The Border and Beyond

An analysis of the post-Border War discourses of families of ex-SADF soldiers.

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Happy the soldier home, with not a notion
How somewhere, every dawn, some men attack,
And many sighs are drained.
Happy the lad whose mind was never trained:
His days are worth forgetting more than not.
He sings along the march
Which we march taciturn, because of dusk,
The long, forlorn, relentless trend
From larger day to huger night.

Wilfred Owen

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to investigate the impact of military experiences in the Border War on families of soldiers who fought in some capacity for the South African Defence Force (SADF) in Namibia and/or Angola during the 1970s and 1980s. The sample for this study comprised one male and 14 female participants, all white South Africans between the ages of approximately 30 to 70 years. All participants were related to, or had a close relationship with a male individual who served in Namibia and/or Angola, or in the Caprivi Strip some time during the period under review. Thirteen participants responded to written appeals whilst and the other participants were referrals.

The data set used for analysis consisted of 14 interview transcripts and one written submission. Personal interviews were conducted with those living close to Cape Town. Interviews were relatively informal and semi-structured, and took on a somewhat narrative format. Guide questions were used as opposed to a questionnaire. The written submission was from a participant who resided outside of the Western Cape. This individual was sent similar guide questions, and responded to these questions in a narrative, essay type format.

The form of analysis used was discourse analysis, applying the approach of Potter and Wetherell (1987; Potter, Wetherell, Gill & Edwards, 1990; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996; Edwards & Potter, 1992). The two dominant sets of discourses that emerged from the texts were 1) military / political discourses, and 2) discourses of effect. These two categories comprised the following subcategories: military / political discourses – views on conscription and/or military service, views on the Border War, feelings towards the SADF and/or apartheid government, political views, and life during the army; discourses of effect – effect on the soldier, effect on the family / life after the army, dealing with effects, and feelings towards / responses to the soldier.

The most recurrent pattern in this research was the negative nature of the impact of the Border War on soldiers and families. This negativity pervaded participants' talk

about conscription, the Border War, the SADF and apartheid government, as well as their impressions of what army life was like. Another consistent pattern was the shifting of responsibility from the individual to something or someone else. In some instances this involved inferring blame, while in other instances it was linked to participants' attempts to cast themselves in a positive light. The last main pattern was the prevalence of psychological discourse (both formal and informal) in the talk of family members, who seemed to look at the issue of the Border War from an emotional, psychological and mental point of view.

This study highlighted the serious need for research into the impact of the Border War. Since so little work has been done in this field, there is enormous scope for future work to be done on a wide range of issues in order to understand the consequences of this war and begin to help those who have been affected.

Abbreviations

ANC	African National Congress
Armscor	Armaments Development and Production Corporation
AWB	Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging
CP	Conservative Party
Frelimo	Front for the Liberation of Mozambique
MPLA	Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PLAN	People's Liberation Army of Namibia
PTSD	Posttraumatic stress disorder
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAP	South African Police
Swapo	South West African People's Organisation
SWATF	South West African Territorial Forces
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UP	United Party
ZANU	Zimbabwean African National Union
ZAPU	Zimbabwean African People's Union

Chapter 1

Introduction and Literature Review

Introduction

World wide there are war veterans who live with the aftermath of their combat experiences. Much attention is given to post-traumatic stress occurring as a result of these experiences, and this interest will continue as long as wars continue to be waged. However, those so easily forgotten are the families and loved ones that these veterans return home to. One simply cannot ignore the impact that war has on the parents, siblings and spouses that have to deal with the sometimes victims, sometimes perpetrators of war.

In South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s, close to an entire generation of young men, by virtue of their colour and age, were forced into the role of soldiers courtesy of conscription into the South African Defence Force (SADF), and many other men committed themselves to service in the SADF Permanent Force. These military experiences have no doubt left their mark on these young veterans of war and many still live with the trauma of their experiences. But regrettably, South African society chose to pass off any effects and possible trauma as merely an aspect of growing up as a white male in a time when soldiers were needed. Even more sad is the fact that the families of these military servicemen were seldom acknowledged to have experienced any degree of trauma themselves. It would appear that very little attention has been given to those who were left behind when sons went to do their duty for South Africa, those who welcomed back these sons, often changed and sometimes scarred, and also those who never got to see their young soldier again because he had become a casualty of war.

Owing to the scarcity of literature that relates directly to this issue, one is forced to examine a broader spectrum of work done in the more general area of the military. In some instances, this leads one outside of the specifically South African context to

look at the relationship between the military and families, which is discussed mainly with regards to the Vietnam and Persian Gulf wars. One is also led towards a more extreme effect of experiences in the military, posttraumatic stress disorder, that some families of ex-soldiers or war veterans are forced to deal with.

Despite the lack of specific South African literature, I believe that it is vital to examine the issue of the effect of the military conscription on South African families within the context of South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s. The reason for this is the unique social and political context in which military conscription is placed, as well as the many complex issues that SADF conscripts themselves have had to face. Therefore, in order to aid a deeper understanding of the effect of conscription on families, I will give a discussion on the militarisation of South African society during the 1970s and 1980s, along with the historical background of conscription in South Africa, and will also mention research pertaining to the experiences of conscripts.

The militarisation of South African society

In order to fully understand the experiences of SADF conscripts and their families, one must examine the context in which conscription was placed – the increased militarisation of South African society, a topic which has been widely written on (National Union of South African Students (NUSAS), 1982; Seegers, 1984, 1993, 1996; Evans, 1983, 1989; Graaf, 1988; Leonard, 1983; Swartz, Gibson & Swartz, 1990; Cawthra, 1988; Grundy, 1987; Foster, 1991, 1997; Cock, 1989; Swilling & Phillips, 1989; Posel, 1989). Although this process of militarisation involved all South Africans to different extents, I will be focussing on militarisation as it affected white South Africans.

A useful definition of a militarised society would be "one in which the use of military force and the military apparatus is seen as an acceptable and necessary solution to political problems" (NUSAS, 1982, p. 2). In order to see how this relates to the situation in South Africa, it is necessary to give some clarification on the concepts of 'total onslaught' and 'total strategy' which are frequently used when discussing South Africa as a militarised society, and it is within these concepts that the ideology of South Africa's militarism is primarily found (Foster, 1991).

When P.W. Botha came into power in 1978, a shift in government strategy occurred and the government, which was previously grounded in police repression, now became grounded in military power. Botha hastened the process of militarisation and placed military leaders in main government positions so that they could coordinate what was referred to as the 'total strategy' for South Africa's future (Leonard, 1983). The total strategy and its consequent expansion of the military was embedded in institutional processes and structures that originated in the 1960s (Seegers, 1984), and these processes and structures were a result of the search by the state for "the internal dispensation that could best protect whites' security, as well as the perceived threats to racial domination" (Seegers, 1984, p. 20).

This 'total strategy' was the government's response to what was believed to be a 'total onslaught', which was seen to be a predominantly Soviet inspired international attack on South Africa (Foster, 1991; Leonard, 1983; Cock, 1989). This response of total strategy legitimised increased involvement of the military at a variety of levels, and was in this way a launching pad of South Africa's militarisation (Cock, 1989), which became a response to its weakening position in Southern Africa, as well as to the intensifying challenge to apartheid by black people. The mobilisation of the military on the home front was intended to fortify the domestic police resources, which were under pressure, but the main thrust of this mobilisation was steered towards external targets – Angola and Namibia (Leonard, 1983).

According to Cock (1989) a full understanding of militarisation necessitates the drawing of a distinction between three closely related social phenomena. Firstly, the military as a social institution which comprises a collection of social relations arranged around war and assuming the form of an armed force. Secondly, militarism as an ideology, which is a crucial factor if one is to accede to the organisation of state violence as a justifiable solution to conflict. Thirdly, militarisation as a social process, which entails the mobilisation of resources for war, at the ideological, economic and political levels (Cock, 1989).

Cock (1989) identifies various levels at which South African society could be seen as militarised: economic, political and ideological levels. In terms of the economic level, the growing armaments industry as well as the increasing number of links between the SADF and the private sector are significant signs (Cock, 1989; Grundy,

1987). During the time period under discussion, South Africa's armaments manufacturer, *Armscor* was one of the biggest corporations in South Africa and proved South Africa to be the fifth biggest producer of arms world-wide. An additional indication of the militarisation of South African society was the high defence expenditure, a large proportion of which was spent on sophisticated weapons systems (Cock, 1989).

Regarding militarisation at the political level, the SADF were instrumental in South Africa's regional policy of destabilisation, and were also used more and more internally to preserve minority rule and the system of apartheid. It was widely acknowledged that the SADF was an integral part of the state's decision making (Cock, 1989), and was inclined towards the policies of the dominant wing of the political party in power – the National party (Grundy, 1987).

With respect to militarisation at the ideological level, there was widespread promotion of the ideology of militarism, which endorsed state violence as a solution to conflict. Consumerist militarism was also related to this ideology, as war toys, games and films became more prevalent, and military parades and other displays of military strength increased in popularity (Cock, 1989). Militarisation also occurred at this level in the way that soldiers achieved more of a privileged status in society (Leonard, 1983). Perhaps most crucial to militarisation at the ideological level was the militarisation of white schooling (Cock, 1989).

In addition to these levels of militarisation, Cawthra (1988) recognised different aspects of militarisation. Firstly, the increased importance of SADF's role in state decision making, and with regards to this, he speaks of the 'total strategy' and 'total onslaught' mentioned earlier. Secondly, the mobilisation of the white population by the military establishment for "a protracted war against the black population of South Africa and its neighbours" (Cawthra, 1988, p. 66). This involved a number of factors: the ideological and psychological preparation, which comprised the use of media, educational systems, civil defence, and the system of conscription. Thirdly, there was an undertaking to procure specific industries and to institute a military / industrial structure to supply the state with its own local arms industry (Cawthra, 1988).

The state's 'total strategy' was implemented through a variety of channels in the media, and especially through state-owned and operated networks, such as television, radio and a range of government publications (NUSAS, 1982; Graaf, 1988; Grundy, 1987; Cock, 1989; Evans, 1983). At a time in which some would argue that a 'war psychosis' was prevailing (NUSAS, 1982; Evans, 1983), South Africans were barraged with pro-government propaganda, which incorporated the promotion and glorification of the military (Grundy, 1987; Cock, 1989), who along with the South African Police (SAP), were "consistently presented on television in ways which evoked a sense of order, control and strength" (Posel, 1989, p. 269). It also incorporated the negative portrayal of political opponents who were depicted as criminal and violent (Cock, 1989; Foster, 1991).

During the mid-1980s, a shift occurred in the target of the state's ideological strategy. Black resistance was mounting and the 'total strategy' ceded to a strategy of 'counter-revolutionary warfare' (Swilling & Phillips, 1989). This revised strategy contained a programme aimed at 'winning hearts and minds' of black people, and was labelled 'WHAM' (Grundy, 1987; Swilling & Phillips, 1989).

This new strategy had the following main objectives: firstly, it aimed for the "domination of security and repressive apparatus which resulted in almost unrestricted powers for the security forces, mass detentions, banning of organisations and meetings, vigilante and security force harassment and extensive restrictions of media reporting" (Foster, 1991, p. 377). Secondly, it involved a strategy which included the upgrading of townships, the development of housing, reform of local government, the abolition of influx control, the legitimation of state structures, and economic deregulation (Foster, 1991).

Emphasis was placed on the positive portrayal of the SADF, so that political opponents could not be granted the psychological advantage of being more popular (Grundy, 1987). It was also stressed that foundations of civil society should be reformed in order that political entry points may in the future be reorganised in a manner in which the system as a whole would not be at risk (Swilling & Phillips, 1989). WHAM was in some ways an endeavour to divert the focal point onto black people by ostracising activist leaders and altering the 'subjection-qualification' of black people via the removal of grievances on the basis of socio-economic grounds

(Foster, 1991). This strategy proved however to be rather unsuccessful as many correctly saw it as just another aspect of the government's 'total national strategy' planned to sustain white privilege and control (Grundy, 1987).

Militarisation did not only effect white education, but for the purposes of this research, I will be discussing only the militarisation of white schooling. The militarisation of white schooling served two essential functions: firstly, to ensure that white youth accepted and supported the goals of the military, and secondly, to prepare white youth for their military service directly after school, so that they would be able to adjust to military life and therefore play an active role in the SADF (NUSAS, 1982; Evans, 1983, 1989).

Militarisation of white educational institutions involved a changing relationship between the SADF and the authorities of provincial and national education (Grundy, 1987; Evans, 1983), and took the form of cadet and Youth Preparedness programs, civil defence, 'veld schools' and leadership schools (NUSAS, 1982; Grundy, 1987; Evans, 1983, 1989). Cadet programs were the most obvious and possibly the most notable element of militarisation of education, and they were initiated for three reasons: to instil in the youth a sense of responsibility and commitment to their country and their national flag; to educate youth in civil defence; and to instruct the youth in good citizenship as a precursor to their National Service (Paratus, September, 1980, cited in Evans, 1989). Cadet programs came under the direct control of the SADF in 1976, and in 1983, 170 000 boys had received paramilitary drill and training and were deemed psychological competent to undergo their National Service (Grundy, 1987).

In the former provinces of the Transvaal, Orange Free State and Cape Province, Youth Preparedness was a compulsory subject for both boys and girls, which highlighted their civic duties, patriotism and 'moral preparedness' (Christie, 1985, cited in Evans, 1989). The SADF provided direct input into these programs (Evans, 1989), and SADF officers and Non-Commissioned Officers (NCO's) would visit schools to impart information on youth preparedness, career guidance and information on National Service and cadet training (Grundy, 1987).

An annex to the Youth Preparedness programs were 'veldschools', which took place only in the Transvaal, and with which the SADF had a direct relationship (Evans, 1989). These were planned to enhance environmental education and survival techniques (Grundy, 1987), and also to "counteract those things which prevent our youth from adopting a meaningful style of life based on accepted norms" (Human Sciences Research Council Institute for Educational Research, 1979, p. 21, cited in Evans, 1989).

The militarisation of South African society has been discussed by some in relation to other phenomena in an attempt to gain the broadest understanding possible. Chidester (1991) considered the role of religion in military ideology and practices that converted South Africa into a "region of total warfare" (Chidester, 1991, p. 87). Chidester suggests that not only was religion sought to provide support and justification for the use of violence by the military, but that religion was also directly embroiled in rituals, myths and symbols of the military. He distinguishes between sacred and holy war and argues that by the 1980s, South African military theory and practice had combined principles of both sacred and holy war in the devising of an extensive strategy of military violence. Chidester discusses the relationship between symbolism and 'total onslaught' and 'total strategy', and from a religious viewpoint, he reflects on the involvement of the military in education and the media (Chidester, 1991).

Seegers (1993) discussed the 'Afrikanerisation' of the South African state, and maintained that the 'Afrikanerisation' thesis has been ousted by the thesis of militarisation. She argues that the theory of militarisation is helpful in explaining the more recent situation of the state, but that theory of 'Afrikanerisation' should not be disregarded as it should go deeper than present interpretations and should embody the move into militarism (Seegers, 1993).

Perhaps one of the most obvious by-products of the militarisation of South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s was enforced National Service (military conscription) for white males. Apart from general references to conscription in a fair number of sources, there is very little literature that deals with this topic specifically. NUSAS (1984) published a document on conscription and the SADF, which was backed by the opposition to conscription, the End Conscription Campaign (ECC), therefore giving a

fairly negative view of National Service and the SADF in general. Shandler (1990) published a research report, close to the time when conscription was abolished, which outlined the investigation into the rationale for National Service in South Africa. The SADF itself has also published a few documents on National Service. A promotional brochure (undated) put together by the Military Information Bureau of the SADF gives some information on National Service, along with the reasons for doing National Service, and its advantages to young men in South Africa. Another pamphlet compiled by the Personnel Division of the SADF (1990) and published after the Border War, also promotes the SADF and explains the rationale behind the shortening of National Service from two years to 1 year.

Historical background of conscription in South Africa

In 1967, conscription was instituted in the form of nine months of service for all white males falling between the ages of 17 and 65 years old. This began as a response to the emergence of the struggle for liberation throughout southern Africa. In 1972, National Service was increased from nine months to 1 year, in addition to 19 days of service annually for five years as part of the citizen force. By the middle of 1974, control of northern Namibia was handed over to the SADF from the SAP, and in 1975, the SADF invaded Angola. To keep up with operational demands, Citizen force members were then required to complete tours of duty of three months (NUSAS, 1982).

Around 1976, the struggle started to intensify. There was development of internal organisation in South Africa, and guerrilla forces in Angola and Mozambique started to increase their control. Significant around this time were the victories of Frelimo (Front for the Liberation of Mozambique) in Mozambique and MPLA (Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola) in Angola, and these provided a great deal of encouragement to Swapo (South West African People's Organisation), ANC (African National Congress), ZANU (Zimbabwean African National Union) and ZAPU (Zimbabwean African People's Union). Beginning on June 16, 1976 with the Soweto riots, there was countrywide resistance that was influenced by the SADF's defeat. In 1977, conscription was once again increased, this time to two years and 30 days annually for eight years (NUSAS, 1982). Due to an increase in guerrilla

activity in the early 1980s, camps were once again lengthened in 1982 to 720 days in total (Feinstein, Teeling-Smith, Moyle & Savage, 1986).

The SADF was involved in a number of spheres, but for the purposes of this research, I would like to focus on the SADF in operation in Namibia (then South West Africa) as a result of South Africa's illegal occupation of this country, and the resultant overflow of this into Angola (Cawthra, 1988). This involvement is what is known as the 'Border War'. An analysis of this war and South Africa's intimate involvement in it would constitute a whole topic on its own as there is a fair amount of literature on this war and its concomitant effects (König, 1983; Weaver, 1989; Heitman, 1985; Steenkamp, 1989; Menaul, 1983; Debay, 1993; Norval, 1989; NUSAS, 1984; Morris, 1971; Venter, 1994; Becker, 1995; Dupuy, Margiotta, Johnson, Motely & Bongard, 1993; Heitman, 1990). I would therefore like to focus on the experiences of those conscripts who served in Namibia and/or Angola during the 1970s and 1980s - those who did what was referred to as 'Border duty'. The reason I have chosen this particular aspect of SADF involvement is because during the time period that I have mentioned, the Namibia/Angola Border was an area where conscripts and other military service men did 'active' service, as opposed to only training, and were involved in a genuine war. Conscripts on the Border were, to varying degrees, involved in combating guerrilla forces from PLAN (People's Liberation Army of Namibia) and Swapo, who were themselves fighting for South West Africa's independence.

Conscripts' experiences

The secretive nature of many of the activities of the SADF has not lent itself to in-depth analyses of conscripts' experiences, least of all how these conscripts felt about their time at the Border, and because of censorship, conscripts' stories were, for many years, not allowed to be published (Cawthra, Kraak & O'Sullivan, 1994). However more recently, there have been an increasing number of narrative accounts of military experiences (Hooper, 1990; Fowler, 1995, 1996, 1998; McCallion, 1995; McAleese, 1993; Wilkins, 2000; Andrew, 2001; Toolis, 1997; Feinstein, 1998; Els, 2000; Jurgens, 2000; Schwartz, 2000), owing possibly to the lapse of time which may have reduced the secretive and controversial nature of such stories. These accounts, to varying degrees and proportions, contain

personal, anecdotal, historical and factual aspects of what life was like on the Border as well as the authors' involvement in the Border War.

Some research has been done on the psychological aspects of warfare and combat, not specific to South Africa, yet still relevant, and includes (among other things): the behaviour of soldiers in battle (Kellet, 1982; 1990), the effects of exposure to the military as an institution (Goffman, 1961), the psychological experiences of combat training (Eisenhart, 1975), the psychological impact of combat and stress responses in war veterans (Horowitz & Solomon, 1975; Hendin, Pollinger, Singer & Ulman, 1981; Boulanger, Kadushin, Rindskopf & Carey, 1986; Boulanger, 1986; Elder & Clipp, 1988; Marmar & Horowitz, 1988; Parson, 1988; Atkinson, Reaves & Maxwell, 1988; Gillespie, 1942; Laufer, 1988), adjustment patterns and attitudes of war veterans (Strayer & Ellenhorn, 1975), and the implications of war veterans' readjustment to civilian life (Lifton, 1973; Laufer, 1988). Much of this literature is based on soldiers' experiences in the Vietnam war, but this does not mean that it should be discarded. In a study of returned conscripts, in which the relationship between problems in intimacy and military experiences in the SADF is examined, Davey (1988) in fact draws a number of parallels between the conflict in Namibia and the war in Vietnam, and some of these similarities are discussed in Chapter Seven under 'Effects theory'.

In terms of research that is specific to South Africa, i.e., which explores the experiences of SADF conscripts, a relatively small amount of work has been done. Price (1989) described and analysed the experiences of five white, male, English speaking conscripts in the SADF, and the key socialisation processes that she identified were firstly, an emphasis on masculinity, secondly, an emphasis on patriotism, and thirdly, an emphasis on pride in the military. She also mentioned that the examination of the resistance to the system of compulsory conscription has proven to be a pivotal contradiction to the extremely militarised nature of South African society (Price, 1989).

Feinstein et al (1986) examined attitudes to conscription in South Africa, focussing mainly on student attitudes towards military conscription as well as the way in which mothers deal with the conscription of their sons. These authors reported mainly on studies done by Feinstein (1985, as cited in Feinstein et al, 1986) and Moyle and

Savage (1985, as cited in Feinstein et al, 1986), which were conducted within the context of the SADF's heightened political role and the ensuing resistance to it. The two main themes that emanated from these studies were firstly, and most prominently, the role of the conscript's parents and family in the development of attitudes towards conscription, and secondly, the influence of other socialising institutions, which would include the school cadet system, the media and the peer group.

In an exploration of some of the psychological aspects of commencing National Service, Flisher (1987) concentrated mainly on the initial stages of National Service. He immersed his discussion in the theoretical framework of crisis theory, which maintains that there are two types of life crises – developmental and transitional life crises. Developmental life crises pertain to times of disturbance and confusion taking place at various stages of the usual life cycle of individuals and their families, whereas transitional life crises involve intellectual and emotional disorders, which occur when an individual has to deal with crucial changes in his/her life situation. Flisher argued that both types of life crises feature during the commencement of National Service (Flisher, 1987).

The experiences of white men in the SADF were investigated by Cock (1991), and her discussion into these experiences was elucidated with conscripts' own accounts of their experiences. Cock saw military training as a form of socialisation into brutality, and argued that it deprived young men of their individuality and moulded them into soldiers. She discussed how in their initial training, conscripts were taught firstly, to submit to authority, and secondly, to be aggressive to the enemy. The dehumanisation of this enemy is one of the most powerful processes, and in this stage of training, it would appear that what was encouraged and commended was insensitivity, dominance, competitiveness and aggression (Cock, 1991).

Cock also mentioned that notions of masculinity were an effective device in the process of making these men into soldiers, and the relationship between masculinity, excessive aggression and violence was connected to extraordinary levels of physical fitness and stamina. Conscripts' training often entailed physical exhaustion, which seemingly increased the soldiers' responsiveness to the process of conditioning. Other common themes in conscripts' accounts of their experiences

were feelings of depersonalisation, and the intense male bonding that was involved in the conditioning process (Cock, 1991).

Cock considered the types of coercion that conscripts were subject to and which in some ways forced them to do what they did. The first type was legal coercion, and this applied to white, male citizens who were required by law to serve in the SADF. The second type was ideological coercion, which involved the increased militarisation of the white educational system as well as the portrayal of the military in the media. The third type of coercion was social coercion. A variety of social relationships entrenched social expectations surrounding conscription, such relationships being girlfriends, peer groups and parents (Cock, 1991).

Cock also stated some of the responses to conscription. The first, and most common response was that of compliance, which is a very extensive categorisation as it covers both acquiescence as well as allegiance, which are clearly two distinct responses. A second response was retreat, and this would include suicide, delay, avoidance and emigration. A third, and rather contentious response would be challenge in the form of objection (Cock, 1991).

Similar accounts of conscripts' were provided by Cawthra et al (1994), in which many complaints about conscription were raised along with the issue of discrimination. Cawthra et al (1994) also discussed the political propaganda used to influence conscripts, especially during training. Conscripts were shown videos depicting the atrocities committed by the 'enemy' and were indoctrinated about the communist and terrorist threats. During basic training, conscripts' attitudes underwent a rapid change; many who began with a liberal point of view or who were against apartheid, soon changed as they were exposed to severe discipline, propaganda and peer pressure (Cawthra et al, 1994).

In addition to this, some of the psychological effects of conscription were considered, and mention was made of the high rate of suicide among conscripts. Conscription was seen as a dehumanising, alienating and a generally frightening experience. Many conscripts were straight out of school; they were away from their families and friends for the first time, and entered a hostile environment in which the

main aim was to eradicate any of their own individual identity and consequently make them obedient soldiers (Cawthra et al, 1994).

In terms of more recent research into conscripts' experiences, Draper (1999) conducted an investigation which centred around the experiences of ex-SADF conscripts who had spent time on the Namibia / Angola border. Through the use of discourse analysis, the dominant discourses that emerged were: military discourses; discourses of anti-communism; discourses of coping with conscription and military involvement; discourses of readjustment upon return to civilian life; discourses of the effect of conscription; and discourses of violence, which included the "fear of being injured or dying; the death of fellow soldiers; aggression; killing feelings of unreality; and perceptions of those involved in violence" (Draper, 1999, p. 27).

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission, in its special submission on conscription (1997), has also contributed to this field of research. This submission included a wide range of opinions of various individuals, who discussed the political, social and religious contexts of conscription, the relationship between posttraumatic stress disorder and conscripts, resistance to conscription, as well as personal accounts of experiences of those personally involved in different capacities in the SADF.

