COMMUNITY HEALING IN BONTELANGA

A SPACE FOR SOCIAL HEALING AND RECONCILATION

by

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DECLARATION

This work has not been previously submitted in whole, or in part, for the award of any degree. It is my own work. Each significant contribution to, and quotation in, this dissertation from the work, or works, of other people has been attributed, and has been cited and referenced.

Signature: Signed by candidate

Date: 15.02.2008

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ABSTRACT

The South Africa of today remains a largely divided society in which people of racialised groups often still regard one another with suspicion. This is not only a case of black and white since racially inflected attitudes and perceptions are just as rife amongst segments of the coloured and black community. This holds particularly true where resources are as scarce as in the townships of Cape Town's Cape Flats. The 'Community Healing Project' facilitated by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) uses dialogue and debate as main tools in a community-level reconciliation project between Langa, a black African township, and Bonteheuwel, a coloured township.

Using the IJR's intervention as a case study, this thesis deals with community dialogue as a means of correcting misconceptions and promoting attitudinal change. The aim of the study is to assess the impact of the intervention on some participants and its importance for the prevention of future conflict. The thesis draws on various disciplines to provide a theoretical framework for community dialogue interventions. Participant observation, in-depth interviews as well as a critical discourse analysis of two IJR publications are then employed to identify and discuss some of the practical challenges as experienced in the implementation of the project. The analysis of the semi-structured in-depth interviews is centred on four distinct but closely interconnected themes. The analysis of the data suggests that despite some frustrations the community intervention has impacted significantly on participants' lives and the relations between the two communities and the IJR's approach proves meaningful for the participants.

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CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

> We have not fully succeeded in acknowledging that our neighbour's suffering has a direct impact on our own well-being. Unless we recognize our inter-relatedness and dependence on one another, we are simply not going to be successful in our attempts to redress our national deficiencies.[1]

1.1 South Africa – a 'Home for All'?

South Africa is often hailed internationally as an example for successful transformation. Indeed the much feared civil war was avoided and South Africa is a functioning constitutional democracy with a growing economy. However, historical divisions and negative perceptions of 'other' racialised groups prevail in the social order of contemporary South Africa and there is a depth of widespread alienation in its transitional society. Recent research has shown that informal contact between ordinary people of different racial groups is low (Hofmeyer 2007, Foster 2001) and there is still a lack of what Du Toit (2003) calls *common ground* amongst the different racialised groups in South Africa. Using a critical lens some analysts even refer to the negotiated settlement and its implications as mere 'elite reconciliation' (Hofmeyer 2007, Jansen 2006). South Africa is an increasingly polarized society (Foster 2007) and real reconciliation and genuine change still seem far away in the lives of those South Africans that need it the most. Thus, it is one of the current social challenges in South Africa to not only address the obvious pressing problems such as poverty, job-creation, health-care, HIV/Aids and education but to also bridge societal gaps and to bring people from different communities together to work towards a more equal and just society.

Fourteen years after the birth of the 'new' South Africa there still remains a great need for transformation and attitudinal change on the interpersonal level. There are multiple levels through which racism still permeates the South African society. Perceptions, attitudes and social behaviour need to be addressed in order to bring about a normalisation of race relations and instilling a culture of democracy and human rights. Bloomfield et al. (2003) stress that negative relations undermine the transformation process in post-conflict societies like South Africa because "[t]he very best democratic

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[1] Gerwel, J. (2006). Chairperson's Report. *Institute for Justice and Reconciliation Annual Report*, 3.

system in the world produced by the most able democrats will not survive if the general populations to which it applies are not minimally prepared to trust the system and each other and at least try it out" (2003: 11). Undine Kayser argues that "[t]he transformation of the interpersonal domain remains a hidden challenge, subsumed under the official success stories of 'miracle' and 'rainbow' rhetoric meant to woo foreign investors and soothe the fears of local ones, and under the general focus on the material dimension of systemic change" (2005: 12).

Taking a closer look at the 'soft' components of transformation in South Africa this dissertation draws on the lived encounters and interactions between ordinary people who are cautiously socializing across ethnic borders. The focus of the research is on a community-level reconciliation intervention, namely the BonteLanga Community Healing Project which was initiated by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation. The underlying assumption is that facilitated dialogue can make a positive contribution to practical attempts to resolve ethnic and intergroup conflict. This study examines some of the complexities and challenges of this specific intervention.

1.2 Background to the BonteLanga project

While a new power balance is slowly being established in South Africa, the Western Cape Province is still known to be the least integrated province in the country.[2] However, some political efforts are being made to facilitate social change. In order to combat the fault lines of racism, sexism, classism and urban bias Western Cape premier Ebrahim Rasool has launched the initiative *Home For All* as a call for social cohesion. The aim is to build bridges between communities and create an environment of mutual respect for each others culture:

> [T]he restlessness that we feel, the suspicion of other, the calling of names, the division amongst us, sometimes the racism amongst us, the identity challenges that we all face, it begins to tell me that this home for all, cannot be based only on material well being. Meaning that, while we have to get the material things, moving for our people, and while we have got to continue to grow and share the Cape materially, *we must also find ways in which to rid our people of the suspicion, the intolerance and of the habit to reject.*[3]

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[2] Hendricks, C. (2007). What does Africanising the Western Cape mean? Retrieved January 14th 2008 from http://www.ijr.org.za/publications/copy_of_media/cheryl.

[3] Speech by Mr Ebrahim Rasool, Premier of the Western Cape, 11 August 2007. Institute for Justice and Reconciliation Memory Project in Memory and Identity. Retrieved December 12th 2007 from http://www.capegateway.gov.za/eng/pubs/speeches/2007/Aug/161173. (my emphasis).

Since political processes do not, of themselves, deliver peace the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (IJR) has launched a 'Reconciliation and Social Reconstruction Programme', which seeks to promote processes of communal and national reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa. As part of this bigger curriculum the 'Community Healing Programme' is one of a number of initiatives to advance transformation on the interpersonal level. It brings together people from different ethnic groups and seeks to encourage dialogue about contentious issues. It is based on the idea that learning about the respective histories of the other community and the sharing of memories will lead to a more inclusive and shared understanding of the past. The project was originally launched in Cradock in 2001 and has now been extended to Cape Town where the focus lies on the 'BonteLanga'[4] project which tries to change attitudes in the townships of Bonteheuwel and Langa.[5]

Langa is Cape Town's oldest township with a predominantly black population. The neighbouring Bonteheuwel was established in 1965 as a result of the Group Areas Act and is a predominantly coloured area (Morrison 2006). Langa and Bonteheuwel are two communities with different histories, languages, narratives, identities and aspirations. There has been no war as such between the communities and the conflict is not of such a nature that they physically attack each other. Rather they are living side by side in relative peace. However, the relations between black and coloured people are often marked by a sense of unease, distrust and suspicion (Morrison 2006, Jansen 2006). Animosity and negative perceptions continue to divide the two communities. Racist terminology is frequently used to refer to the other group. The public debate about race relations in South Africa is often primarily centred on the black and white problematic only and tends to neglect or gloss over tensions between blacks and coloureds. Racism is however far more complex than this black-white reductionism suggests. The apartheid era with its ideology of racial superiority has left its mark on all social groups in South Africa. These animosities are to a great extent a result of apartheid legislation and ideology and are currently fuelled by the competition for scarce resources such as housing, jobs and education. In the face of economic inequalities and unfulfilled material expectations ethnic identities gain importance. Many coloureds feel a loss of privilege in the new

[4] BonteLanga is the name the two communities agreed upon in their 2005 statement of partnership.

[5] Recently efforts have been made to include the predominantly white community of Pinelands into the initiative. So far with very limited success which is why I have chosen to focus on Bonteheuwel and Langa only.

dispensation and believe that black people are now getting everything, while on the other hand many black people believe that the coloureds with their relative privileges did not suffer under apartheid legislation and that the Western Cape is still a paradise for them (James et al. 1996, Morrison 2006). What it comes down to is a dispute of interests, a perceived conflict over resources, ideological differences and dissension over values and beliefs.

The IJR believes that the strained relations between the communities impact on their social and economic development and that it would be far more effective if Bonteheuwel and Langa pursued their interests in combination.[6] The community healing initiative wants to create a supportive environment for the discussion of contentious issues. The group provides a safe space for community members to discuss issues of identity, stereotyping and memory (Morrison 2006). It is hoped that in the long run the people of Bonteheuwel and Langa will bury their differences and build bridges between communities. It is an attempt to attend to the emotional, psychological and spiritual wounds that were inflicted on communities and individuals by traumatic events or circumstances and it aims to restore the social fabric while at the same time strengthening civil society in the targeted communities.

[6] Many public services are shared by the two communities. The Vanguard Community Health Centre situated in Bonteheuwel services both Bonteheuwel and Langa. According to Morrison (2006) the competition for limited public services often leads to racialised tensions between the communities.

1.3 Scope and thesis outline

> [A]lthough a great deal is known about the social and psychological processes that cause division and conflict, there exists very little understanding of how reconciliation comes about or how partnerships develop. (Bland 2002: 325).

This dissertation relates to the interpersonal domain of social change, or in other words the 'soft' components of reconciliation and is based on the premise that there is a relationship between the provision of support services for those who were victimised in political struggle, and the attainment of reconciliation amongst citizens.

The dissertation consists of a brief general literature review which draws on various disciplines to provide a theoretical framework for community healing interventions before looking at some of the practical challenges as experienced by the participants. The thesis is divided into six chapters. Chapter one introduces the motivation for this study and identifies the central research question. Chapter two provides the theoretical framework for the study's concern. It discusses identity challenges in contemporary South Africa and how the lingering discourse of racial hierarchy still affects the relations between black and coloured South Africans. Chapter two also examines some of the current theory on the relationship between storytelling, identity as a discursive formation and the resulting possibilities for facilitated dialogue. After a brief introduction into contact theory and intercultural communication it finally turns to the concept of community dialogue in reconciliation interventions. Chapter three introduces the methodology used in this study. Chapter four provides a critical discourse analysis of the IJR's official stance on community healing. Drawing on two IJR publications dealing with the Community Healing initiative, this chapter tries to establish where the IJR positions itself in relation to different discourses in society and how it conceptualizes the relevant theory discussed in chapter two. Chapter five examines some of the practical challenges experienced by the participants. The central research question is: what are the challenges of implementing the concept of Community Healing in BonteLanga and does the intervention make a difference in the lives of the participants? Finally, chapter six comprises a discussion of the findings and some concluding remarks.

Evaluation is one key to ensuring the relevance and sustainability of interventions. While I am aware that due to its limited scope a thesis of 25,000 words can by no means

achieve a thorough evaluation of such a complex intervention I will nevertheless try and identify some of the major challenges and successes of this initiative. The information gained in the process of this research can then be used to adapt or re-direct programme activities. This study aims to look at this specific intervention only and is thus clearly limited to this context and does not aim to generalize about the nature of community interventions in general.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 The intertextuality of academic work

In *Making Sense of Qualitative Data* Coffey and Atkinson (1996) identify a number of themes and issues that researchers should keep in mind when dealing with qualitative data. They stress the point that writing and reading are acts of sense-making and they encourage social scientists to think creatively about their data. According to Coffey and Atkinson, the use of theory in qualitative research is an ongoing process of constantly developing and refining of concepts. Analysis is never complete because ideas can be derived from multiple sources; some ideas might be discarded during the research process, while others might have to be modified. The researcher should thus not be confined to only one theoretical perspective but should rather adapt and transform theory from a broader range of sources. Coffey and Atkinson talk about the "intertextuality of academic work" (1996: 158) by which they mean that seemingly unrelated fields of study might offer unexpected inspiration. They claim that it should be the aim of any researcher to develop theoretical ideas about social processes and cultural forms that have relevance beyond those data themselves.

Indeed an intervention such as the IJR's Community Healing Programme is not informed by one coherent field of study but rather by many different disciplines such as social psychology, sociology, anthropology, history and political science. It is worth noting that in all of these academic disciplines there has been a recent upsurge in research interested in the concepts of remembering and forgetting in the context of ethnic conflict. It is with this in mind that I will use this literature review to look at social identity theory, the discourse of racial hierarchy in South Africa, contact theory and intercultural communication before eventually introducing the concept of community dialogue. I do so in order to identify ideas that are relevant for the concept of Community Healing. The theory introduced in this chapter provides a framework from which to understand social psychological change in South Africa and from which to explain and analyse the data in the later chapters.

2.2 Identity challenges in South Africa

G. H. Mead (1934) was among the first to challenge the notion of a stable, monolithic identity. He described identity formation as an ongoing social process. Only through interaction with a social group do we form an individual identity and consciousness. According to Mead, mind and self emerge from the social process of communication and the dominant discourses in society inform our perception of our selves. We have all been socially conditioned by our environment and a person possesses a self only in relation to the selves of the other members of his social group (the *generalized other*). This self expresses or reflects the general behaviour pattern of the social group to which he belongs, just as does the structure of the self of every other individual belonging to this social group. Each human being acquires specific sets of social identities as they grow up. The process of social conditioning begins the day that we are born and it shapes our consciousness and sense of identity. Hence, Mead understands identity as a social construct that depends on context, space and time. This understanding implies the possibility of transforming identities and has since been further developed by others. Most notably, Stuart Hall (1990, 1996) took up the notion of identities as fluid and constantly changing with the social context and according to Berger and Luckman identity is "a phenomenon that emerges from the dialectic between the individual and society" (1966: 174).

Identity politics have always played a major role in South African society, perhaps especially since the Apartheid legislation imposed ethnic and racial identities on individuals and groups. The often oppressive definitions of race, gender, and class identity were enforced in order to constitute group identities that fitted into the apartheid ideology. Marlene Roefs argues that "an important psychological consequence of South Africa's social engineering was that people developed strong racial and nationalist identities" (2006: 77). The socio-political changes in South Africa since 1994 have interrupted the old established order and thus made it necessary for people to reinterpret their lives in order to come to terms with the new situation. The change from an authoritarian regime to a democratic 'Rainbow Nation' necessitated a rethinking of identity and opened up the field of possible constructions of self (Wasserman & Jacobs 2003, Steyn 2001). However, to let go of those indoctrinated racialised identities is a tremendous challenge for most South Africans. The search for identity in the climate of

post-apartheid South Africa proves to be a painful undertaking for some, and their identities are far from stable but rather a problem-ridden result of a complex interplay of discourses pertaining to both race and gender in South African society. In her study on whiteness in contemporary South Africa Melissa Steyn refers to this situation as the "untidy cultural space" (2001: 139) of the New South Africa where a new order is still being negotiated.

2.3 The discourse of racial hierarchy

It is crucial to the design of any kind of community intervention to identify the specific context. This thesis is looking at a community intervention that aims to change attitudes between people from a coloured and a black township. Racialised tensions between blacks and coloureds in South Africa do not attract nearly as much attention as the black and white problematic (Erasmus 2001). Howe (1998) highlights the fact that generally the interest in 'race' is often restricted to particular distinctions between 'black and white'. However, everyday racist practices are still quite common and one only needs to look at the local papers to find examples of incidents of racialised violence between blacks and coloureds. During the month of finishing this thesis there has been a severe fight between coloured and black pupils at Rhodes High in Mowbray.[7] Another confrontation that made the headlines was the gathering of a crowd of about 400 black people in Khayelitsha who threw stones and hurled racial slurs outside a house that had been bought by a coloured man.[8]

In order to understand where the damaged relations between the two groups originate, it is necessary to take a closer look at the discourse of racial hierarchy which was the backbone of apartheid ideology. This discourse has for decades informed, if not determined, identity formation and the willingness to engage across 'race' not only between black and white but also between coloured and black South Africans. Without addressing the underlying causes of the existing divisions in the relations between black

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[7] "Race row brings police to school", Cape Argus January 30th 2008
http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=105&art_id=vn20080130032559457C836600
[8] "ANC steps into ugly housing race row", Cape Argus January 31st 2008
http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=&art_id=vn20080131114207878C209090
"We don't want coloureds here!", Cape Argus on January 30th 2008
http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20080130112257222C956973

and coloured communities in the Western Cape the structures that cause it cannot be transformed.

2.3.1 Blackness

Like any other social identity, blackness is constantly being challenged and renegotiated in post-1994 South Africa. This is in itself a broad and exciting field for extensive further study. For the purposes of this thesis however, it is more important to take a brief look at how the apartheid discourse of racial hierarchy has in turn shaped an essentialist view of black identity.