Other literature that centres on conscripts' experiences on the Border includes poetry (Batley, 1998), and even a short anti-war play (Akerman, 1993). Related work on conscripts has been done by Bergh (1986), who examined conscript's attitudes towards and perceptions of the SADF at the time of conscription, and focussed on the methods employed by the SADF to maintain the upper hand in the psychological aspect of the Border War. Tham (1999) also made an interesting comparison of the experiences of an SADF conscript with that of soldier fighting for the opposition forces.

The majority of research mentioned so far was carried out a fairly long time ago. Much has changed in South Africa over the last seven or eight years since the ANC came into power in 1994, yet almost no research has been done to hear the stories of conscripts who served during the 1970s and 1980s, and to evaluate, with hindsight, the extent to which conscription and their military experience has affected their lives.

The effect of military service on families

A very limited amount of literature is available on the relationship between the military in South Africa and families, and it would appear that practically no work has been done regarding the effect of military conscription on families of conscripts. A small amount of research has however been carried out which has concentrated on the more general relationship between the military and families.

Moyle and Savage (1985, as cited in Feinstein et al, 1986) conducted an investigation into how mothers from white, middle-class backgrounds dealt with their sons' conscription into the SADF. Their main interest was the incongruity between mothers' negative views on National Service, and the involvement of their sons in the SADF (Moyle & Savage, 1985, as cited in Feinstein et al, 1986). Although this study does provide insight into the conflicting feelings that conscription may have aroused in family members of conscripts, it does not focus on the actual effect of conscription on families. Moreover, the study was done in 1985 – a time at which conscription was still in effect, thus making it difficult to evaluate the full extent of the impact of conscription on the family.

Kruger (1997) conducted a more recent study on the relationship between the South African military and families, but focussed on the 'military family', which in this case is a family in which the male parent is a Permanent Force member of the SADF. Kruger (1997) identified involvement in the military as playing a major role in the family, and she emphasised the demands that the military, as an organisation, places on the family, especially during the transition into parenthood, along with the sometimes unrealistic expectations of the military that the family must cope successfully with these demands. Although there would be substantial differences between the experiences of individuals who are Permanent Force members of the SADF, and those who were conscripted involuntarily into the SADF, Kruger's (1997) findings would no doubt shed some light on the effect that military involvement can have on the family, particularly the stressful demands that are faced by families when a family member serves in the military.

A fair amount of international literature exists which acknowledges some relationship between the military and families (Shulman, Levy-Shiff & Scharf, 2000;

Ford, Chandler, Thacker, Greaves, Shaw, Sennhauser & Schwartz, 1998; Matsakis, 1996; Mateczun & Holmes, 1996; Norwood, Fullerton & Hagen, 1996; Yerkes & Holloway, 1996; Hendrix, Jurich & Schumm, 1995; Miles, 1987; Silver & Iacono, 1986; Herndon & Law, 1986), the majority of which relates to military involvement in either the Vietnam War or Persian Gulf War.

A portion of this literature merely explicates the interplay between families and the military, looking at: the effect of military involvement on the family (Norwood et al, 1996); the role that the family plays in an individual's adjustment to military service, as well as the attitudes of the family towards their son leaving home to do military service (Shulman et al, 2000); and the difficulties of soldiers returning to their families, and the process of readjusting to civilian life (Mateczun & Holmes, 1996; Yerkes & Holloway, 1996; Miles, 1987).

As helpful as this international literature is, it does not directly relate to the issue under investigation in the sense that many of the individuals under research who were involved in the military did so out of choice, and not because it was stipulated by the government of their country, as was the case in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s. The experiences of a Permanent Force or voluntary member of a military institution would be very different to that of a conscript, for the reason that a conscript had little choice in the matter of National Service, and the only alternative option was to object and thus spend time in prison. This would not have been an appealing option for most young men, particularly those who had just finished school, who would make up the majority of conscripts. These conscripts then faced the possibility of traumatisation as a result of their military involvement, which would have been difficult enough to deal with apart from the fact that they did not choose to do National Service in the first place.

The compulsory nature of conscription would have also affected the conscripts' families, as their family members would have been powerless to prevent their sons from doing their National Service had they been strongly opposed to conscription. The possible trauma brought on by conscription would then also have had an impact on the conscripts' families, and it is possible that the families of traumatised conscripts may have built up feelings of resentment, anger and bitterness towards

the SADF and the South African government because of what the military did to their son/brother/husband.

Another reason why it is important to focus on the South African context is because of the unique social and political climate that these military experiences took place in. As was stated earlier, the system of apartheid and the militarisation of South African society during the 1970s and 1980s are extremely vital aspects of conscripts' experiences, and will also impact the families of these conscripts, as they too were living in the context of apartheid and this militarised society.

Families and trauma

One is aware that trauma, generally in the form of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), occupies one extreme end of the scale when one is looking at the effect of military involvement and the family, and it should not be presumed that all families will be exposed to, and will have to deal with this degree of trauma. However, attention in research has been given to the role that the family can play in dealing with trauma as a result of military involvement (Hendrix et al, 1995; Silver & Iacono, 1986; Herndon & Law, 1986; Matsakis, 1996; Figley, 1989), and this research all points to the significance of both the family as a system, and the importance of the family environment when dealing with effects of military trauma.

The vital role that the family plays in dealing with trauma has also been highlighted by Figley (1986), who recognises the importance of the family as a system of support for victims of trauma within the family, but also makes mention of the susceptibility of these families to traumatisation as a result of this trauma (Figley, 1986). In Figley's (1989) discussion of traumatised families, he defines such families as "those who are attempting to cope with an extraordinary stressor that has disrupted their normal life routine in unwanted ways" (Figley, 1989, p. 5). He identifies war experiences as being a possible stressor to families, and mentions that this stressor may take the form of PTSD (Figley, 1989).

Figley (1988, as cited in Hendrix et al, 1995) argues that the understanding of trauma as a result of military involvement should not be restricted to an understanding of only the individual, but should take into account the family

relationships of traumatised individuals. Figley's (1989, as cited in Hendrix et al, 1995) Systemic Adaptation-to-Trauma Process (SATP) model acknowledges these family relationships, and views the traumatised individual as part of a system – the family. The SATP model propounds that when the family system faces a stressor event, such as military involvement, "the interaction between the system's pretrauma resources and perceptions influences the development of trauma, with trauma arising out of inadequate resources and a more negative perception of the stressors and the system's ability to cope with them" (Hendrix et al, 1995, p. 499).

The family systems approach has been used fairly extensively when attempting to understand the relationship between families and the military (Figley, 1989, as cited in Hendrix et al, 1995; Figley, 1989; Hendrix et al, 1995; Silver & Iacono, 1986; Herndon & Law, 1986; Ford et al, 1998; Kruger, 1997), and there are a number of possible explanations for the use of this approach. Firstly, the family systems approach sees the individual in terms of his/her entire life situation, shifting the view away from cause and effect (Compton & Galaway, 1989), and towards an understanding of how an individual's behaviour both affects and is affected by the behaviour of other individuals in the family (Gerdes, 1988). In terms of how this relates to the effect of conscription on the family, the conscript's military involvement is not seen in isolation, but is rather seen in relation to the social and political context of the 1970s and 1980s, as well as the family environment in which the conscript is placed.

Secondly, the family systems approach proposes that family systems exist within larger suprasystems (Barker, 1992), and these suprasystems "exist within a context of social policy, political decision making, and laws that shape and direct their work" (Imber-Black, 1988, p. 27). This is especially relevant to the issue of conscription, which was a definite outgrowth of the social and political context of South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s, so it is therefore necessary to locate the family system of the conscript within the suprasystem of 1) the military establishment of the 1970s and 1980s, and 2) South African apartheid society.

Thirdly, the family systems approach provides an effective means for understanding how the family deals with pressures and demands that are placed on the family system. It maintains that the family faces pressure from within that stems from the

developmental changes that occur in family members (Minuchin, 1974), which could be the changes that occur within the conscript as he makes the transition from adolescence into adulthood during his time in the military. The family also faces pressure from outside the family system in terms of the "demands to accommodate to the significant social institutions that have an impact on family members" (Minuchin, 1974, p. 60). In the case of conscription, these outside pressures could be the pressure on the conscript to do his National Service without protestation, and also pressure on the family to support their son or brother, even if they are opposed to conscription. Examples of the social institutions that Minuchin (1974) mentions could be the SADF itself, as well as the apartheid government, both of which could have a very distinct impact on the family.

Lastly, the family systems approach gives a possible explanation for the inability of the family to function efficiently as a system, and this would be particularly relevant for those families in which a conscript has suffered severe trauma as a result of their involvement in the military. The family systems approach contends that when a family member is unable to perform his/her function within the family, it is required of the family to adjust to this. If this failure to perform his/her function is severe enough, the family's ability to function may be seriously impaired. Following on from this, if due to severe traumatisation the conscript is unable to function efficiently within their family, and the family finds great difficulty in adjusting to this, the family as a system may suffer detrimental effects, and may cease to function successfully (Compton & Galaway, 1989).

Conclusion

After a review of the literature, it would seem reasonable to conclude that very little South African literature exists that relates directly to the issue of the effect of military service on *families* of soldiers, especially not the effect of Border War experiences on the families of soldiers that served there, and that the majority of literature available is peripheral to the primary focus of this research.

This lack of literature is most probably due the fact that such a small amount of research has been done in this field, and it would seem that the whole issue of military service remains clouded by post-apartheid efforts to forget about the past

and its possible consequences, particularly those aspects which were a product of the apartheid government system itself, such as conscription and the militarisation of South African society. However easy this might be for some to forget, and however politically correct it may be to frown upon anything supported by South Africa's previous government, I do not think that ignoring this aspect of the past or simply not acknowledging the effect it had would be very wise. I argue this in the light of what the international and local literature suggests on the effects of military involvement, both on those directly involved (i.e. soldiers), as well as their families.

Even if the literature were to indicate that there were no traumatic effects of military involvement on the family, I would still maintain that this is an issue worth investigating in South Africa. This would be for the sole reason that almost no one has given these families the opportunity to speak about the effect that military service may have had on their lives, let alone acknowledged that they may have been adversely affected in some way. Therefore, I believe the way forward in terms of future research would be to conduct *any* research regarding families of soldiers in South Africa. An enormous field of research is wide open for a vast number of approaches that could be taken towards investigating this complex issue, and I believe that any of these approaches would not only be beneficial, but indeed necessary.

Chapter 2

Aims and Methodology

Aims of research

The aim of this research was to investigate the impact and consequences of military experiences on the Border on families of soldiers who fought in some capacity in Namibia and/or Angola during the 1970s and 1980s. The original aim was to focus on the families of conscripts, but this aim was broadened to include families of soldiers who served in a voluntary or permanent capacity, e.g. in the SADF Special Forces (the 'Recces') or in other security forces, e.g. military police.

While the experiences of conscripts may differ in some ways from permanent or voluntary members of the SADF, and some of these differences have already been mentioned, there are many similarities pertaining to the South African situation. The main commonality is that *all* white males were required by law to complete National Service, and many of those in the Permanent Force started their service in the military as a conscript. Those individuals that served as part of the SAP at Koevoet in Namibia also share some similarities with conscripts. An alternative to conscription (two years plus camps) was to join the police force for three years, which did not include camps. Service in the police force could therefore be seen in some ways as a type of National Service. In terms of the experiences of men involved in Koevoet, these men worked closely with the SADF, especially with the Namibian locals, to fight terrorism, and were therefore as much involved in the Border War as the SADF. Essentially, all these men (conscripts, police etc.) were living in the same militarised society and were faced with the same pressure to serve one's country and fight communism.

A subsidiary aim of this research is to compare its findings with the findings of similar research done on conscripts who fought in the Border War (Draper, 1999). Since the discourses of family members often contain second-hand information, and

are essentially family members' perceptions of the effects of the Border War on their son/brother/ husband, a comparison of these discourses with those of the conscripts who were directly involved in the Border War should hopefully provide a richer understanding of the discourses of family members and the effects of the Border War.

It is perhaps necessary to note at this juncture that the term 'effects' is not used in this thesis in the positivistic sense, and is not implying a linear cause and effect relationship. The term 'effects' is used interchangeably with 'impact/s' and 'consequences', taking into consideration the many and varied ways in which the Border War may have affected individuals and families, ranging from death of a loved one to minor changes in behaviour or personality.

Methodology

Form of analysis

The form of analysis used was discourse analysis, applying the approach of Potter and Wetherell (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter, Wetherell, Gill & Edwards, 1990; Wetherell & Potter, 1992; Potter, 1996). According to Potter and Wetherell, the term 'discourse' encompasses "all forms of spoken interaction, formal and informal, and written texts of all kinds" (Potter & Wetherell, 1987, p. 7). 'Discourse analysis' therefore refers to the analysis of any of these types of discourse (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Edwards & Potter, 1992), and is concerned not so much with the linguistic organisation as it is with the social organisation of talk and the content of this talk (Edwards & Potter, 1992).

Potter and Wetherell identified the three principal components of discourse analysis as being function, construction and variation. In terms of function, they argue that language is used by people to do things, and they favour the notion that descriptive discourse is directed by action and effect as opposed to the conception of language as an abstract, inherently referential system (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter et al, 1990).

Regarding construction, Potter and Wetherell claim that discourse is fashioned by available linguistic resources, and that the collection of these resources will imply a selection from those available, and therefore language is used by people to construct their social world. Construction links to variation in so far as versions of discourse are constructed and directed to action, and variety of action will produce a variety of discourses (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Potter et al, 1990; Edwards & Potter, 1992).

An aspect of the analysis of discourse that must be recognised is the *context* of discourse. Potter and Wetherell's approach to discourse analysis does acknowledge its importance (Potter & Wetherell, 1987; Edwards & Potter, 1992), and its value is further stressed by van Dijk (1997), who maintains that context is a highly significant factor to consider when we describe or explain text or talk. He argues that it is necessary to "account for the fact that discourse as social action is being engaged in within a framework of understanding, communication and interaction which is in turn part of broader sociocultural structures and processes" (van Dijk, 1997, p. 21).

The importance of context within this research relates to the fact that participants' talk is deeply embedded in the social, and particularly political context of South Africa over the last few decades. This is probably the main factor that sets this research apart from research done on other wars and in other countries, as wars such as the Vietnam War are placed in an entirely different context to that of the Border War, despite some similarities between the two.

The discourses of family members therefore need to be evaluated in light of the militarised nature of South African society during the 1970s and 1980s, and it should also be recognised that participants are speaking as part of different language groups, i.e. English and Afrikaans. This is important to consider, according to van Dijk, who claims that "language users are engaged in discourse not merely as individual persons, but also as members of various groups, institutions or cultures" (1997, p. 30). Afrikaans speakers, perhaps more so than English speakers, have a distinct culture, in which there are specific values, norms and beliefs that are acceptable within the Afrikaans culture, and this definitely emerged in the talk of participants.

In Chapters Three and Four, a more conventional type of discourse analysis can be found, in accordance with Potter and Wetherell's approach. In Chapter Five, however, a more unconventional method of analysis was used to supplement and enhance the analysis in the preceding chapters. The analysis in Chapter Five can be referred to as 'text analysis' and it expands on Potter and Wetherell's emphasis on the construction of discourse by highlighting the *types* of discourse used by participants, along with the words and phrases that characterise these types of discourse.

Data set

The data set that was used for analysis consisted of fourteen interview transcripts and one written submission. Participants were all white South Africans, one male and fourteen females, and were between the ages of approximately 30 and 70 years. All participants were related to, or had a close relationship with a male individual who had served in Namibia and/or Angola, on the Namibia/Angola border, or in the Caprivi Strip for varying lengths of time during the 1970s and 1980s. For five of the participants, this male individual was their brother; for five, it was their son; for four, it was their husband; and for one participant, this male individual was a very close friend. Although the primary aim of this research was to investigate the effect of the Border War on *families* of conscripts and Permanent Force members, it was felt that the experiences and feelings of this participant were extremely similar to those of other family members, and therefore warranted inclusion in the data set. (See Appendix A for more details of participants.)

Ten of the participants were respondents to an appeal that was placed in a number of Cape Town newspapers – The *Cape Argus,* and various local Cape Community Newspapers – *False Bay Echo*, *Constantiaberg Bulletin*, and *Helderberg Sun* (see Appendix B). Three of the participants were respondents to an appeal placed in a South African women's magazine (*Fair Lady*; see Appendix C) in 1999 for the purposes of research into the psychological experiences of SADF conscripts during the 1970s and 1980s (Draper, 1999). One of the participants was referred to me by another participant (a relation of hers) who had responded to the newspaper appeal, and one of the participants was referred by an acquaintance of mine.

The gathering of this sample was an extensive process, and stretched over the last three years. For this study, I was interested in getting hold of and interviewing anyone who was willing to speak about their experiences, through acquaintances, previous contacts, formal appeals etc. As a result of this, my sample was gathered from a variety of sources, and is not necessarily representative of all families who's sons/brothers/ husbands went to the Border. This method of sampling understandably has limitations, and these are discussed in Chapter Seven under 'Limitations'.

My choice of publications used to appeal for participants requires some explanation. The *Fair Lady* was originally used because it is a widely circulated, well read, and popular magazine. A women's magazine was chosen to appeal for male conscripts because it was thought that the wives, girlfriends, sisters and mothers of these men would be likely to encourage them to respond. The *Fair Lady* was also the first appeal made for participants for that study, and it proved so successful that no other appeals were made. Unfortunately for this study on families, the *Fair Lady* were not willing or able to publish a similar appeal letter, and so other publications had to be approached. The *Cape Argus* and other local newspapers are also widely circulated and proved to be successful options, even though responses came in slowly at the start.

Because of my own language limitations, I advertised only in English publications, which obviously increased the potential for language biases. Gender bias may also be present, owing to the fact that *Fair Lady* is a women's magazine. This bias was hopefully counteracted to some extent by the use of newspapers (available to all genders) as a method of appeal. Language and gender issues are also raised in Chapter Seven under 'Limitations'.

Procedure

Personal interviews were conducted with those participants living in fairly close proximity to Cape Town. These interviews were all tape recorded, and ranged in length from 40 minutes to 1 ½ hours, the average length being approximately 45 – 50 minutes. Of the fourteen interviews that were conducted, nine of these were conducted at participants' homes; two were conducted at the interviewer's home;

two at the workplace of the participants', and one at a coffee shop nearby to where the participant worked. Thirteen of the interviews were conducted in English, and one was conducted in Afrikaans. This interview was transcribed in Afrikaans, and relevant portions of the text were translated by a person fluent in Afrikaans.

These interviews were relatively informal and semi-structured and, took on a somewhat narrative format. Guide questions were used as opposed to a questionnaire, and these questions centered around the following issues: feelings about conscription (at the time of conscription and present feelings); feelings about separation from their son/brother/ husband; the impact on the family of the returning soldier; the effect of conscription / military service on the family (at the time and now); a description of the family; coping with stress and change in their family; and the community they lived in and society in general at the time of conscription (See Appendix D).

As the interviewer, I played an active role in the interview process by contributing to the interview. This is line with Potter and Wetherell's suggestions that interviews used for discourse analysis should be like "informal conversational exchanges" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p. 165), and should be seen as a "piece of social interaction" (Wetherell and Potter, 1992, p. 99), with the interviewer actively participating in and contributing to the interview (Potter and Wetherell, 1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1992).

The structure of these interviews was rather flexible and depended largely on the relationship of the participant to the soldier. Interviews with mothers, fathers and sisters of soldiers were generally more structured than those with wives of soldiers, and interviews with wives also took on a more narrative format. The interview with one of the participants who had lost her son in the Border conflict was in many ways different to other interviews, owing to the fact that she never had to deal with the impact of her son returning from the Border, but rather had to deal with the loss of her son as a direct result of him being on the Border.

All interviews were fully transcribed, with the focus being on the content of the interviews, rather than the detail of the interviews, i.e. pauses, stops, length of

words etc. The reason for this focus on content was that I was more interested in *what* participants had to say rather than *how* they said it.

The written submission was from a participant who resided outside the Western Cape, and who responded in 1999 to the appeal letter in the *Fair Lady*. This particular participant was contacted in 2001, was sent similar 'guide questions', and was asked to tell her story from the perspective as a family member of a conscript (see Appendix E). Her response to these questions was in a narrative, essay type format.

Analysis

The process of analysis was a lengthy one, and I began with reading through the texts and recording as many as possible of the 'themes' that reflected what participants were referring to or talking about, e.g. bitterness, silence / secrecy, long term effects, brainwashing. These 'themes' were coded and classified into a number of subcategories, and these subcategories were grouped into two main categories, according to content, in accordance with suggestions made by Potter and Wetherell (1987; Wetherell and Potter, 1992). This process of subdivision was not straightforward, and it took a number of attempts before the final subcategories and main categories were decided upon. Once these were finalised, the texts were re-read and relevant texts were flagged according to the relevant subcategory. The relevant texts, pertaining to the various subcategories, were then grouped together, and it was at this point that common themes began to emerge and one was able to see the interrelation between the subcategories and how they fitted together to form the main categories.

These two main categories, or dominant sets of discourses were: 1) military / political discourses, and 2) discourses of the effect on the soldier, and these were divided into the following subcategories of discourses:

Military / Political Discourses –

- Views on conscription and/or military service
- Views on the Border War
- Feelings towards the SADF and/or apartheid government

- Political views
- Life during the army

Discourses of effect –

- Effect on the soldier
- Effect on the family / Life after the army
- Dealing with effects
- Feelings towards / Responses to the soldier

In my discussion of these discourses (Chapters Three and Four), I will highlight the specific issues that make up the sub-sets of discourses, demonstrate how these issues are spoken about and how they come to form part of that particular set of discourses, and relate this all to the principles of function, construction and variation put forward by Potter and Wetherell (1987; Potter et al, 1990).

Before discussing these discourses, it is important to state that the categories I am referring to are my own constructions, and were a product of the analysis process. The labels for these main categories and subcategories are also my own, and were not referred to as such by participants. The function of the processes of coding, categorisation and labeling these subcategories is to "squeeze an unwieldy body of discourse into manageable chunks" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p. 167).

The label of one particular subcategory, 'Dealing with effects', possibly requires additional justification. It is acknowledged that the terms such as 'dealing' and 'coping' are psychological terms, and it could be argued that the use of such terms is an attempt by myself to 'psychologise' participants' discourses. Some participants did in fact use these words extensively, which justifies to some degree the labeling of this subcategory. Further justification would be that participants spoke at length about the effects (mostly negative) that the Border War has had on themselves and their sons/brothers/husbands. It would seem logical that following a discussion of these generally negative effects would be a discussion of how these effects have, or have not, been dealt with, and whether these effects have been dealt with in a positive or negative manner. This rests on the assumption that negative experiences are necessarily dealt with in some way or another, and cannot simply be ignored. Some of the things mentioned by participants that I have labeled as coping are not referred to by them as ways of coping, e.g. family closeness, and

admittedly I have taken the liberty of identifying such things as protective factors and have grouped them with other ways of coping mentioned by participants.

Although it may appear to the contrary, the use of psychological terms to label certain subcategories is not an outright attempt to 'psychologise' participants' discourses. These labels are merely used to elucidate the *content* of participants' discourses and present the relevant texts in a clear and logical fashion; categorisation is simply a tool in this regard.

The procedure of analysis for the 'text analysis' was somewhat different. For the purposes of this analysis, the texts were examined for different types of words and terminology; these were then categorised into four main categories, and then further divided into sub-categories. The 'Find' function of Microsoft Word was used to identify the frequency of these words and terminology in the texts; the frequency of these words and terminology were recorded by hand, and these categories and sub-categories were then discussed in terms of their variation and function. With regards to variation, words and terminology were classified as positive, negative or neutral, and although this classification was clearly my own subjective construction, it was done for the purposes of obtaining a deeper understanding of the function of these types of discourses.

Methodology of study on conscripts' experiences

It was mentioned earlier that a comparison will be made between this research and research done with conscripts (Draper, 1999). In order for this comparison to be as beneficial as possible, it is helpful to give some information on the methodology of the study on conscripts.

The form of analysis used was discourse analysis, using the approach of Potter and Wetherell, with a data set of 11 interview transcripts, four written submissions and two personal documents. Participants were all white, South African males who completed their National Service between 1971 and 1989, were between the age of 16 and 24 when they were conscripted, and all served time, varying from three to 18 months on the Namibia / Angola border, or in some part/s of Namibia and/or Angola

(see Appendix F for participant details). Participants were all respondents to an appeal placed in a South African women's magazine (*Fair Lady*; see Appendix C).

Personal interviews were conducted with those living in fairly close proximity to the greater Cape Town area. These interviews were informal and unstructured, and guide questions were referred to as opposed to a questionnaire (see Appendix G). Written submissions were from participants who lived outside the greater Cape Town area, and who responded to similar 'guide questions', which were accompanied by a short explanation (see Appendix H). The personal documents were both individual, written accounts of conscripts' experiences (Draper, 1999).

Research questions

Although there is no formal hypothesis being tested in this research, mention should be made of the research questions that are posed at the outset of this study, as well as some of the expectations that I had going into this study. The origin of these research questions and expectations lie more with my own previous research experience than with the literature that exists on the topic.

It was made clear in Chapter One that, in spite of a wealth of international literature, very little research has been done on the effects of war on ex-SADF soldiers, and there is certainly no literature that looks at the impact of the Border War on families of SADF soldiers. However, a great deal of research suggests that there are negative psychological consequences for those directly involved in combat, and this was confirmed to a large extent in my previous study on the experiences of conscripts who fought in the Border War. It was through this research that I became aware of the significant impact that the Border War has had on the lives of these conscripts, and this led me to contemplate how this war has affected the families of these men, as well the families of members of other SADF forces. Out of this, two main research questions were birthed, each question being accompanied by my own expectations of what the answer would be.