Black identity formation under apartheid was marked by the experience of colonialism and the domination by the white man (Durrheim & Mtose 2006). Inevitably this exploitation and maltreatment had moral and psychological implications. Abdi (1999) claims that institutionalized racism had a major influence on the identities of Black South Africans. He argues that the white settlers established a eurocentric cultural hegemony that effectively responded to their own needs. Economical exploitation and cultural oppression thus deformed and deconstructed the earlier identities of black South Africans. The emergence of the Black Consciousness Movement in the 1970s was a reaction to this psychosociological alienation. Steve Biko claimed that black liberation would have to start with the liberation from internalised inferiority, with a psychological transformation in the minds of black people themselves (Abdi 1999). Adhikari (2005) describes how a shared identity of black South Africans as collectively oppressed and sharing collective political objectives and values emerged n the struggle against apartheid.

The ANC under Thabo Mbeki has stressed the need for an *African Renaissance* in intellectual and economic terms to fight the cultural, educational and social marginalisation of black South Africans. Mbeki asks blacks and Africans all over the continent to take more pride in their heritage and claims, "[t]he beginning of our rebirth as a Continent must be our own rediscovery of our soul" and talks further about a "journey of self discovery and the restoration of our own self-esteem."[9] In his famous 1996 speech *I am an African* Mbeki included all ethnic groups living in South Africa in his

[9] The African Renaissance Statement of Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki SABC, Gallagher Estate, 13 August 1998. http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/1998/tm0813.htm.

definition of 'African'.[10] However, not all black South Africans share this non-sectarian philosophy, some prefer an exclusive black identity and adopt a narrow, primordial and essentialist definition of what it means to be African. Erasmus (2001) identifies this as an "emergent discourse of African essentialism" based on exclusivist principles which excludes the coloured experience.

Durrheim and Mtose (2006) argue that blackness is often conceived of as an inclusive political category comprising all oppressed blacks of the world struggling for liberation because they share a narrative of suffering and exploitation. Generally, black identities are often thought to be 'different' and culturally based on collectivism rather than individualism. Consequently, there is a tendency amongst some black nationalists to emphasise African or black culture and values, often drawing on the myth of an innocent pre-colonial Africa. In this paradigm African people are seen as particularly unique and different in terms of their philosophy, personality and especially in the areas of thinking and feeling. While it is important to contextualise these ideas as a reaction to Afropessimism, they are indeed sometimes uncomfortably close to the themes of white racism. The abdication of logic and analytical thinking to Europe, while sentiment and analogical 'apprehension' of truth are assigned to Africa is unsettling. In some ways this reproduces the dominant discourse of the colonisers that 'the African' is childlike and primitive.

There are multiple ways of 'being black' in contemporary South Africa. As a consequence of economic, political and social changes in the post-apartheid era a multitude of different constructions of blackness are possible today. With the ANC firmly established in power and policies like Black Economic Empowerment in place, there are many reasons for black South Africans to feel more empowered. However, according to Abdi (1999) the 'struggle unity' is threatened in this new dispensation as the black population of South Africa drifts further apart with a widening gap between the have-nots and a tiny black elite. The view that intraracial inequality has increased is shared by Seekings and Nattrass (2005). They hold that South Africa remains a society characterized by extreme inequality but argue that "the basis of disadvantage shifted from race to class" (2005: 4).

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[10] Statement of Deputy President, Thabo Mbeki, on behalf of the ANC, on the occasion of the adoption by the constitutional assembly of "The Republic of South Africa Constitution Bill 1996" Cape Town, 8 May 1996 http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mbeki/1996/sp960508.html.

2.3.2 Conceptualisations of coloured identity

"Coloured identities have been shaped by very particular racist discourses."[11]

The use of the term 'coloured' has been highly contested throughout South African history for different reasons. The ethnic group of coloureds is popularly regarded as 'mixed race' and its members inhabit an intermediate status in South African racial hierarchy. This ambiguous position is largely a result of the Apartheid laws, especially the Population Registration Act of 1950 which defined a coloured person as "a person who is not a white person nor generally accepted as a member of aboriginal race or tribe of Africa."[12] This meant that coloured identity was always constructed in negative relation to the other, not through a positive perception of the self (James et al. 1996). They were classified not according to pure racial blood but on the contrary by impurity. In her very personal introduction to *Coloured by History Shaped by Place* Zimitri Erasmus describes the humiliation attached to this supposed racial hybridity: "Being coloured is about living in an identity that is clouded in sexualised shame and associated with drunkenness and jollity" (2001: 14).

Erasmus and Pieterse (1997) identify three key discourses that have shaped coloured culture and identity. The dominant discourse during the apartheid era was the white nationalist discourse which "constructs coloureds as 'left-over people'" (1997: 8). Miscegenation and racial hybridity are seen as the essence of colouredness. Within this approach coloured people are marginalized and their historical agency is denied. Adhikari (2005) refers to this as an essentialist school of thought.

A discourse of blackness grounded in the growing rejection of the term coloured emerged amongst political activists in the anti-apartheid movement during the 1970s and 1980s. An all encompassing black identity was seen as necessary in the context of resistance to white supremacy. The Black Consciousness ideology made coloured identity a contentious issue and thus the term 'so-called coloured' surfaced in the non-racialism philosophy of the resistance movement (Erasmus and Pieterse 1997, Adhikari 2005). Similarly, certain coloured academics dismiss the term as well as the idea of a distinct

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[11] Erasmus & Pieterse 1997: 17.
[12] http://heritage.thetimes.co.za/memorials/wc/RaceClassificationBoard/article.aspx?id=591128.

coloured culture as artificially created by colonialists and imperialist agents.[13] Erasmus and Adhikari have shown in their respective work that to simply deny the lived reality of being coloured under the banner of non-racialism is just another form of discrimination. The idea of a 'false identity' minimises coloured agency in the making of their own identity. Furthermore, Erasmus and Pieterse rightly point out that all identities are constructed, unstable and heterogeneous because "all our lives are gendered, racialised and classed" (1997: 12).

The plurality and differentiality of global culture, now so readily available through information technologies, has an impact on people's identities. Global mass culture influences local identity formation. Melissa Steyn suggests therefore that "[i]n the face of all the information in the contemporary world about other belief systems, people's identities will either become more fluid or revert to fundamentalism" (2001: 152). Consequently, the third discourse distinguished by Erasmus and Pieterse is an ethnonationalist discourse which informs a new coloured nationalism groping "desperately after a mythical ethnic purity based in selectively reconstructed mythical pasts" (1997: 9). Nationalist movements try to give 'colouredness' new meaning in order to mobilize people on ethnic terms.

Erasmus and Pieterse (1997) as well as Adhikari (2005) criticise both the essentialist and the instrumentalist concepts that regard coloured identity as a given, fixed category. These paradigms neglect the ongoing dynamic process of identity formation. Adhikari argues that "Coloured identity (...) is a product of human agency dependent on a range of historical, social, cultural, political and other contingencies" (2005: 9). His aim is to demonstrate the complexity of coloured identity formation while stressing the agency of coloureds in the course of action. Erasmus claims that generally "racial discourses in South Africa have made it impossible to see colouredness as an identity that could be understood and respected on its own terms" (2001: 15).

The intermediate and ambiguous position of coloureds has not changed in the new order. In the 'untidy cultural space' (Steyn 2001) of the new dispensation in South Africa where identities seemed threatened, an alignment in 1994 of the majority of coloured

[13] Erasmus and Pieterse refer explicitly to Neville Alexander & Norman Duncan.

voters in the Western Cape with the National Party, their former oppressors, became possible. This rather unexpected voting pattern put the spotlight on the 'coloured problem'. In the post-apartheid era reality had become more complex and there was no longer a single white supremacist enemy against which to unite in struggle. It seemed that the majority of coloured people actively feared marginalization in the nation-building project of the new ANC-led democracy. While before 1994 they were not white enough to govern themselves many feared that they now were not black enough (Adhikari 2005). This is mainly due to the fact that a critical link between race and access to resources continues to operate in the new South Africa. The most pressing concern for many coloureds is the fear of being marginalized (James et al. 1996, Erasmus 2001). The fear of marginalization (and the loss of relative privilege) were encouraged and exploited by the National Party which successfully preyed on the anxieties of Indians and coloureds. As a result affirmative action policies are perceived by many coloureds as only benefiting blacks.[14]

2.3.3 Coloured Compromises and Complicity

Some people have been silenced by the oppressive system of apartheid; others have remained silent about their complicity in that very system. If "societies, like individuals, cannot grow and mature unless they come to terms with the dark places – the silences – in themselves"[15] then the obvious solution is to engage in dialogue and uncover those stories that were formerly excluded from discourse. Coloured identity is decisively shaped by white domination and its discourse of racial hierarchisation. However, coloureds share some degree of complicity in this discourse because of the creation of an inferior black African Other. According to Erasmus (2001) there is a 'better than black' element of coloured identity formation. If they were not good enough to be white, then they were definitely better than black. This racial hostility towards black people shows that those who suffer from racism can very well be racist themselves. Rasool also problematises racism *within* the coloured community (James et al. 1996: 55). In the same vein, Erasmus asserts that the "discourse of racial hierarchy and its association of blackness with inferiority is mobilized *by coloureds against coloureds* as much as against black Africans"

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[14] "Coloureds see Mbeki on 'being marginalised'", Cape Argus June 16, 2007
http://www.iol.co.za/index.php?set_id=1&click_id=13&art_id=vn20070616111307711C559091
[15] Brink, André (1998) Interrogating silence: new possibilities faced by South African literature. In Attridge, Derek and Rosemary Jolly (eds.), *Writing South Africa*. p. 24.

(2001: 24). She comes to the conclusion that an acknowledgement of the complicity of coloured people in the discourse of racial hierarchy is necessary for a re-imagining of coloured identity.

2.3.4 Concluding remarks

The "depoliticizing discourse of rainbow nationalism" (Erasmus 2001) makes it difficult to renegotiate the racial terrain of South African culture. Colourblind approaches negate the lived experiences of ordinary people whose lives are still very much determined by race (Adhikari 2005, Ansell 2006). Under apartheid coloureds enjoyed slightly better socioeconomic conditions than black South Africans but were nevertheless discriminated against and oppressed. Many coloureds thus joined the ANC-led liberation struggle or formed their own resistance movements. However, little is known about the history of coloured resistance (Adhikari 2005) and in fact many black people are now convinced that coloureds neither suffered from nor fought against the apartheid regime. With the exception of Adhikari's work there are no systematic studies of coloured identity or social history and apart from Erasmus and Adhikari very few scholars look at the social and political impulses behind the assertion of a separate coloured identity.

Thus there are two major issues to address in the relations between black South Africans and coloureds if reconciliation is to be achieved. On the one hand the coloured community must acknowledge a certain degree of complicity in the racial hierarchy of the apartheid system. The black community on the other hand must acknowledge that life under apartheid was indeed hard for coloureds and that they did their part in fighting against it. Most importantly, both groups have to stop viewing the 'other' as a competitor or threat to their own interests. Coloured racism is often seen as the root of rising racialised tensions between blacks and coloureds (James et al. 1996). Nelson Mandela, however, argues that racist language and ideas are not at all unique to coloured communities but a legacy of apartheid that the nation has to address as a whole. If those racist attitudes remain unattended they could "undermine the very foundation of non-racial democracy that we have all struggled to achieve" (1996: 8). What Mandela says is that no one in South Africa can claim a moral high ground when it comes to racist sentiments. Consequently, Desmond Tutu in the foreword to Ryland Fisher's *Race* urges all South Africans to start talking about race and identity and to engage with each other

across social boundaries. What is necessary then is to start thinking outside the old frameworks and look at the social construction of racial identities and how and by what circumstances they are shaped and in what situations they become important.

2.4 Negotiating Identities through Storytelling

> With the lies of stories – all the lies, all the stories – we shape ourselves the way the first person was shaped from the dust of the earth. That is our first and ultimate dust.[16]

This paragraph explores the idea of the self as a narrated identity and examines how identity is constructed and reconstructed through narratives. The idea behind this is to trace the implications of the concept of narrative identity to the idea of *community dialogue*, e.g. the sharing of personal stories and experiences in a safe space. How can the telling of and listening to stories help in the wider processes of social change towards a more just, democratic and egalitarian South African society?

While some find the exposure to new and changing contexts which challenge their identity confusing, others see it as a liberating force. In this time of transformation, knowing that neither South Africa's history nor its moral boundaries are fixed and final, novelists and poets recover and reinterpret the cultural identity embedded in their people's myths.[17] They are highly informed by postmodernist historical consciousness and try to appropriate the past through imaginative understanding. Consequently, Crystal Warren observes "a notable feature of the fiction published was the blurring of boundaries between fiction and non-fiction, particularly evident in the many autobiographical novels appearing, and between adult and teenage fiction. Authors continue to explore aspects of identity, for individuals and for the country" (2004: 113). However, it is not only authors who make use of an interpretive appraisal of the past. Ordinary people do it on a day to day basis.

Language is a primary modelling system through which human beings code and express other systems. It is a basic human inclination to evaluate, assess and structure actions and

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[16] Flip Lochner in Brink, André (2000). *Devil's Valley* London: Vintage, 287.
[17] For example Zakes Mda's *Heart of Redness* or André Brink's *Praying Mantis*.

events into compositional narrative patterns. We feel a need to storify, we make sense of our worlds by telling stories and those stories are meaning-generating mechanisms. Therefore, human beings are essentially storytellers and identity is a discursive formation. Accordingly, there has been a notable 'narrative turn' in the social and cultural sciences over the last few decades. Especially with regard to self and identity theory, narrative studies have been welcomed by social psychology.[18]

There are a number of theoretical approaches that use the concept of narrative as a method of analysing human identity. Giddens' (1991) theory of identity as narrative for example analyses how people display to each other who they are and which discursive strategies and linguistic devices they employ to construct a certain self-image. Giddens argues that lives and the stories people tell about them are socially constructed. He explores the fictionality of the self and the different ways in which people constantly reinterpret and reconstruct the meaning and significance of past experiences. Furthermore, Giddens' theory shows how dominant discourses shape our perception and understanding of the world. Thus, social identities are not simply given or static; they are called into being by political-ideological processes. That in itself implies that they can be deconstructed and subsequently reconstructed.

In the same manner, Freeman (1993) claims that an act of 'rewriting the self' occurs both in actual autobiographies and in everyday reflections over one's personal history. Freeman's work is situated in the context of narrative psychology and deals with the problem of how individuals make sense of their lived experience. In the same vein as Giddens Freeman explores the invention of the self and the different ways in which people constantly reinterpret and reconstruct the meaning and significance of past experiences. The essential part of this autobiographical act is the interpretation of past events into meaningful patterns. Freeman argues that one has to become conscious of the discursive order of one's culture in order to make transgression possible. Freeman and Brockmeier claim that these identity narratives are inseparable from normative ideas of how a life is supposed to be lived: "constructions of autobiographical identity always aim at some form of narrative integrity; they cannot, as it were, do without it" (2001: 82). People's identity narratives are always modelled in relation to the dominant discourses in

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[18] For example: Freeman, M. (1993). *Rewriting the self. History, memory, narrative.* London: Routledge.
Straub, Jürgen (ed.) (1998). *Erzählung, Identität und historisches Bewußtsein. Die psychologische Konstruktion von Zeit und Geschichte.* Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp.

society. Even if an individual rejects the accepted norms, they position themselves in relation to them. Thus "conceptions of the good life are woven into the fabric of human identity" (2001: 81) and provide important axes of self-constitution within society. Identity is constructed along shared axes of experience and knowledge. The story by which one constitutes one's own identity shows that one's life is always linked to others, not always in the way one would prefer. Hence, other persons are always constituents in our identity and vice versa. Thus our narratives are always intertwined with other narratives.

To conclude this brief theoretical digression, individuals achieve a certain sense of coherence and continuity in their lives and identities through their personal narratives. These narratives provide the tellers with a frame of interpretation through which they make sense of the world and their place in it. Thus, identity narratives are a central organizing feature of our social world. In moments of crisis they need to be renegotiated and reinterpreted in order for people to make sense of certain events. Mead, Giddens, Brockmeier and Freeman focus primarily on individual identity formation. However, with regard to community healing the focus should be expanded to group identities and how these are influenced by shared rhetorical visions.

2.5 Symbolic Convergence Theory

Ernest Bormann's Symbolic Convergence Theory provides beneficial insights on group identities and group cohesion. According to Bormann (1982), groups form cohesion and a sense of group consciousness through the exchange of stories. Bormann's idea is that the sharing of fantasies creates symbolic convergence. Through this symbolic convergence common ground is discovered and established and individuals can become a cohesive group. The term fantasy in this context has nothing to do with the magical or supernatural. It simply refers stories or speech patterns that contain or reveal emotion. Steyn, Grant and Van Zyl claim that "the creation of fantasy themes is the basic method by which common experience is shaped rhetorically. *Fantasy* is a technical term for the creative and imaginative interpretation of events built around a theme" (2001: 20). Bormann's theory thus allows us to analyse the sense-making system of a group through fantasy theme analysis. By looking at recurring patterns of symbolisation amongst group

members and an analysis of how these function rhetorically we can find out more about the vision that holds the group together.

Bormann's theory entails that group members can create a new fantasy theme, and establish common ground with another group, thus creating a cohesive bond. This finding is crucial in the context of reconciliation initiatives such as Community Healing. If intra-community dialogue between historically divided communities could result in the discovery of common ground and subsequently in the creating of a new shared fantasy theme it would strengthen community cohesion and enable a larger, shared group identity. If the communities were able to 'reemplot' their respective histories in such a way as to change the meaning and the significance of those events for them, they could move from a divided past to a shared future. Negative social identities might be challenged and a shared group identity rediscovered.

2.6 Contact Hypothesis

In social psychology's contact theory, contact is associated with a reduction in racial prejudice and intergroup hostility. The contact hypothesis proposes that social interaction between members of different groups reduces intergroup prejudice and stereotyping. The underlying assumption is that if you bring people from conflicting parties together the conflict will subside as they get to understand one another better. Gordon Allport's *The Nature of Prejudice* (1958) is regarded as the founding stone of contact theory and his ideas have since been developed further. According to Kenworthy et al. Allport was "cautiously optimistic about the role of contact in reducing prejudice" (2005: 3). He saw potential benefits of contact if certain critical situational conditions are present and emphasized that the nature of the contact is crucial to its effect. Kenworthy et al. identify four basic elements of an ideal situation in Allport's theory: equal status among the groups, shared common goals, institutional support and a perception of similarity between the two groups. Contact will only reduce prejudice "provided it is of a sort that leads to the perception of common interests and common humanity between members of two groups" (Allport 1958: 281). Thus, while meaningful contact might reduce intergroup bias, superficial contact may actually reinforce stereotypes.

Contact theory has lost some of its popularity since it became more and more apparent that 'unfavourable' conditions such as inequality in status may foster even more

resentment and intergroup tension. Dixon, Durrheim and Tredoux (2005) carried out what they termed a 'reality check' for the contact hypothesis. They hold that the contact literature has become detached from everyday life in divided societies and offers little guidance about how the ideal conditions are to be achieved. There is a discrepancy between actual and ideal forms of contact. Dixon et al. claim that contact theory has neglected wider power structures embedded within the historical, political, and economic organization of society as well as participants' own constructions of the meaning of contact.

For a long time the literature on intergroup contact has focused on assimilation and integration and thus emphasized the importance of perceived similarity between different groups. In a 2001 paper Brown and Lopez reconsider the relationship between similarity and positive intergroup relations. They challenge the widely held assumption that perceived similarity is absolutely essential for the reduction of prejudice and argue that similarity need not be central to the resolution of intergroup contact. They set out to show that intergroup contact is a complex process. Even though interpersonal similarity often leads to liking, intergroup similarity may at times actually threaten positive distinctiveness and foster intergroup tensions. Brown and Lopez suggest that addressing the group differences might be more fruitful for improved interethnic and intergroup relations: "an inherent component of conflict resolution is the recognition, acceptance, and treatment of group differences" (2001: 286). They suggest to link work on contact theory and work on conflict resolution in order to develop "an alternative route for positively challenging prejudice, one in which difference is addressed and analyzed in a way that fosters better communication and understanding and leads to stronger, richer cooperation and less prejudiced beliefs" (2001: 288).

The lessening of prejudice through intergroup contact often appears to only take place in the environment where the contact takes place. Dixon, Durrheim & Tredoux "accept that contact may transform interpersonal attitudes and stereotypes, but caution that it may leave unaltered the ideological beliefs that sustain systems of racial discrimination" (2007: 868). However, even if intergroup contact is not a guaranteed road to success it can still be very effective in the reduction of prejudice and distrust.

2.6.1 Contact in South Africa

Foster (2007) analyzes group contact and racialised attitudes towards 'the other' and argues that the cross-racial contact situation in South Africa has only slightly improved since 1994. According to Foster apartheid South Africa was a 'non-contact' society. Apartheid policies restricted inter-racial contact to the absolute minimum. The little contact that did take place happened mostly under negative circumstances which served to further accelerate prejudice. He argues that in the 'New South Africa' informal racialised segregation continues to be the norm. South Africa can now be called a 'minimal contact' society in which many of the disproportions of the past remain in place. Economic inequality, social segregation and persistent spatial segregation are still dominant patterns. The IJR's reconciliation barometer discloses that social contact between racialised groups in South Africa remains dangerously low (Hofmeyer 2007). This lack of contact and cooperation between different communities is a threat to the democratisation process in post conflict societies (Bloomfield 2003). Foster (2007) emphasises that South Africa is a most unequal society and that unless this is given the utmost attention, no amount of interaction among deeply unequal people will change the state of race relations in this country.

2.7 Intercultural Communication

These days it is common knowledge that there is more to communication than just language alone. People of different cultures, genders or age groups encode and decode messages differently. Non-verbal channels of communications, such as body-language, tone of voice or facial expressions carry additional meaning to what is being said and verbal and visual language operate in a mutually reinforcing way. This specific interplay of verbal and nonverbal codes a person uses is to a large extent determined by that person's social conditioning. According to identity theory, mind and self emerge from the social process of communication. The dominant discourses in society inform our perception of ourselves and we have all been socially conditioned by our immediate environment. Certain assumptions and even stereotypes help us frame and interpret what we find. "All human beings are captives of their culture" writes Edward Hall, who is often referred to as the 'founder' of Intercultural Communication Studies (1994: 5) and Scollon & Wong-Scollon hold that "discourse patterns are among the strongest

expressions of personal and cultural identity. To a great extent a person feels he is what he is because of the way he talks with others" (1990: 37). Prejudices and stereotypes help us structure our reality because they reduce the information we have to decode. They do not recognize the complexity of personal experience but generalize according to preconceived patterns.

People consciously or unconsciously behave and communicate in a certain way that is acceptable and conventional in their cultural context and more often than not unquestioningly accept the social conventions and cultural practices they are taught by their environment as the norm. Subtle qualities of behaviour and different communication patterns can lead to considerable misunderstandings and language skills do not necessarily entail intercultural awareness. Developing cross-cultural skills requires the close examination of our own biases and prejudices. No matter how fluent one might be in a certain language, there is always more to learn than just grammar and vocabulary.

It follows from the above that intercultural interaction and communication can be very frustrating for one or both parties because the frame of reference and general behaviour might be significantly different. Many people are afraid of the unknown and "*[u]ncertainty avoidance* is the extent to which people within a culture are made nervous by situations that they perceive as unstructured, unclear, or unpredictable" (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg 1995: 56). Consequently intercultural value conflicts arise amongst people with different cultural frameworks and understanding and accepting cultural differences is by no means an easy undertaking. As a solution James suggests that "members of conflicting cultures should practice *critical intercultural dialogue*, whereby they try first to understand and only then to criticize cultural practices they find offensive" (1999: 589). He discusses the limitations and difficulties of developing practices of critical intercultural dialogue and stresses the need for fair conditions and the dangers of asymmetrical power relations which can severely strain dialogue endeavours.

James identifies three central criteria for intercultural dialogue: there must be an attitude of openness and trust amongst the participants, they must come to understand each other's perspective and they must communicate with each other under conditions that both parties regard as fair (1999: 590). These criteria resonate with those presented in Allport's contact theory, which shows just how interrelated the fields are. James further

holds that intercultural understanding does not come easily or quickly but that "dialogical understanding occurs gradually, in piecemeal and incremental steps based on mutual agreement" (1999: 591). Intercultural understanding is an ongoing process which is never complete since the understanding of the other's position can inevitably only be partial.

James further argues that "individuals may give greater salience to different cultural values or norms when placed in different cultural contexts" and warns that "these changes complicate intercultural understanding (1999: 593). One of the aims of intercultural dialogue is to accept that norms, beliefs and worldviews are contingent and open to revision. One should engage in intercultural dialogue to learn something from the other and to deconstruct some of the stereotypes held against the other group. An important prerequisite for successful intercultural communication is to understand one's own culturally mediated values and biases. Equally important is an underlying wish to overcome stereotypes and to redefine the image of self and 'other'. James cautions that "[i]ntercultural dialogue, critical or not, cannot serve as a means for addressing cultural conflict unless participants are open to allowing others to understand their perspective" (1999: 591).

Having looked at the complexity of the cultural systems governing intercultural communication I shall now turn to the concept of community dialogue, a conflict resolution and trauma healing approach that is in fact built on constructive conversations between people that perceive each other as significantly different.

2.8 Community Dialogue

Community dialogue has been used as a de-escalation strategy as well as a trust building exercise in many different contexts. The Canadian government defines community dialogue as follows:

> A community dialogue is a forum that draws participants from as many parts of the community as possible to exchange information face-to-face, share personal stories and experiences, honestly express perspectives, clarify viewpoints, and develop solutions to community concerns and opportunities. Unlike debate, dialogue emphasizes listening to deepen understanding. It develops common perspectives and goals, and allows participants to express their own interests.[19]

This concept has been employed to reduce discord and dissension amongst different stakeholders in contentious environmental issues and to facilitate gender reconciliation, to give only two examples. More importantly for this research, however, is the fact that in light of the growing number of ethnopolitical conflicts that have erupted into armed hostilities this approach is gaining recognition as a tool for conflict prevention. The aim of community healing initiatives all over the world is to come to terms with a turbulent and often violent past in order to build more inclusive and cohesive communities and to interrupt "cycles of hostility and spheres of indifference" (Du Toit 2003: 161). Community dialogue groups have been established in Northern Ireland, Rwanda and other divided societies where barriers between ethnic groups are at the root of the problem. Community dialogue in post-conflict societies is crucial because negative relations undermine the transformation process. In a country like South Africa where a great deal of the population is traumatised by the violent and repressive apartheid past, there are plenty of psychosocial wounds that need to be healed. Many scholars agree that if these issues remain unaddressed the possibilities of violent conflict erupting in the future remain high (Van der Knaap 2006, Staub et al. 2005, Anckermann et al. 2005). According to Van der Knapp trauma is not just a mental illness as some people see it, but rather "the product of a man-made disaster" (2006: 58).

Consequently, Staub et al. suggest that "[c]ollective trauma seems logically to require healing at the community level" (2005: 301). In a similar vein, the IDEA handbook *Reconciliation After Violent Conflict* edited by Bloomfield et al. (2003) stresses that individual traumatic experiences are often intimately tied in to those of the local community. Hence, personal healing is closely linked with the social context and "what needs to be 'healed' is therefore the multitude of individual, political, social and cultural responses to

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[19] Government of Canada. Canadian Rural Partnership
http://www.rural.gc.ca/dialogue/tool/toolcontent_e.phtml#1.

a traumatic situation and its aftermath" (Bloomfield et al. 2003: 78). Community healing is an activity that seeks to improve the psychological health of individuals and communities following extensive conflict. Facilitated dialogue and public platforms for the exchange of ideas are used to counter inherited animosity, negative perceptions and estrangement between divided communities. Safe spaces are provided for community members to discuss issues of identity, stereotyping and memory. In most cases where community dialogue projects are established, the relations between the divided communities are based on antagonism, distrust and disrespect. It is an enormous challenge to address these longstanding negative perceptions and nothing can change over night. The major goal should therefore be to achieve a minimum basis of trust, which allows for a maximum degree of cooperation.

There are three dimensions of community healing which are all interdependent: personal healing, intra-community healing and finally inter-community healing. Firstly, there is the dimension of personal healing which is a very fragile, gradual process that each person must eventually go through at their own pace. Bloomfield et al. however highlight the importance of intra-community healing where the group becomes a source of support for its members:

> As such healing is not only about assisting individuals to address their psychological health needs in an isolated way, but is dependent upon and integrally linked to repairing and rebuilding communities and the social context. This implies restoring a normalized everyday life that can recreate and confirm people's sense of belonging (2003: 77).

This is trauma healing at the collective level through repairing bonds and decreasing barriers within the group. It is advisable to have a few separate meetings where the respective group members can address their fears and expectations before the conflicting groups actually begin to interact with each other. Bland cautions that "maintaining or building consensus *within* the parties is just as difficult, and remains just as critical, as reaching agreement *between* them" (2002: 326). Finally, the third component of community healing is the contact with other communities which is aimed at reconciliation and peace building.

2.8.1 From acknowledgement of suffering to rebuilding relationships

Tuller (2005) highlights the importance of regaining psychological control over traumatic events. She writes that "[o]ften what is needed is a mechanism by which individuals [...] can safely create narratives in which they exert some degree of shared control over the events that surround them" (2005: 111). A sense of closure can be gained from reconceptualising the past. Rosenthal (2003) has worked extensively with Holocaust survivors and found that "as liberating as it is to revive feelings and to cry, what is decisive is to distance oneself from the past through the narration and as the narration continues, to narrate oneself out of the linearity of the experiences" (2003: 927). The exchange of memories and attentively listening to other people's stories can lead to trust-building and the realization of common values. Moreover, the sharing of life stories can help to overcome individual trauma.

Another priority of community healing is to analyze the conflict, its causes and effects jointly. The ideological roots of the conflict are explored and discussed in order to deconstruct them. This improved mutual understanding will in turn make it easier to let go of enemy images. A crucial component of the healing process is the recognition of individual victims and communities that experienced human rights violations in the conflict. Community healing is also about acknowledging what the others have endured. This is at times a very challenging exercise that involves looking into one's own possible complicity: "Reconciliation requires a more complex and critical view, acknowledging the role that one's own group has played throughout the conflict" (Bland 2002: 327). The aim is thus to recognize difference without essentialising it, but rather to use it as a base to discover commonalities. While an awareness of the effects of difference is created, this knowledge is used positively and productively. This approach once again resonates with Erasmus' call for a "new kind of politics premised not on 'who we are' but on 'what we do' with 'who we are'" (2001: 25).

Learning to acknowledge and accept difference is the key to community healing. It provides an opportunity to confront the complex dynamics that create and sustain prejudice. Preconceived ideas and stereotypes are challenged by the sharing of narratives. It is crucial for the process to leave old conversational habits behind and accept that everyone's thoughts and actions are not the same. To try and understand someone else's

point of view is the first step towards promoting a sense of reconciliation within a divided society. Jan Hofmeyer writes in an editorial to the IJR's race barometer that:

> we will never overcome the divisive aspects of racial identification unless we confront the misperceptions and prejudices that sustain them. This might be partially addressed through education, but ultimately nothing can exceed the value of heartfelt conversations between ordinary citizens (2007: 2).

Dialogue, debate and listening to other people can stimulate different ways of thinking and facilitated dialogue can, in the long run, strengthen group identity and cohesion. Cross-cultural and cross-boundary encounters between ordinary people are crucial components of real and meaningful reconciliation in South Africa. In the same vein as Hofmeyer Undine Kayser identifies "the engagement of self-motivated, ordinary citizens with their personal memories of apartheid and, importantly, with each other in a face-to-face memory process" as a critical part of South Africa's transition (2005: 23). What is more, re-exploring the past and the history of the communities can also restore a sense of worth and self-esteem and thus facilitate social re-integration.

2.8.2 Participation and empowerment

Servaes (1999) distinguishes three theories of development that have dominated and continue to dominate development discourse. The oldest is the modernisation theory which promoted the adoption of new technology and ideas among target populations to 'bridge the gap' between developing countries and the first world. However, since economic growth does not necessarily entail the eradication of inequality and underdevelopment for all sectors of society the dependency paradigm which blames underdevelopment in third world countries on the capitalist system in the first world gained momentum from the late 1960s especially in the Latin American context. A new concept of development emerged which stresses the importance of dialogue with communities about their actual needs rather than one-way communication by educators. Servaes refers to this paradigm as multiplicity and 'another development'. Similarly, Head (2007) observes a general international trend towards more participatory governance with more emphasis on citizen engagement, public consultation and dialogue. He explains this "rediscovery and revitalisation of civil society" with a "growing awareness of the complexity and interconnectedness of many problems" (2007: 443).

Community dialogue falls into this paradigm. It holds the promise to empower more voices and to minimise fragmentation within the communities. In "A Tale of Interesting Conversations: Exploring Reconciliation in Northern Ireland" Bland regards the identification of common goals as a central premise underlying community dialogue: "Otherwise diverse and often contentious political parties can be united by the realization that they cannot get what they want without one another's consent" (2002: 325). This realisation of common goals can in turn lead to a shared agenda and a plan of action for moving towards joint problem solving (Du Toit 2003). Thus, while the focus in Community Healing is on psychosocial health and the restoration of the social fabric, which has been damaged by the conflict, it ultimately seeks community development (Anckermann et al. 2005, Bloomfield et al. 2003). Through addressing the past and promoting human rights such initiatives aim to build up or strengthen a participatory democratic culture. Moreover, they provide a forum for networking and the exchange of practical information (access to resources, etc).