The first research question that is posed in this study is 'what is the impact of the Border War on families of ex-SADF soldiers?' Both my previous research experience and the surrounding literature led me to expect that this impact would be

negative, and that the consequences of this war would be negative for these families. Linked to this expectation was the expectation that family members of ex-SADF soldiers would feel negatively towards the SADF and the apartheid government as a result of these negative consequences. I also expected that those more likely to respond to an appeal to be involved in this study would be those family members who have been adversely affected by the Border War and do not feel particularly positive towards the previous apartheid government.

The other research question that is presented is 'how will family members speak about the impact of the Border War on their families?' Relating to this question, my initial expectation was that women (white, and mostly English speaking) would be more likely to respond to my appeal for participants than men would be. On the basis of this, my expectation, not founded on any other research or experience, was that these family members would therefore be more inclined to talk about feelings and relational issues (i.e. interpersonal interaction within their family), rather than focus on experiences and events. This relies heavily on the commonsense notion that women talk more easily about feelings and emotions, whereas men would rather evade such issues. This is possibly associated with another lay perception that white, English speaking women are unperturbed by things of a psychological nature (in contrast to Afrikaans women), and may be quite comfortable with speaking about such things, even to a stranger such as myself.

Conclusion

In the following two chapters, the results of discourse analysis are presented under the two main categories of 'Military / Political Discourses' and 'Discourses of Effect', and as was mentioned previously, these main sets of discourses are divided into a number of subsections. The discourses within each subsection are discussed with reference to the relevant texts and their construction, variation and function.

Chapter 3

Discourse Analysis:

Military / Political Discourses

The increased militarisation of South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s, along with the political turmoil that characterised the period in which the apartheid government was in power in South Africa are two factors that automatically place all participants within a military / political discourse. The affected individual within each family was either forced by law to complete their National Service, or they chose to be part of the SADF Permanent Force or some other sector of the SADF, e.g. the 'Recces' (highly trained Reconnaissance Commando) or South African government, e.g. Koevoet (security police counterinsurgency unit).

With regards to the political climate during the 1970s and 1980s, communism was perceived as a very real threat to South Africa, and the apartheid government encouraged the view that white was dominant and superior over black. Although some white South Africans may then have been ignorant as far as the government's activities were concerned, few would have been able to be unaffected by the anti-communist and racist discourses that were so prevalent at the time.

The five sub-sets of discourses that form part of the military / political discourses are: views on conscription and/or military service; views on the Border War; feelings towards the SADF and/or apartheid government; political views; and life during the army.

Views on conscription and/or military service

Conscription was very much a part of life during the 1970s and 1980s, and it was just accepted that it had to be done. It was seen as inevitable, and was portrayed as young men's patriotic duty.

The majority of feelings expressed about conscription were negative, and participants were generally against the idea of seeing their loved ones going off to do National Service.

"When it came time for Andrew to finish his schooling, I was determined that he was not going to go to the army if I could help it."
Joan
"So my personal views on conscription, is that it's for the dogs! I've got a lot of anger about that, apart from the fact that I'm a mother, and I've got a son, and I do think about things like that, like what if he has to go off and fight?"
Pam
"I was dead against it, I was dead against it. I hated the Nats...I wasn't all 'ra ra' about them going away, I hated it. Especially as they were going to be exposed to the sort of thing they were exposed to."
Mary
"...my attitude is that they were children, when they were given huge big rifles and said go kill people...People like him and thousands and thousands of others should never have been put in that situation where they could make mistakes, where they were absolutely petrified of being in this place, and then suddenly they turn around and they kill someone, and you can never take it back."
Angela
"A 17 year old that has been fed propaganda all his life...you give him a gun and tell him he's a man, wow. That is so dangerous."
Debra

A lot of the negativity towards conscription centres around the belief that it was unfair because men were forced into doing it.

"I just don't think that you should be forced, it should be a choice, it should be a choice."
Pam
"My view on life is each one of us has been called to a particular calling, you know, and if you're not called to go fight wars and kill and shoot and whatever, you shouldn't be forced into it."
Laura
"But I must say that I never thought of conscription in a favourable light when it came to calling them up to wars and forcing it. I always believed that that should be a voluntary thing. I don't think you should be forcing people to do things like that."
Sarah
"...he also went to the army, but he went to a proper war. But he went because he wanted to go. This child was forced into it."
Ursula

Conscription and time spent in the military was also seen by some as a waste, something that shouldn't have happened.

"I've always felt it's such a senseless waste, you know, especially these young men...their whole life was still in front of them, and you think how many thousands were killed. What for at the end of the day?"
Laura
"And also, there was a lot of kids who were killed, you know, in the army, not necessarily in a combat situation, but driving, and crashes and that kind of thing. And I think that's dreadful."
Debra
"He just really shouldn't have gone through that, you know he really shouldn't have. In fact I don't think any of our guys should have gone through that. I just really, really feel for them."
Yvonne
"...we both feel that it never should have happened, and we thought it was unnecessary, we do think that, we both feel that today, we do."
Sarah

Some participants expressed a positive view of conscription, and felt that it could teach these young men discipline and help them to mature.

"...he was a difficult boy - rather aggressive and argumentative and my husband and I secretly thought that the army, with it's discipline, might do Andrew some good."
Joan
"They were far more disciplined, and I believe in a way it was good, some of it was good for them, because I think they need to learn that discipline..."
Sarah
"So I thought the discipline is good, it is necessary for them to learn discipline..."
Sandra

This positive view was also expressed as the view that some parents held at the time of conscription.

"I think many parents thought it might be the most wonderful thing to send their children to this...matric boys sometimes get all rebellious, and this would sort them out."
Liz
"...our parents, that generation, they would view that as a very good thing between school and...settling down, give them a bit of discipline, teach them a bit of self-reliance, that's really how they viewed it...It was very much make a man of the boy."
Debra

The construction of these views on conscription and/or military service are generally negative, with only a few positive views expressed. The fact that military service (voluntary or permanent) was such a part of life in the 70s and 80s did not seem to make it any more positive in the eyes of the participants, and traces of negativity can be detected which indicate that compulsory service was endured, almost begrudgingly, rather than enjoyed or embraced.

"...like sheep..."
Liz
"...otherwise you're not loyal..."
Laura
"...you were disloyal, or traitor, or you were not a man."
Debra
"...they were ostracised. They would have given him virtually hell on earth."
John
"...you knew that it shouldn't be like that..."
Sarah
"..you didn't have a choice...Doesn't the Defence Force understand that you also have a life to live, that you have a family?"
Karen

A number of participants expressed that they were against conscription and that they thought that military service was a waste. By stating this, it is possible that they were attempting to make it clear that they were, and still are against the system that enforced conscription. The emphasis on the fact that conscription was forced serves two possible functions. Firstly, if men were forced into doing something which turns out to be wrong, they are able to pass on the blame for these wrongdoings, thus abdicating themselves of the responsibility for dealing with the consequences of their actions. This obviously affects family members in that they want their son/brother/husband to be free from blame and to be seen in a positive light. Secondly, it is conceivable that doing one's military service could be seen by South Africans today as colluding with the apartheid government. It is also conceivable that many men today would not want to be seen to be doing this, and that many family members do not want their son/ brother/husband to be seen doing that either. The fact that conscription was forced implies that these men cannot be judged for going to the army and fighting for the government of the time - they had no choice but to do so.

In terms of the variation within this particular sub-set of discourses, there seems to be consistency between participants' views of conscription and military service in that the majority of participants saw it in a negative light. There was however some variation in the individual views of participants, and some expressed both negative and positive views of conscription and/or military service.

"...I was determined that he was not going to go to the army if I could help it...my husband and I secretly thought that the army, with its discipline, might do Andrew some good. We weren't really aware that there was a real war in Angola."
Joan

A possible explanation for this variation in Joan's views on conscription is that she did not want to be seen to support the system of apartheid, and she didn't want her son to be seen to be in support of it either, and therefore didn't want him to go to the army. However, she did see that the army could teach her son discipline, which she felt he needed to learn, and thus thought it would be a good idea for him to go to the army. She was clearly not aware of the circumstances under which her son would be learning this discipline, and by claiming this naivety, she is possibly trying to deal with the guilt of sending him to a place where he sustained an injury that has had a devastating and long-lasting effect on his life.

Two other participants also possessed differing opinions of conscription, once again related to discipline.

"...when you look at the young people today, I mean they're not conscripted and that kind of thing, there's just not that same discipline. They were far more disciplined, and I believe in a way it was good, some of it was good for them, because I think they need to learn that discipline...my son, he doesn't even know what it is to go to the army...I think to an extent, conscription was a good thing, because I believe that the kids could do with the discipline, ok. They could do with going to the army and with learning to do the things that they need to be doing, get the physical exercise and get the discipline. But I must say that I never thought of conscription in a favourable light when it came to calling them up and forcing it...we both feel that it never should have happened, and we thought it was unnecessary...I'm glad that my son doesn't have to do it, very glad..."
Sarah

Sarah is highlighting a positive aspect of conscription (discipline) in retrospect, and is to some degree, comparing young men at the time of conscription and young men

of today that are her son's age. It is possible that she is commenting on the need for discipline in the young men of today, yet is reluctant for her son to ever go to the army in light of conscription's more negative aspects, and this would account for her more negative view of conscription.

"...I think the situation's changed a lot, you know, it really has. I think it has a role to play, especially now I feel that it could probably give a lot of people employment. I think it might be good for various things like discipline or whatever...I reckon conscription for the guys in the 60s and 70s, I just think it was crazy. I think it was crazy to take fresh-faced, pimply guys straight out of school, and put them in..."
Yvonne

Yvonne mentions the value of discipline and employment in light of the fact that the political situation has changed in South Africa between the time of conscription and now. She is possibly asserting that there is more of a need for discipline now than there was before, and that conscription could help deal with the problem of unemployment. The issue of unemployment is obviously not a new one, but it is likely that white South Africans have become more aware of it since the government changed.

There was also some variation in the views of one the participant's parents, with regards to conscription.

"My father was an Anglican priest, and he was labelled a communist...So my family were not supportive of the government system of the time. But my father...my father just felt that as we lived in South Africa, we needed to identify, not with the system, but be part of...I think that was his reasoning, but we needed to be citizens of the country...it was my father's feeling that they should apply for South African citizenship, even though he and my mother had been refused. And because of that they were conscripted...we were not supportive of the system, I still can't understand my dad's reasoning of wanting them to go."
Jenny

Jenny makes it clear that she and her family were not in favour of the apartheid system at the time of conscription, and that her father was seen as someone in opposition to the government. By doing this, she is identifying with the views of her father, and is possibly trying to portray herself in a positive light in terms of her political standing. In contrast to this, Jenny also highlights the fact that the view that

her brothers should obtain South African citizenship and therefore do their military service was a view that belonged to her father, and was not the view that she held. By doing this, she is no longer identifying with her father's views, but is rather trying to distance herself from them, and once again, possibly trying to portray herself in a positive light with regards to her views on conscription.

Views on the Border War

It was mentioned by a few participants that many South Africans (including themselves) were relatively unaware that a real war was being waged on the Namibia / Angola border during the 1970s and 1980s, in which thousands of young South African men were involved in some or other capacity. Owing to the fact that military service was such an ingrained part of South Africa at that time, many didn't realise what was really happening beyond South Africa's borders, and didn't have a clear idea of what exactly their sons were going to be exposed to. According to family members, it is likely that in some cases these young men themselves weren't even aware of what awaited them.

"We weren't really aware that there was a real war in Angola. Our son was the eldest boy in our circle of friends and acquaintances and although some of the horror stories trickled through, most of the time we tended to bury our heads in the sand, believing 'it could never happen to us.' "

Joan

"I didn't really realise that there was such an ugly war going on there. If I knew that, I think it would have made me go off my mind. But I didn't realise that there was such an immense war going on. And as far as these troepies[i] *were concerned when he left, it was just a new...*uitdaging[ii]*...it's a new challenge, you know, and you know when you're very young, it's excitement. So I don't think they knew either."*

Ursula

"...obviously my mother worried about it, about what he was doing, and where he was. But it didn't seem to be...no-one was hysterical about it, because that was what was done."

Debra

Through the experiences of their son/brother/husband, participants have obviously come to realise the extent of the Border War, and feel very negatively about it. The dominant sentiments expressed were that it never should have happened, and that the apartheid government's shame and embarrassment regarding this war only served to prove this. Many believe that it was a waste, and that it was unfair to

force individuals to fight for something they may not have believed in, or fight for a cause that was ultimately not worth fighting for.

"It was a waste…I don't believe it ever really accomplished very much. And a lot of it I think was just a waste of exercise, wasted lives, wasted everything, the finances, when you think what it must have cost the country, in money, to do that and to keep it up."
Sarah
*"…it was so unnecessary, it was a load of absolute bulls*t. Why did they have to sit there in the army and go and fight – in South West in any case – do you understand? Why did they have to be dragged all over the place, to Grootfontein and some sent to Angola – why?"*
Sandra
"I kind of feel that it was there, but it was put away as if it was a shame, and I don't think so. I think it was a proper war. I think we paid a huge price for it, with many lives…And I think much more people, much more people, much more than that…were affected. If you think of the families that stayed behind…because I think it was a waste for some of them. It was maybe beneficial for some others, but for us it wasn't."
Karen
"…these guys suffered because of the government. It's not their fault, as far as I'm concerned. And I really don't…'Oh, he volunteered, so he's got to face the consequences.' You know sometimes you volunteer for reasons that, they're your reasons and you feel they're ok."
Yvonne
"I mean the whole concept of going to fight for a theory that was an idea of a few little chosen men up there high in politics. Fighting for a thing that a lot of them didn't believe; once they got there, their best friends were black people…now that the political situation has turned around and changed, these guys are faced with thinking, 'what the hell did I waste those years for?' "
Pam
"You know that was fighting for a cause, for which we believe a cause then. If you think back now, was a cause? Was it right?…We thought it was right, because it was about communists, and we didn't want our country to be invaded in communist. Now the communists sit in parliament…And I was just wondering, was it worth it? Was it worth it for our country, was it worth it?"
Erika

Many of these negative feelings stem from participants' perceptions of the effect that this war is seen to have had on both the soldiers[iii] and their families.

"I remember in the ward that I worked, these youngsters come back. Not broken arms, but no arms, no legs, and shrapnel all over them, some of them, and I remember the one with half of his back and half of his bottom missing. The one had come back without any scratch, but totally mentally, they didn't know where they were. And there were quite a few of them, that the impact of what happened on the border, really got to them, and they became totally bossies."
Karen

"...a lot of those men, today are probably in their 40s, late 30s, have got a hang of a conscience problem, horrific, and apart from the fact that they are made to pay, because they are the so-called middle aged, white man in South Africa. They are paying the consequence now of something they got told to do...And there's a lot of anger, there's a lot of anger, and almost sort of hopelessness now, this hopelessness."

Pam

"What about the guys of Mark's age? I mean you see them all the time outside the Spar shop, Main road Rondebosch, with placards, 'help' and 'I've got no job'. These are those guys, who I really think that the system has failed them, and nobody wants them anymore, and it is terribly, terrible sad."

Yvonne

"...it effects that whole generation...between the 70s and 80s, I think were the most affected. I think in a lot of families, we were blessed in that we didn't lose anybody in the wars. But I think in a lot of families, it has caused devastation and anger, that their sons were killed."

Laura

Participants' views on the Border War are once again constructed as negative, and there is no variation among participants, i.e. none of the participants saw it as positive. Many participants are aware of the devastating effects that the Border War has had on individuals and families, and they have implied that they feel that the apartheid government, by enforcing conscription and sending soldiers to the Border, is responsible for this war and its effects. These negative discourses therefore function as an effective vehicle for blaming the government. It is unlikely that participants would have openly blamed the government at the time of the Border War, as this may have had serious consequences, but considering the amount of time that has lapsed between then (end of the 1980s) and now, and the fact that this time may have allowed participants to gain more knowledge and insight into the Border War, participants may feel that they are entitled to see the apartheid government as culpable.for the effects of this war.

It is interesting to note that so many of the participants stressed that the Border War was a waste and that it didn't accomplish anything. The Border War was in fact a result of the apartheid government's campaign of anti-communism, and was part of an attempt to maintain the status quo in South Africa – white rule. It is quite likely that most of these participants did little to practically oppose the apartheid government or conscription at the time, and this does emerge in the discourses of some participants, e.g. *'I often used to think I'd like to join the Black Sash or something like that, but I knew if I did, it would cause such controversy in our*

family...'; 'I could join the picket lines, and 'ra ra ra' and things like that, which I realised probably wouldn't get me anywhere...'. The negativity they have recently expressed with regards to the Border War and the way in which some of them have implied culpability of the previous government, may therefore be a way of 'putting themselves in the clear', in terms of either supporting or not opposing the government.

The ignorance that a few participants mentioned with regards to the Border War could be functioning to absolve themselves from any feelings of regret or culpability for not doing anything to oppose military service on the Border. If they did not know that a real war was going on and that their sons were involved in it, there is no reason for them now to feel culpable for not doing anything about it.

Feelings towards the SADF / Apartheid government

The feelings expressed by participants towards the SADF and previous apartheid (Nationalist) government are once again negative, and they took the form of anger, frustration and bitterness. A range of circumstances were responsible for these negative feelings – traumatic events that had occurred, the effect that experiences in the military have had, and the way that these experiences have impacted on the lives of the participants.

"That's my side of it, how I feel it's affected me, it makes me angry."
Angela
"...I didn't realise the dangers they were in. I only realised many years after he came back...Now I'm cross, now I am. And now I mean there's no time for it now, but I am very cross."
Ursula
"My memories or association with ***the army***[iv] *are negative. It is my feeling that it really messed up my husband."*
Sandra
"Sometimes I don't even have words, I just get so...what have ***they*** *done to these young men?* ***They've*** *destroyed so many lives."*
Laura
"I was also angry that he was being forced to do this thing and that ***the government*** *expected parents to foot the bill for the extras."*
Joan

"He left me alone, again. And you know that angered. Doesn't ***the Defence Force*** *understand that you also have a life to live, that you have a family?"*

Karen

The next day we managed to find out more about what had happened. I was terribly, terribly angry and the more I ranted at ***the army personnel****, the more shifty* ***they*** *looked. Almost as if* ***they*** *were trying to cover something up."*

Joan

"It is now – now that I look back that I am angry. I am now angry at ***that system****..."*

Sandra

In some cases, participants came to realise the destructiveness of these emotions, and have made efforts to deal with them. But it would appear that even if they are dealt with, they nevertheless leave behind a trace of some negativity.

"I have gotten over my bitterness with ***the Defence Force*** *- it's such a destructive emotion - but every time I think of my beautiful broken son, I get a pain in the middle of my chest."*

Joan

"To be bitter, you know, a bitter old person is a very difficult person to live with. So you must try not to be bitter. And sometimes you can't help yourself but be bitter about it, and ask all the questions."

Erika

A lot of resentment was also expressed by participants towards the SADF and the apartheid government for not realising the effects of military experiences, and for also just expecting ex-soldiers to readjust to civilian life without any support or assistance in the form of counselling or rehabilitation.

"I don't think anybody realised what's happened to our children."

Ursula

"The fact that the men came back from the border and they just has to go back to work, react like nothing has happened, that was hard. The fact that ***they*** *call them back, and just carry on with everything. All these years on the border, for what?"*

Karen

"They *just let them come back and told them 'go back into society'...But they should have had an orientation year after that...just to acclimatise to being in a structured, organised society. But it didn't happen. If one looks in retrospect, I suppose there should have been...****the Defence Force*** *should have put that kind of thing in place."*

Liz

"It was you know, one minute he was in the army, and then he was out. There was no help there."

Debra

"And the support of our friends was amazing. I'm sorry the same can't be said about ***the army****. We had to fight to get Andrew's insurance payout of R10 000. He was boarded out from the Defence Force and given a paltry monthly military pension. There was no financial compensation whatsoever except for all medical expenses relating to his injury."*

Joan

"You know they *send somebody off, somebody goes up to the border, get involved in whatever they have to get involved in, come back to civilisation. There's no rehabilitation, there's no debriefing, there's nothing. It's definitely a hiccup in* ***the system****."*

Yvonne

"...I think there should be a lot more provision made for the mental welfare of those people...Because a lot of them do it very early in their lives, and they are in their 20's, and they're going through things that no normal human being should be going through, in a very formative stage, where they need mental support, and I don't know about that happening."

Pam

"There should have been more psychological treatment, worked into a program, some sort of a program to rehabilitate these boys. Because a lot of them are just zombies now, who walk around with injections and that sort of thing."

John

"And what really upsets me is afterwards, there wasn't, I don't feel, sufficient counselling for all those young men."

Laura

"But we felt that they weren't given enough help in the army to deal with issues."

Debra

"You see the men, there was no counselling for them. There was no counselling for us."

Karen

"I don't think any of them were given counselling when they came back."

Liz

Some parents also felt resentment because there was no acknowledgement by the army of what they had to deal with.

"And there was just no recourse for us as parents to go to ***the government*** *and say, 'look what* ***you've*** *done with our children, now* ***you*** *equip them for the future,* ***you*** *give them a job,* ***you*** *give them psychiatric treatment or something."*

Ursula

"You know there's no means for the parents, if there was, I wouldn't be sitting talking to you...You can say it's because of ***the army****...no,* ***they'll*** *just write it off.* ***They*** *don't worry what happened to you or your child."*

John

The apartheid structure (the army and government) has clearly emerged again in the discourse as an effective channel for blame, and while participants may have not had a negative experience with the SADF or government on an individual level, it appears to be extremely useful to be able to put a label to that which has caused distress to so many soldiers and their families. The construction of this particular discourse in the text can be easily linked to the function of blame as participants have referred to the government or army specifically, or have referred to them indirectly, by personifying the government and government structures, and this is highlighted in the preceding texts, as well in some of the texts to follow.

At this point it is perhaps necessary to justify my referral to the 'SADF and apartheid government'. I have grouped these two terms together, thereby implying that both represent the same structure, and my reason for doing this is because it appears that participants have used these terms fairly interchangeably, and have not gone to any great lengths to distinguish between their feelings towards the SADF and their feelings towards the apartheid government of the 1970s and 1980s. Participants have referred to the SADF (*'the army', 'the Defence Force'*) and the apartheid government (*'the government', 'the system'*) almost equally, and in some instances have made quite a vague referral to *'they'*, not necessarily specifying who *'they'* is.

It would be unwise to conclude that the common perception during the 1970s and 1980s was that the SADF and the government were one in the same thing. However, I do believe that it would be safe, and may avoid some confusion, to refer to the SADF and the apartheid government together, in light of the fact that a) participants do not always separate the two, and b) the army was part of the apartheid government structure and was fighting to uphold apartheid government aims.

Political views

Owing to the political nature of conscription and military service in South Africa, it is expected that the participants make some mention of political views. These views were expressed firstly on a personal level.

"Most of my friends considered me a radical liberal but I considered myself tolerant and morally ethical...I also brought my three children up to think for themselves and to question issues. However I made a conscious effort to influence them regarding the immorality, unfairness and cruelty of ***apartheid.****"*

Joan

"...I hated ***the Nats****...I often used to think I'd like to join the Black Sash or something like that, but I knew if I did, it would cause such controversy in our family...so I decided in my own quiet way I would just guide them..."*

Mary

"Very early on, in the early 70s, I had two choices. I could join the picket lines, and 'ra ra ra' and things like that, which I realised probably wouldn't get me anywhere...or I could treat other people the way I wanted to be treated, or I'd like to be treated."

Yvonne

"I always used to cringe when they used to swear at the black people...and it really used to upset me and I used to think they're also human beings. Moving to the Cape, of course I became even more liberal."

Laura

"I had mixed feelings about it; I'm not South African born. And I really didn't agree with ***the government of the day****...we didn't approve of* ***apartheid****, we were very much pro-ANC in those years."*

Debra

"So we were not in favour of ***the system*** *that he was fighting for..."*

Jenny

"I don't think politically I ever really got involved...I think, if I may have spent time on thinking of political parties, I would probably have landed in jail myself, because I could never have gone along with what was happening....My family are not politically orientated at all. At all."

Ursula

"At that stage our political viewpoint was CP. We felt, give the blacks what is due to them, but not with us. We did not believe in a mixed situation...I just remember that we were vehemently against the ANC. The ANC were...were the terrorists. I was never a person particularly involved in politics...I am not that kind of person. So all that I know now, it was not in our minds the whole time. The army guys went fighting because they were protecting our land...against the ANC. The ANC was the enemy."

Sandra

"...we didn't want our country to be invaded in communist."

Erika

There appears to be some variation between the personal political views that were expressed: some participants identified themselves as liberal and anti-government, others as conservative or anti-communist, and one participant claimed that she was not politically inclined. These differing constructions obviously serve various

functions. As mentioned earlier, it is very likely that the majority of white South Africans do not want to be seen as racist or be seen as being in support of the apartheid government. For this reason, participants could describe themselves as either liberal or ignorant of politics. Those that describe themselves as conservative have constructed their description in such a way that it in some way justifies their racist views by portraying communism and the ANC in a negative light. They do this through the use of words such as *'invaded'*, *'terrorists'*, and *'enemy'*.

A few participants also varied in their own views, and made contradictory comments about their own political standing.

"...My father's an absolute racist, he still is. And we were brought up that way...I always used to cringe when they used to swear at the black people...Moving to the Cape, of course I became even more liberal...we were brainwashed again, you know, to believe that they were the bad guys and we're the good guys. You don't talk with them, you know there's this, what do you call, this apartheid thing."
Laura

Here Laura is describing her upbringing as very conservative, and implies that she was brought up to be anti-black. She could be doing this to pass on the blame to her father for influencing her, thereby not taking any responsibility for any racist views she may have had. In an effort to portray herself in an even more positive light, she then goes on to say that she defied her racist upbringing and even describes herself as liberal. In addition to this Laura makes a vague comment about *'this apartheid thing'*, alluding to her naivety, which seems unlikely if her father is an *'absolute racist'*.