Du Toit insists that because of its potential to strengthen community cohesion "dialogue enhances development, especially in a deeply divided society" (2003: 140). He argues that while it certainly needs to go hand in hand with material reconstruction, community healing remains an important tool for social reconciliation. Anckermann et al. assess a large scale community intervention in Guatemala and come to the conclusion that "long term perspective and psychosocial attention to a traumatized population, is a prerequisite when dealing with economic development in a post conflict society." (2005: 150). They see the creation of sustainable development mechanisms as the crucial long term objective of community interventions and point out that "psychosocial healing and community empowerment are necessary as parts of strengthening community capacities for participation in political and economic development" (2005: 150).

2.8.3 Criticism

The question arises if in a society as unequal as South Africa we should not rather focus exclusively on material development. Some critics argue that addressing the 'soft' components of transformation actually prevents real change and presents no challenge to the status quo. Naidu writes that symbolic reparation initiatives, such as interpersonal reconciliation efforts and memorialisation projects, are often accused of being

"mechanism[s] that divert [...] attention from what is perceived as more significant forms of reparation such as financial reparations or land restitution" (2006: 1). They are seen as a mere symbolic apology that stands as a substitute or excuse for actual and substantive transformation. Diane Enns claims that dialogue initiatives to address the hostility and estrangement between conflicting parties have 'burgeoned' over the last years. Enns is critical of this approach and feels a strong "ambivalence to the 'dialogue industry'" (2007: 34). She discusses the dilemma of whether to address the political or psychological problems in post conflict societies. She asks: "do we approach conflict through an ethical response to another's pain through empathy and pathos, or do we focus on political and institutional changes that may not always privilege such pain?" (Enns 2007: 26). The notion of self-transformation is salient in this debate. Is individual transformation a prerequisite for structural transformation or the other way round? Is one possible without the other?

I agree that this is a very important question and that there is an inherent danger in addressing the 'soft' components only and thereby deflecting the attention from bigger structural problems. However, I am of the same mind as Naidu who argues that "no one form of reparation can substitute for another" (2006: 2). Villa-Vicencio writes that "those who ideologically and evangelically drive a single agenda, whether this be prosecutorial justice or simple forms of reconciliation, are not helping the nation overcome the challenges it faces" (2007: 3). Thus, to me it is not an 'either or' question. Du Toit (2003) stresses that social reconciliation always needs to go hand in hand with material development and that dialogue alone cannot solve the current social challenges in South Africa. Economic development, community empowerment and reconciliation stimulate and complement each other. Dialogue does not necessarily have to become a substitute for action. Effective and preventive conflict transformation practice needs to build on both psychological and political approaches. So while it is obvious that dialogue is not enough, it does not mean that it is not necessary.

Community Healing is extremely difficult to assess in terms of outcome because it is such an abstract, broad and multi-faceted process. How do you measure reconciliation and forgiveness and what are the criteria for assessing the effectiveness of participatory processes like Community Healing? In the literature on conflict resolution and peace studies there is little agreement as to what evaluation methods are appropriate, and even

less agreement as to what should constitute a standard set of indicators. Schmelzle (2005) discusses the limitations of impact assessment and states that "there is a continued need to assess positive and negative, intended and unintended consequences of development and humanitarian projects" (2005: 2). Schmelzle highlights one of the dilemmas of impact assessment. In order to do justice to the intervention the assessment and evaluation needs to be highly contextualized. This however makes it even harder to compare interventions. There are a number of often unpredictable internal and external factors that can enable or constrain reconciliation work. Körppen (2006) argues that "conflict dynamics and societal processes do not follow linear principles and [...] a single intervention in a conflict system cannot be regarded as an external neutral mechanism. An intervention becomes itself part of a conflict system and is influenced by many unpredictable factors" (2006: 2f). Inevitably, power structures are at work in a specific context and those are likely to be reproduced in the evaluation. Consequently, the evaluation depends to a great extent on the perspective one adopts. As Körppen argues: "knowledge about the conflict and an assessment of the situation depend on the point of view of different parties and cannot be considered as technological processes in which all parameters can be fixed and measured" (2006: 3). It is here that the notion of agency becomes salient. Is the intervention designed with regard to practice? Does it meet the needs of the community? A deep conflict analysis should always be based on the local perceptions of the conflict and should involve all stakeholders. As Bland puts it, we must set ourselves the goal of "*asking better questions*, both of ourselves and of each other" (2002: 326). Are we doing the right thing and are we doing it the right way? This question cannot be answered without hearing the voices of those who are affected the most by the intervention.

Some people argue quite strongly that community-level reconciliation projects with a focus on dialogue and memorialisation can indeed alter social reality (Bloomfield et al. 2003, Du Toit 2003). Naidu suggests that "in addressing some of these issues, memorialisation contributes more broadly to human development and the regeneration of human capital" and thus to reconciliation on a broader scale. (Naidu 2006: 2). However to say it with Bloomfield et al., we have to accept "the inherent limitations of attempts to deal with the legacies of extreme violence and the long-term nature of such a project" (2003: 77).

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design

This thesis examines the IJR's Community Healing Programme from two different angles in order to identify the practical challenges faced in the process of this intervention. Chapter two of this thesis already presented the theory that informs community dialogue interventions. The second part of this dissertation will illustrate this provisional theoretical framework for Community Healing with specific examples from the IJR Community Healing project in BonteLanga. There are two sets of data in this dissertation. In chapter four critical discourse analysis is used to explore the ideological positioning of the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation in two of its publications on Community Healing. After a close inspection of this 'official' stance on Community Healing, chapter five presents the voices of the BonteLanga members through an analysis of six open-ended, semi-structured in-depth interviews with participants. Furthermore, I have taken part in a number of dialogue sessions and meetings of the BonteLanga group between May 2007 and January 2008. Thus, an additional element of data which informs this thesis is participant observation.

This two-phase data qualitative research design was chosen to identify and describe the challenges that may arise out of a hierarchy of discourses. By comparing the official voice of the IJR with the voices of the people partaking in this programme, I try to come closer to an evaluation of the impact of this intervention. Given that this study deals with subjective human experiences, I chose an inductive qualitative research approach. Qualitative research focuses on in-depth understanding of human action and seeks to find insight into the human condition based on a few detailed examples. It does not produce statistical data but rather describes and examines socio-cultural phenomena. Qualitative research often combines different research methods to achieve this understanding of multiple perspectives. It is the combination of these methods which produces the rich descriptions present in good qualitative research findings. This exploratory approach allowed me to analyse documents as well as interpret the data that emerged in the interviews.

3.2 Critical Discourse analysis

According to Norman Fairclough (1989) language is a form of social practice and thus determined by social structures. Not only are social practices discursively shaped, but discourse can also have a decisive effect on social practices. Fairclough thus adopts the approach that "linguistic phenomena *are* social phenomena of a special sort" (1989: 23). Generally speaking discourse analysis is interested in the actual processes of decoding and interpretation. It is a tool to detect and understand the mechanisms and discourses through which power relations are upheld and how these shape our views and self-perceptions. Fairclough talks about "raising people's self-consciousness" (1989: 41) and making them more critical towards their own use of discourse as well as towards discursive practices they are subjected to. In order to overcome divisions, suspicions and stereotyped views of those who are 'different' it is important to be aware of where dominant discourses come from, what ideologies inform them and how they fit into broader dynamics of society. Through paying more attention to mindsets and frames of reference we can monitor and observe our own actions and thoughts as well as those of others. The deconstruction of what Fairclough calls "key discourse types which embody ideologies which legitimize [...] existing societal relations" (1989: 36) thus holds the potential for social change.

However, as with any other kind of qualitative research, discourse analysis does not follow a stringent set of methodological rules. Parker (1999) compares discourse analysis to riding a bike and Fairclough likewise insists that he can only provide guidelines, not a blueprint. He argues that "there is no set procedure for doing discourse analysis" (1989: 225) and that the adopted approach depends very much on the specific nature of the project. I will apply critical discourse analysis to two publications by the IJR which deal with the implementation of reconciliation initiatives. Due to the limited scope of this dissertation I cannot look at all aspects of these texts in detail. The idea is to roughly situate these publications in relation to other discourses and to identify the IJR's official conceptualisation of Community Healing before turning to the participants' understanding of the concept. Regarding the BonteLanga intervention *Community Healing: a Resource Guide* (2006) and *Learning to live together: Practices of social reconciliation* (2003) are the most relevant texts published by the IJR. *Community Healing: A resource guide* compiled by Kate Morrison describes the work of the Community Healing Project. It gives a very

brief overview of the history of the initiative and focuses on giving practical advice on how to overcome divisions, suspicions and stereotyped views of those who are 'different'. The more comprehensive *Learning to live together* edited by Fanie Du Toit describes a number of 'best practices' in pursuit of social and political reconciliation.

3.3 The interviews

My interview design was based on a close reading of Tom Wengraf's *Qualitative Research Interviewing* (2001) in which he focuses on the practice and analysis of in-depth qualitative research interviewing. Wengraf offers helpful practical advice from the preparation for the interview to the interview's conduct and the subsequent analysis of its content and process. Well aware of the intricacies and complexities of qualitative research interviewing, I conducted all the interviews with the BonteLanga members myself. They were semi-structured, in-depth interviews that lasted for approximately an hour. An interview schedule was designed to elicit information from the interviewees regarding the benefits and practical challenges in the BonteLanga Community Healing project. However, the flow of conversation and depth of topics covered varied in each session.

The reluctance and difficulty in addressing 'race' and racism was taken into account when formulating the interview questions. Rather late in the research process I was specifically asked by the IJR facilitator to be extremely cautious as to not upset the fragile progress that the group has made by asking the participants outright about their sentiments about the 'other' group. This meant I had to revise my initial plan and to modify my interviewing approach. The interview questions were shaped by this limitation in so far as they now do not explicitly ask about the attitudes and perceptions of the 'other' but rather try to get the interviewees talking about their general experiences and perceptions. The central research question behind the interview question thus became: what do the respondents report about their experiences in the BonteLanga project and how they talk about it? Consequently, I asked very open general questions about the participants' involvement in the project. I encouraged them to talk about their personal understanding of community healing. Furthermore, I asked them to share with me what they regard as benefits gained from the project and where they see the challenges. The final question in each interview was always whether community healing had made a difference in their life.

The interviews were then coded in order to extract common themes and patterns from the responses. Coding is the first step in analysis which links the data to theory (Coffey & Atkinson 1996). While I initially used the qualitative data analysis software Nvivo for this process I quickly returned to the manual act as I found I could work more constructively with pen and paper. The first step was to compare recurring concepts and themes from the different interviews. A number of themes and topics stood out as particularly salient for the interviewees. These were singled out in the coding process. I started off by dividing the responses in each interview according to perceived benefits and challenges of community healing. I then identified subcategories for these two rather broad and comprehensive codes. Due to the limited scope of this thesis I will have to limit my analysis to the four 'benefit-codes' and the four 'challenges-codes' that stood out the most. The benefit-codes under discussion in chapter five are: broadening of horizon, sharing memories and stories, personal healing and collaborative learning. The four challenges under discussion are lack of organisation and implementation, the generation gap in the group, lack of outreach and a focus on the past. While this was an extremely useful step it soon became obvious that not all responses were so clear cut as to be termed 'challenge' or 'benefit'. A third very strong category emerged from the data: the ambivalence of participants' expectations and hopes. This will be dealt with separately.

3.3.1 Sampling

Due to time as well as organisational constraints I had to limit myself to interviewing three participants from Bonteheuwel and three participants from Langa. The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation provided me with a slightly outdated list of participants and some of their phone numbers. Gaining access was an exercise in patience. It was extremely difficult to get hold of people and arrange for interviews since not everyone has access to a cell phone or landline and a lot of the numbers were actually not in use or had been past on to other people. Thus I made a number of phone calls to no avail. This difficulty of contacting participants directly further limited my choice of interviewees. As a result there is a gender and age imbalance in the choice of the interviewees. Out of the six respondents only one is female and not one is older than 50. This is certainly not an ideal sample but all that was possible under the circumstances. However, since healing is a very personal process and a unique experience for each and every one of the participants, this sample still guaranteed a wide range of information.

The interviewees

Naazima is a bright 25 year old woman from Bonteheuwel who is desperately trying to find a job. Before she got involved with community healing she was active in a number of youth programmes. She lives in a shack with her parents and dreams of having her own place.

Rashied is a 38 year old divorced father of two who works in the printing business. He was an activist in the Bonteheuwel Military Wing (BMW) a militant teenage self-defence force formed in the mid-1980s.

David was also a member of BMW, spending his teenage years battling against apartheid. He is 41, works as a truck driver and is actively involved in a number of organisations including the ANC. He is married and has five children.

Luvuyo is a 28 year old awareness campaigner from Langa who is working for an HIV Prevention Programme for youth. He lives on his own in a one room shack. He is for the time being no longer involved in the BonteLanga group.

Sipho is an extremely well-read man 37 year old man from Langa. He spent eight years in the USA and currently studies sociology through correspondence. He shares a house with his brother in Langa.

Thando is a 28 year old actor from Langa who lives on his own in a shack. He used to play cricket and soccer in Bonteheuwel when he was younger.

3.3.2 Framing

Having attended a number of dialogue sessions I had made some tentative contact with the participants so that they had an idea of who I was when I phoned them. I let the interviewee suggest a time and setting that was suitable for them. Mostly the choice fell on a community centre or the local library. However, one respondent decided that he would be most comfortable and least distracted in my car. I always made sure there was enough time for some initial small-talk before we started the interview. Things became

more formal between me and the interviewees once the dictaphone was on the table between us. While the relaxed atmosphere remained the conversation immediately became more serious. I was very aware of how the power shifted at that stage. While I had been a guest or friend before, I now turned into the researcher. The interviewees for the most part seemed pleased and even a little honoured to be interviewed. Thus, building rapport with the respondents was very easy. It was certainly helpful that they knew me beforehand and that we had already made a good connection before we started the interview. This mutual sympathy and respect helped considerably to establish trust between us. I was genuinely interested in what they had to say and I think that they responded to that. It was very important to ask questions that were not leading so that the respondents' voices would not be manipulated (Wengraf 2001).

I informed the interviewees of the purposes of my research and what will be done with the data obtained. However, in any interview situation there remains the danger of 'wrong framing' (Wengraf 2001). Thus, I had to be careful as to exactly what information I gave away and throughout the interview process I needed to be aware that asking questions in a certain way can influence the respondent's answer. This should be avoided if 'unslanted' information is wanted from the interviewee. I decided to take an active listening approach in order to empower the informant to control how he wanted to answer. For the most part I am confident that I have managed the interviews quite well and where I felt I might have influenced the response too much I have refrained from using that material. I basically wanted to give a platform to the participants to share their own views and ideas about Community Healing. This proved to be a fruitful approach and it was extremely interesting that the interviewees all more or less chose to address the same areas without my asking specific questions about them.

3.3.3 Ethical considerations and the issue of power

All participation in interviews was on a voluntary basis, and informed consent was achieved. While the confidentiality of participants was of primary importance to me it was next to impossible to grant absolute anonymity due to the small sample size. I have made it clear that while the respondents will remain anonymous in all dissemination of research findings and I will keep their identities confidential it might nevertheless be possible for them to be identified by other people involved in the project. However, I am

convinced that this will not drastically affect the outcome of the research. I have reassured participants that to answer freely and honestly will not lead to judgment and that the findings of the research might even help to improve the initiative which means they might in the long run benefit from these possible improvements, too.

Last but not least, it is important to be aware of the asymmetries of communicative power in any interview situation. Wengraf (2001) discusses the inequality in interviewing situations where power is most often on the side of the interviewer. The interviewer has an ethical responsibility not to exploit this situation and to give the interviewee as much information as possible. Thus, it was important for me to give the interviewee a chance to say anything they might want to add to what has been said and assure them that I will be available for any questions that might arise on their part and invite them to contact me if they wish. I tried to provide feedback and reinforcement during the interview and always made sure that the interview 'ended well' by giving the interviewee a chance to say anything they might want to add to what has been said. I tried my best to make it clear how much I appreciate their time and energy as well as the insights they have offered me.

Inherent in writing this dissertation is the risk of betraying the trust that these people have offered me. I hold an enormous power in that I represent the respondents in this study and I can create them so to speak. They have shared their experiences and thoughts with me and I have to be extremely careful in what I do with that information. I have tried to portray them as impartially as possible and have done everything not to quote them selectively to suit my argument.

3.4 Limitations

I am fully aware that this is a very limited study and that the insights gained from the interviews are in no way representative. The interviews were conducted in English which is certainly not the ideal, given that the respondents are far more comfortable communicating in their respective mother tongues. However, I have decided against working with a translator because I felt that the trust and rapport established over the course of the last ten months was quite valuable in the interview situation and that the presence of another outsider would have been even more disadvantageous. Thus I chose the lesser of two evils.

The findings and conclusions of this thesis are unique to the specific context and to me as a specific researcher. Of course, this study can only be the beginning of an evaluation of the impact of the initiative. It is very difficult to measure the effectiveness of Community Healing because many of the effects on the communities and its members may only appear in the years to come. More research would have to be conducted to get a better grasp of how to measure the impact and the limitations of such an initiative. But until those specificities are more clearly identified, this thesis cannot achieve more than to identify and discuss both the benefits of this intervention as well as the obstacles that may thwart the social reconciliation progress of the Community Healing Project.

3.5 My role as a researcher

Since researchers are a major source of bias, self-reflexivity is essential component of the research process (Erasmus 2000, Wengraf 2001). As a researcher I need to constantly scrutinize my own behaviour to eliminate self-introduced bias and error. This includes the monitoring of my effects on the respondent and the research setting and the respondent's and research setting's effects on me as a researcher. Indeed, my own life experiences and statuses (race, gender, age, nationality, martial status) all played significant roles in how the interviewees interacted with me.

3.5.1 Being white

Whiteness is something that is hardly ever problematised by white people and is generally accepted as the norm in Western societies. Yet, however much whites would like to pretend that race does not affect them on a personal basis, it is impossible to escape who they are (Coetzee 1987, Steyn 2001). Toni Morrison (1992) called for a change in perspective in studying 'race' and racism. She wanted people to understand and acknowledge that white identity is also a social construct and thus needs to be examined and analyzed. From there the field of Critical Whiteness Studies has developed. It is in this tradition that I want to take a few paragraphs to problematise my role as a young, white female in this special research context.

As a white person in South Africa you cannot escape your whiteness and thus you need to explore what being white means to you and what it means in a broader perspective.

Richard Ballard's work highlights the connection between space and identity and how people tend to build fences rather than bridges around cultural difference. Ballard claims that our environment can affirm or challenge our sense of self. He argues that "our sense of space and sense of self are mutually constitutive", we shape our environment, but at the same time we are shaped by it (2004: 50). Ballard is particularly interested in the mechanisms adopted by white South Africans to find comfort zones (e.g. gated communities) which are places that do not challenge their self-conceptions. Ballard calls this phenomenon *semigration*.

According to Ballard people generally seem to prefer "places that do not challenge [their] self-conception" (2004: 50). This results in ongoing informal spatial segregation. I have to admit that my social life and that of my friends is actually far more influenced by such self-affirming spaces than we would like to admit. I like to think of myself as open-minded and incredibly tolerant and different from those 'other whiteys' who refuse to wrestle with issues of identity and culture. However, despite my self-professed openness to new experiences, most of the time I 'stick with my own kind' and choose the 'cozy' alternative of going to places where I could easily forget the fact that I am in Africa and only occasionally do I "test out and play with the spaces in-between" (Dolby 2001). Thus, there was a certain novelty and a sense of adventure around venturing out to Langa and Bonteheuwel for the interviews.

3.5.2 Being foreign

As a German living in Cape Town I have to critically ask myself just why it is that I love South Africa so much. Normally my answers would be: the sheer beauty of the land, the hospitality of its citizens, the mixing of cultures and the relaxed 'now-now' attitude to life. However, sometimes I wonder how much of my love for this country is also influenced by the higher standard of living I enjoy here and the highly visible privileges of being white and educated that come with it. I abhor how polarized this society is in terms of wealth and education, but I still profit from it. Does this mean I have double standards? As Albert Memmi argues in *The Colonizer and the Colonized* even a person who condemns colonialism always feels a sense of guilt and shame since "he participates in and benefits from those privileges which he half-heartedly denounces" (1991: 20). Thus,

whether I like it or not, I am in fact complicit in the production of social formations that I seemingly oppose.

Being a foreigner I could easily fall into the trap of distancing myself from South African whites and stress my German nationality, thereby denying any implication in the power and race relations in South Africa. If I wanted to, I could play the part of the 'good white' that had nothing to do with Apartheid and condemns the way that white South Africans are dealing with its legacy. Melissa Steyn points out that "part of the need to deny whiteness is to avert being regarded as 'white' in the same way as those 'other' whites" (2001: 107). However, I do not want to do that, and what is more, I cannot do that, because my whiteness is such a big part of my lived experience in this country and it situates me in a very complex web of power relations. I hope that a greater peace of mind regarding my double moral standards can be found through actively acknowledging complicity and living with entanglements and finding ways of changing this.

But here as in any other context there is a gap between theory and practice. Going to Bonteheuwel and Langa on my own in order to conduct the interviews was an exciting, enriching but also very frustrating experience. It was as one of the respondents in my interviews says "lekker to hang out with them", interesting to see how they live and what they do in their free time. On the other hand, I also experienced very conflicting feelings as to my own identity.

3.5.3 Being female

Harro (2000) highlights the fact that privileged groups are often not aware of their privileges and unquestioningly accept the stereotypes they are taught by their parents as the norm. Thus we take up a place in a system of oppression without necessarily being aware of it. However, in a research situation like the one I found myself in it is next to impossible not to be aware of oppression, privilege and power relations. As a white, young, blonde foreigner you cannot expect to spend time in a township and go unnoticed. You are bound to attract attention; and it is a kind of attention that is solely based on the colour of your skin and hair and has nothing to do with your character or personal achievements. Thus, the interest is bound to make you a little uneasy. It reminds you just how white you are.

I am by nature a friendly, sociable and outgoing person. Thus, when I went to Langa and Bonteheuwel I was open, interested and friendly towards everyone I met. Looking back now I might have overcompensated my insecurities with friendliness. As a result, there were many expectations of a romantic as well as of a financial nature that I clearly could not fulfil. My phone hardly stopped ringing for a couple of weeks after conducting the interviews and it got to a point where I just wanted to cry because I did not know how to deal with the emotional demands that were made of me. My refusal to answer the phone resulted in accusations. Minor threats and demanding and rude messages where left on my phone in the middle of the night. If a white young man had pursued me in a similarly coarse, crude and aggressive manner, my feminist self would have very strongly reacted to this sexism. Why then was I so overcome with guilt, bright white guilt, and felt that it was entirely my fault? Quite obviously I was not at ease enough in these unfamiliar surroundings to really be myself. The sheer awareness of my whiteness undoubtedly overrode my identity as a strong emancipated female and left me slightly disempowered in that respect. This experience has definitely fostered a critical attitude by encouraging me to question and interrogate my own investments in particular ways of understanding diversity and my relation to it. I have become more aware of my own values and assumptions about issues of diversity.

It is important to note that the people who have thus approached me were not directly involved with Community Healing and BonteLanga. The interviews themselves went very well and I felt humbled by the insights that some of the interviewees shared with me.

CHAPTER FOUR: THE IJR'S COMMUNITY HEALING DISCOURSE

4.1 Introduction

Ian Parker writes that the term discourse is "used to refer to patterns of meaning which organize the various systems human beings inhabit and which are necessary for us to make sense to each other" (1999: 3). The chosen discourse thus delivers the vocabulary, expressions and the style to communicate about a certain topic. In this chapter I want to take a brief look at the discourse employed by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation on its website and in two publications dealing explicitly with the Community Healing Programme: *Community Healing: A resource guide* compiled and edited in 2006 by Karen Morrison and *Learning to live together: Practices of social reconciliation* edited by Fanie Du Toit in 2003. Due to the limited scope of this essay I cannot look at all aspects of these texts in detail. I am particularly interested in how the IJR's rhetoric is related to other discourses in society. While it is the institute's self proclaimed aim to challenge power relations and the ideologies that sustain them, I want to see how far they themselves are influenced by different dominant discourses and ideologies. In other words what discourses are implicitly assumed and/or contested in the publications?

4.2 TRC discourse

There is always a broader historical, discursive and social context in which a debate about a certain topic takes place. The IJR says on its website that its work is "self-consciously located in post-TRC (Truth and Reconciliation Commission) South Africa."[20] Therefore it is necessary to say a few brief words about the TRC and the discourse generated by its work. These days it is nearly impossible to talk about the possibilities and challenges of social and political reconciliation in South Africa without drawing on the vocabulary and concepts provided by the TRC discourse. Claire Moon goes so far as to argue that this holds true for the whole world: "Since the TRC's highly publicized operation, reconciliation is now a popular and widespread discourse governing the various contexts

[20] www.ijr.org.za/about/ IJR homepage "About the IJR".

in which regime change or transition from conflict occurs" (Moon 2006: 258). It was the intention of the TRC to give a voice to the voiceless, to empower and enable people who were silenced during apartheid in order to lay open the gross human rights violations that were committed during this era. One objective was that by doing so no South African could claim not to have known about the recent past of his country. Many scholars further argue that it was an explicit undertaking of the TRC to produce a new, shared 'master narrative' of the history of South Africa on which the making of a collective memory and national identity could be based (Grunebaum-Ralph 2001, Nuttall & Coetzee 2000, Moon 2006). Through a certain type of reconciliation-discourse constructed at the TRC hearings, a reconciliation-oriented reality took shape in post-TRC South Africa. There is a general 'template-script' of what reconciliation should consist of, namely, confession, testimony and forgiveness (Moon 2006). Colvin describes this reconciliation discourse rather vividly:

> "The TRC inaugurated this postapartheid discourse of optimism and provided it with a host of signs, symbols, and icons of redemptive possibility: pictures of Archbishop Tutu crying in cathartic release. Mothers hugging the repentant killers of their sons. Images like these and hopeful words like rebuilding, reconstruction, reconciling, healing, forgiving, developing, transforming, redistributing, and recovering all compete for the attention of those who hope the present—and the future—will redeem the past." (2004: 4)

The TRC clearly favoured a restorative justice transition process over a retributive justice one. According to Claire Moon, this is due to the political goal of national unity that lay behind this initiative. She argues that the TRC, faced by the dilemma of retribution vs. restoration, constructed "reconciliation as a response to the conflict between the moral demands of justice and the political demands of peace" (2006: 273). This is reflected in the structures and coding-frameworks used in the TRC discourse. The TRC discourse focuses on the concept of reconciliation through disclosure of truth. In her analysis of the narrative framing of reconciliation by the TRC in South Africa, Moon observes that there is no script for revenge provided by the TRC discourse. The process simply did not provide a space or a language to say "I'm not reconciled, I will never forgive you." Furthermore, Grunebaum-Ralph (2001) sets out to show that there are thousands of stories that do not fit the public historical narrative of transcendence, triumph, redemption and reconciliation and she reminds us not to forget or gloss over those narratives that are not part of the official 'truth'.

4.3 Post-TRC discourse

> Debating the role of history and memory after the TRC has produced various points of view. Not least of these is a struggle between the concept of 'moving on/ getting on with life/ forgetting' and the idea of 'remembering/ deliberate dialogue/ restitution for past injustice (Du Toit 2003: 51).

Both *Learning to live together* and *Community Healing: A resource guide* position themselves clearly in this debate about history and memorialisation generated by the TRC. Recurring concepts and themes in both publications are the 'sharing' of memories, stories, knowledge and experience. In the spirit of the TRC there is the conviction that one has to deal with the past in order to move on. This draws on a therapeutic healing discourse. The importance of remembering and debating the past are stressed in both publications. In fact, the very foundation on which community healing rests is "providing communities with opportunities to heal from the past and to achieve inter-community reconciliation"(Morrison 2006: 64). The main object of community initiatives is identified as providing safe spaces for communities to tell their stories and explore ways in which to memorialise their past. Language, especially in the form of dialogue, is viewed as an instrument of confronting a traumatic past, of negotiating conflict and of initiating processes of healing for individuals and communities. Dialogue is seen as "a tool to break down barriers and build trust" (Morrison 2006: 9) and to confront and come to terms with collective pain. Learning about the history of 'the other' and sharing memories with them is supposed to lead to a more inclusive, 'shared understanding of the past'. Both publications emphasise that this kind of storytelling can have a 'healing' effect. They provide examples and approaches for sharing stories in various settings and give practical advice on how to encourage others to tell stories (involving the audience and creating a safe environment for others to tell their stories), and how to process the story through song, art, games, improvisational story plays, community projects, and discussion.

The relevant subject positions or key agents in the TRC discourse are individual victim and individual perpetrator and the objects are individual instances of gross violations of human rights during apartheid with the focus on politically motivated violence. The relevant subject positions of the TRC were thus not for those who could speak on behalf of communities or the nation but individuals as victims and perpetrators. The relevant

subject positions and key agents in the community healing discourse of the IJR, however, are communities or individuals in conflict with each other. A conflict that is characterised by racialised tension. Althusser's notion of the ideological interpellation of subjects explains the process by which ideology addresses the individual in such a way that it effectively produces him as a subject proper of that ideology (1971). According to Althusser our idea of who we are is delivered by ideology. Thus, texts hail readers, and position them in ideological relations through various lexical and grammatical devices. Texts operate pragmatically through the use of pronominalisation, modal auxiliaries, and the selection of speech acts such as questions and commands, orders and injunctions. The *interpellative hail* that according to Althusser produces human subjectivity and constitutes social and political identities positions the reader of the two IJR publications as a community activist in a world where a more democratic and inclusive society are attainable through individual action. The world is represented from one position in the political 'field'. The social identities constructed in the discourse are those of people willing and determined to "interrupt [...] cycles of hostility and spheres of indifference" (Du Toit 2003: 161). The same is true for the guidebook which ends on a very personal and encouraging note: "We hope the process will be as exciting and beneficial to you as it was to the communities of Bonteheuwel, Cradock, Laignsburg and Kwa-Langa and we wish you well with your project" (Morrison 2006: 64). As in the TRC discourse, the reconciliation discourse employed by the IJR assumes the readiness to forgive and shake hands.

The IJR community healing project wants to give a platform to those narratives that according to Grunebaum-Ralph (2001) fall out of the official frame. The aim is to empower more voices and provide different understandings of the past and how it affects the present. However, *Learning to live together* and *Community Healing: A resource guide* stress the importance of a collective memory in building wider inter-community trust, as well as building consensus on ways to promote development more effectively. Thus, as in the TRC discourse there is also a need for coherence and for a somewhat simplified general understanding as a basis for a shared agenda in the community healing discourse. These two aims could contradict each other. The following quote illustrates how the IJR conceptualises this possible conflict of interest. When they talk of constructing common ground they do not mean to gloss over tensions or to simplify them but rather to confront difference and face prejudice.

> Developing diversity as an asset presupposes creating a shared reality. In this shared reality – often the result of facilitated dialogue- the emphasis falls on understanding the nature of the difficulty in the relationship, rather than insisting on reaching a point of agreement or perfect understanding. (Du Toit 2003: 184)

Thus in the IJR community healing discourse a "shared reality" means a reality in which difference is acknowledged and accepted. They reject a colour-blind approach to diversity since previous discrimination has created a situation in which a general condition of equality has yet to be achieved. Du Toit argues that "claims that race is no longer important –or that non-racialism means to ignore the issue of race- foster a culture of denial and unaccountability" (2003: 136).

4.4 Ownership, agency and participation

The IJR says about its own position that it is "located at the interface between academia and the broader structures of civil society" and that the Institute "draws on the insights and research resources of scholars, intellectuals and people of creative perception - while promoting debate and programmes of action in the society as a whole."[21] This statement defines the dilemma the IJR could be facing: can the IJR extricate itself from the contradiction between its wish to identify with its object of inquiry and its wish to dominate that object by telling a truth that the object does not know? Many theorists take themselves to be contributors to the world about which they write, either by shaping public consciousness or by training future agents.

Communal self-evaluation and sustainability are frequently stressed as indispensable in both IJR publications and particular emphasis is given to questions of agency. To name a few examples: "community healing committees are a way for community members to evaluate and take responsibility for their own programmes" (Morrison 2006: 15), "getting the community to own the project should ensure high levels of commitment to the process" (Morrison 2006: 22), "ideally, you will no longer run the project because the community healing committee will do that collectively" (Morrison 2006: 25). This ties in with the sustainable development discourse that has gained momentum over the last years (Servaes 1995).

[21] www.ijr.org.za/about/ IJR homepage "About the IJR".

Community Healing: A resource guide "offers a coherent strategy and practical assistance to address a growing need: facing a traumatic past in a way that helps communities move forward" (5). The focus here is on *strategy* and *practical* assistance for working with divided communities and traumatised individuals. Very basic help and instructions are offered such as: "Note: you may find it difficult to find good maps of your local area. If you have access to the Internet, you can try www.easymap.co.za". The language is non-academic, simple and easy to understand. *Learning to live together* on the other hand, despite claiming to be a workbook, is far more self-reflexive and academic in tone. To give only one example: *Learning to live together* devotes a whole chapter to describing social reconciliation from different angles instead of trying to give a set definition. It problematises the ambiguity of the term 'social reconciliation' by saying that "[w]ords do not carry timeless meanings; they exist in ever-evolving contexts, and receive meaning through the way we use them in these changing contexts. This section provides a brief history of 'reconciliation' as it has functioned within the South African public debate during the changes of the past two decades" (2003: 15). There is also a paragraph on "What we do not address" (2003: 12) to explain the choice the editor makes to focus on race rather than other social identities. Moreover, there is also a glossary at the end of *Learning to live together* which is preceded by the following statement: "Every term we define below is ambiguous and contested." (2003: 306). This kind of self-reflexive academic discourse (commenting on the relationship between various orders of practice) belongs to second order discourse. To sum up *Learning to live together* problematises its own role while *Community Healing: A resource guide* sets out to be a simple guidebook providing practical information to those working on the grassroots level. The *Community Healing: A resource guide* handbook is far less self-reflexive than the more bulky and comprehensive. While they are both informed by the same paradigm, they are directed at slightly different audiences.