"And then eventually what did they do? They stopped it. I would say the black government stopped this recruitment, you know why? There's a reason why they did that. Because in those days no blacks were conscripted. Am I right? So it was a political decision they made. They didn't want their sons to go to war for South Africa. They allowed their sons to go to war against South Africa, because that was their enemy. But the whites were conscripted, not the blacks...So obviously they didn't want their *children to be involved in fighting wars in other countries. This is why the delay sending the troops to the Congo, because those troops are not predominantly white, they're predominantly black. Which means it's their nation that has to start sacrificing...I don't want to be racial or anything like that, but there wasn't one white cop here..."*
John

It is evident from the construction of this text that John is harbouring some bitterness over the fact that whites were conscripted and blacks were not. Despite his efforts not to be *'racial or anything like that'*, he has made a clear distinction between 'us' (whites) and 'them'. He is understandably bitter about the fact that conscription was enforced for all white men, especially if one considers the way in which it has affected his life: his son is schizophrenic and has attempted to kill both his parents, and John believes this is the result of his experiences on the Border. John's comment about not wanting to be racist is most likely an attempt to be seen in a positive light.

"I don't think politically I ever really got involved. I can remember the first time I could go and vote...and I said to him, it's the last time I'm voting for the mayor, next time you're all voting for me, because I want to be the mayor, I don't want to be just one of these people. And that's been my lifelong attitude. But when it came to politics, I did criticise sometimes...So I can't think that politically I was ever brainwashed by the National Party government. My father was a great, great UP man when he was still alive...My mother was the Nationalist...So we as children were never brought up with any political feeling, because my parents never spoke politics, because they were from two totally different camps. And I think that's why I never thought of the National Party per se. *I was very much involved with people in the National Party...And so I never realised the bad things that were going on. I was very much involved with people in the Broederbond...I think, if I may have spent time on thinking of political parties, I would probably have landed in jail myself, because I could never have gone along with what was happening. But it didn't even penetrate....So politically...I'm horrified today to think that I've also put my cross next to the National Party...but I didn't realise what was going on...politics in my house was never a discussion, never, ever, ever...My sons grew up in a very Afrikaans society, very, very Afrikaans. So automatically I want to say National Party. But again politics were never a discussion. We were just Afrikaans and that's it. And if you're Afrikaans, you vote for the National Party. My children, none of my children are politically orientated, even today. Not at all, at all, at all...It's never been an interest for any of us. I want to tell you when I was 50, and I'll never forget that, when I was 50, I said, I would want to be the Prime Minister of this country because there are so many things wrong for me, and I will put it right in no time..."*
Ursula

Ursula goes to great lengths to highlight the fact that her and her family are not politically inclined and that she was not aware of what the Nationalist government was up to, and at times she seems to almost overemphasise this. Her apolitical standpoint and ignorance seem rather unlikely in light of a number of things that she mentions: both her parents' political affiliations; her involvement with people in the National Party as well as the Broederbond; the fact that she was *'very, very Afrikaans...And if you're Afrikaans, you vote for the National Party'*; and her desire

in the past to be mayor and also to be Prime Minister, the highest political position in the country at that time. It is possible that Ursula is trying to deal with her regret for supporting the National Party in light of what she knows now, claiming that she was ignorant and not involved or interested in politics, thereby creating a positive impression of herself.

Participants also mentioned the political views of those that have influenced them, such as husbands or parents, and in some cases, link the development of their personal views to their upbringing.

"And my husband being a lawyer, being very conservative, and being very anti-communist."
Mary
"My father's an absolute racist, he still is. And we were brought up that way...we were brainwashed from little kids, you know, typical Afrikaner thing."
Laura
"My dad was staunch Nationalist, he always will be, and always had a lot to say about the other side."
Liz
"My parents lived in Rhodesia, so they had a sort of had a hang-over 'Ian Smith' type view of politics. I wouldn't like to say they were pro-apartheid, but I think they liked the way things were, and they saw the army as fighting the 'swaart gevaar'[v]..."
Debra
"When I grew up as a kid, the black people went to this...group, and the white people went to this, and I never questioned, and I thought that this...this was the way it was supposed to be."
Sandra
"So politically my own parents were in two camps. So we as children were never brought up with any political feeling, because my parents never spoke politics, because they were from two totally different camps. And think that's why I never thought of the National Party per se.*"*
Ursula
"My father was an Anglican priest, and he was labelled a communist by the powers that be at that time...My father always remained a very committed supporter of justice, and he spoke out very clearly about the injustice in this country, and continued to do so."
Jenny
"My own upbringing was fairly enlightened in a conservative sort of way...This included other things like politics and many discussions were held around the dinner table debating various issues."
Joan
"...we were brought up and taught...never rude to anybody, doesn't matter who it is, and we had a lady helping us in the house, and if we were ever rude or cheeky to her there was hell to pay."
Yvonne

As with participants' personal views, there seems to be some variation between the political views of those that have influenced them. These range from conservative and racist to liberal, and in one case, even communist. The issue re-emerges of participants trying to portray themselves as non-racist. Those participants who came from a more liberal background most probably emphasise this in order to put their upbringing in a good light and hopefully to come across as liberal themselves. Most participants who describe their upbringing as conservative do so in a way that suggests that it was a normal way of being brought up, and therefore wasn't wrong, or it was something that was out of their control.

"...we were brainwashed from little kids, you know, typical Afrikaner thing."
Laura
"...this was the way it was supposed to be."
Sandra

Variation was evident in two of the participant's descriptions of the political views of those close to them. Initially they are described as conservative, racist or anti-communist, but this is later denied.

"...my husband being a lawyer, being very conservative, and being very anti-communist. I wouldn't say he was pro Nationalist...I often used to think that I'd like to join the Black Sash or something like that, but I knew if I did, it would cause such controversy in our family; my husband wouldn't have approved at all...And I say that my husband was so conservative, I'm probably giving quite the wrong impression of him, because I mean he did so much for so many people."
Mary
"My parents lived in Rhodesia, so they had a sort of had a hang-over 'Ian Smith' type view of politics. I wouldn't like to say they were pro-apartheid, but I think they liked the way things were, and they saw the army as fighting the 'swaart gevaar'...They tut-tutted over a couple of bad incidents, you know that's not right, but they thought that being nice to the maid, and nice to the gardener, and doing good deeds every now and then, that was fine. That was the way it was for a lot of people. They didn't rock the boat...Look, they were definitely not racists at all. I mean, my mother ran a black girl guide troop, my father helped with development in soccer for years and years and years with little kids. So they certainly were not pro-apartheid racist-type people...My father was never anything like a racist..."
Debra

Mary and Debra may have started off by giving their original impression of their husband/parents, but it is possible that when they realised that they could also be

labelled as racist or conservative because of their relationship with these people who are close to them, they are quick to state that their husband/parents are not as they originally made them out to be. They may be attempting to set themselves apart from these racist or conservative views and portray themselves as liberal and non-racist.

Other political views that were expressed by the participants were those of the community that participants were living in at the time of conscription.

"Very mixed I think in that place. It's never really been clear cut this or that, it still is, you know you have the right wing radicals, and then the other half still tolerant...I think the really, really radical ones were in the minority. It's one of those places, because there were so many black people around, I think people realised it wasn't them that we were fighting, it was a different enemy."
Laura
"...it was an Afrikaans environment...In the late 70s they were having all the riots, and all our parents would get their deck chairs out and their ancient old guns, and off they'd go and sit on top of the hill to protect the areas."
Liz
"My sons grew up in a very Afrikaans society, very, very Afrikaans. So automatically I want to say National Party...We were just Afrikaans and that's it. And if you're Afrikaans, you vote for the National Party."
Ursula
"Your typical middle class, white attitude. Pseudo-liberal, in that you're very nice to the maid, and very nice to the gardener, and don't look in deeper...they didn't rock the boat."
Debra

The prevailing political views in South African society during the 1970s and 1980s also emerged as part of this discourse, and mention was made of the racism at that time as well as the anti-communist propaganda that the apartheid government disseminated.

"You know if you were like an ANC supporter or something like that, it just wasn't on. So it wasn't radical, but it was there. For a time. I think in later years people realised that they weren't the real enemy. But it was there, it was there, and for people black was the enemy and the whole communist thing, it was seen to be the black people, it's sad to say...we were brainwashed...to believe that they were the bad guys and we're the good guys. You don't talk with them, you don't mingle with them..."
Laura
"...that feeling of anti-communism was very strong."
Mary

"Well you know we'd been fed such a line about the communists, you know everyone seemed to be a communist...I don't think anyone really was told the whole story about why there was conscription, you know it's to guard our borders. But the 'from what', I don't think was ever really clarified, it was from the communist threat...And to me it came across as a very white against black type of thing..."
Debra
"I can remember being very aware of two distinct differences of people who were so anti what was happening in the country, and other people feeling 'gosh, we've got to fight the terrorists, this is the communist invasion.' And in fact I would say that was the majority of white people at that time...I just was amazed that so many people were so gullible and could believe so much of what was being fed to us by the media."
Jenny

Some participants admitted to being quite ignorant about the apartheid government's activities, so it seems that despite the prevalence of these political views (anti-communist and anti-black) in society at that time, it appears as if the apartheid government managed to keep secret much of what they were doing and their true motives behind their actions.

"I didn't know as much then as I do today. I think we were all like that actually. The truth was always shielded to a certain extent from people, and I think that was wrong. I really do think that was wrong. And I think we should have known more, and I think we should have been able to stand up and say, that's wrong, that I don't believe in, I don't want to do that. I do believe we should have had the freedom to be able to do that."
Sarah
"...it does sound so stupid now to say we didn't know what was going on, but we didn't. I mean they were so clever with their controlling the broadcasts and things like that, and if we did hear of any thing, we used to discount it, we used to say 'it's just rubbish, they don't do things like that.' "
Mary
"I'm horrified today to think that I've also put my cross next to the National Party, and you know, I know someone, one of the black women once said, she can scream if people say I was a Nationalist but I didn't realise what was going on. But you know that was very true. We didn't realise what was going on."
Ursula

Because of the diverse backgrounds of the participants, there is inevitably some variation between their accounts of the political views of the community in which they lived at the time of conscription. There is obviously less variation in their accounts of society's views, as they all reported on the prevalence of anti-communism. Their descriptions of the views of the community are constructed in

such a way that participants either do not include themselves in the description: *'**that** place...**people** realised'*; *'our parents...**they'd** go and sit...'*; *'**they** didn't rock the boat'*; or they depict these views as typical and acceptable: *'if you're Afrikaans, you vote for the National Party', 'typical middle class, white attitude'*. This once again served to distance themselves from the beliefs of the apartheid government and portray themselves in a good light. In terms of the political views of society, participants mentioned that people were *'brainwashed'*, tricked into believing that communism was a genuine and serious threat, *'shielded'* from the truth, unable to *'stand up and say, that's wrong'*, and ignorant about what the government was doing. All this serves to do is allow participants to feel less responsible and accountable for their political views, and directs blame at the apartheid government for misleading South African society.

With regards to variation within individual accounts, one participant made conflicting remarks about the belief that black was seen as the enemy.

"...there were so many black people around, I think people realised it wasn't them that we were fighting, it was a different enemy...for people black was the enemy and the whole communist thing, it was seen to be the black people, it's sad to say."
Laura

Laura starts off by saying that black was not seen as bad, but then contradicts herself by saying that black was seen as the enemy. A possible reason for this conflict in views is that she begins by trying to paint a positive picture of the community she grew up in and identify herself with the community's views. She then says that racism and anti-communism were merely the norm and it was therefore acceptable to have racist and ant-communist views. In her continued effort to be seen as non-racist, she even expresses sadness that this was the case.

Life during the army

The commencement of conscription or military service involved a process of leaving and of separation from loved ones. This process was described generally by participants as difficult, and in some cases traumatic, both for the individuals leaving and the families at home.

"Hard to be away from home, all of a sudden...and to suddenly be torn away to this camp where you get shouted at, and broken down and then to the other end of the country, I think was traumatic in itself as well. I mean they weren't really given time to come to terms with it I don't think."
Laura
"It worried me when he went off to the army, I hated it seeing him go, obviously...I was worried about Steven. It's horrible, when you think of those trains pulling out, faces out of the window, really horrid. But what could you do?"
Mary
"...it was very traumatic. It was very, very traumatic for me. That's all I can tell you. There's no other way that one can actually put it. You know you feel totally empty...it just left an emptiness, and an immense concern, because I didn't know where he was...I missed him very much, it was awful for me, and very traumatic for me..."
Ursula
"It was very traumatic...he hated it; he hated the whole army set-up, and that was not nice for us...we just hated it, everyday, it was just a nightmare, we just wanted him to get back."
Jenny
"...we hadn't been married for very long, and I was about three months pregnant, and he left again to go on another camp. And that was very difficult for me, because we were living in Port Elizabeth, we'd just moved there after we got married, so I didn't know anybody. I was in a new job, he was called up, I was pregnant, I didn't have my family, and that was very difficult for me."
Sarah
"...we got married in '79...it was a year later that my husband told me one morning that he must go to the border, but just quickly for ten days. When we got married he told me he wasn't involved in going to the border. So I actually dropped him off at the airport and that ten days became three months. And I was then pregnant with my first baby, so that to me was very traumatic...but I never heard anything in the mean time. There was no letter; there was no telephone call. It was just...he just disappeared...That was just the beginning; after that it happened on a regular basis, he said to me 'I'm going. I don't know when I'm coming back, I don't know where I'm going, just going to the border.' "
Karen

This process of leaving was possibly made easier by the fact that families were expecting their brother/son to go the army, and were in some way prepared for it.

"...we all sort of were sort of semi-prepared for it, you knew that there's no doubt that he was going to be sent away. And for him I think in a way, he'd been at boarding school as well, so in a way, he was quite prepared for it..."
Laura

Linked to the difficulty of initially being separated was the difficulty of being alone, and some of the wives whose husbands left them behind to go to the border expressed their feelings about life alone and the loneliness that they experienced.

"...the fear of not knowing if you didn't hear regularly where they were, what they were doing, you know that kind of thing. And I must say to a certain extent...maybe resentment, you know, because they weren't with you, where they should be...I think you can accept that they've been called, you can accept that they've got to go, but I think the most difficult part was not knowing where they were going, had they arrived safely, how they were being treated, what they were doing...There were lots of times that I was alone, and that I can remember that was not enjoyable. That feeling of loneliness, and insecurity because you don't know where he is, it's possible that he might not come home, how will you react?"

Sarah

"On the one hand as a wife staying behind on my own, I had to take all the responsibility. And you work yourself up in such a state that when you see him, you also kind of react abnormal, and you want to get rid of this responsibility. And the men were not ready for that...I think it was such an uncertain situation...it was abnormal."

Karen

In the midst of this difficulty, some of the participants found that knowing that many others were going through the same sort of difficulty made it easier to deal with in some way, and it helped, to some extent that they could identify with others in their community.

"...in Nelspruit there were thousands of young boys, and there were always like prayer meetings, so people were always getting together somewhere and praying for them, and virtually every family was affected..."

Laura

"...all my friends hated their boys going off to the army, and almost all of them were very against the government and what was going on...everybody moaned about the army."

Mary

Participant's accounts of being separated from their son/husband/brother and being alone while their husbands were on the Border contain words and phrases such as *'hard', 'torn away', 'traumatic', 'worried', 'hated it seeing him go', 'horrible', 'horrid', 'emptiness', 'immense concern', 'it was awful', 'we just hated it...it was just a nightmare', 'very difficult', 'fear', 'resentment', 'feeling of loneliness, and insecurity',* and *'uncertain situation'.* Through the use of these words and phrases, a particularly negative picture is painted of this time of leaving and separation, and

there seems to be no variation in participants' accounts, as none of them described this time as easy or pleasant. This is done in an effort to evoke sympathy, and to also possibly point a finger of blame once again at the government for bringing about these difficult circumstances.

Participants also spoke a lot about their impression of what life was like in the army, and this was obviously based on what they had heard from their son/brother/husband. The majority of this information related to negative experiences, or negative aspects of life in the army.

"My husband and I were terrified to go out at night in case Andrew phoned and we missed his call. In fact from the time that Andrew left for the army, we hardly left the house in case he phoned. The boys would have to stand in a queue for hours to use the pay phone and we couldn't bear the thought that he might have wasted two hours waiting to make his call only to find that we were out...Their CO was a deeply religious man who would not allow the boys to chain and padlock their laundry to the lines. Needless to say, their laundry was regularly stolen and, yes, you guessed it, the parents had to cough up again."

Joan

"Adrian was in the Panser division, so they went very far into Angola...they didn't stop fighting...it seemed to be important for them to have a pictorial record of everything they blew up, every body that was shot to pieces, and these, Adrian and all his friends all smuggled out in bandages and they came and had them developed."

Liz

"...he was living in a fox hole. He didn't have a bungalow, he was living in a hole. And they were shooting mortars, and he never knew when that mortar was going to land up in the hole. So you're living in fear."

John

"I do remember him writing once...they were guarding a bridge. And he said how scary it was just the two of them to be alone at night, and not knowing what was going to creep up on them."

Mary

"...he said it was a horrific thing that you have to kill people, otherwise they're going to kill you, because this is war. He said the terrible thing for him was...if they killed someone...they were with the bushman trackers, and they would run to see what they could find on these dead bodies as souvenirs. He said and it was terrible for me. He said at the very end of the war, hè found that he himself was doing that, stripping the body for a souvenir."

Ursula

"But I think more than anything else it was the boredom. It was the sitting around, it was the waiting, it was the not knowing what was going to happen."

Debra

"...in the army I know, they told how at times the corporals brought them pornographic material. You know, that they distribute in their bungalows, and they had...blue movies and such things. The corporals brought it to them, because they were on the Border so long. He many, many times spoke about homosexual...not experiences that he had had himself, but experiences of guys around them. Guys that interfered with others, and they then bashed the moffies *as they call them."*
Sandra

Some of these negative experiences were spoken of in relation to the job that the individual was required to do in the army.

"He also spoke many times of when returning from ops or whatever...he was a driver, he was in a service unit so he had to drive trucks. And...told how he had to drive the trucks and the trucks were covered with corpses, he had to transport the corpses from one place to another...those were terrible things."
Sandra
" ...we knew how horrible it must have been for him. And to go and pick up pieces, because that was his job, retrieve people that were wounded or whatever, go in there and walk through and clean up, pick up pieces sometimes."
Laura
"And slowly he started to talk about it, how he had to get bodies out of the ratel[vi]*, that was totally destroyed, put them in bags, tag them. How these bodies was blown up by bombs or whatever."*
Karen

In their descriptions of life in the army and their son/brother/husband's job on the Border, many participants have highlighted the negative aspects of these experiences, and in doing so, put the SADF in a bad light. A likely purpose for this is to then identify the SADF as being responsible for any adverse, and sometimes traumatic, effects on the individual and/or family that may have come about as a result of time in the army and on the Border specifically.

Some participants spoke rather strongly about the fact that they felt that these men had been brainwashed. A few even went so far as to say how they thought that these men had been programmed to behave in a particular way, and how they saw that this 'programming' had persisted in life after the army.

"There were pieces of paper that inspired him to do horrible things, brainwashing, and newspapers, and photographs..."
Pam

"...they were programmed...they were totally, he said brainwashed, they were literally brainwashed, and it wasn't completely reversed afterwards... "

Laura

"...when they went to Angola, they got their last brainwash session before they went...'We want no prisoners, no prisoners whatsoever. We can't afford them, and a prisoner will give your presence away.' So in other words, they had to wipe them out, no matter whether those guys walked with a white cloth, and said 'look we're sorry, we're sorry'. They had to kill them, because they were not allowed to have prisoners."

Ursula

"He himself says the army messed up his whole life because they...that which they fought and were brainwashed and bled for to achieve came to nothing."

Sandra

"They are programmed...There's a rationale behind it, which I think they must have been programmed...how else could they go into a tough situation like that?"

Liz

"Nobody's every deprogrammed them from that kill-mode, you know."

Yvonne

"...they were put through a killer training, a training that in certain circumstances in the war, they wouldn't attack to attack, they would attack to kill. They had things that they taught them how to go about. And he said that that thing lives with you, that if you should ever suddenly be taken by surprise, you would automatically react to kill, and kill someone without even thinking about it."

Ursula

"Also what I've noticed with him...is if you suddenly approach them, you know they're ready to kill, actually. You know if you woke him up at night, or just touched him while he was sleeping, he would jump up ready to kill, because that's what's been...into them."

Laura

As mentioned earlier with reference to the prevailing political views of society at the time of apartheid, claiming that people were brainwashed makes them less culpable for the views they held. This line of reasoning emerges again with regards to life on the Border. By maintaining that their son/brother/husband was *'brainwashed'*, *'programmed'*, and *'put through a killer training'*, they may be trying to suggest that these individuals on the Border should not be held responsible for any actions they committed both on the Border and afterwards. The words 'brainwashing' and 'programming' intimate that these individuals are not in control, and if they are not in control, they can not be blamed for what they have done. Participants may be concerned that others think badly of them because of what their son/brother/husband has done or been involved in, and by portraying their son/brother/husband in a good light, they do the same for themselves.

Some of the participants also spoke about events that had taken place during their son/brother/husband's time in the army.

"...he had gone into some little town somewhere, and they were going to bomb the town, or do whatever they were going to do, and he had unintentionally shot a child who had been hiding, and the child, she was 14 years old. She'd come out of hiding, and he had obviously in his fear, and whatever was going on, he'd shot this child and killed her...every year, on that day, the 22nd of September, he will have a shut down for the day...he's kind of having his own little remembrance."
Angela
"He told us how they came through a little village in Angola, and he said there was just nothing, there was nobody left. Everybody was killed. He said a whole village, the bodies was just lying there. They didn't even bother to bury them; the pigs was just eating them, the bodies. He never eats pork after that."
Karen
"I think what happened, he was led in an ambush, and that's where they shot him. But I think he was overacting, and over excited or over acting too much, you know like a dog when you see smoke there, he runs to sniff it. That's what they did."
Erika
"...there had been an attack on the camp, that Andrew had a head injury, and that he was being stabilised before he could be flown to 1 Military Hospital in Pretoria...It was a dreadful shock to see him. He was the most seriously wounded of the boys. His head was twice its normal size and a bit like an egg on its side. He was filthy and smelled awful because he was incontinent. His left leg kept kicking upwards in spastic jerks and he was blood-spattered. His face was still covered in black boot polish...they had just returned from a foray into Angola. With no warning the camp was suddenly attacked and they all ran out with their weapons...One of Andrew's friends, Mark, had found Andrew a long time after the attack. He was lying, face down in a bunker, semi-conscious."
Joan

These events that have been mentioned by participants seem to all have had rather dire consequences, in that they either involve death or permanent brain damage, in the case of Joan's son. By describing these events, and highlighting the devastating nature of these events, these participants are seeking sympathy, and possibly pity and compassion. These events are spoken about in such a way that they make it clear that they have altered the lives of both the individuals who were on the Border as well as their families, and this is most probably done to emphasise the awfulness of the Border War.

Many participants mentioned that in the midst of these difficulties and the hardship of being in the army, much support was provided by the families of these men, and

made specific reference to the significance of letters sent between home and the Border. Any letters sent to or from the Border were however censored, but this seems not to have been a hindrance to some.

"...we kept in touch, I was forever sending him cakes and cookies and things like that."
Mary
"...I wrote him letters, I wrote some of his friends letters..."
Angela
"..with my younger sister, I think that's when their relationship became very close, because she was absolutely amazing, she was still at school at the time....and she wrote to him just about everyday...I seem to think that at one stage when Mark was on the three month camp, we had a family agreement that one of us would write everyday, so that there was sort of roster going through the family that we'd write."
Jenny
"...he wrote regularly for me...to me, and he was a very good son to me."
Erika
"...I would say he was pretty good at letter writing...he was pretty good with his letters, so in that way we were able to keep in contact....the letters were, if I remember correctly, they were opened, and so they had to be very careful what they could write in their letters. So it was normally pretty much a general letter."
Sarah
"...when he was in the army, I wrote to him every single day, every single day for all the years he was there, I wrote him a letter, or a card, but there was always something every day...we devised a language in our letters, which was quite fun. Because whenever there was something you couldn't say because it went through the censors, we would use capital letters in sentences to spell out words. So we had a little code...it's amazing how we developed that, so he could let me know what was going on all the time."
Debra
"Andrew wrote regularly. The letters were heavily censored but we had a code..."
Joan

Here the participants have highlighted a more positive aspect of life in the army, and in speaking about the support that they provided their son/brother/husband, they may be wanting to depict themselves as supportive and doing what they could to help.

Another positive aspect of life in the army mentioned by a few of the participants was the camaraderie, closeness and friendship that developed between the men.

"And for the men, a lot of them, they formed like a lasting relationship with guys in those situations. And Kevin's...one of his best friend was his little tent buddy, you know they shared the tent, and he could tell you how many mosquito bites Barry had on his face in one night, that kind of thing. And he's one of his best friends, you know, and I think they really built good bonds with their friends in that situation, some of them, which I think is a good thing."

Sarah

"He obviously built a close friendship with people who are in those kinds of situations in the army, in very dangerous situations, you die for friends, and you will defend your friend...he's very aware of what friendship is supposed to mean."

Pam

"...he still has friends that he met up on the border. Doctors, who were in his camp, who have become life long friends. So he really made incredible friends up there."

Jenny

These positive aspects have been mentioned are in direct contrast to the negativity previously spoken about in terms of life in the army. It is possible that some of the participants do mention things like support, letter writing and camaraderie in an attempt to see something positive in what appears to be a largely negative portrayal of life on the Border.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, a generally negative picture has been painted of conscription, the Border War, the SADF and apartheid government, and life in the army, despite some of the positive aspects mentioned about conscription and life in the army. A wide variety of political views were also presented: participants' views, participants' families' views, and the views of various communities and South African society as a whole during the 1970s and 1980s.