4.5 Discourse of racial hierarchy

The inside jacket text of *Community Healing: A resource guide* reads:

> The Institute for Justice and Reconciliation is committed to the promotion of sustainable reconciliation, transitional justice and democratic nation-building in South Africa and other African countries. The Institute seeks to advance dialogue and social transformation. Through research, analysis, community intervention, spirited public debate and grassroots encounters, the Institute's work aims to create a climate in which people in divided societies are willing to build a common integrated nation. The Institute is committed to peacemaking at every level of society, by *breaking down old boundaries and reshaping social paradigms.*[22]

The last sentence of this statement shows that the Community Healing initiative by the IJR is not only about dialogue but also about the deconstruction of ideological discourse. Reddy writes that "[c]olonial and Apartheid discourses of state and civil society located themselves firmly within the tradition that saw identity as biology" (2001: 66). The IJR's reconciliation discourse counters this conception and is based on the conviction that ethnic divisions are not 'natural' but rather social and political devices. The community healing project tries to change relations of domination and aims at enabling people who have hitherto been more or less voiceless to make decisions and pursue their own interests. It tries to give agency back to those who have become mere subjects (the 'previously disadvantaged') in the discourse on transformation and reconciliation. The project tries to intervene in the process of naturalization of dominant discourses. Its aim is to help the people of BonteLanga understand and discuss the ideological content of the discourses which sustain relations of domination and to challenge those discourses and the ideological content that has become common sense and finally to replace them with an action oriented more inclusive and self-reliant self-understanding.

Consequently, the 'discourse of racial hierarchy' which was at the heart of apartheid ideology is clearly contested by the IJR. This discourse has for decades informed if not determined the relations and the willingness to engage across 'race' not only between black and white but also between coloured and black South Africans. In *Learning to live together* a whole chapter is dedicated to deconstruct this discourse by exposing it as "inherited from Europe as an ideology of white superiority" (2003: 87) and emphasising

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[22] My emphasis.

"racism's origins in socio-economic and political injustice associated with the West's colonisation of Africa" (2003: 99). This chapter also talks about the nature and danger of stereotypes in great detail.

Interestingly enough, during the second close reading of *Community Healing: A resource guide* I found some rather surprising inconsistencies in the IJR discourse. Slightly stereotypical language is used in the description of the predominantly coloured township Bonteheuwel. In chapter three the two main agents in the community healing project, Bonteheuwel and Langa, are presented in a brief case study. The introduction states that in Langa: "many community members continue to suffer the *traumatic effects of their history* whilst others experience a lack of resources and skills *as a result of past discriminatory policies*" (Morrison 2006: 27)[23]. The current problems in Bonteheuwel are described in much shorter and simpler terms and -more importantly- without any reference to the apartheid past: "Bonteheuwel has a history of drug abuse and gangsterism among youth" (Morrison 2006: 27). While the social problems in the coloured township are stated as endogenous, the conditions in Langa are explained *as a result* of the apartheid past. Furthermore, with "the traumatic effects of their history" and "past discriminatory policies" *two* explanations of the social problems in Langa are given in just one sentence.

A couple of pages later we encounter the same method of presenting the two townships in slightly different terms: "Langa, since its inception, has *reflected the excesses of apartheid*, from disintegrated families *as a result* of the migrant labour system to poor conditions, hostel dwelling and socio-economic deprivation" (2006: 29)[24]. Of Bonteheuwel no more is said than that it "was established as a result of the Group Areas Act" (2006: 30) and that "a number of households depend on either state grants or employed family members for subsistence" (2006: 30). While the socio-economic deprivation of the people in Langa is explicitly presented *as a result* of apartheid policies, little if anything is said about the reasons for poverty and unemployment in Bonteheuwel. Another stereotype is reinscribed by omitting the word 'crime' in connection with Langa but emphasising its dominance in the Bonteheuwel context. The words 'crime' and 'gansterism' trigger an abundance of connotations in South African society. The following passage subtly reinscribes dominant assumptions about coloured people as lazy

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[23] My emphasis.
[24] My emphasis.

alcoholics and gangsters which are part and parcel of the discourse of racial hierarchy: "The area is characterised by environmental degradation *although* attempts have been made by the Environmental Forum to clean up and regenerate public spaces. These spaces have generally become run down and have become areas of concentration for gangsters and other forms of crime" (Morrison 2006: 30).[25] The passage is structured in such a way that the emphasis lies on the fact that attempts have been made but were not taken up by the people. This suggests once again that it is their own fault. Certainly, similar examples of failed initiatives could be found for Langa. The fact that they have not been included is significant. I find it very interesting that comments like these can be written in such publications and for the most part go unnoticed.

Critical discourse analysis is according to Foster an important tool because it: "is directed to showing the way language works to constitute and defend existing relations of domination, and of equal importance, how such power relations may be challenged and transformed" (1999: 342). This inconsistency in the Rhetoric used by the IJR shows that ideology involves language and that power relations are upheld with the help of certain discourses. It is important to understand how these mechanisms and discourses work and how they shape our views and judgements.

4.6 Concluding remarks

Discourses can only be understood in relation to other discourses. The IJR rhetoric is consciously and unconsciously shaped by many different discourses. The TRC discourse with its emphasis on confession and forgiveness is assumed and developed further. The concepts of reconciliation and community spirit are emphasized and promoted by the IJR. They are linked with other 'progressive' discourses such as the discourse on sustainable development. The apartheid discourse of racial hierarchy based on ideologies of superiority on the other hand is a discourse which is implicitly contested and challenged by the IJR.

[25] My emphasis.

Nevertheless, the depiction of coloured townships in *Community Healing: A resource guide* shows some remnants of this ostensibly opposed discourse. This shows how powerful the discourse of racial hierarchy still is and how every society has an ideology that forms the foundation of the 'public opinion' or common sense. This foundation usually remains hidden to most people within the society because this dominant ideology appears as unmarked and is seldom challenged. We all constantly make use of a whole set of frameworks of interpretation and understanding, often in a very practical unconscious way. Fairclough talks about "raising people's self-consciousness" (1989: 41) and making them more critical towards their own use of discourse as well as towards discursive practices they are subjected to. In order to overcome divisions, suspicions and stereotyped views of those who are 'different' we need to be aware of where dominant discourses come from, what ideologies inform them and how they fit into broader dynamics of society.

The IJR manages to extricate itself for the most part from the dilemma of wanting to identify with the object of inquiry and imposing a kind of objective truth about that object. They do so by noting that the academic and analytical reflections they present are of an entirely different order of discourse from that about which they speak. They emphasize that they do not stand in a superior position over their objects by virtue of possessing knowledge about how they ought to function. They include case studies and real life stories told by the protagonists themselves because as Du Toit argues we have a "far better chance of understanding reconciliation by looking at initiatives actually happening in society rather than speculating about what might or might not work" (2003: 7). *Learning to live together* is a combination of both, real life examples and framing theoretical background. Fully aware that I might be biased, I want to add that when holding community dialogue sessions, the IJR as an institution always takes on a very humble position, trying hard not to impose itself. To give one example Fanie Du Toit closed off one of the inter-community forums by saying "we are honoured and proud to be *associated* with an initiative like this"[26] thus stressing the agency of the community members.

[26] My emphasis.

CHAPTER FIVE: THE INTERVIEWS

5.1 Participants' understanding of community healing

> Healing is not a book or is not something that is written in parliament in a white paper. It's the way we live, the way we understand things. Healing is about nature, it's about *us*, not someone from Mars. (Thando)

Elsewhere in this paper the limitations of adequately assessing reconciliation efforts were discussed and the need for a standardised set of indicators was mentioned. The above quote from Thando illustrates why it is so important to listen to what the participants have to say about community healing. As the main protagonists it is their views that need to be heard. There is so much to learn from those who are so often excluded from analysis, evaluation and decision making. This research project has taught me that there is absolutely no other way to assess an intervention like the BonteLanga project than through a qualitative data approach. The challenges and dynamics of the project are unique and extremely complex and need to be addressed in an appropriate manner.

When asked how they would describe the concept of community healing, all respondents came up with beautiful descriptions. "Reaching out to one another" and "trying to understand the other's viewpoint" seemed to be the most important aspects of the concept. Sustainability was also stressed. The participants were aware that casual and superficial contact is less likely to change mind-sets than intimate contact is. The following passage supports the premises of contact theory that there are certain favourable conditions of contact that are conducive to reducing intergroup prejudice and increasing tolerance (Allport 1858).

> Now Community Healing is not about I go to Langa and then I go and sit there in a pub or a tavern and have two beers and say 'yes, that is my black brother.' That is not Community Healing. Because, after I'm finished there I am coming back and here in the discussion I say 'that kaffirs'. You understand? So that is not Community Healing. It's not where you heal one another or where you reach out to one another. You have to accept their culture and they have to accept our culture. And we have to combine the cultures. (David)

The exposure to new and challenging ideas and the exchange of information attract the participants to the project. Asked why he kept coming back to the meetings, Rashied replied: "because the facilitator, he brought the thing right to your face. Like this is what

you need to have, and um, it's almost like you can't get enough of it." Generally, there seemed to be a great need to talk about the pressing social problems as well as personal issues amongst the participants. The notion of community dialogue as a tool to prevent future conflict (Van der Knaap 2006, Staub et al. 2005) was also raised as an important aspect by the participants.

> We are not just talking about Cape Town, Western Cape, we are talking about South Africa. Because there are a lot of issues. And at the end of the day it will cost us, because we don't want to repeat the same mistakes that have happened. (Thando)

5.2 Themes emerging from the interviews

The following section presents the most salient themes that emerged in the interviews. I will start off with the perceived benefits described by the interviewees before turning to the challenges they identified.

5.2.1 Benefits

All the benefit-codes are highly interconnected as one depends upon the other. What they have in common is the aspect of sharing and growing. The interviewees responses mirrored the community healing discourse as it is employed by the IJR. The sharing of memories, of pain, of stories, knowledge, skills and experience are stressed as the most important aspect of the BonteLanga initiative.

Broadening of horizon

Many of the respondents pointed out how community healing has made a difference in their lives. One of the major themes is that it has stimulated different ways of thinking. While most people might think that they make rational and individual assumptions, they often fail to see how caught up they are in a cluster of ideologies, belief systems and cultural hierarchies. The intervention helps the participants of the BonteLanga group to understand and challenge their own views as well as dominant assumptions in society. The discussions in the group help them to understand that their judgements are never objective or neutral and how their attitudes are formed and informed by assumptions,

stereotyping and prejudices. This insight has an impact on how they think about themselves and others.

> It has not only stimulated my thoughts, also my practical relation with coloured people. I don't think of them as different, I don't. (Sipho)

Dialogue, debate and discussion about contentious and difficult issues have challenged old interpretative frameworks and opened up new possibilities of seeing and judging other people.

> I have broadened my horizon of thinking. Because sometimes you are thinking like, like a larva in that cocoon, you understand? Most of the time human beings are like that. You think only here and in the immediate surroundings. You don't think outside the box. (David)

Sipho also identifies this 'thinking within the box' as the major cause of tensions between the black and coloured community. He says he has learned a lot about identity formation in some of the lectures and exercises that he did in the group. He particularly enjoyed the labelling exercise which taught him how people tend to label each other, and more importantly, what it feels like to be labelled. It seems that through this exercise an awareness has been created in the group around how we limit a person's identity by labelling them according to certain stereotypes.

> It's just like to give someone an identity and to trap someone in that identity. And that's what happened to the coloured community, I learned a lot about the coloured community. That's what it was about. (Sipho)

While he is talking about coloureds being trapped in a narrowly defined identity Sipho makes a connection to what must have been a hurtful experience for him when reintegrating back into Langa after having studied abroad. He identifies a personal experience of discrimination when because of his higher education he was accused of being out of touch with his roots.

> We must accept that no one can force me to be a Xhosa man; I acknowledge that Xhosas did that to me. They said I had forgotten many of the things, not all of the things. But I have multiple identities. But they don't see that, they don't think like academics, and to them the coloured person is still the person who hates them more than whites. He is a competitor at work; the coloured is a competitor at work. So it's their reality. (Sipho)

Sipho thus calls for the right for everyone to choose their identity freely, and more importantly, that everyone deserves to be seen as an individual rather than a representative of an ethic identity. What is required to reach this aim is a nurturing environment to help develop and understand individual identities. Community healing is addressing this need by providing a platform where people feel safe to discuss issues of identity.

Learning more about the past and about the living conditions of others has certainly made an impression on those taking part in the programme. Some people from Langa, for example, were surprised to find that Bonteheuwel was a lot poorer that they had imagined. Interviewees used phrases like "we actually have better houses." Some of the stereotypes about coloureds getting preferential treatment in the Western Cape were thus deconstructed simply by physical contact and by the crossing of material boundaries.

> Very much, very much I look at the coloured community in a different way, at coloured identity per se. (Sipho)

Participatory exercises and reflective dialogue further raise the trust level within the group and create a better understanding of the value of reconciliation. (Morrison 2006). A major objective of community dialogue is to try and understand the viewpoint of someone who is perceived as different. All of the interviewees feel that their experiences in the Community Healing Project have changed the way they interact with and relate to other people in general.

> Yeah, I look at people in a very different way now even the way I address myself to people, even the way I speak to others [...] So every time when I am walking in the streets I see old, people, young people, I have to behave in a certain way. So I kind of mean like, it made me grow as a person, it made me grow as a person (Luvuyo)

Tolerance and a healthy curiosity are equally important factors in this process. One of the aims of community healing is to create a safe environment in which individuals can reflect on their needs while receiving care from the larger group (Anckermann et al. 2005). As a result, they are able to pass the same support that they have received on to other people. Rashied felt this impact very strongly and repeatedly said: "I opened up to

seeing other people's problems and helping them out." This notion of passing the gained benefits on to more people was particularly salient in all of the interviews.

"Each one, teach one" - Collaborative learning

The literature on conflict resolution stresses the importance of learning about the roots of contemporary conflict (Anckermann et al. 2005). The concept of community healing or community dialogue in general builds on the idea that the conflicting parties are prepared to enter into a deep reflection and understanding of personal knowledge, attitudes and values (Bland 2002, Du Toit 2003). Self-reflexiveness and a willingness to learn are essential to successfully interact with those different to oneself. Van der Knaap highlights that "not only can education play a central role in infusing a culture of Peace that permeates all levels of society, but it can also greatly contribute to the transformation of relationships" (2006: 31). In my conversations with the participants I got the impression that they feel that they are part of something larger than themselves and that the project makes a real contribution. When asked why she keeps coming back, Naazima replied "because every time I learn something new."

According to James "receptive listening assumes that participants believe that they have something to learn from each other, which in turn presupposes the openness and trust that enable intercultural dialogue in the first place" (1999: 598). I a similar vein, Anckerman et al. suggest that perceiving the group as a learning organisation is a decisive empowerment indicator (2005). The members of BonteLanga definitely see the group as an educating force. They use phrases like: "it's almost like an educating tool for yourself to educate other people as well" (Rashied). Furthermore, they are convinced that even those who were only part of the group for a short time have benefited from it:

> But today if you go there [to the young people from Langa who have dropped out], they have learnt something; I am telling you they have learnt something out of this IJR, out of this BonteLanga. They've learnt a lot, I have learnt a lot. (Thando)

Most notably, almost all respondents stressed the importance that what they gain from the project has to be passed on to other people. They want to be active agents of social change. Like Rashied says: "I am trying to help as much people as possible." (Rashied)

> If you don't know, learn. If you know, teach. Now that is what you do. If you have skills you must teach someone else that don't have." (David)

Learning and teaching were the means by which most of the respondents measured the success of the initiative. They were frustrated that they had not reached enough people and that the project had not yet become an established part of their communities. This problematic will be addressed in greater detail under the challenges.

"I was blown away. I didn't know, I didn't know..." The sharing of memories and stories

> Reconciliation is never an automatic outcome of dialogue, nor is it dialogue's only legitimate goal. Yet the link between reconciliation and dialogue remains strong (Du Toit 2003: 188)

Sharing stories and memories is an extremely important factor in overcoming prejudices and preconceived ideas (Du Toit 2003). Staub et al. write that "[p]eople also often see their own great suffering as painfully unique. Learning about similar ways that others have suffered and examining and coming to see commonalities in the roots of such violence can help people see their common humanity with others and mitigate the negative attitude toward themselves" (2005: 304). The following paragraph illustrates what an impact listening to other people's life stories can have:

> Listening to those stories, you know the interviews, the everything. Even when I went to Somerset West doing interviews on the project of the migrant labourers, yeah, that was another experience. I was blown away. I didn't know, I didn't know. We would actually think that we are the only ones here who live like that, you know, the everything, the everything, you know. But there are a lot. And people have to know these things. (Luvuyo)

The concept of sharing stories and empowering individuals by listening to them is taken up enthusiastically by the participants who once again feel a strong need to pass it on to others. The notion of empowering others by attentively listening to them has been internalized:

> And you engage THEM: how do YOU feel about this? What can YOU remember about this? [...] and now you're engaging him to tell HIS story and now you inviting him to come onboard because he have a story and he's telling it. [...] You make him part of something that he wasn't part of. (David)

David clearly sees the psychological benefit of being acknowledged for the person that is telling their story. However, this listening part seems to be equally empowering. When asked whether listening to other people's life stories had changed his views about the people in the project one interviewee said:

> Actually, not only about those people but about people in general. Just people around me. It was actually so amazing for me to get an opportunity to get those stories. To listen, just to listen, to get the stories from the horse's mouth. (Luvuyo)

From all the responses in the interviews it seems that dialogue is a very powerful tool to empower people and to change relationships. The meetings and dialogue sessions help the participants to reconceptualise their experiences and see them in a different context. Thus, they gain a certain degree of power and authority over their own life story. Rosenthal (2006) observed similar effects of storytelling in her work with Holocaust survivors.

But what forms of dialogue are actually possible in the meetings? Often there is so much organisational administration that needs to be taken care of that honest interpersonal engagement fails because of a lack of time. As Thando says: "the only thing that is failing is the time. The time is limited, the time is short. We don't have enough space whereby we can stretch our legs." For deep and meaningful dialogue, however, there needs to be enough space to 'stretch your legs.' If someone shares very personal feelings without enough time for feedback and resolution, dialogue can indeed have negative effects. As David rightly points out there is the danger of re-traumatisation that needs to be considered: "But is that story going to bring healing or going to open that wound wider? [...] Because the thing is, now you ask this question and what happened is, instead of healing, now the person's grudge is back again." He goes on to suggest that the more personal stories should be addressed in one on one sessions rather than in front of a big group. Seeing to it that the person telling their story does not lose himself or herself too strongly in the traumatic memories is crucial. This is the part where a well grounded facilitator is essential to the therapeutic process. Tuller argues in the same vein as David when she says that "too much memory can also prevent healing" (2005: 112).

Another facet of storytelling that was extremely important to the younger interviewees was the intergenerational dimension. They regarded the elders as a source of information that would satisfy their curiosity about the past and thus help them to understand the present. It seems that there is a lack of other platforms where this exchange could happen.

> Because the old people there, they are sharing their stories. And then I'm learning being a youngster (Thando)

> And the exciting part is I get to learn a lot from them. It's lekker hanging out with them. And the way they tell their stories it's interesting. [...] I'm interested in learning what happened that time, and why it happened and what can we as youth today benefit from it. (Naazima)

However they could also see the cathartic effect that telling their stories had on some of the older people who in the past rarely got the necessary platform to share their experiences. Thus, the sharing of stories with the group for some mirrors the cathartic experience of apartheid victims testifying at the TRC hearings. Furthermore, the embedding of their individual suffering into a collective experience confirms people's sense of belonging (Du Toit 2003, Staub et al. 2005).

> It's about people from our older generation, how can I say it, not to heal, but to connect with those who were involved that time. And to see how they felt that time. Yes and to, just to expose, because in the past they didn't get a chance to share how they feel or somebody who came into the community who has got an interest of knowing what they experienced in that time. (Naazima)

Personal Healing

One of the major benefits of community healing is the psychosocial rehabilitation of the individual, the personal healing of wounds, the reducing of psychological distress. Another important theme that came up during the interviews was for the men in the group to let go of displaced and unspecified anger.[27] The following quotes support that the male interviewees referred to their trauma as anger, aggression or a violent streak:

> After that [being detained] I just became violent and that and even though I have been through trauma counselling and that it didn't help. And, um, it seems to me that the Community Healing Project helped." (Rashied)

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[27] This would be another fascinating topic for further research. My interview design did not focus on this but I believe that there are many stories about dealing with anger that are just waiting to be told.

> Is that for me, that concept helped me a lot. Because even myself, you know, I got some few issues, some I do understand, some of them I don't understand. And then when you talk about healing, you don't only talk about healing the community only. First you talk about yourself, to heal yourself. To take all the anger that you have or all the anger that you've got inside. (Thando)
>
> David came with aggression; now he is soft. (Sipho)

The improvement of their individual psychological well-being that they gain through the project has an impact on the participants' private and social lives. Staub et al. argue that "[u]nderstanding trauma, including the classic symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder, traumatic grief, and the profound effects of traumatic experiences on the self, can contribute to healing" (2005: 304). The experiences gained in the group help the participants to modify or reorganise their view of their life. In some cases it helps them to repair and rebuild relationships. Some respondents talked about how the project has also taught them new ways of communicating with other people:

> I couldn't relate with my ex-wife, I'm divorced now, I couldn't relate with her. But now I can speak freely with her, I can tell her what's on my mind. Before this I couldn't do it. I was never a good communicator, especially when it came to women. But after this I could speak freely with everyone. I can even interact with a lot of people with different views and how they see life and that. (Rashied)

This passage is of particular interest because it allows us to come to some conclusion concerning the three-dimensional nature of healing that takes place within the BonteLanga group: personal healing, intra-community healing and inter-community healing. These processes are inextricably linked and are mutually reinforcing each other rather than happening in a temporal sequence. Du Toit argues that "only by recognizing the humanity of others can you maintain your own humanity. Conversely, your own humanity suffers when you fail to acknowledge the humanity of a specific section of people" (2003: 217).

5.2.2 Challenges

The participants agree with the IJR's position that the communities are dependent on each other and that they need to combine their efforts and skills in order to address the developmental backlogs they still face.

> In both townships we face the same issues. Because, I get along very well with the people in Langa so we all talk about the same things. If we can get the youth from Bonteheuwel and Langa to work together. They come to our place to see what we do, they get involved also of what we do. And we go there and they teach us how to do stuff that they do and we teach them. Just like that. (Naazima)

Generally, there seems to be a feeling that there is a lot of respect for each other in the group and that it is a success.

> It's going quite well. And there's no, like problems when it comes to the group itself. Because a lot of people have their own differences with other people and that. But when it comes to the project there is nothing like that. (Rashied)

Nevertheless, during the course of the interview some challenges became quite obvious. Once again it is interesting to note that all participants came up with roughly the same themes without my asking for them specifically.

Generation gap - "if they asked us to tell a bit about us they could also learn..."

Strained cross-generational attitudes and segregation by age are phenomena of our current society. Thus it was fascinating but not surprising for me to learn that most of the participants seemed to view the intergenerational interactions as both the group's biggest benefit and at the same time as its greatest challenge. Everyone seems to value the exchange between the generations:

> And, um, what was really, really like great for me was [...] it broke that boundary between older people and young people: regardless of race, the colour and where they're from. (Luvuyo)

However, there is also a lot of frustration on the part of the youth who often feel sidelined and silenced. Respect and custom make it hard for them to insist on their points and suggestions.

> We cannot argue with older people, you know. Respect, we are always like that. [...] Because at the end of the day you want you want to be polite you understand. So that kind of made not a damage, I don't want to say damage. But it kind of had something, a dent, a small dent on the organization or the project that we wanted to do, you understand. (Luvuyo)

There is clearly a form of social power operating in the group which restricts and silences some of the members. According to James (1999) this constrains the intercultural efforts. The older participants exert a certain amount of cultural power over the younger ones. In this particular context the unequal status of power is not conducive to reducing intergroup prejudice and increasing tolerance (Allport 1958). So while there may be a relative equality of status between the coloured and black participants, there seems to be a hierarchy of age which sometimes inhibits meaningful exchange. "Ultimately, the very real danger posed by cultural power must be countered by the willingness of actors to listen receptively to each other, in order to understand other perspectives before critizising them" (James 1999: 598).

> The problem is because there is more elderly people, they don't really give the youth a chance. So we feel left out when they always want to do the speeches. Because if they asked us to tell a bit about us they could also learn. So most of the youth feels that they don't get the chance to say what they can do. So they don't get the opportunities to bring their own stuff in. (Naazima)

There has been a considerable decline in the participation of young people. The usual reasons given by the interviewees are that they found work and are too busy to attend now or that they lost interest because they like to drink and take drugs.

> The number of Langa people is going down, because one thing that here at Langa, mostly the youth, and then they like to party. And they like to be independent. And if you don't give them that freedom, you know. Then everything, you know, starts going wrong. (Thando)

However, it also became obvious from the interviews that some simply felt frustrated by their lack of voice within the group and by the slow pace with which the group is moving forward.

> Because there is a lot of older people, they want to do things their way so it doesn't mean, um, we are not part of it. What we want is, if they can give us a chance to do what we also want, to tell how we experience things today. Like that. (Naazima)

"Bring more new faces. That's how the gospel is spread."

A clear theme running through all the interviews was the wish to gain more visibility and acceptance in the communities. Thando was disappointed that "the masses they don't know who BonteLanga is." There was generally a sense of disappointment that the idea of Community Healing had not spread further and consequently there was a resounding call for more 'new' or 'fresh' faces.

> Because all the workshops that you attend it's always the same people coming. No new blood comes on board. (David)

> Rather than to bring the face that I know. It's, yes, it's nice. But I want to see a new face whereby I can say, yes this thing is going." (Thando)

For most of the interviewees the biggest sign of success would be an increase in members and a broader and more effective reach into the communities.

> It didn't broaden out significantly where you can say ok, this is the Bonteheuwel people, most of Bonteheuwel people bought into this concept, or most of Langa people bought into this concept about community healing It wasn't like that actually and it's still not like that. You were here when we had that Open Dialogue thing. And for me it was mostly intellectuals and mostly people that is part of BonteLanga already. The broader communities were not participating and that. (David)

However, in a different context Luvuyo actually explains why the inclusion of lots of new faces could in certain respects in fact even hinder the pace of the healing process:

> And we are losing people and I know we can recruit new people, but *when we recruit people we will have to start from scratch.* Which means we are going nowhere. (Luvuyo, my emphasis)

This wish for more visibility and more practical modes of engagement came up time and again. While they all stressed the importance of dialogue sessions, most of the participants suggested that less talk and more action was the way forward.

> So they [the younger people] would come, because I guess youth like fun. If there is fun and learning involved then they are interested. But if it's just talking and talking and no action, then they lose interest. (Naazima)

> More activities, more visibility, that's a major thing. Who we are. Who we are and where we are going [...] Today it is 2007, it's December. Soon it will be 2008. And then we have to calculate all these years. What are we sitting in the boardroom for?. (Thando)
>
> What we usually do is we talk, there was never action, you understand? (David)

It is highly important here to make a distinction between facilitated dialogue sessions mere administrational talk such as the drawing up of a business plan or a year programme. Luvuyo furthermore raised the idea that in order to be sustainable the project needs to have its own building. A visible but neutral space where the two groups can meet and interact on a regular basis:

> We need as BonteLanga project, whatever it is that we are, we should have walls and a roof. To say 'ok this is how we do things', 'this is where we hold our meetings' in a very good manner, in a very orderly manner. Like any other organisation you understand. We would stand tall, we would stand tall. (Luvuyo)

Organisation & Implementation

"I don't actually see now where we are gonna go"

All the people that were interviewed for this research project stressed the importance of analysis and evaluation. There is a great deal of self-reflexivity in the group and despite some subtle blaming of others there is a strong self-proclaimed readiness to discuss and analyse the shortcomings of the group.

> We have to sit down and ask ourselves openly and honestly: did we achieve in 2007 what we planned to achieve? Or did we fail majorly? Did we fail? And we have to be critical, we have to do analysis and be critical. (David)
>
> You see, because now you see the number of Langa starts to be going slow. Ja, it's right. Let's sit down and ask ourselves, what causes that. (Thando)
>
> But there I blame myself also. All of us is to blame. We agree about stuff but we're not actually quite serious in the implementation of it. (David)

Community healing depends on the communities' level of commitment. A major problem seems to be the organisation of the meetings. Time and transport are major issues. Some of the interviewees complained that they received the information about upcoming meetings too late and that dates and times were often inconvenient. While

some of the BonteLanga members are unemployed others have more than one job trying to make a decent living. They have no time to waste and get impatient when meetings and decisions drag on unnecessarily.

> Ja, I've got other stuff as well that needs my attention, especially my two kids (Rashied)

> Because the thing is, I also have my own life, I am also a member of an organization where I am the chairperson of, I also go to church, I have everything and I have to work and then I don't have a lot of time. (David)

Serious concerns raised included the lack of implementation of decisions taken by the group. All interviewees agreed that there is a problem with the realisation of formulated plans. This perceived standstill is a cause for a lot of frustration:

> And our business plan is drawn up but it is not yet submitted. So you are, actually, you are getting frustrated and you are getting to say: 'I wonder if this is something good for me?' Because we are still where we are, three years down the line. Some of us are longer, but we are still where we were. And what have we achieved so far: nothing. So, are you in something that is hopeless, useless, or what? Or are you in something where you can see at the end of the tunnel there is a light that we are going forward to?? (David)

> You can brainstorm for three years. And then for me that is a waste of time.(Thando)

This lack of perspective was reason enough for Luvuyo to actually leave the group. Interestingly enough, talking about the concept of community healing he was probably the most enthusiastic one out of all the interviewees. Clearly his expectations were not met.

> That's when I told them I'm not gonna be part of it anymore, you know, because I don't actually see now where we are gonna go, my future now is blurred, I don't know what I'm doing here? I don't see myself continuing with this. And I left, yeah I left like that. Because I spent so much time, you know from 2003 to 2007, you understand, and still we were standing in the same block, not moving, not doing anything. It was very bad for me; it was very bad for me. I don't know what happened there, I don't know what happened. (Luvuyo)

Traumatic present: Violence and crime

> Because you know, the problem is, when you talk about healing, we are nor talking about all those who went to exile, or all those who were involved in the struggle. Today South Africa has a crisis of drug abuse. We've got a problem of HIV and Aids and on and on and on. (Thando)

Community dialogue tends to focus on dealing with the psychological impact of a violent past. However, not only do the people of Langa and Bonteheuwel have a traumatic past to overcome but they also have to come to terms with an often very traumatic present. Violence, crime and drugs create a climate of fear and hopelessness in Bonteheuwel and Langa. Tuller points out that "[t]he types of disruption and trauma experienced by residents of high-crime neighbourhoods can be similar to the trauma experienced by children and adults in times of war" (2005: 109). She goes on to say that "residents suffer from mass trauma- the type of trauma that begets more violence because people become, by necessity, distrustful of their neighbours, reluctant to let their children out on the street, and unconvinced of the sincerity of law enforcement" (2005: 109).

Sipho sees unresolved identity issues as the root of the crime problem:

> Because the identity problems in Africa lead to the crime problem. If you look at why there is so much crime, the identity problems. And what identity we should have? God knows! What is an African identity broadly and inclusive to suit everyone? How do you get there? (Sipho)

Bland argues that "reconciliation must address the past, the present and the future through a strategy of sequencing that allows development of constructive relationships" (Bland 2002: 335). So if this is to be a continuous intervention it will slowly but surely have to shift its focus away from coming to terms with apartheid memories and their emotional legacy to dealing with the present. As one of the young interviewees said:

> What we want is, if they can give us a chance to do what we also want, to tell how we experience things today. Like that. (Naazima).

It is not only the experiences of the past that instil trauma, it is the very present that needs to be addressed, too. Bland holds that the past has to be addressed in order to avoid "selective and self-glorifying narratives" but he also says that "the role that

addressing the past should play in reconciliation is highly debated. Some see it as a central mechanism to achieve reconciliation, while others view it more as an outcome of the reconciliation process" (2002: 328). Unfortunately he does not elaborate on this point or explain the different positions.

Tuller asks: "When the violence never stops, how can communities recover from mass trauma? How can people establish shared social values that condemn violence when they distrust their neighbours because of ongoing violence and when perpetrators live, frequently unpunished, alongside victims and bystanders?" (2005: 109). Tuller claims that reconciliation efforts in Peru and SA have "[a]ccomplished some degree of both psychological recovery and relative peace" (2005: 110). She therefore suggests that mini TRC's at the community level which confront conflicting parties could assist psychological recovery from trauma and prevent further crime in the area. She stresses the importance of public ceremonies and symbolic reparation as demonstrations.