This chapter has in a sense provided the 'backdrop' for the other main category of discourse, 'Discourses of Effect', which constitutes the following chapter. The effects of military service and the Border War cannot be seen in isolation, and it is vital that these effects are placed in their correct context in order to fully understand them.

Chapter 4

Discourse Analysis:

Discourses of Effect

The effect of military experiences and time on the Border have no doubt had some kind of impact on the individuals concerned, as well as their families and those close to them. This impact obviously depends on the experiences of the individual soldiers, and will thus vary between individuals and families. However, it would be fair to say that the majority of soldiers and families in this study have been affected in an adverse manner. The way in which these effects are or were dealt with will be in some way dependent on the impact on both the individual soldier and his family. The degree of the effect of these experiences will also have influenced the feelings of families towards the affected individual, as well as their responses to this individual. This set of discourses can therefore be divided into four subsections: the effect on the soldier; the effect on families / life after the army; dealing with effects; and feelings towards / responses to the soldier.

The effect on the soldier

From this set of discourses, it appears as if the effect of military experiences on the Border have for some been quite profound, and a number of participants commented on the change that they noticed in their son/brother/husband.

" ...when you break someone down like that, you're actually doing damage to their soul, which is their will, their emotions, you know the whole area. And if it's not brought up in a healthy manner, they are left with like a whole new and changed personality, which is not the real them...the real person is somewhere locked inside...it's changed people's whole character, the way they think. It's changed their whole identity."

Laura

"I don't know whether it's more difficult to change your personality, as they do there, they do break you down. But then they don't really build them up again."

Debra

"And I noticed a change in him from the moment he put his uniform on, which was fascinating to me, because he changed, personality wise I would say. He changed, he became more aggressive, from not wanting to go, from the moment he put his uniform on, his hair was cut and everything, he was keen to get going."

Sarah

"And the thing that was very traumatic for me at that stage was the fact that he came back a different person. He had a total different personality...at the hospital we heard that they come back with what they called bossies*...He said he remembered one morning that he got up...he had this feeling that he was not Riaan anymore. He was somebody else...He said he always kind of feel that there was somebody, somebody else a shadow, or part of the shadow...So you kind of live with a man that's a different person."*

Karen

Some participants highlighted more specific change that they felt had come about as a result of being in the army by describing their son/brother/husband before he went to the Border. Some then compared this state to after he had been in the army and spoke about their impression of the effect that their military experiences had had on him.

"...my brother, was a soft, gentle, kind person, and he came back completely changed. Swearing, just a hard, horrible person. And a lot of violence and anger comes out at times, and it sort of goes smoothly for a while, and then suddenly something just triggers it...I've actually seen him when he gets like that, it's like, it's horrific, because even when you look at the person's face, it's not the person you see. I literally see demons on his face. And like he says himself, he says he can't control himself, something just comes...something devastating that just wants to kill and destroy and hurt..."

Laura

"I think it turned him from a very liberal little Durban guy, which he was when he was in Durban, it turned him into a racist. It absolutely did, without a doubt. I found his political views changed, the way he spoke about black people. That definitely changed...that was definitely a big change. And a radical change, a radical turn-around...they were absolutely drilled, you know this is your enemy, this is the kaffir. *My brother didn't speak Afrikaans when he went in, but my God when he came out he did."*

Debra

"I think he was one of those guys who was really happy-go-lucky. And he still now tries to be the happy-go-lucky guy, but there's this underlying current of 'I must not make a mistake; I must not make any mistakes'...his attitude is he doesn't want to admit that he's wrong."

Angela

"...with his own feelings that he did never want to hurt anybody, he didn't want to kill anybody. That was his emotional status when he went there. When he came back, because of the situation, it's reversed, and he nearly killed me and his mother..."

John

"...when my brother came back from the border...she felt like she'd lost a son, and got back some kind of animal...my brother was always one of those really good, well behaved types, and suddenly he couldn't eat properly and things like that."

Angela

"It feels to me as if it really messed up my husband. It feels to me as if the person that I got is a totally different person from the one I got to know as a young teenager."

Sandra

"There was a change in the way they behaved towards other people. I found that he couldn't communicate. He was a very outgoing kind of person, but it was very difficult for him to communicate with other people. He was distant; he didn't want me to get close to him."

Karen

"But he was always a quiet little boy, sweet little boy. I can always remember him sensitive...But he definitely went a lot quieter, definitely....there definitely was a change, but not immediately, definitely not immediately...he just, I think doesn't have the capacity for loving. I think he loves, but he just doesn't know how to show it...I think it's been lost definitely. He was always a very huggable, lovable kid. And I think that he's lost that, very much so. I think it's something that he thinks 'what's the use, why bother', you know."

Yvonne

"...in fact he doesn't show much emotion at all. And when I've talked to him about it, he says there's no need to show emotion...And I've started realising that something in here was tied up to the army...You just see this outer façade of the good guy, but you don't...you can't have an in-depth conversation with him; he doesn't go depth...Nothing where anything emotional is involved...He's like this steel bar, who will not let anyone in..."

Angela

"When he came back...it would take a little while for him to unwind, and he would be aggressive...when I say aggressive, he was never aggressive towards me, but he would be uptight, he'd react very quickly to situations. If something happened, he would get a fright easily, he would react strongly I would say, maybe more than aggressive to certain situations, noise, anything like that, he would react to."

Sarah

"He's 41, he has never adjusted socially. He cannot interact in a group at all. He has no social skills whatsoever...He became rebellious, non-conformist...He became incredibly reclusive, but secretive ... he wouldn't disclose things about himself."

Liz

"Well it's just that he sort of withdrew, you know, he withdrew into his room, he wouldn't really socialise. We had our own tennis court, and as a family we used to play tennis every so often...if he did do something wrong on the tennis court, he would get so cross with them, something that was

there never before, you know. It was a crossness in him, and he didn't know how to bring that crossness out. He was very cross, and he didn't know how to bring it across, how to cope with it. "
Ursula
"...he came back very subdued...I think it made him less able to express his feelings, he sort of built up this wall around him."
Jenny
"So when he came out of the army, he was very...I would say very shaky psychologically...I felt that he really had got himself into a bit of a state...he'd sit and catch flies and do really stupid things, and we were really quite worried about him, because he didn't have anything other than the army. It was quite disturbing to see him just be...it's hard to describe the way that he was really."
Debra

Some participants claim that the effect of military experiences on the Border has come in the form of fear that permeates their son/brother/husband's life.

"...he's a nervous, scared person. I know in our counselling, that the chap working with him said many times, 'Willem, you're a scared person. Speak about the things that scare you. Because above all your therapy, across everything is written fear.' Fear, fear. He's scared. Scared of the dark, scared of weapons ...He's a fear-filled person."
Sandra
"He said that 'but I feel that, and I think that they feel that I have killed people.' He says 'and I have such an immense fear that I might do it again...I still have this immense fear that in a moment of being ambushed for instance', he said 'that old army training will come forward'. He said 'and I will just kill, you know.' But it's a fear that lives with him."
Ursula
"And he saw his friends that died in front of him, as closer relationships, and that he missed more than anything else. And now he found someone that he can talk to, and he's got this fear, continual fear, that he's going to lose that too...this fear won't let him go."
Pam

Some specific effects were highlighted by participants, such as problems with sleeping and nightmares that were experienced by soldiers.

"And the nightmares that he had. And I got so used to these nightmares that it didn't bother me after some years. But in the beginning, he woke up at night, drenched in sweat, and he said he saw these people, they tried to kill them, and how they had to run. So he had these nightmares all the time."
Karen
"And I noticed that he never slept with the light off; it was always on, and I thought maybe he'd fallen asleep reading or something, but it was every night. And one thing that I remember quite distinctly, I was reading one night, it was about 11pm, and I was in the lounge, and he was in his room. The

light was on, but the door was closed, and he came crashing out of the bedroom, sort of wide-eyed and this wild look in his eyes, and this flailing. And I said what was wrong, and he said 'I keep having these terrible dreams, I just keep having these awful dreams'...I reckoned that it had something to do with his experiences on the Border..."

Yvonne

"...he sleeps extremely fitfully. He talks in his sleep. That was also a time when he came out of the army. He talked in his sleep and would awake with a start...And he works with many black people, and so those fears returned. He started having nightmares again and talking in his sleep..."

Sandra

A few participants also noticed in their son/brother/husband a flippancy and a carelessness about life that they believed was a result of time spent on the Border.

"So when they come back to the real world, there's a flippancy about everything...In fact he was quite rebellious when he came back. He had a recklessness about him. It was not there when he was a boy."

Liz

"I found him to be very careless with his own life. I wouldn't go as far as to say a death wish, but he really took big chances, and at one stage he ended up in hospital in Pretoria after a car crash, which, I mean he was drinking and driving and what have you, but that's not him, he was never like that before, and he hasn't been like that since...if Nick had been killed in this car accident, it was a very serious car accident, I would have blamed the army for that. Because I felt that it affected him to the degree that it did cause him to be drinking and to be unreasonable, and sort of he's only here for a short time, and what the hell, he could die any minute."

Debra

"And he's had many brushes with death, really scary things have happened to him. Which I think is also kind of part of that, I'm not sure, but I would imagine that people that have been through something like that have different attitudes to life and death..."

Angela

A number of participants remarked that another possible area in which individuals who spent time on the Border may have been affected is with relationships, particularly with women.

"...it was recommended that he stay at the psychological section of 1 Mil for six months...during this period that Andrew started smoking grass...At this stage he met a girl and they had a serious relationship for about 18 months. This did a lot to boost his self-esteem but unfortunately didn't stop him from smoking his weed and the girl eventually broke it off with him because of that. Since then he has not met anyone else and I know that he feels desperate about it. He says he'd love to be

married and have children but who would be interested in a cripple."

Joan

"...he's very much still in love with his wife...she left him for someone much younger than her...she's just mentioned how Sean is not at all interested in his children, how he never was around for them, how he'd disappear for long periods of time, and how Sean is not there. She used to say 'my husband lives in a dream world; he's not down to earth, he's not realistic.' "

Pam

"...he's had quite disastrous drama with the girlfriend who went to Australia with him...And then he was attracted to a girl who I think was a bit of a psychopath...if he met the right woman I think it would be the answer, you know somebody who was sort of cheerful..."

Mary

"..it took him a while to form any relationships with girls or what have you. He had a couple of girlfriends before, but, he became not a very good judge of character, and very unwilling to form any kind of relationship. He went through a stage of having these flings, and affairs with married women..."

Debra

"Greg got married, he was only 21, and they got divorced just not very long after that. But I don't think he'll ever marry again. But he said to me, he says 'you know, I have a feeling that a woman can feel, that there's an undercurrent of viciousness in me'...he said to me, 'you know, I can't understand at all how we could have ever got married.' He said 'I must admit, I gave her a tough time, I only realise that now.' "

Ursula

According to the discourses of some participants, the effect of these military experiences on some individuals may have been particularly traumatic, and the damage brought about is in some cases irreversible.

"He told us that the right side of Andrew's body was semi-paralysed, that he was suffering from paresis of the right side. At the time we didn't know what the prognosis was. We didn't know if he would ever hear properly again, or walk, or even talk...The following weeks saw Andrew improve in leaps and bounds...His memory began to improve and most wonderful of all, he hadn't lost his wonderful sense of humour. He had to learn to read and write all over again...He had been assessed by the resident psychologist who said that there was a 'deficit' and that Andrew's IQ was now 100 (dropped from 139). At least he was normal and I knew that the deficit was to do with short-term memory loss, speech and hearing loss etc and not intellect."

Joan

"...he was model citizen for our country...I said 'Chris, you've got the potential in yourself, you must start resurrecting from the dead. That's virtually where it is...And I believe the end of the story won't be tragic...I believe he's going to become somebody against all opposition, because he has the faith in Jesus, he has the knowledge, he's no fool, he can answer the phone. Nobody even knows that he's schizophrenic if he speaks on the phone...at the moment, he's calm, he's collected, he's very

sensible, and very obedient, I will not go against him...he went into the Vietnam mode, which is anti-socialism, that was first noticeable...What obviously happened on the border was something he couldn't handle. Most of them couldn't handle, because of the severity of it. To the effect that the brain is affected, it has to be affected by these things."

John

"...that's actually where he discovered that he possibly had post-traumatic stress disorder. Before, we all thought he was just being impossible, difficult, there wasn't a label that we could give it...there's times he sort of sleeps for three days, and eventually I've got to go in and put my foot down...it gets pretty depressing living with a depressive."

Yvonne

"...I also think a lot of negative things came out of that...I think the army messed up my husband's sexual life. Totally, totally messed up...when our second baby was born, Willem began...on his own to phone sex chat lines, and then to go to strip shows...he began to visit escort agencies and never in our relationship was I aware of it. Whatsoever...I still think some of those things must, must have come out of his army time, because that was his first real exposure to sex..."

Sandra

In some of the other discourses on the effects, some participants may not have spoken about the effects of Border experiences as being as traumatic as those mentioned above. However, they do maintain that these experiences have definitely had a lasting effect on the way these men's lives have turned out, and some participants mentioned that their son/brother/husband has battled to find direction, achieve or settle down in life, despite having the potential to do so.

"...he can't get direction in life. He knows what he wants to do and which way he wants to go, but it's like he just can't get there."

Laura

"But he hasn't been able to settle down to anything. He has fits of depression, where he says he can't get himself moving to do anything. And what he's doing at the moment, there's nothing wrong with Steven's brain, he could be doing anything, he's renovating houses. And it seems such a waste...It's just that he's got so much potential which he's not fulfilling, and he says that himself. I don't know whether it's because of the army, or what?"

Mary

"...it was a terrible thing for me having three sons, very talented, very intelligent children, he goes to the army, goes to war, he comes back, and I can just never find him again...you have a son that just can't work and can't find his feet...And that is a terrible thing for me now, because for the first time, I'm living with that and saying to myself this was what was wrong with this child all along. This is why he can't find his feet. And please dear God, may he just find his feet now, you know."

Ursula

"It really took him a while to wind down, and sort of get his life back into order. He didn't know what he wanted to do at all. This had totally thrown him off track."

Debra

"I was hoping, he was a good looking man, I was hoping he was going to get married, etc etc, his head was screwed on right....And I believe it's no fault of the family, it's no fault of our background, it's no fault of his teaching, it's no fault of his schooling, everything as you can see is prosperous. He should have been prosperous. What's happened, it's reversed the situation because they were put into a situation that was very bleak."

John

"And I was the one sort of in the middle, and putting out fires, and saying do this and do that. And it was pretty traumatic to see him actually deteriorating, you know. He sort of couldn't hold down a job, I mean he was freelancing, but he did well, but then he'd make enough money to get by, and then that would be it...when I see a person of Mark's capabilities and talents, and if I had that much talent, well, I'd be made. But I just used to see it as a waste, you know that he just didn't use it, that he's just so capable...I think a big chunk of Mark's life is lost, it's just gone..."

Yvonne

Some claimed that the effects or consequences were not necessarily negative, and the changes brought about could have been positive.

"...he doesn't want to fight, he doesn't want to fight back, he's very anti-violence...he's very placid. He's gone the opposite of what he used to be: incredibly aggressive, non-feeling, cold individual..."

Pam

"I think that had a positive effect in the long run. It made him quite capable...So I think the medic experience in the long run was a good one."

Debra

"And I think in that aspect it brought about positive change, because he became more of an extrovert than he was before...he came out of himself more, he gained more confidence...he learnt many things."

Sandra

There appears to be little variation between accounts in terms of the effect that military experiences have had on the men involved. Some variation however will be evident to some extent, owing to the fact that each individual that spent time on the Border will have his own unique set of experiences, as will each family, and these unique experiences will have varying effects. The effects however are similar in that they are generally negative, and the majority of participants, although mentioning some positive effects, have clearly focussed on the negative. This could be for two reasons, both of which have already been referred to. Firstly, participants may have

spoken about the negative effects in order to gain sympathy and to elicit feelings of compassion and pity for the soldiers and their families. Secondly, by stressing the adverse effects, they are also putting the army in a negative light, thereby making it easier to blame the SADF and the government for these effects as well as the changes that have been brought about in their son/brother/husband. Some participants have expressed these feelings of blame by inferring that the army and time on the Border are directly responsible for what has happened to their son/brother/husband, and that these experiences have unmistakably changed him.

The effect on families / Life after the army

One could not expect soldiers to be affected by their experiences on the Border without this having some effect on those close to them as well, and this negative effect was acknowledged by some of the participants.

"It's brought, without those people knowing, bondage into lives, and families can't function properly, and a son wonders why he can't have this relationship with his mother that he had before he left...I can see the destruction that's coming in families. It's been going nicely for years, but then something just needs to trigger those things, and then the whole family just crumbles, and people don't understand why."

Laura

"...we had to deal, not only with the patients, but with the trauma, the psychological trauma of that, but also with the parents and with the families...So many marriages came to an end because of this. I think it was such an uncertain situation...it was abnormal."

Karen

"There are a lot of hurting families who can't accept it, and tragedies are happening..."

John

Apart from speaking about the effect on families in general, participants also spoke about the effect that their son/brother/husband's experiences on the Border had on their life personally and on their families, and some expressed their feelings about this, such as grief, bitterness or frustration.

"With regard to how it affected me, us, basically it's had quite a lot of negative influence on my family...It's drained me, literally drained me...I have given...lost too much of myself in this whole thing, because it was so intense. I mean the things that he's told me, I used to have terrible nightmares as well."

Pam

"...I wanted to murder him, and both of us wanted to commit suicide. It was a very traumatic time."

Sandra

"...he's cost me a lot of money, he's cost me a lot of sleepless nights, and a lot of tears...there's times he sort of sleeps for three days, and eventually I've got to go in and put my foot down, and say get up, get a life, have a shower, come and eat, and then he's fine. And I find if you give him things to do he'll do it, but it never comes from him, and there's no sort of emotion. And it gets pretty depressing living with a depressive...He drained me. I remember thinking that he just drained me..."

Yvonne

"Well, the result of Mark's experiences was that he went to Australia...it had long-term effects on our family. It was not any of our family choice to live in Australia, but because of what happened in the army, it was a direct...it directly impacted on his decision to go."

Jenny

"Well, he came back to live with us, as I say. That was for a while like having another child, because he wasn't ready to go into a job..."

Debra

"On the one hand as a wife staying behind on my own, I had to take all the responsibility. And you work yourself up in such a state that when you see him, you also kind of react abnormal, and you want to get rid of this responsibility...And I as a wife, we didn't have a clue what was going on, we didn't experience that side, and not to come together and exchange feelings - what was it like for you to be at home, what was it like for you to be on the border?"

Karen

"Over the long-term, it's had quite a devastating effect. Because as I said to you, these outbursts of anger, it's led to family ructions like you cannot imagine. I have a father who's already a bit of a problem case, temper wise. And it has caused terrible, terrible fights...it's had devastating effects...And as I say, not only on himself, on his personal family, his wife, and his children, obviously they get the brunt of the anger and that kind of stuff...when you don't understand, and suddenly you have to bear the brunt of all of this, it does also cause all sorts of problems within a marriage."

Laura

"...it had a terrible effect on our family. Because it almost put a wedge eventually between me and the other two boys...the boys did so well, and here came this younger brother that simply can't go anywhere, and they all had a suspicion that whatever little money I may have had all went down to Greg, which is true."

Ursula

"The family didn't come together because Adrian came home, or Adrian had experiences. I think everyone in their own...in their own way, recognised it, but as a family, we never discussed it."

Liz

"...it doesn't effect me in a huge way, it doesn't make me sort of...I don't get terribly emotional about it, I get more frustrated..."

Angela

"...every time I think of my beautiful broken son, I get a pain in the middle of my chest. I don't think you ever get over grief. I wish it could have been me. I'm the mom. I'm supposed to be the one who protects her children."

Joan

"But how can one explain soreness?...it's something you can't explain to anybody...The rawness...I can't tell you it takes five years to go over your husband's death, more or less. But it takes you ten years if you've lost a child...So you know, you get in sort of a depression mode...it's difficult to get out of it again. But in any case. And so you must maar[vii] *make the best of it. To be bitter, you know, a bitter old person is a very difficult old person to live with. So you must try not to be bitter. And sometimes you can't help yourself but be bitter about it, and ask all the questions...if you haven't had trauma in your own life, it's difficult...it is difficult to describe to someone who has never had it. You can speak of your nights of heartache, of your days of heartache, you can...you live hour by hour to get through this day...I can pour out my heart, and I can give it to you, and it won't be enough."*

Erika

Participants also mentioned the effect on some of their other family members.

"...my husband drove to Johannesburg with our other two children, a son of 17 and a daughter of 15. They were devastated when they saw Andrew. Gareth broke down and locked himself in the hospital loo for an hour. Claire was also very tearful."

Joan

"But I know that that effected my mom, because when me brother came from the border, I remember her going into, what now I can see was a depression."

Angela

"I think his mother found it very traumatic. The whole army was an awful time for his mother."

Sandra

Once again, participants are focussing on the negative effects and on the negative emotions associated with these effects, and this may be done for the same purpose as mentioned before – to evoke sympathy, portray the SADF and government in a negative light and direct blame at the SADF and government for these effects. There seems to be almost no variation among participants' descriptions of these effects, however an interesting variation is evident in one participant's account of her grief after losing her son in the Border war. Erika makes it clear that she has experienced a great deal of grief over the loss of her son, and has battled not to be bitter about the incident. She describes her grief as so intense that it is almost as if

she cannot explain it to anyone. This depiction of grief is then contrasted with a number of comments that she made throughout the course of the interview:

"So, I don't know what to tell you...That's all I have to tell you. I haven't got anything more to tell you...So I haven't got anything more to tell you really...Now I've said enough. I think I've finished now..."
Erika

It would appear that by making these comments, Erika is trying to downplay her grief and make out as if it is insignificant. A possible reason for doing this is that she may feel guilty about any feelings of grief or bitterness, and maybe feels some kind of loyalty to the SADF and the apartheid government. She might see her expression of grief and bitterness as being unfaithful to what she previously believed in and supported, and therefore tries to conceal this grief by making out as if she has nothing worthwhile to say.

Dealing with effects

It is should be clear now that both the soldiers that were on the Border as well as their families have been affected negatively to some degree, and it would seem logical to suppose that these individuals and families are going to need to deal with these effects in some or other way. Just as the effects of experiences on the Border vary between individuals and families, so do the ways of dealing with these effects.

In these discourses, it appears that the majority of participants saw communicating about experiences on the Border as an important component of dealing with the effects of these experiences. A possible reason for why this way of dealing with effects was so widely spoken of is that what happened on the Border was to a large extent shrouded in secrecy, and men were prohibited, by law to speak about their experiences, and what they saw or did. Some participants then claim that as a result of this, many individuals who were on the Border have become secretive about their time in the SADF and do not talk about it easily.

"Steven told me that they were actually told that they were not to mention anything of what they'd seen. Well, that's terrible. And they were told that there would be severe consequences if they did.

And I think that's why they didn't talk about it."

Mary

"And he came back very subdued. He said he'd had to give a written oath that he wouldn't talk about his experiences up there..."

Jenny

"But he's still in that army kind of mental state, which just involves him being very secretive."

Pam

"...he said what was drummed into them was 'put a guard over your mouth', but not in a Godly sense. So in other words, it was drummed into them not to speak, whatever I suppose if they got captured or whatever, I suppose that was the whole idea behind it. He said that he's realised that that is what has kept him all these years from speaking, because it's been programmed into his mind, you know, 'though shalt not speak, set a guard over your mouth.' "

Laura

This secrecy was also mentioned by a participant who was affiliated to the army (worked in a military hospital) and they too were to keep silent about what was going on.

"...we were not allowed to talk to the outsiders, not even my family...my family didn't know a thing, because I was not allowed to tell them. There was no support from my family; we had to cope through this without support...We were not even allowed to write a letter, or tell anybody about anything, because everything was all so secret...it was such a hush-hush thing, and everything was so secret..."

Karen

A few participants also commented that the experiences of soldiers may have been difficult to deal with, possibly making it even harder to speak about their time on the Border.

"...there was a lot of things, most things, he didn't tell them about the army, I suppose there's a lot of things you don't want your mother to know about, what you're doing..."

Debra

"So they came back with that, they...never wanted to talk about, because it was so raw, it was so immense."

Ursula

"But he says too, for a long time it's been very hard for him, because of what he saw, because of what he experienced. To even talk about it, he says it's like something he's just kept it down, kept it down, but he realises that it's going to destroy him...So he says from his perspective, he feels that's why he feels he's never been able to talk about it. Because his mind said no, no, no."

Laura

A number of participants expressed that by being aware of this secrecy and silence, one is then more aware of the value of men speaking about their experiences on the Border.

"...he's grown in the space of 5 years that I've known him into a more whole human being, and I feel that I have been very much a part of that, not through knowing about it all, but just through allowing him to talk...and to just talk about them, to actually talk about them, which you were never allowed to...It took him two years to actually get to the stage where he was comfortable about talking to me...anything that's hidden, anything like secrets, to have a bad habit of turning in and destroying yourself...and rotting you from the inside out. That's why everything that's in you should actually just come out...once you let it out, they lose their impact."

Pam

"So it's been easier to deal with it, easier to sort of encourage him, and say this is why this is happening, and talk about it, just talk about it."

Laura

"And I think until they can talk about that kind of thing, or until they could talk about that kind of thing, there was always a wall between you, because you didn't understand what they'd experienced, and what they'd been through...If he had to come back and not talk about where he'd been and what he'd been doing, what he'd experienced, why he's feeling like he's feeling, and why he's reacting like he's reacting, then you can't understand it, then you can't feel any empathy or whatever with him for that. I think, ja I reckon if you did get that situation, it can only drive you apart."