5.3 Expectations

> Reconciliation generally requires that both sides accept indefinite postponement of fulfilling their ultimate goals and aspirations. (Bland 2002: 327)

As I have argued above, no wonders can be expected from Community Healing. It addresses the interpersonal level, seeks to reduce stereotypes and build trust. This can only be the beginning of a process that transforms social and political life and needs to go hand in hand with economic restoration to truly empower the people. If the general socioeconomic circumstances in the community remain unchanged it is difficult to see the benefits of attitudinal change. It is easier by far to identify the challenges and to criticize the intervention. I see one of the main challenges in this project in the expectations that arise in the participants. Head (2007) tries to answer the question what the participants of interventions such as the Community Healing Project hope to gain. He suggests that "[f]or them above all, perhaps, the prospects of change are most tantalizing" (2007: 448). However, whether these expectations are material or psychological, when improvement does occur it is generally very limited in scope. Healing is a continuous process that never really comes to an end but is rather cyclical in nature. Thus, there are bound to be deflated expectations amongst some participants who impatiently wait for something substantial to change in their communities.

Correspondingly, there were contrasting and ambivalent responses and evaluations in each interview. This characterises the wide range of experiences and feelings that the participants go through while taking part in the BonteLanga project. Their evaluation of their experiences shifted and changed even during the short span of the interviews. Things that they had emphasized as positive the one minute were then also described as challenges (age difference, dialogue). According to Colvin (2003) this is a typically South African characteristic: "In South Africa, however, the language of crisis competes with the language of recovery. Deep optimism and pessimism, often found in the same person, seem to shape-shift into each other" (2003: 4).

In my opinion this ambivalence in evaluation is partly due to the emotional intensity of the workshop experience which is often very personal and moving. Feelings of euphoria about learning new things and gaining insights for themselves and others are quickly followed by disillusionment and frustration when the outcome is not as visible and substantial as they had hoped.

> Yes and no. Why do I say yes and no? I'm like this: if I go into something, I want to see either it is a success, rather a success than a failure. But IF it is a failure, then I will question myself: why. (David)

It is extremely difficult to sustain this feeling of elation when the novelty wears off. Naidu (2000) cautions that the significant development needs of the community make participants in symbolic reconciliation interventions vulnerable. Some participants from time to time get the "feeling that what they are giving up is more valuable than what they are receiving" (Bland 2002: 331).

> Somehow it makes a difference. But somehow it makes my life very, very difficult. Because I dedicate my life to the project. (Thando)

Consequently, Naidu advises that "[e]xpectations therefore need to be clarified and managed as an ongoing process to prevent disillusionment and potential divisions within the community" (2006: 3). In a similar vein Bland emphasises that "local groups must be prepared to make painful concessions and to accept minimum gains to achieve peace" (2002: 326).

David made an interesting point when he said that there are competing needs within the group which can at times be difficult to prioritise. Each person moves in their own speed and sharing personal pain makes a person vulnerable. Transformation is not a process that happens to a person. It is something that has to happen within the person, through internal individual change, through a shifting of paradigms and the subsequent change in their way of thinking. This strong component of personal development means that you cannot push people forward:

> The thing is, some of us moved faster and then we leave others behind. And that was where we made mistakes. Instead of taking those people step by step together with us, forward, we as the fast movers just move and go and go and go. And we say, oh they will catch up. We don't say: when are they going to catch up? (David)

A solution to this dilemma of different needs and different stages of development could be to form smaller subgroups that cater more specifically to certain needs. A BonteLanga youth group for example would certainly be a very beneficial undertaking as Naazima suggests.

5.4 Role of the IJR

Head emphasizes that "a key issue in community engagement is whether the local and national NGOs, as key participants, are seen as legitimate and democratic" (2007: 446). From what emerged in the interviews the IJR is largely seen as legitimate by the participants especially because of its association with the TRC. Most of the participants seemed very proud to be affiliated with an internationally renowned organisation like the IJR:

> Big People, yes who seem to be there on top when it comes to these things and the IJR as an organization, you understand. Yes and they delegate people to come. But you see, people like Fanie, you understand, YEAH, you understand. Being workshopped by people like Glenda, you know, that's AMAZING, you understand. (Luvuyo)

> Yes, they know everyone personally; we have interacted for a long time. We know even the top leadership, we know the leadership. It is a good plan, and a good connection and they are internationally renowned. (Sipho)

As a third party in the process the IJR acts as a kind of mediator. They are trying to slowly back out of the leading role and instead to respond to the requests and questions made by the participants. This participatory approach with a focus on strong local participation in decision making and planning is very much in line with the philosophy of conflict transformation as outlined by Van der Knaap (2006). The communities are given a chance to decide on the content of the community healing programme for their own context. For Rashied "it's almost like they are just keeping an eye on developments and see if it's working." Generally, there seem to be two camps within the group. On the one hand there are those who feel that the IJR's part is over now and that the participants must take full ownership of the intervention:

> I think the people from BonteLanga, they should try to be independent from IJR. But still IJR must give their support if they're stuck anywhere along the line. But the way IJR manages the thing, that is the way they can also do it. Even if the IJR is not there they can still go strong. (Naazima)

> What IJR has done is big enough, you understand. Because now, we are more recognized you know, we have spoken in front of big people [...]. That is success; you understand, we just need more people with the same vision. If we can get people who actually have one eye with which they see this thing, you understand. (Luvuyo)

Van der Knaap writes that careful planning and a "high degree of flexibility to answer the needs of the communities which are involved in them" are crucial components of the success of community-level interventions (2006: 28). In the literature on conflict resolution the ideal of local ownership and participation in decision making is emphasized (Bloomfield et al. 2003). Schmelzle however also warns about an "inherent dilemma in the idea of local ownership" and cites Andy Carl: "we should avoid the tendency to romanticise local and indigenous capacities for peacebuilding. While they are vitally important, it is often overlooked that traditional capacities for conflict management have failed [...]."(2003).

While strong local participation in decision making and planning, is advisable and should be the ultimate aim of community-level interventions, it can also lead to frustration with a lack of implementation as discussed earlier.This is why some participants feel that the IJR should not withdraw into a more passive role. They feel that their socio-economic status and their lack of resources and contacts render them next to powerless.

Consequently, they perceive a significant involvement of the IJR as more beneficial to their cause.

> Because we are still in our growing stage, they are supposed to be the parent again [...] Because, the thing is, we don't have all the connections and the contacts here. [...] So that means we are not independent, we are still dependent. And unless we are, we have all the resources that are in our communities, that we can use, maybe THEN. (David)

Consequently, the ideal would be for the IJR to stay as involved as possible, offering the BonteLanga group their help in developing the relevant skills and contacts and by providing financial assistance.

CHAPTER SIX: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

> Discussion, debate, analysis and the recording of the truth can be a significant part of the healing process, but only that. Much more will need to take place over many years. The wounds incurred in the long and bitter period of repression and resistance are too deep to be trivialized by imagining that a single initiative can bring about a peaceful, stable and restored society.[28]

6.1 Dialogue and collaboration

The analysis of the interviews suggests that despite some frustrations the community intervention has impacted significantly on participants' lives and the relations between the two communities. The 'main storyline' in all the interviews was a journey of personal healing and improved social relationships. Sharing information in a two-way exchange (telling of personal stories and attentive listening to other people's stories) helps to discover the self and celebrate the other and to rebuild relations.

The central phenomenon around which all other categories in this therapeutic journey are integrated is acknowledgement. To be acknowledged and listened to as an individual and granting that same acknowledgement to others leads to personal and collective empowerment. One thing that became very clear during the course of this research is that all of the interviewees were pleased if not proud to be interviewed. Most of them hardly ever get a platform to give voice to their opinions, emotions and ideas. Even though empowering individuals is not the primary objective of the community healing project, it is very powerful side-effect of the dialogue forums. To feel relevant and recognised is sadly not a daily reality for most of the people living in Langa and Bonteheuwel. The analysis also shows that the weaving of personal experiences into the stories of the communities helps individuals to move away from traumatic experiences and create a sense of community. Through this process of sharing each participant grows as an individual while the group as a whole grows, too. Recurring patterns of symbolisation amongst group members provide a script for people to understand why things have happened. This can lead to the creation of a new and commonly shared social reality or in the terms of Bormann's symbolic convergence theory to a shared rhetorical vision (1972).

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[28] Boraine 2000: 44.

Such a shared rhetorical vision makes collaborative efforts between the two communities easier. It is not just cross-community contact per se that fosters attitude change, but it is the quality of contact that is important to counteract intergroup anxiety and to affect attitude change. Thus, in encouraging its participants to embrace a particular way of thinking about diversity that doesn't perpetuate stereotypes, the BonteLanga project is seeding the ground for future collaborations and helps to diminish violent processes and structures. A dynamic civil society is a sign of a healthy democracy (Bloomfield 2003) and "durable reconciliation requires the support and active input of civil society" (Colvin 2007: 335). According to Nelson Mandela (1996) one of South Africa's main assets is the vibrant civil society that was forged by its people in the struggle for freedom (in James et al. 1996). Sipho is of the same opinion and claims that "it is a South African tradition, civil society is numero uno." If this is the case, there should be great potential for initiatives like the community healing project that try to keep the debate about identity formation and negotiation open. South Africa needs a vibrant civil society and people need to engage with each other across borders to tackle the enormous social challenges in this country. The benefits of community healing might seem abstract and immeasurable but they are undeniably there. I agree with Schmelzle, however, who writes that "[a] certain humility is needed in what we can expect to achieve and what we ask others to achieve" (2005: 6).

6.2 Beyond victimhood

The community intervention in BonteLanga has been a success in that it has stimulated people to think outside old frameworks and to acknowledge the histories and lived experiences of others. It has certainly also been a success in that through reflecting on history in an integrated way it has instilled a certain sense of pride and ownership in regard to their own history. This was particularly evident when I was fortunate enough to be present at the launch of the BonteLanga tourism project. The BonteLanga Community Healing Year-end Celebration 2007 took place on National Reconciliation Day. The highlight was a guided bus-tour of the three communities involved in the project starting in Bonteheuwel, through Langa and ending in the neighbouring Pinelands. A member of each community presented historical sites, gave background information and answered any questions that were asked. On this cold and rainy morning on this rather steamy bus I sat next to an elderly coloured woman who nodded at every

word the guide was saying and like some sort of mantra repeated all the sites, names and events with a very strong sense of pride. It was there that I felt absolutely certain that this project does indeed make a difference to people's lives. Exploring the past and memorialising it certainly had a very empowering impact on this woman. A greater awareness of and appreciation for the community's history and identity might give her the strength to face the daily hardships in her community more effectively. Cairns and Roe (2003) argue that memory plays an important role in conflict prevention. The re-evaluation of one's past experiences can relieve a person and help them move forward in order to address current and more urgent problems. They further highlight that a reappraisal of the past can help to prevent future conflict by disburdening a person from a sense of victimhood which could "create new senses of wrong and injustice thus creating the potential for future conflict" (2003: 5). In the same vein Staub et al. (2005) emphasize the importance of moving away from the self image as victim.

The need for further research into the impact of dialogue initiatives is clearly highlighted by this very limited study. More knowledge needs to be generated around the evaluation of such interventions. The need for financial resources in this field is enormous. Van der Knaap (2006) writes that the South African government and health NGO's are so preoccupied with the fight against HIV/Aids that they tend to overlook the pressing need for psychosocial healing services. Consequently, it is important to carry out more research that would justify funding.

6.3 Concluding remarks

> Whatever their respective weaknesses, however, it is clear from the experiences in Southern Africa that sustainable, meaningful, and effective reconciliation initiatives require the strengths of both formal and informal processes (Colvin 2007: 335).

As the literature review has shown, there is a lot to be said about the limitations of dialogue, and about the insufficiency of symbolic reparations. There are many pitfalls to dialogue interventions and it is crucial to be aware of them. However, the benefits that can be gained from such healing outweigh its potential harm. Staub et al. claim that "[s]tructures and institutions that promote and serve reconciliation are important, but reconciliation must include a changed psychological orientation towards the other"

(Staub et al. 2005: 301). Without addressing the psychological effects and underlying causes of the conflict no sustainable change can be achieved. The case study of BonteLanga has confirmed this view. The intervention represents a small but significant effort at local level which has produced healthier attitudes in race relations amongst its participants. These efforts alone are insufficient to solve the extensive socioeconomic problems in Langa and Bonteheuwel, especially as too few people are involved. Nevertheless they can contribute significantly to meaningful change, more than ever if the participants apply what they have learned and influence others around them. The interviews with the participants have shown that they use the conflict as a catalyst for social and personal change and thus help to reduce the potential for the conflict to re-emerge in the future.

The relationship building efforts between the two communities show first modest results. Early in 2006 a new bridge across Vanguard Drive, between Bluegum and Washington Streets, was opened. The bridge is part of the City's effort to remove the artificial barriers between communities as created by past divisive policies. The BonteLanga group has successfully proposed for this bridge to be named 'BonteLanga Footbridge' as a public symbolic manifestation of the growing ties between the communities. It will take time, of course, but the beginning is made as the following quote shows: "I think of Langa and Bonteheuwel as one big community, because it's only the Vanguard Drive that separates it" (Luvuyo).

Most encouraging is the fact that progress to bridge the contextual divides between the communities is indeed being made with this social dialogue initiative. A further indication of the beginning of healing involves the increase in contact. There is clearly a lack of opportunities to bring people from Bonteheuwel and Langa together in order to engage one another. Since most people are scared of gangsterism and crime in the unfamiliar terrain, they are unlikely to venture out on their own. Thus, the BonteLanga project provides a much needed, safe platform for exchange. Constructive cooperative relationships and even friendships have developed between people from the two communities. According to Pettigrew (1998) cross group friendship is a good predictor of better intergroup attitudes. And indeed, one of the members has moved from Bonteheuwel to Langa which was an easier step for her because she had already made friends through the Community Healing Project. When you hear how affectionately

some of the participants talk about the project there can be absolutely no doubt about its usefulness:

> [O]ne of the guys, he gave the name BonteLanga. It was so amazing. It was like when you meet a girl, and you see her and you fall in love. And you say to yourself this is the girl that I want, you see. And that was it with the name. It's not political, it's just two communities. So both sides can relate to it. Bonteheuwel and Langa. And we just all of us fell in love with the name. And from there we just speak about BonteLanga, BonteLanga. (David)

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1

Guiding interview questions

What is your understanding of Community Healing?

How did you get involved/how did you hear about the project?

Why do you keep coming back?

Who is involved in this process?

How do you see the IJR's role in the initiative?

Do you feel recognized, respected, acknowledged in this process?

What are the challenges?

What do you think of the activities? Dialogue Forums, oral history project, etc?

What are you particularly interested in?

What do you find boring/unneccessary?

Has listening to other people's life stories changed your views about them?

Has the project made a difference in your life? If so, how?

Appendix 2

Interview Consent Form

Research Project: Community Healing
Name of Researcher: Imke Kristin Ankersen

University of Cape Town
Faculty of Humanities
Intercultural and Diversity Studies Unit of Southern Africa (iNCUDISA)
Sociology Department
Private Bag Rondebosch 7701

iNCUDISA Telephone 021 650 2561
Researcher Telephone: 076 4289985 (Imke Ankersen)

e-mail: imke.ankersen@gmail.com

Nature of the Research: A conceptual framework for Community Healing. Case study of the IJR community healing initiative.

Participant's involvement: Spending time talking with the researcher about the Community Healing Project.

No compensation. Voluntary participation only.

I agree to participate in this research project.

I have read this consent form and the information it contains and have had the opportunity to ask questions.

I agree to my responses being used for education and research and on condition my privacy is respected, subject to the following:

- I understand that my personal details may be included in the research but my name will remain anonymous in materials produced or distributed by the researcher.
- I understand that I am under no obligation to take part in this research project.
- I understand that I have the right to withdraw from this project at any stage.

Signature of participant/Guardian (if under 18):_____

Name of participant/Guardian:_____

Date:_____

Signature of Researcher _____ Date:_____

Appendix 3

Note of thanks to interviewees

Dear participant,

thank you so much for making the time for this interview. You are helping me immensely with my research into Community Healing. I appreciate your assistance.

Should you have any questions after the interview, please don't hesitate to get in touch with me. I am available for any questions that might arise on your part and invite you to contact me if you wish. I will phone you back immediately. Also, if you want to add to what has been said during the interview I am very interested in anything you might want to say.

Contact details:

Imke Ankersen (076/4289985)
1 Tweed Road
Newlands 7700
imke.ankersen@gmail.com

THANK YOU FOR YOUR TIME AND ENERGY!!!

Imke