Sarah

"...he spoke a lot about it. Maybe not even enough, maybe there are still things that bother him."

Sandra

"And then we had the chance to talk, because you can't talk about things like that too much on the phone...with Tim being so ill, and everybody in an emotional state, I suppose it was a time to talk, and we did, we talked very long and hard..."

Mary

One participant also mentioned that talking about her son's death on the Border had helped her to deal with it.

"And you need to talk about it. Every trauma in your life...you must talk about it. You must have a good friend, or a mother or a father or somebody who can just listen...if you're able to talk, if you don't talk it all block up inside your system...I think the best medicine is to talk about your heart sore."

Erika

Participants seem to agree that the SADF's policy about keeping silent about what happened on the Border is not right and is not beneficial for those involved. By holding the SADF responsible for enforcing this silence and, in some cases,

emphasising the traumatic nature of Border experiences, participants are once again casting the SADF in a negative light. While the SADF is portrayed as bad by keeping men quiet, it appears that participants want to be seen as good. They attempt to do this by emphasising the importance of talking and showing support to these men, and highlighting the supportive role that they have played in encouraging men to speak about their experiences, thus putting themselves in a positive light.

Apart from the reasons mentioned above as to why men who spent time on the Border are reluctant to talk about their experiences, some participants felt that men in general find it difficult to talk and to express their emotions. A number of possible explanations for this are offered in their discourses: socialisation and upbringing teaches men to keep their emotions to themselves, and this may be particularly relevant in the Afrikaans culture; men and women are just made differently; and the army encouraged men not to show their emotions.

"The men don't talk. You do get men that do not talk. And they'll just shut it away, and put it in a compartment."

Sarah

"...but the way they chatted was not in the way that women chat about things, to try resolve something. It would be a...'look at this, look what I did to this, or I did to that', not anything psychological. I don't know, women just do it instinctively, try analyse things, but men don't...I mean men don't talk. They really don't talk. I mean I've yet to find a man that will really say exactly what he feels."

Liz

"...I think men battle more...more with it. But I think it is an individual thing to a degree, because there are men that can talk about their feelings. But I think that women feel safer talking about it. We trust more...But men are distrustful, they don't believe that someone else can protect or nurture their secrets. Maybe even that comes from the army...why do they always mistrust people so? What can't they simply relax and say, 'well, that happened, and I felt sad about it' or whatever? Why do they clam up? Isn't it precisely the army who taught them to close up like that?...People also say Afrikaans men are more inclined...they must be a man and are not allowed to cry, and they mustn't talk about their emotions."

Sandra

"And then she said because women cry about things, they talk about it, but men are so different. They just bundle it up...he told me that as a boy, he grew up 'men doesn't cry'. He said when he started his career in the Defence Force, he was an instructor so he was not allowed to show his emotions."

Karen

All these comments regarding the differences between men and women's ability to talk have been made by women. It has already been mentioned how talking has been identified as valuable and helpful, and it is possible that by claiming that women talk more easily than men, these women are implying that women cope better than men, thereby creating a positive image of women in comparison to men.

Still on the issue of talking, a few participants spoke about their exposure to or perceptions of therapy, which is sometimes referred to as the 'talking cure', and was used by some as a means of dealing with the effects of military experiences.

"The problem lies...not even on a sexual level, concerns his whole self-image, how he expresses himself as a man...what came out in our counselling, or shall I say what this man said to us is that the initial reason, as far as he can deduce from all the individual counselling that he did with Willem...he did a lot of individual counselling with him, crises management in the beginning because I wanted to murder him..."

Sandra

"...when he was in the army, we organised a psychologist to go speak to him...my parents are from a generation where if you go see a psychologist, you've absolutely just totally lost your marbles, and you're ready to be locked away...I think my mother felt guilty also that I'd said to her I've organised a psychologist to go...she didn't really see it as too much of a problem. She thought it was something he could easily cope with, and that I was fussing unnecessarily, he was fine."

Debra

"...when he left the Defence Force, he actually had to go...he went to a psychologist, but it actually was very much 'she just made me play games...basically told me I was mad'...for him, I was the sounding board, so it was obviously very helpful for him. But now...I'm having to go for therapy. I'm actually having to go to a counsellor for help now, because I think that I've actually, in the process harmed myself as well."

Pam

"I have been to a therapist...he came along one day with me, no, he came on his own. He said he would go because I had a problem, so he would go to see what he could do to sort the problem out. And obviously when you talk to a therapist, they're not interested in how you want to help so-and-so sort their problem, they want to help you with what your problem is. She said to me 'Angela, that was the hardest two hours I've ever had', and she's been a therapist for 30 years."

Angela

"...he phoned and he said he was in George, and he'd been seeing a psychologist, and then he told me that he was going to put himself into Valkenburg on the recommendation of the psychologist."

Yvonne

"We sent him to a shrink but he refused to continue after one session."

Joan

"I think a lot has changed though, I think that there are more younger men in therapy than there used to be in the past."
Liz

There seems to be little variation in these discourses on therapy, as women have generally been associated in these discourses with more positive or neutral views on therapy, whereas men have been generally associated with more negative views of therapy, excepting for Yvonne's brother, Mark. A possible reason for Yvonne's reporting of Mark's positive experience and perception of therapy is that she has seen it to be instrumental in his recovery process. With regards to other participants, the link between talking and therapy has already been acknowledged, and that by highlighting women's positive perceptions of therapy, participants are restating the point that because women find it easier to talk, they cope better, and this once again creates a positive impression of women.

The support of others was also identified by participants as a factor that can help both soldiers and their family members deal with the effects. Some also mentioned the difficulty associated with lack of support.

"...the support of our friends was amazing. I'm sorry the same can't be said about the army."
Joan
"I think it would have been unbelievably difficult time had I not in the meantime undergone this paradigm shift with regard to coloured people. Because in our divorce, in the trauma of our divorce, they were my support system. My closest friends, because all my family is still in Johannesburg, it was me alone here, not my mother nor anybody else is here, so my closest female friends with whom I can talk and who support me were all coloureds."
Sandra
"I don't want my children to suffer more than they have to. There's a limit to everything, and I believe that the parents must get together."
John
"And whenever Mark hit the wall or I had a problem, I'd phone Marius and say 'what do I do now? This is whatever'...and he cares a lot about my brother, definitely."
Yvonne
"...there was a good support system at the hospital, we had our social workers, and we had our psychologists at the hospital...the people that stayed behind, the fact that they were not allowed to talk about anything, the fact that we didn't have support from one another..."
Karen

"And there's been a couple of times...difficult to cope with I would say, in a sense that you don't have your support, your husband, your friends, you know that kind of thing. That I found very difficult to cope with."
Sarah
"...my father, as I said, has always been 'cowboys don't cry', that sort of harsh attitude, that's what he's always had. So he didn't get much support, he's never had much support from my dad."
Laura

A few participants claimed that they found it easier to deal with their situation by identifying with others who were in a similar situation to them.

"We hated it, but you know everyone was doing it, and we kind of got on with it."
Jenny
"I think you just had to get on with it and cope. I knew at the time quite a few people whose husbands had...his friends, you know, they were all called up together at the same time. And we did it, we just had to get on with it; we just had to cope. If you were in the same vicinity, we were sort of like a bit of a support network...we could understand and empathise with one another, because we were in the same situation."
Sarah

In these discourses, variation is evident in that some participants have felt support while others haven't, and this can be attributed to different circumstances, family situation etc. Despite this variation, what emerges from these discourses is that support is important and necessary, and it could be significant that none of these participants mentioned the army as a source of support. One participant even remarked on the lack of support from the SADF, once again putting the SADF in a negative light.

A number of participants spoke about some of the difficulties that they or their son/brother/husband had encountered (or are still encountering) while trying to deal with the effects of military experiences on the Border. Some of them expressed the feeling that there needed to be the initial step of identifying the extent of the problem and facing up to it, knowing what one has to deal with, or coming to terms with what happened, and being able to let go. Some participants also expressed the belief that part of this process involves the individual that has been affected taking the initiative and the first step in dealing with these effects.

"I don't know...what damage it really does...I don't know if they bury it so deeply and simply never want to think about it again and totally encapsule it...I need to find out from somebody like you what consequences it has because I...I don't know what damage it causes on a long term basis."

Sandra

"...I think the most difficult part was not knowing where they were going, had they arrived safely, how they were being treated, what they were doing. That was, I would say a very difficult part of coping with it. I think if it had of been more open...I think maybe you could accept things like that better. I've always been one for knowing. I need to know. If there's something wrong with me, I must know, then I'll deal with it."

Sarah

"He must look forward and realise, we're a product of our past, but we can lose the shackles. We've still got a choice. And I keep saying to him you've got the choice; I've got the choice and I know how to react to things, I can be strong, I can be proactive; I don't have to be determined by these things...take up charge...in the very early stages of when we met, and there was a suitcase, and there were things there from his experiences...And he asked me to take this box, just take it, because he said it held too much for him, and he wanted to let it go, and it was all symbolic, and he left it with me."

Pam

"But I also realised that I couldn't help him if he didn't really want to help himself, I tried...he discovered that he possibly had post-traumatic stress disorder. Before we all thought he was just being impossible, difficult, and there wasn't a label that we could give it...And I think once Mark had a name, or a label to how he was feeling, I think he...he realised there was actually something wrong with him...I reckon America faced exactly the same problems...with their Vietnam veterans. They had a major, major problem, and until they recognised it, and realised that they had a problem...And I think our guys certainly are in the same boat...And you see these are things that Mark has to face, come to terms with, and just find closure. He has to. He's made that decision; he can't keep harping back on it. It's destroying him."

Yvonne

"He has reached the stage of not being prepared to help himself and we just don't know how to help him ourselves."

Joan

"I had his body cremated and I had it buried in his father's grave...that's part and parcel of it. And then you must just go on with you life."

Erika

"Adrian has never chosen to deal with it, and he doesn't find his behaviour odd, and then who am I to say that he should do something about it?...he hasn't identified anything within himself. If Adrian came to me and said 'you know Liz, I'm really...I'm not coping', but I don't think he sees it that way."

Liz

There is significant variation in these sets of discourses, and this is most probably related to differing circumstances, and the fact that individuals who were on the

Border and their families have been affected to varying degrees. The variation in construction suggests a range of functions: trying to understand the issue, trying to get the individual who has been on the Border to admit that he has a problem, or at least realise that there is a problem, trying to help the individual and motivate him to get on with life, or blaming the system for making things difficult.

Some participants mentioned that their belief and faith in God along with prayer had helped them (as well as their son/brother/husband in some cases) deal with the effects of their son/brother/husband's experiences on the Border.

"And of course, you have your belief in God, that's the other way to work through it...if you haven't got your religion to fall back on...you don't know how to cope. That's the only thing I can tell you....God gave me knees to stand on. And that's the only way...I don't know how you can cope if you haven't got a religion."

Erika

"But I think through everybody's faith, has sort of held things together...I think it's prayers that carried him through, to deal with it...My side, personally, I think it's become better...and the change has been faith and walking with the Lord and not trying to sort out these things in your own strength."

Laura

"...what really kept me through those three months was my...it was my faith."

Karen

"I'd say strong Christian principles, with my father being an Anglican priest."

Jenny

"I believe he's going to become somebody against all opposition, because he has the faith in Jesus...you take every negative thing that's thrown at you and you go over to the Lord, and you say 'Lord, what do I do in a situation like this?' And I can guarantee to you, I can prove it to you, I can testify to you that when my mind is made up, that God is on my side, you can't be against me."

John

"...now he's turned immensely religious. And I think the religion came from wanting to be alone, wanting to shut himself off in the mountains. He came here one day, and he took one of the flowers, and he said to me, have you ever looked at the perfection of a flower? And I think that made him decide, there is a God up there, because this little flower is so absolutely perfect, that no human hand could put it together like that. So maybe that's his saving grace."

Ursula

These participants have all spoken positively about their Christian faith and how it has helped them to deal with and overcome difficulty. Their reason for doing this is most probably to describe something that is meaningful and important to them, and

to testify to the fact that their faith has played a pivotal role in helping them come to terms with the effects of the Border War.

A number of participants remarked on the closeness of their family or their close relationship with their son/brother/husband, and it is possible that this closeness has played an important role in helping them deal with the effects of their son/brother/husband's military experiences.

"I'd say we're a very close family...I think in change and difficulties we're very supportive of each other; I do notice that, there's a lot of rallying around when there's things to be faced in the family."
Jenny
"...we're very close my brother and I, very close indeed..."
Debra
"...we've always been close, we've always had a close relationship. He's suffered a similar sort of fate under my dad...so I think that just drew us together in itself."
Laura
"Our family life was very well established. And the fact that we always had lots of fun, and we'd often get together...very resilient! There was nothing wrong with us!"
Mary
"I believed that we coped very well with it. We've always been very close, and we've had a very loving relationship, and very open, ok. And I do believe that that helped us to deal with it."
Sarah
"One is afraid of boring other people but he was the father of my child and I could bore him to death with my grief because he felt the same way."
Joan
"...it's brought me very close to this person, incredibly close."
Pam

One participant expressed quite conflicting views of her family and the closeness of its members.

"...we were quite a close family, we had our hassles, but quite a close knit family...these outbursts of anger, it's led to family ructions like you cannot imagine. I have a father who's already a bit of a problem case, temper wise. And it has just caused terrible, terrible fights, because he would fly off the handle, and it would eventually involve three, four or 5 different people...We're a strange family. It's only sort of coming together now. I think more with my mom, my sister and my mom, and my brother and myself are quite close. My dad is a whole different story, you know, he's never sort of really been connected to anybody."
Laura

Two participants claimed that these close relationships have led to dependency.

"So he was in most close contact with me, and when he came out of the army, it actually made him very dependent on me after that, because I was really the one person that he told everything to and went through everything with...He didn't do anything without consulting me...it's only, I would say a good ten years before that started to wear off, the total dependency on me."
Debra
"...now he's actually making an effort to work through it, but misdirected, in that he's leaning on someone, where he's actually got to deal with it himself, and he's leaning on me...I keep on saying to him, you can't come around as often as you do, because at one time it was actually every day, every night and weekends...and phone calls, I get phone calls three times a day, every day for 5 years."
Pam

Those participants that have spoken of close family and other relationships are most likely doing so to paint a positive picture of their family or of themselves. It is possible that these participants esteem closeness in relationships and in their family, and would like to see their family and relationships as being in line with these aspirations. The conflicting views that Laura expresses also fit in with this explanation, in that she sees family closeness as important and meaningful and would like her family to be seen as a close family. However, her comments that suggest that her family has experienced some difficulties may be an expression of reality, which is not congruent with how she desires her family to be.

A number of other ways of dealing with the effects were mentioned by participants, and these can be divided into two categories: those that help the participant and the participant's family, and those that assist the participants' son/brother/husband.

Ways of dealing with the effects of experiences on the Border that were spoken about and that pertain to the individual who was on the Border include: having time to recover directly after coming back from the Border; making reparation for wrongs committed in the past, which may involve helping others; families showing understanding, support and encouragement towards the soldier; and making others aware of the effect that military experiences have had.

"So when he came out of the army...he came to live with us...I felt he needed that period of adjustment... they go through the whole posttraumatic stress, which wasn't even mentioned in those

days. Ja, I think it was very important to have that little regroup thing, and not have to be responsible for anything, and to deal with what you've seen and what you'd heard and done."

Debra

"...the way he tried to make reparation for what he did was obviously was...any person of colour, because now obviously he was fighting against the enemy, and the enemy happened to be black, he would go out of his way to be nice, but in a way where he ended up getting hurt...I think he saw that as payment for what he had done."

Yvonne

"But every year on that day, the 22nd of September, he will have a shut down for the day. In fact in the beginning of the year, he'll put in his diary, 'my public holiday', and he just shuts down for the day, and he's really difficult to be with and whatever...And his thing is out of respect for the life that he took, on that day he won't work, he will remember it, and so he's kind of having his own little remembrance...he says 'no well, it's out of respect for this person'...People who meet him, everyone loves him, because he'll give everyone whatever they need...I just feel that the 'too good to be true' thing is his way of paying back what happened there..."

Angela

"But it's only now that we really understand where he's been coming from and why. So it's been easier to deal with it, easier to sort of encourage him, and say this is why this is happening, and talk about, just talk about it. Why are you feeling angry, why this, why that? Why do you think...what do you think triggered the anger? What happened here that you think triggered it? Begin from there and try work it back. Because it's got a root, and if you can trace it back to that and you can start dealing with these things. Just dealing with the symptoms, then you can just keep coming back and back...when he's gone through these sort of dark times, there's always been someone to encourage, to speak to him, to say just talk about it, we'll listen."

Laura

"...I felt I had to help this person, I had to help this person...so now I have helped to try instil in him a sense of pride about achieving in taking care financially of his children, opening up trusts, working hard...so I'm continually motivating him."

Pam

"The kids adored him, and I adore him, so he got constant praise and admiration, building him up, and the kids saying Uncle Nick's so strong, and he's so this and so that, and I think that did him good. I think it gave him back his self-esteem, and sort of a purpose..."

Debra

"I've also encouraged him, go tell your pastors about these things. Go and speak to them, and say do you know how many young men that are out there that are in this particular age group that were on the Border that need help? Because the pastors don't even have an inkling of this problem. And I speak to them, wherever I go, whenever I come in contact with them, I go chat with them."

Laura

Ways of dealing with the effects that participants commented on that were more specific to the families include: helping others; focussing on the positives; persevering; coping out of necessity; and coping as a result of past experience.

"And if you have a trauma like this, you must do something to somebody who's worse off than you are. Go out and do gemeenskapsdiens[viii]*, whatever you call it...So that's how you make your life again, get yourself a foothold. That's the only way you can do it, I think, to reach out...And so I went to these children, or young ones, spoke to them, asked them where they came from, who their parents are...And I came home and I phoned their parents and I told them I've seen your son on the border. They're well and they're happy, and they all send their love. I phoned each one of them, just to let their parents know."*

Erika

"There are so many positives in his life...He's ALIVE! We've tried to help him see these positive sides to his life."

Joan

"I will defend you right until the end. Because that's the way we're going to win this battle. That you can get so confident, that you can say to yourself, I must put it behind, and I must reach forward. And that's the only way you'll progress...I became victorious in each and every thing because I persevered. And I showed that what I spoke about, I do. And a lot of people speak a lot, but do nothing. I maybe speak a lot, but I do something. Something positive. I don't believe in negativity, irrespective."

John

"I just think I would have probably been able to help him more if I realised what a very deep, imbedded problem he had. I didn't realise it. Look, it's very sad that a mother can say that...if I wasn't the breadwinner, I would have picked it up much easier. But I was never a mother at home, you know I didn't go through the normal having a husband looking after me that sort of thing...otherwise I would have picked it up earlier...I never had someone I could turn to help me with this or help me with that, never ever. I just had to do it on my own, and that's it."

Ursula

"...she was a very strong woman, she'd been on her own because my dad died, he was in the war, and so she had dealt with these things before...So she had 5 kids to bring up, she got on with it and she did it."

Sarah

"You know, we grew up in the war, and we'd been through it before, so we probably coped with it quite well I think."

Mary

Participants' discourses of the ways of dealing with the effects of Border experiences that have been discussed so far have been generally positive. Apart from these, participants also spoke of negative and inappropriate ways of dealing

with these effects. Within this category, participants were generally referring to the individual who spent time in the military and how they had dealt with things, and these participants claimed that their son/brother/husband had distanced themselves emotionally in order to deal with their experiences on the Border.

"And when he makes comments like 'I don't see any point in getting emotional about anything', that scares me...that very closed, 'don't touch me', it's like I think he feels that if you peep in the lid, he's got Pandora's box."

Angela

"I think war gets romanticised. It's something honourable, and it's...the reality, I think they keep it as a façade to deal with, or not to deal with the reality of what they're seen and what they're experiencing. But the more that they're exposed to what they've seen, the more they just lose touch with anything that's emotion."

Liz

"I think he had to shut down emotions when it was his friends that he had to be sewing up, and quite a few of them died, so I think he started to distance himself emotionally from a lot of things, just to cope, just to cope with that...his way of dealing with stress is just to ignore it...I think if someone very close to him, or if a good friend in the army had been killed, it would have been different. But he got quite hardened about it, and he sort of filed it, and ignored it."

Debra

"...I don't know what'sitsname, what damage it really does...I don't know if they bury it so deeply and simply don't ever want to think about it again and therefore absolutely encapsule it..."

Sandra

Some participants mentioned another possibly negative way that individuals who were on the Border dealt with their experiences, and this was to justify their actions or to portray their actions in a positive light. This served the obvious function of abdicating themselves of blame and not accepting responsibility for deeds they committed on the Border that may have negatively impacted others.

"And when we have talks like around the braai with other people who were also in the army at the same time, they'll say things like they can't believe how they were brainwashed, or how the whole thing was so wrong or whatever, and he'll defend the SADF. He will defend them...he will never agree with anyone who's saying that it was wrong, he will say no, it was right...And I've come to realise that what he was saying was if he admits it was wrong, then what he did was even more wrong, then it was really unforgivable. So by saying well, he had to do that, it was the right thing to do, and we were defending our country and all this kind of stuff, he can justify partly what happened then."

Angela

"...it seemed to be important for them to have a pictorial record of everything that they blew up, every body that was shot to pieces, and these, Adrian and all his friends all smuggled out in bandages, and they came and had them developed...I don't know if they got a kick from looking at them, but this was to him was his real world, these dismembered, decomposed bodies, it was his real world, that's all he'd known...I don't know...if he would have responded to any kind of therapy. Because what they saw was the real world to them...So him being so obsessed with these photos, was maybe his way of dealing with it. His reality."
Liz

One participant also spoke of how she, as well as her fellow family members had not coped well.

"Well I would say that my father coped with nothing. He's an academic, and he decided that the best was just to go into his study and look at the bottle quite closely...My dad didn't deal with it well at all. But he never deals with problems...I think each person in the house lived his own life. The family didn't come together because Adrian came home, or Adrian had experiences. I think everyone in their own...in their own way, recognised it, but as a family, we never discussed it...nothing was ever dealt with. So my dad dealt with it in his way, which was to withdraw completely. I really just gave up on Adrian, he was just impossible...I think I distanced myself in the same way that everybody else did. Because you could only take so much. If it was his whole world, it definitely wasn't my whole world...So how can you help somebody if you don't understand the complexity and the enormity of what was happening to these boys?"
Liz

There is a great deal of variation in the preceding discourses, and this is attributable to the wide range of experiences and circumstances that individuals and families have been exposed to. Some participants are most likely to speak about positive ways of dealing with the effects of Border experiences, because these have proved to be significant, beneficial and effective for them and those close to them. Other participants are most likely to speak about ineffective ways of dealing with these effects, because their son/brother/husband may have battled to deal with these effects or may not have dealt with them at all.

Feelings towards / Responses to the soldier

There was a fair amount of variation within this particular sub-category of discourses, but the feelings that participants expressed towards their

son/brother/husband were generally positive. Some of the participants who are parents, spoke about their need to protect or defend their son.

"...because Steven when he was nine he had meningitis...and he nearly died. And I think I've always had a more protective attitude towards him than any of the others because of that. And we are very close...I just want him to come home so I can look after him!"
Mary
"I kept thinking that I didn't want him to die...I wish it could have been me. I'm the mom. I'm supposed to be the one who protects her children."
Joan
"He was very cross, and he didn't know how to bring it across, how to cope with it. But I think it was also his inner frustration, so I personally looked at it, and it just made me more protective of him, because I thought, ag you know, he's so young and he's been away, and his brothers can't understand him. He always thinks other people can't understand him. So it made me want to protect him more, that's all it did to me really, was the worry that he's also not finding his feet, he's just not carrying on with life."
Ursula
"...it's my child, irrespective of what anybody says or anybody does. I love him and I want to look after him...I will defend you right until the end."
John

These parents have emphasised their protective role as parents, and it is possible that they feel that they are expected to fulfil this role. They make mention of their awareness of this role as protectors and how they seek to fulfil it, as they probably do not want to be seen as neglecting their duty by not protecting their children.

Participants also expressed feelings of concern as well as pity, compassion and even helplessness towards their son/brother/husband. In some cases, participants mentioned that these feelings were shared by fellow family members.

"And I was concerned and very, very worried about him, but I was also aware that he needed to talk about a lot of the events...I felt I had to help this person, I had to help this person."
Pam
"His brother and sister are irritated by his attitude and I worry about what will happen when my husband and I die and whether they will feel responsible for him or not."
Joan
"And he's been terribly depressed, and that was terribly worrying...They're all very concerned about him. I mean every time I speak to any of them, they say 'have you heard from Steven? How's he doing? What's he doing?'...They're all worried about him, they really are. Nobody's sort of pointing a

finger at him in any way about the fact that he hasn't really got his life together at all. We're just concerned, and wish that we could do something, but really don't know what we can do."

Mary

"...I think we felt for him. We knew what sort of a person he was, and how soft and sensitive...and we knew how horrible it must have been for him...we've all sort of really been feeling for him because of these outbursts and things that have come through the years."

Laura

"I feel sorry for him in a way, because he's just like a lost soul. I don't know if he'll come right."

Liz

"I just think it's a very, very sad thing. He's closed to many doors. He's aware of it, he knows it..."

Yvonne

"...when my brother was in the army I felt very sorry for him when he couldn't come home or we could not visit him..."

Sandra

"And I'm still battling to see what can I do to make him believe in himself...I didn't realise how desperately he actually needed psychiatric treatment...my husband knows that there are days, nights, even now, that I don't sleep and say to myself why didn't I just pick it up earlier?...I just think I would have probably been able to help him more if I realised what a very deep, imbedded problem he had."

Ursula

"...it just seems to be that that incident is still gripping him in some kind of way, and I don't know what I can possibly do to help him out of it."

Angela

Through the use of words and phrases such as *'concerned', 'very, very worried', 'terribly worrying', 'horrible', 'feel sorry', 'lost soul', 'very, very sad',* and *'very deep, imbedded problem'*, participants have highlighted their feelings of concern, pity and compassion for the individual, and it would appear that the majority of participants have expressed these types of feelings towards their son/brother/husband. It is possible that in light of the adverse nature of experiences on the Border, participants may feel that there is an expectation of them to feel concern and pity towards their son/brother/husband, and a failure to express these emotions may depict them as harsh and unfeeling. Therefore by stressing that they do feel these emotions, they are casting themselves in a positive light. Any negativity expressed in the words and phrases mentioned above may also be a means of directing blame at the SADF and casting them in a negative light.

Some participants described their response to their son/brother/husband as supportive and understanding, and many of them link this support and

understanding to their close relationship with him. In some instances, participants maintain that this support has extended to taking responsibility for the individual to some degree.

"My son is at least working. I've encouraged him, if he does it he does it, if he doesn't do it, I don't force him to…What I've done is, it's happening gradually. It's a long process, it's a long way to come back from that terrible…that time that he went through, where he even lost faith in himself."
John
"I have endless conversations over the phone with him, just trying to encourage him and say don't give up…we've always been close, we've always had a close relationship…when he's gone through these sort of dark times, there's always been someone to encourage, to speak to him, to say just talk about it, we'll just listen…"
Laura
"I think he says to himself, if nothing else, my mother truly loves me, because she sticks it out with me…I've always been very, very close to him. Very, very."
Ursula
"…he has to know that there's somebody there for him, especially someone in the family. Because I care about him a lot and I love him a lot."
Yvonne
"…it's brought me very close to this person, incredibly close…I've grown very close to him because he's exposed that…I feel I've taken on this responsibility myself…I feel like I've got to guide him in normal ways of working in business…there was…more than a friend kind of relationships going. Just because it was just so touching to see a man being so real, and actually being down to their very bones about exposing things, and fears especially…He's a very dear friend, and I'm very loyal."
Pam
"We're very close my brother and I, very close indeed…I just let him do his own thing, until he was ready to go back to work. We supported him financially…I found him a job."
Debra

In this set of discourses, participants have highlighted the positive role that they have played, and this is evident in comments such as: *'What* I've *done'*, *'I have endless conversations'*, *'my mother truly loves me'*, *'I care about him a lot'*, *'I'm very loyal'*, and *'I found him a job'*. It is likely that participants want to be seen as supportive and understanding, and make comments such as these to cast themselves in a good light.

Although the majority of participants speak about how they have responded positively to their son/brother/husband, some participants also expressed negative feelings, and have responded towards them with irritation and frustration.

"And now he found someone he can talk to, and he's got this fear, continual fear, that he's going to lose that too. I don't want to make things worse by telling him listen, I am married, that you have to pull out, that you have to pull back, this is my life; it's not going to be there forever...now, I'm actually getting quite irritable, incredibly irritable, and I'm having to contain...I'm having to for therapy. I'm actually having to go to a counsellor for help now..."

Pam

"...everything he does is so controlled, and he's always good, he's always the good guy. He'll put himself last...It's just like those things are irritating to me, because I find them unnatural...I wouldn't know how to define what the problem really is...I don't get terribly emotional about it, I get more frustrated..."

Angela

"I mean sometimes I can bang my head against the wall, but I mean before, we were fighting terribly, because I just couldn't handle the way he was behaving..."

Yvonne

One participant's response to her brother was to give up on him and distance herself emotionally from him.

"So Adrian came back...I just thought he was wacky...You couldn't talk to him, I've never been able to talk to him since. I might speak to him once a year, and that's usually to tell him he's a jerk about something that he's done...I really just gave up on Adrian, he was just impossible...I think I distanced myself in the same way that everybody else did. Because you could only take so much. If it was his whole world, it definitely wasn't my whole world."

Liz

The negativity expressed by participants is most probably related to their son/brother/ husband, in terms of his personality, the degree to which he has been affected, and the way in which he has responded to and dealt with his experiences on the Border. In these discourses, participants have to some degree portrayed their son/brother/husband in a bad light, thereby justifying their negative feelings towards them.

In two cases, this negativity is inconsistent with other comments made by these participants.

"...he told me that he was going to put himself into Valkenburg on the recommendation of the psychologist...I admired him for that really, because I think he had fallen so badly, he just realised that if he didn't do something about it, well, there was only one way to go...I take my hat off to him, because he's been clean now since June last year. I mean I can't even give up smoking, let alone

what he's been through...I mean sometimes I can bang my head against the wall, but I mean before, we were fighting terribly, because I just couldn't handle the way he was behaving..."
Yvonne
"...it's brought me very close to this person, incredibly close...I've grown very close to him because he's exposed that...He's a very dear friend, and I'm very loyal...now, I'm actually getting quite irritable, incredibly irritable, and I'm having to contain...I'm having to for therapy. I'm actually having to go to a counsellor for help now..."
Pam

Pam has begun by emphasising her positive feelings towards this individual, in a possible effort to portray herself in a good light. This may have been in reality how she felt at the start of their relationship, and as time has progressed, her feelings towards him have become increasingly negative. Her feelings of irritation may in fact be an expression of the present reality. With regards to Yvonne's conflicting feelings towards her brother, her feelings of frustration do seem to represent how she has felt at times towards him, and this is understandable in light of the serious effect that his time on the Border had on him. However, despite this frustration, she has also expressed her support of him and love for him, and it is possible that these positive feelings have generally outweighed the negative, resulting in her expression of admiration for him.

Conclusion

A generally negative impression is once again created in participants' discussions of the effects of military service and the Border War on both soldiers and families, as well the changes that have come about in soldiers who fought on the Border. However, a move away from negativity is evident where participants have spoken about how these changes and effects have been dealt with, on the level of both individuals and families. Participants were also more positive in their responses to and feelings towards the individual who fought on the Border, and this was evident in their expression of feelings of concern, compassion, and support for this individual. What follows in Chapter Five is a more detailed look at the construction of participants' discourses, still drawing on Potter and Wetherell's model of discourse analysis, but taking a more unconventional approach, and using a method that could be likened to some kind of content analysis.

Chapter 5

Text Analysis

In their model of discourse analysis, Potter and Wetherell emphasise the importance of the construction of discourse (1987; Potter et al, 1990). This was mentioned in the two previous chapters, and will be examined in greater detail in this chapter, relating it once again to both the variation and function of the discourse.

In Chapters Three and Four, coding and subsequent analysis of the texts rendered two main *categories* of discourse, and these categories were divided into a number of sub-categories. In order to explore the construction of the discourse in more detail, further analysis of the text was carried out to identify the *types* of discourse that were used by participants. The types of discourse identified were –

- formal psychological / clinical,
- quasi-psychological,
- political, and
- religious / moral.

What follows is a detailed outline of these types of discourse, and the words and phrases particular to them. The numbers in brackets refer to the number of times the preceding word or phrase was used in the texts, (i.e. the entire data set) if it was used more than five times.

Formal Psychological / Clinical discourse

Formal psychological discourse could be roughly defined in terms of the words, phrases, terminology and jargon used in the fields of psychology and/or psychiatry. Those that would typically employ such discourse would be professionals in the field (psychologists, psychiatrists, researchers, academics), or students and teachers of psychology and/or psychiatry.

This particular type of discourse was most noticeable in the texts where participants used words such as:

psychological / psychologically (11)
mental / mentally (11)
psychiatric;

referred to psychopathology:

psychopath
schizophrenic
anti-socialism
posttraumatic stress disorder / posttraumatic stress / post-trauma
depression (12);

or made reference to professional individuals in the field of psychology and related fields:

psychologist/s (17)
counsellor
psychiatrist
therapist
social workers.

In the talk of some participants, a distinctly psychiatric or medical discourse was evident:

prognosis	*brain*
symptoms	*healthy*
sick	*ill*
pathologically	*genetic*
syndrome	*hospital / hospitalised*
injections	*medication*

In their discussion of the many ways of dealing with the effects of the Border War, participants also made use of formal psychological discourse. Here participants were referring to their own ways of dealing with the effects, as well as their own interpretation of how their son/brother/husband has dealt or should deal with these effects:

treatment
debriefing
therapy / therapeutic (11)
program
Valkenburg
deal / dealing / dealt (50)
come to terms
period of adjustment
resolve
contain
rehabilitate / rehabilitation
counselling (13)
crisis management
institutionalise / institutionalised
cope / copes / coped (40)
help / helping / helped / helpful (71)
regroup
reparation
work through
confront

A wide range of other formal psychological words or phrases appeared in the texts, including nouns which refer to feelings or affect:

inner frustration
anger
grief
pain
resentment
empathy;
insecurity
bitterness
loneliness
rejection
hopelessness

nouns that are more general in nature:

trauma (11)
suicide
outbursts
effect/s (28)
stress
emotionalism
feeling/s (33)
attitude/s
change/s (15)
good bonds
support (20)
dependency
reality
social skills
tragedy / tragedies
problem/s (67)
issues
crisis
emotion/s (14)
behaviour
fear/s
personality (9)
relationship/s (57)
family dynamics
closeness
control
positives
strength

self-reliance
moulding process
root
remembrance
identity
self-image
façade
manipulation
denial
tough love
violence
extrovert
depressive
communication
formative stage
recourse
Pavlov reaction
self-esteem
discipline
negativity
distrust
addiction cycle
aggression
recklessness
disciplinarian
delinquent;

adjectives describing the emotional, behavioural or mental state of an individual:

traumatised
depressed (7)
distant
rebellious
bitter
secretive
subdued
distrustful
hyperactive
temperamental
stressed
suicidal
open
broken / broken down
dependent
non-conformist
aggressive (14)
reclusive
withdrawn
cold
obsessive
volatile
authoritarian
unstable
closed
protective;

more general adjectives:

traumatic (29)
depressing
negative / negatively (18)
repressed
in-depth
emotional / emotionally (11)
abnormal
tragic
dysfunctional
well-shielded

resolved / unresolved
resilient
supportive
problem;
safe
close / closely / closer / closest (60)
positive (13)

and verbs mostly describing the actions and interactions of the conscripts or Permanent Force members and their family members:

analyse
relate
open / opened / opening
support
communicate
build them up
distanced
suffer.
function
change/s / changed / changing (33)
trust
empathise
triggers / triggered
break / breaking down
withdraw/s / withdrew (7)

In terms of the variation (within this discourse) among participants, there appear to be some similarities in participants' accounts, in that there are a number of words or terms that were used frequently by many of the participants, e.g. *'psychological / psychologically', 'cope / copes / coped', 'trauma'* and *'emotion/s'*, some obviously more than others. This variation in frequency is reflected in the numbers in brackets that follow particular words. The majority of words and terms may however only have been used once, or very infrequently by one, or maybe a few participants. This indicates that aside from some similarities, there is also a great deal of variation among participants. Despite this wide variation, there do seem to be some common threads that run through this discourse. In order to elucidate these common threads, it is helpful to first distinguish between the following word types as exemplified in the texts –

- positive: e.g. *healthy, resolve, empathy, support, open, safe, trust*
- negative: e.g. *psychopath, sick, anger, suicide, bitter, traumatic, suffer*
- neutral: e.g. *psychological, therapist, syndrome, treatment, feeling/s, emotional, function*
- neutral, which could possibly be construed as negative: e.g. *institutionalised, confront, dependency, disciplinarian, non-conformist, hyperactive, triggers*

Within this discourse, negative words appeared the most frequently (68), followed by neutral (56), positive (32), and then neutral / possibly negative (15) words. Negative words were used more extensively where participants referred to psychopathology, nouns pertaining to feelings or affect, and adjectives (both personal and general). Neutral words were more prevalent where participants spoke of psychological terms (e.g. *'psychological', 'mental'*), professional individuals, medical / psychiatric terms, ways of dealing with effects, and general nouns. Positive words appeared mostly where participants spoke of ways of dealing with effects and general adjectives. Verbs used by the participants seemed to be evenly spread between the categories of negative, positive and neutral.

What this prevalence of negativity in the texts could suggest is an effort on the part of the participants to portray the whole issue of the effects of the Border War in a distinctively negative light, thus possibly highlighting their view that the Border War has affected their son/brother/husband in an adverse manner. This is especially shown in their wide use of negative nouns and adjectives describing an individual's emotional, behavioural and mental state. The only aspect of this formal psychological discourse where negative words do not appear is where participants spoke about their perceptions of dealing with the effects of the Border War, and this could be owing to the fact that dealing and coping are in and of themselves positive actions or initiatives.

This pervasive emphasis on the negative also relates to a more general function of this formal psychological discourse, which is to depict the effects of the Border War as a psychological issue. The extensive use of neutral words could also contribute to this, as neutrality may serve to emphasise the objective, clinical and possibly even pathological nature of this issue, thereby stressing its seriousness. By using formal psychological terminology, participants may also be trying to portray themselves as 'psychological experts', thereby conveying that they possess some kind of authority on the topic of psychology and psychological effects. In addition to this, psychological terminology, owing to its formal and often empirical nature, can hold its own authority, and therefore the use of such terminology would likely be an effort to emphasise the gravity of the issue being spoken about.

Another aspect to consider would be a common view held by South African society, and especially by the former Nationalist government, that men's service on the Border was merely a developmental milestone in the life of a South African male during the 1970s and 1980s. Through the emphasis of the negative and the use of formal psychological terminology, participants could be attempting to bring to people's attention that their son/brother/husband's service on the Border was *not* merely a developmental milestone, and was not only just a difficult time for both these men and their families. Participants may be wanting to alert South African society, and particularly those from the former government, to the fact that these experiences on the Border have left deep psychological scars on many individuals, both the soldiers and their families, and have had far reaching and devastating consequences for many.

By implying psychological damage and by stressing the serious psychological nature of this issue, participants may be stressing the need for effective help for those who served on the Border and their families. Participants may be relying on the premise that if genuine psychological dysfunction is apparent then the appropriate psychological or psychiatric treatment should be administered. Many of the participants expressed feelings of resentment towards the apartheid government because no treatment, in any form, was offered to these men, let alone their families. Participants may feel that if no treatment was offered, any serious psychological problems experienced by their son/brother/ husband may have become worse and had a wider effect on their families. Participants could then be holding the apartheid government responsible and blaming them, not only for the effect on the individual who served on the Border, but also for the wider effect and the damage that was caused to the families of these men.

By talking about the effects of the Border War using formal psychological terminology, participants may also be trying to make sense of this issue, that often seems to be vague and very seldom even acknowledged as an issue worth addressing. By placing this issue within the realm of psychology, participants are accepting implicit boundaries that are established within psychology, and they may be doing this in order to locate a secure and safe environment in which to discuss these issues. Also, working with the terminology of a relatively 'scientific' field, participants are able to find names and labels to previously nameless and

inexplicable phenomena. This process of identifying, labelling and therefore containing these phenomena is quite possibly very helpful and liberating for participants, who may have been in a sense 'bound' by the ambiguity and vastness of the impact of the Border War on their own lives and the lives of those close to them.

Quasi-psychological discourse

Participants also employed less formal or quasi-psychological discourse in the texts. This discourse may be less formal in the sense that it contains common-sense explanations of psychological states, may have elements of 'pop' and self-help psychology, and makes general references to things of a psychological nature, e.g. feelings, coping.

This quasi-psychological discourse is perhaps most blatant in how participants described psychological abnormality:

bossies
crazy
ready to be locked away
messed up
basket case
nervous breakdown
zombies
lost your marbles
mad
wacko
after-war syndrome

Participants also depicted emotional or psychological pain and difficulty in a more informal manner:

damage
harmed
hassles
rawness
sad
struggle
sinking
lost
never adjusted socially
lost faith in himself
hurt / hurting (14)
empty / emptiness
soreness
heart sore
battle / battles / battling
troubles
cracked
locked inside
closed too many doors
fallen so badly

cannot interact
can't find his feet
hit the wall
went for a loop
gone completely off the rails
bit of a state
can't get direction in life
thrown him off track
there's a wall for them
speed wobble in his mind
work yourself up in such a state

When speaking about the ways of dealing with this psychological difficulty or pain, participants used a great deal of quasi-psychological terminology, words or phrases. Here, participants were mostly referring to their personal interpretation of how their son/brother/husband has dealt or should deal with these effects:

got his life together
get his life back into order
get on with it
get it off his chest
picked up the pieces
believe in himself
biting the bullet
win this battle
reach forward
victorious
find yourself
channelise
come together
drew us together
fall back on
carried him through
kept me through
back up
block up inside your system
put it in a compartment
bundle
shove it under the carpet
become somebody
get yourself a foothold
carrying on with life
pour out your heart
move on
pull himself together
settle down
reach out
progress
let it out
somebody there for him
sticks it out
leaning
rallying around
held things together
back up
saving grace
bury our heads in the sand
built up this wall around him
bury
absolutely encapsulate

Many other quasi-psychological words or phrases were evident in the texts, including nouns referring to feelings or affect:

joy
flippancy
crossness;

more general nouns:

shrink
impact
wavelength
sounding board
real world
potential
release
family ructions
destruction
disaster
deterioration
horror stories
undercurrent of viciousness;
fate
depth
vibes
mind-shift
dream world
purpose
conscience problem
devastation
darkness
strife
wild look
death wish

adjectives depicting the emotional, behavioural or mental state of an individual:

whole
happy-go-lucky
head was screwed on right
sensitive
clean
drained
hardened
tearful
nervous
wide-eyed
happy
outgoing
calm
prosperous
down to their very bones
desperate
non-feeling
unreasonable
hysterical
wacky;

general adjectives:

real
connected

loving
complexity
dark
harsh
disastrous
deep down / deeper
draining
desolate
warped
devastating;

and verbs concerning the actions and interactions of the conscripts or Permanent Force members and their family members:

impacted
draw out
exposed
gripping
pull out
overacting
fly off the handle
rock the boat
destroy / destroyed / destroying
guide
socialise
shut / shutting
pull back
wind down
drive you apart
torn away
crumbles
rotting.

With regards to the variation in this particular discourse, there seems to be a much greater variation among participants, with only one word and one of its derivatives, *'hurt / hurting'*, appearing fairly frequently (14 times) in the texts. However, as was the case for formal psychological discourse, there seem to be the same common threads in this discourse in terms of the different word types or phrases that appear in the texts –

- positive: e.g. *become somebody, rallying around, joy, purpose, whole, loving, guide*
- negative: e.g. *messed up, sinking, shove it under the carpet, crossness, disaster, tearful, harsh, torn away*
- neutral: e.g. *mind-shift, real world, deeper, socialise*
- neutral / possibly negative: e.g. *shrink, down to their very bones*

Negative words and phrases dominate this discourse, with 95 words and phrases in total appearing in the texts. These are followed by positive (51), neutral (15) and then neutral / possibly negative (two) words and phrases. Where participants spoke

about psychological abnormality as well as emotional or psychological pain and difficulty, they used exclusively negative words and phrases, and this negativity was also prevalent where participants used nouns (general and relating to feelings / affect), adjectives (personal and general) and verbs. Positive words and phrases appear mostly where participants mentioned their perception of ways of dealing with effects, and adjectives depicting the state of an individual. Neutral words and phrases do not proliferate in the texts, but do appear to a small degree as general nouns, general adjectives and verbs.

As was the case for formal psychological discourse, the negative far outweighs the positive, to a greater extent here than before. This could once again point to an attempt by participants to paint a negative picture of the Border War, thereby stressing their opinion that the Border War has adversely affected their son/brother/husband. This is most obvious in participants' descriptions of psychological abnormality, emotional or psychological pain and difficulty, and their use of verbs, and is perhaps less noticeable in their use of nouns (general and affective), and adjectives (personal and general).

The only area within this discourse where the emphasis is on the positive is where participants have spoken about their impression of the way their son/brother/husband has dealt with, or should deal with psychological difficulty and pain. However, even though these particular words and phrases refer to a positive action or initiative, there is a latent negativity in some of this talk, and in spite of the participant's positive intention, the very image they use to describe this positive action is often a negative one. For example –

- *'picked up the pieces'* implies that something was broken
- *'win this battle'* and *'victorious'* imply that the individual is fighting to overcome their circumstances; a battle also implies that there are casualties and injuries
- *'get yourself a foothold'* implies that the individual may be in a precarious or dangerous position
- *'pull himself together'* implies that the individual is not 'together', which could mean they are unstable or easily distressed
- *'fall back on'* implies that the individual is falling, possibly out of control

- *'carried him through'* implies that the individual is incapable of dealing with things alone and needs help
- *'leaning'* implies that the individual cannot stand alone and needs to depend on someone

Where participants have spoken about their perception of the ways of dealing with this difficulty or pain, a number of different purposes are apparent. Some of these phrases speak of the positive, active role that the participant has played, e.g. *'somebody there for him', 'sticks it out', 'rallying around', 'carried him through'*, and through using this kind of discourse, participants could be portraying themselves in a positive light – as helpful and supportive. Other phrases could serve a similar function, by drawing attention to the encouragement that participants have given to their son/brother/husband, e.g. *'believe in himself', 'win this battle', 'pour out your heart', 'become somebody'.* Some phrases highlight ineffective ways of dealing with difficulty or pain, e.g. *'block up inside your system', 'shove it under the carpet', 'built up this wall around him'.* This may be an effort by participants to communicate that, through no fault of their own, they have not been able to help their son/brother/husband, because they feel he may have chosen not to deal with it himself.

This quasi-psychological discourse could also be contributing to the other function of the formal psychological discourse, which was to depict the effects of the Border War as a psychological issue. The words and phrases in this quasi-psychological discourse are clearly not formal psychological terms, but do make some reference to psychological issues. It is possible that colloquial psychological terminology was used so extensively because it is more accessible and available to participants, and is more easily understood by those who may not have been exposed to the formal field of psychology. Participants may also have used quasi-psychological words and phrases, often in favour of formal psychological discourse, in order to emphasise the reality of the issue, and in using these words and phrases, they may be depicting the effects of the Border War as more real and tangible, as opposed to clinical and objective, which may have been the case had they used exclusively formal terminology.

Whereas before participants appeared to be portraying themselves as 'psychological experts' through their use of formal terminology, now participants are using colloquial terms to come across as lay persons and 'non-experts'. By depicting themselves as 'psychological experts', participants may be conveying that they have the knowledge and the skills to confront the issue of the effects of the Border War, and with this role of 'expert' comes certain responsibility. In order to avoid being seen as capable of providing any solutions to this issue and therefore able to take on this responsibility, participants may then, through their use of more informal discourse, emphasise that they are merely lay persons with no such knowledge or skills.

What also needs to be taken into consideration is what appears to be one of the most difficult things for families to come to terms with regarding the effects of the Border War, and that is that these effects are difficult to assess and categorise. Contributing to this is that it is also difficult to identify the 'middle ground' as far as the diagnosis of psychological dysfunction is concerned, i.e. varying degrees of psychological disorders. The possible result of this is that those men who spent time on the Border who do not have the correct number of diagnostic criteria for a particular psychological disorder, e.g. posttraumatic stress disorder, depression, schizophrenia etc, are often passed off as having no psychological, emotional or mental problems at all. If they are seen to have no such problems, then there would be very little cause for concern or any need for appropriate treatment, because there is nothing to treat.

Many family members of these men may feel that their son/brother/husband, while not qualifying for a clinical diagnosis, is, in their opinion, definitely not psychologically or emotionally stable, and this assumption on the part of family members may have been brought about by strange behaviour or changes in personality exhibited by their son/brother/husband. In an attempt to explain these changes and any strange behaviour, participants may have developed colloquial categories of psychological dysfunction or 'oddness', which emerge in their quasi-psychological discourse. They may argue that there are a number of 'Border War syndromes' that exist, which despite their non-clinical or non-scientific nature, are very real and significant. An excellent example of this is the term *'bossies'*, which is an Afrikaans term that exclusively refers to the mental and/or psychological state of

men returning from the Border. *'Bossies'* is not a classified psychological disorder and does not even have a list of proper diagnostic criteria, but it is widely used, referred to, and understood by those familiar with the Border War. As was the case for formal psychological discourses, putting a name to any strange behaviour or personality changes may serve the function of dealing with any ambiguity surrounding the issue of the effects of the Border War and coming to terms with these effects. If these 'Border War syndromes' are admitted, participants may also feel more entitled to attribute responsibility, and therefore blame the apartheid government for causing these 'syndromes'.

Political discourse

Owing to the fact that the majority of this psychological / quasi-psychological discourse is linked to the effects of a war that was orchestrated by a political system, it makes sense that participants will employ political discourse in their talk. While this political discourse may not be as prevalent as formal psychological or quasi-psychological discourse, it is nevertheless used extensively in the texts.

Participants employed political discourse in their discussion of the political state of affairs in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s as well as their mention of political views or perspectives:

politics / political / politically (44)
the system
total onslaught
terrorists
cause
liberal (10)
racist/s / racial
radical/s (7)
patriotic
right wing
Nationalist
government (20)
apartheid
communism / communist/s (15)
'swaart gevaar'
enemy (18)
conservative
anti-communist
pseudo-liberal
tolerant
progressive

Relating to these political views, reference was made to a number of political parties and organisations:

Progressive Party / 'Progs'	*Nationalist Party / 'Nats'*
ANC	*AWB*
CP	*UP*
Black Sash	*Broederbond*

Participants also spoke about the manner in which the apartheid government influenced South African society:

propaganda
brainwash / brainwashed / brainwashing (13)
fed such a line / fed to us
force / forced / forcing (11)

In the texts, distinctions were made between race and language groups:

black/s (46)
kaffir
African
coloured (12)
white/s (18)
English (19)
Afrikaans / Afrikaner/s (43)

In terms of variation within this discourse, there seem to be a number of terms used frequently by participants, e.g. *'politics / political / politically', 'enemy', 'brainwashing', 'black'* and *'Afrikaans'*. There also appears to be substantial variation among participants, and this is most evident where participants have mentioned opposing political views, e.g. *'liberal'* and *'conservative'*, *'right wing'* and *'progressive'*; opposing political parties or organisations, e.g. *'ANC'* and *'Nationalist Party'*, *'Black Sash'* and *'Broederbond'*; and have distinguished between race and language groups, e.g. *'black'* and *'white'*, *'English'* and *'Afrikaans'*.

It would be potentially problematic to label words or phrases within this discourse as either distinctly positive or negative, as this would require a subjective and probably biased judgement of what is right and wrong. It would therefore be wiser to label the majority of these political terms as neutral, meaning that a political term may be positive for some but negative for others. The only likely exception to this might be

some of the words and phrases that participants used to describe the manner in which the apartheid government influenced South African society, e.g. *'brainwash'* and *'forcing'*, as these terms could possibly be interpreted as negative.

Regarding the more general function of this political discourse, it is possible that participants used this type of discourse to support their view that the political aspect of the issue of the Border War needs to be acknowledged. The more the political situation in South African during the 1970s and 1980s is spoken of, the more the apartheid government is seen as involved in and responsible for the organisation of the Border War. Participants may have the view that if the apartheid government was the driving force behind the conflict on the Border, then this government system is accountable for the consequences and subsequent effects of this war, and once again, the apartheid government becomes an effective vehicle for blame. This function of blame is supported by the negativity expressed by participants about the Border War, in light of the effect that it has had on individuals and families, and also because they feel it was a waste.

With regards to some of the specific aspects of this discourse – the influence of the apartheid government and distinctions made between race and language groups – two other functions are evident. As was mentioned earlier, participants described the way in which the apartheid government influenced South African society in a rather negative manner. The words and phrases that participants used in their descriptions could be inferring some kind of power relationship in which society, and especially soldiers on the Border, are in a position of weakness in which they cannot, or do not resist. These words and phrases evoke an image of an authoritarian parental figure that has control over its underlings. These underlings submit to their authority either because they are in no position not to (*'force / forced / forcing'*), or they are dependent on this authority figure (*'fed'*). This idea of submission can easily be applied to the apartheid government. In terms of being *'forced'*, all young, white men were required, by law, to do their National Service. In terms of being dependent on the apartheid government, white people enjoyed a great deal of privilege and opportunity as a direct result of apartheid policies, and it would be fair to say that many white people could have become accustomed to this position of superiority and in various ways, could have depended on it for financial gain, employment, education, access to resources etc. Society during the apartheid

era was also in many respects *'fed'* by the apartheid government in as much as this government was in control of the media and closely monitored the quantity and type of information disseminated to the public.

As was mentioned previously, words such as *'brainwash'* and *'forced'* could also serve the purpose of abdicating responsibility. Words such as these imply a position of weakness, and if individuals are in such a position in which they cannot oppose authority, then they are likely not to be blamed or held responsible for any wrong doings they committed, or racist views and attitudes that they held under this authority. These words could be used by participants for this purpose in order to cast themselves and their family members in a positive light.

Concerning the distinctions made between race and language groups, one could easily pass these off as completely objective terms with no political significance. However, in light of the political history of South Africa, one cannot simply ignore the ideological and political baggage that accompanies racial or cultural classifications, especially since many of these classificatory terms are used so often in the texts. Regarding the frequent referral to *'black'* particularly, it is possible that this word was used so often by participants (who incidentally, are all white) in order to highlight the distinction between 'them' and 'us'. Because *'black'* has often been linked with communism and the notion of the *'enemy'*, participants may be trying to justify the fight against this enemy, i.e. the predominantly black, communist force. More specifically, they may be attempting to defend the apartheid government's ideological opposition to communism, as well as their practical opposition to it, in terms of the actions that were taken against communism and those thought to be communists. If this force of communism was indeed as evil and dangerous as it was made out to be, then this opposition was legitimate – the end justified the means.

With respect to the repeated use of *'English'*, and more so of *'Afrikaans / Afrikaner/s'*, there could be two apparent functions, depending on the language group of the participant (their mother tongue). For English speaking participants, making a distinction between English and Afrikaans could be an effort to separate themselves from the views of Afrikaners, which may be seen as racist or overly conservative, thereby portraying themselves as liberal and open-minded. These

participants may also be trying to cast themselves in a positive light by avoiding any associations between themselves and the Afrikaans apartheid government, its beliefs and its policies, which they perceive in a negative light.

For Afrikaans speaking participants, the frequent mention of *'Afrikaans / Afrikaner/s'* could be a means of identifying with this language group and its culture, but in such a way that it portrays the participant as not liable for their own political views because they were merely influenced by their Afrikaans background. Afrikaans participants may be putting forward the argument that racist or conservative views and anti-communist sentiment were just the accepted norm in the Afrikaans culture, and one did not oppose these views and beliefs because one did not know any better. Their argument may be that, because of this naivete, they should not be held accountable or be blamed for their political views. In their alleged ignorance, they may also be making the claim that they did not realise what the consequences of these political views would be or the actions that these racist views would lead to.

Within this discourse, a distinct dichotomy seems to be emerging in participants expressions of their feelings towards the previous government. On the one hand, participants seemed to have been dependent on this government for their position of privilege in society, and at the time (during the 1970s and 1980s) they submitted to the authority of the apartheid government and were reluctant to oppose this government for fear of the consequences of such actions. However, on the other hand, some years down the line, participants have expressed definite negativity towards this same government that they previously didn't directly oppose. They have inferred a fair degree of blame on the apartheid government for the effects of the Border War and have made clear their resentment, anger and bitterness towards this system of government, which includes the army.

The latter part of this dichotomy brings into the picture a very contentious aspect of the political views of white South Africans during the apartheid era. It has already been mentioned how some participants claimed to either be ignorant of what the apartheid government was really up to, or they maintained that it was not safe to be in open opposition to this government. If participants took either of these stances, they would be denying their support of the apartheid government, its beliefs and consequent actions, thereby distancing themselves from these beliefs and absolving

themselves of any responsibility for these actions. This would be a viable claim of *in*culpability if it was believed that support was only evidenced by the commission of certain actions. However, this claim would be discredited if it was believed that the failure to oppose a particular system is tantamount to support of that system. The ramifications of such reasoning would be potentially damning, as it would imply that many white South Africans, while imagining themselves to be liberal, non-racist, free-thinking and tolerant, were in fact supporting the policies of a conservative and racist government that they now refer to as cruel and unjust.

It is most likely that participants would argue that their claim of *in*culpability is plausible and that there is no paradox between their past and present support of the apartheid government. The purpose, and obvious advantages of this argument for participants would be that they do not feel any feelings of guilt or regret for not opposing the previous government, and they are able to freely condemn this apartheid government and hold it responsible for the effects and repercussions of the Border War.

Religious / Moral discourse

A number of the participants (six out of 15) made some allusion, either blatant or discreet, to their religious persuasion, Christianity, and as a result of this, religious discourse can be detected in the texts. (Although 'religious' can be used as a broad term for all religions, it is used in the context of this research to refer to the Christian faith, as none of the other participants claimed any other religious beliefs.)

This religious discourse can be most easily identified by the use of specifically Christian expressions:

prayer/s / praying (10)
belief in God
Godly
Christian
miracles
Bible
evil
spiritual
demons
religion / religious (10)
faith (8)
revelation
blessed
born again
possessed
atoning for your sins

church *congregation/s;*

as well as references to icons or individuals pertaining to the Christian faith:

Jesus *God (9)*
Lord (9) *pastor/s*
Christians *Anglican Priest*
minister.

These (Christian) and other participants also employed religious discourse by using words or expressions that are derived from religious discourse, but may be used in other contexts, or may not be perceived as exclusively religious:

hell on earth *hell to pay*
bondage *calling*
soul *manifesting*
unforgivable *repentant*
wicked *persecution*
forgiveness

Participants also made use of moral discourse, and this was most often with reference to apartheid and the apartheid government system:

immorality *justice*
justify *injustice / unjust*
wrong (vs. right) (25) *freedom*
morality *cruel / cruelty*
ethical

The variation within this discourse would be most evident in the variation among participants, since not all participants share the same religious faith or beliefs, and religious words or phrases, Christian expressions and references to Christian icons and individuals in particular, have been used most frequently by only six of the 15 participants. A wider range of participants used other religious expressions derived from religious discourse, along with moral discourse.

As was the case for some aspects of the political discourse, a subjective and possibly biased judgement would be employed if one was to classify all this

discourse as positive or negative, and so it would be more appropriate to label some of this discourse as neutral. The aspects of this religious discourse, which could be labelled as neutral, would be Christian expressions and references to Christian icons and individuals, which may be interpreted as positive or negative for some, while others may be indifferent towards this kind of discourse. However, it would be quite acceptable to classify the other religious expressions and the moral discourse as either positive or negative and, in some cases, neutral –

- positive: e.g. *forgiveness, repentant, justice, freedom, morality, ethical*
- negative: e.g. *hell on earth, bondage, wicked, immorality, injustice / unjust, cruel / cruelty*
- neutral: e.g. *soul, calling, justify*

The use of religious / moral discourse could be an attempt by participants to make apartheid and the Border War a religious and/or moral issue. By doing so, an implicit set of religious and moral values are brought into the picture, along with notion of what is 'right' and 'wrong'. In light of what has been previously mentioned, it is highly improbable that participants feel that the Border War was 'right' or 'good' in both the religious and moral sense. The use of negative expressions, along with the fact that the word *'wrong'* has been used so frequently in the text suggests that participants may see apartheid and the Border War as morally reprehensible. This then serves to put further blame on the apartheid government system and yet again cast this system in a negative light.

Participants may also feel that the government should be held accountable for these wrong doings and should be made to pay for the damage they have caused. This relates to what was previously mentioned regarding the fact that no appropriate psychological treatment was offered to men who served on the Border, and participants may be claiming that not only did the Border War cause psychological damage, but it was also morally wrong to force young men to fight in this War. Their assumption may be that moral wrong doings deserve appropriate punishment and should be accompanied by repentance and contrition. Participants may feel resentful regarding the fact that there was no expression of penitence on the part of the apartheid government regarding the consequences of the Border War, and many participants did express feelings of bitterness and anger at the government's

lack of contrition, or even acknowledgement of the widespread impact that this war has had.

Conclusion

This text analysis, although unconventional by typical discourse analysis standards, has surprisingly (or hopefully unsurprisingly) complemented the findings presented in the two previous chapters. The prevalence of negativity emerges once again, and many of the functions mentioned in Chapters Three and Four are echoed in this chapter. In addition to many of these functions, this text analysis has also highlighted participants' emphasis on the seriousness and reality of this issue, as well as the responsibility of the apartheid government for the consequences of the Border War.

In Chapter Six, there is a return to the main *categories* of discourse of family members (the dominant discourses) and the functions of these discourses, and both these dominant discourses and their functions are compared with the dominant discourses and functions thereof of conscripts.

Chapter 6

Comparison of Conscripts' and Families' Discourses

The discourses that have emerged from the texts and that have been discussed so far, centre on the views and perceptions of those in close relationship with soldiers who fought in the Border War. Their accounts of how this war has affected their son/brother/husband are very much their own perception – from the 'outside looking in'. Owing to the closeness of their relationship, participants are in a relatively reliable position to comment on these effects, and are certainly entitled to speak about their own feelings regarding the Border War, their feelings towards the government, as well as how they feel they have been affected by this war. However, not to discredit participants versions of the effects of this War, it is beneficial to contrast these versions with the versions of those that served in this War – the soldiers themselves.

Research that explores the stories of these soldiers is relatively scarce, and recent research is even more difficult to locate. As was mentioned previously, recent research that investigates the experiences of conscripts who served on the Border was conducted by myself (Draper, 1999), and is appropriate for comparison with this research for a number of reasons. Most obviously, it is recent, unlike most other research on this topic, taking into account the political changes that have occurred in South Africa over the last decade or so, and therefore locating the accounts of family members and those of conscripts within the same social and political contexts. In addition, both studies have used very similar methodologies with respect to the gathering of a sample as well as procedure. Both studies have also used the same form of analysis – discourse analysis, applying the model of Potter and Wetherell, thus making it easier to compare results.

The fact that both studies have been carried out by the same researcher may be viewed as an advantage, in terms of the understanding that has been gained regarding the issue of the Border War, which will hopefully lend itself to a mature and insightful comparison of the versions of families and conscripts. The points of comparison will be 1) the dominant discourses that emerged from both sets of texts, and 2) the functions of these discourses.

Dominant discourses

The dominant sets of discourses that emerged in each of the studies are as follows:

Conscripts:
Military discourses
Discourses of anti-communism
Discourses of coping
Discourses of readjustment
Discourses of effect
Discourses of violence
(Draper, 1999)

Families:
Military / Political Discourses –

- Views on conscription and/or military service
- Views on the Border War
- Feelings towards the SADF and/or apartheid government
- Political views
- Life during the army

Discourses of effect –

- Effect on the soldier
- Effect on the family (life after the army)
- Dealing with effects
- Feelings towards / Responses to the soldier

The dominant sets of discourses are clearly not exactly the same for both studies, and there are a number of things that family members spoke about that conscripts

didn't. However, despite some differences, there are many similarities, and the following parallels can be drawn –

- Military discourses *and* Views on conscription and/or military service
- Discourses of anti-communism *and* Political views
- Discourses of violence *and* Life during the army
- Discourses of readjustment, Discourses of effect *and* Effect on the soldier
- Discourses of coping *and* Dealing with effects

Military discourses *and* Views on conscription and/or military service

Military discourses were prominent in the talk of conscripts, and the reason for this was that all white males were forced by law to do National Service, and were therefore all exposed to the military to some degree. Within this military discourse, much of what conscripts spoke about had to do with the fact that conscription was an accepted part of life during the 1970s and 1980s, and that to contest conscription was to be unpatriotic or unwise.

"...that was the thing you did when you finished school."
Participant 8
"...I did not want to be seen to be unpatriotic, or to flinch away from my 'duty'."
Participant 7

Many of these men felt too young to object or did not feel strongly enough against conscription to oppose it, and for reasons such as age, they felt rather unprepared for their time in the army.

"The only thing I actually know of, if you have had to object to doing your military service, you would go to probably the military jail...I don't think I would have been brave enough to object, because as I said, I was only 17 at the time. But I know that's one place you never wanted to go, from what I heard what happened."
Participant 2
"...I was an absolute kid, nobody prepares you for what the army holds. Nobody."
Participant 3

A similar kind of military discourse was evident in the talk of family members (Views on conscription and/or military service), where it was also mentioned that conscription was a part of life and seen as one's duty. Family members however,

went to much greater lengths to express their feelings of negativity about conscription and the unfairness of their sons/brothers/husbands being forced into it. Some also mentioned that they saw it as a waste and something that shouldn't have happened.

A possible explanation for this difference is that conscripts themselves may have had a heightened feeling of duty with regards to conscription, and because they expected and accepted it, they may have come to terms with it more easily and therefore felt less negative about it. Family members may have had a more difficult time accepting conscription in light of the perceived impact it has had on their son/brother/husband and their family, and those family members that share a particularly close relationship with their son/brother/husband may feel rather protective towards him and therefore more negative about his experiences in the army.

Discourses of anti-communism *and* Political views

The prevalence of anti-communism during the 1970s and 1980s was reflected in the discourses of conscripts, where they spoke extensively about the perceived threat of communism, how evil communism was, and the communist enemy – the terrorists.

"...you just saw communism, just that red flag, and you knew this was evil, definitely, and they were about to take the world, and our country..."
Participant 12
"The terrorists were the bad guys, and we were going to sort them out there before they even got to our door steps."
Participant 8
"...the dominee[ix] *told us that if we died fighting communists we were doing God's work and he personally assured us passage into heaven."*
Participant 15

Conscripts also spoke about the racist views that were evident in the army, despite the fact that the dynamics between white and black sometimes ran contrary to the norm.

"...every black man is a suspect, every black man is the enemy...the whole emphasis is on 'swaart man, moet hom dood maak'[x] *...must kill him."*
Participant 2
"It was one of those incongruous moments in an apartheid army where a black soldier was physically challenging a white troep[xi]*."*
Participant 17

With regards to this anti-communist and anti-black sentiment, conscripts referred to the brainwashing and propaganda that was employed by the government to instil these sentiments in the army's forces.

"...Slovo[xii] was mentioned. And that's when the brainwashing started. Every night they used to tell you about the communists that were coming in...with the propaganda they filled the young guys' heads with."
Participant 5
"...if you look at the propaganda, you didn't have another way of thinking, really, that was being rammed down your throat, day in and day out."
Participant 8
"...it was a very powerful machine of non-information that the government had at that time. That's it. You do this because it's good for the country, and you don't challenge it."
Participant 6

Afrikaans speaking conscripts also mentioned the influence of Afrikaner Nationalism at the time, which appeared to be more significant for them than for English speaking conscripts.

"From school right into the army. They had it worked out so nicely. You just did not have a chance. As a child, you just did not have a chance, walking out of there without being a racist."
Participant 12
"Afrikaner Nationalism was prevalent throughout the system, and was a divisive entity: the English and Afrikaans soldiers seldom mixed, and rarely trusted one another."
Participant 7

In comparison to family members, conscripts barely mentioned their own political views, and referred only to political views on a societal level. Family members, on the other hand, expressed their own political views as well as the views of some of their fellow family members and the political views of the community in which they were living at the time of the Border War. They made relatively very little reference to anti-communism and the 'terrorists' that South Africa were fighting against.

A possible explanation of this discrepancy is twofold. Firstly, during their time on the Border, conscripts spoke about how they were constantly reminded of the reason why they were there – to fight communism, and prevent the terrorists from getting to South Africa. Compared to families of soldiers, they had a much more real and tangible idea of who this communist enemy was, what it had done and what it could do. This probably gave conscripts a much clearer idea of why they were engaged in war, what the purpose of this war was, and why the apartheid government believed this war was important and necessary.

Secondly, conscripts may have felt less pressure to convey themselves in a positive light by portraying themselves as liberal and non-racist. They may have felt that due to the fact that conscription was forced, they were merely doing their duty by acting on the anti-communist and racist views of the apartheid government, and could therefore not personally be labelled as racist. This could be accompanied by the implication that there was no room for liberal political beliefs in the SADF, and that any individuals that possessed such beliefs would be foolish to overtly oppose the views of the government. In contrast to this, families seemed to feel a great need to portray themselves in a positive light – as non-racist, either by expressing their own liberal political views, by making a distinction between themselves and those that do have racist views (e.g. parents, community), by depicting racist views as the norm (e.g. in the Afrikaans culture), or by claiming to be apolitical or ignorant about the political goings on of the country.

Discourses of violence *and* Life during the army

Discourses of violence featured frequently in the talk of conscripts, and these discourses were essentially related to life in the army and perceptions of military violence that they observed during their time on the Border. These discourses covered a range of topics associated with violence, including their fear of dying or of being injured while on the Border.

"The platoon openly talked about the fear of dying or being wounded, and had lost the sense of adventure that we started with."
Participant 7

"But all of us were scared after the first time, because you never know when your ticket's up, you never know."
Participant 13

They spoke about their fellow soldiers dying, and their reaction to this.

"...he was lying there, knowing that he was dying, and being able to talk, completely numb, not feeling a thing, with his mates trying to console him when he can see that there is absolutely nothing there...that was a bit of a shock. That rattled us all."
Participant 3
"That night we had a memorial service to bid one of our friends farewell...The service was very moving and quite a few of the guys could not help the flow of tears. I was amazed at how the anger towards the enemy inside me had swelled to such great proportions after that."
Participant 1
"The mind numbing experience of seeing friends die while you hold them in your arms and make promises you know you cannot keep is almost a robotic response to someone who knows their life is slipping away and allows the terror of it to take over as they showed their absolute fear of dying."
Participant 14
"His face was shot away and he was crying for his mother...An infantry Buffel[xiii] *took a direct mortar hit and all five died, the rest badly wounded...I can't really remember being shocked or grieved at this stage – we just went on."*
Participant 15

Conscripts also spoke about aggressive behaviour that was characteristic of some individuals.

"A telephone call, line gets cut, I tell you, that guy becomes a monster, stronger than any lion in the bush...Guys with a little bit of drink in them, they go mad...go crazy, I mean a big fight."
Participant 2
"We were horrible people...We were mad."
Participant 3
"...we had such killer instinct, it was scary."
Participant 3

Some conscripts spoke about their involvement in violence and their justification for these actions.

"...when your life is in danger, you'll do anything. And to kill someone at that stage, it didn't really mean much. I mean that's what we were there for, we were killing people."
Participant 13

"I caught him in my gun sight and shot him with the co-ax Browning machine gun. We all roared with laughter as he somersaulted backwards…That night I realised that I had probably killed somebody's father or husband and felt really bad. I sat with the muzzle of my R4 in my mouth but did not have the guts to pull the trigger."
Participants 15
"This is how I justified what happened: it was an injustice for the episode to have no resolution / we couldn't stand to watch him lying there in that pain / execution was the best thing for him. This is how I justify what happened: in stepping forward and acting with a courage I never knew I possessed, I made the sacrifice of choosing to carry his life forever."
Participant 17

Mention was also made about the 'unreality' of the situation and how the Border was seen by some as:

"…the border of sanity and insanity…"
Participant 10

…with sanity occasionally prevailing.

"When we did the body counts you look at okes[xiv] *and there they're lying and you count them, and this oke's young, it's very unreal."*
Participant 13
"…this was a different world with different rules. We were strangers in a strange land who could perform atrocious acts and get away with them. The social norms and behavioural inhibitors that existed at home did not apply to us when we were that far away."
Participant 7
"…when my section leader hit me, I very nearly shot him. I cocked my rifle, which you just don't do until you're told to. I was sitting, he was walking away from me, I was still thinking maybe I should call him and shoot him in the forehead so he knows I shot him. Because I won't shoot him in the back. I had a round in the chamber, I had the whole trip. I had a 35 round magazine that was full, I could have taken him out totally. I could have destroyed him on the spot. Fortunately, sanity prevailed, what little bit of sanity that I had left."
Participant 9

Some conscripts also discussed their perceptions of those involved in violence, and offered their view of why these individuals were so violent.

"…everybody knew the Recces was the main guys. You never see them, you never know where they go or what they do…you were just told, you don't go near there, they would shoot you. Because they're totally beserk, totally…they were specialist in killing people, them and Koevoet…I think in the

operations where you had Koevoet and you had these guys together, I don't think any opposition on the other side would survive."

Participant 2

"Koevoet...they were wicked cannibal, they were war making machines. They were bad. And everybody knows about Koevoet. Everybody up in South West Africa know about Koevoet, you don't mess with Koevoet."

Participant 9

"They were the real madmen. I think they really have a bit of a brain problem those guys...there must be a kind of mental disorder if you enjoy doing that kind of thing."

Participant 6

"...indoctrination. You would also go out and do it, and eventually would do it because he thinks that's now the right thing to do. It's a lot of indoctrination."

Participant 11

"And I think if you're that way inclined and maybe you go up there for three months, that could just push you over the edge. And you could come back a really messed up person."

Participant 8

"...Koevoet and 32[xv] really attracted the psychos. They loved it...Then there were the true believers. They were on such an anti antichrist (communism and the swaart gevaar) trip that they saw it as their Christian duty. And they loved it."

Participant 15

Some conscripts also remarked on how, in the midst of this violence, the enemy was dehumanised.

"The apartheid system itself had grown a generation that viewed blacks as sub-human....In some areas we were exposed on an ongoing basis either to action or to dead bodies. The unremitting contact with death dehumanised some people."

Participant 7

Family member's discourses on life during the army differ from these discourses in the sense that family members spoke not only about what life was like for their son/brother/husband, but also spoke about what it was like for them as family members, i.e. being separated from their loved ones, and the fact that family members spoke about this more, could be for the reason that it was a reality for them, more so than the violence that their son/brother/husband encountered. Family members did mention their son/brother/ husband's exposure to violence on the Border, but did not discuss it in great detail, making reference mostly to his job in the army. This could be attributed to the possibility that men returning from the Border did not speak much about their experiences because they were not allowed

to, or they had difficulty readjusting to normal life, and battled to relate to people and speak to them about their experiences. Both these explanations appear in the texts – family members commented extensively on the fact that men returning from the Border did not speak about their experiences, and conscripts' spoke about the difficulties of readjusting and the fact that people back home did not understand their experiences.

Conscripts went into much greater detail in their descriptions of experience of and exposure to violence, and this could be because violence was much more of a reality to them; it was what they were constantly faced with and reminded of on the Border, and it was something that couldn't be ignored or avoided. In addition to this, conscripts discourses of violence are obviously going to be more specific and vivid because they are speaking from firsthand experience, whereas family members are only retelling stories that they have heard from someone else.

In spite of these differences, family members' discourses on life during the army are similar to conscripts discourses of violence in some respects. Both have an emphasis on the negative, as both family members and conscripts spoke about aspects of life on the Border such as killing people and fear, as well as events of violence. Family members also spoke extensively on how men had been brainwashed and 'programmed' to behave violently, which related to the indoctrination that conscripts mentioned.

Discourses of readjustment, Discourses of effect *and* Effect on the soldier

Both conscripts and family members spoke about the effect of Border experiences on those directly involved, with conscripts focussing slightly more on the difficulties of readjustment after coming back from the Border. In their discourses of readjustment, conscripts described this process of adjusting from military to civilian life as particularly hard, especially since they were just expected to slot back in to society, and weren't given any form of debriefing or counselling.

"...there wasn't a grace period...We just had to fall in and carry on."

Participant 11

"My family had organized a welcome home party with champagne and all. I said hello to everyone and then ran away into Newlands forest. I could not stand the noise and attention and I hated being

treated like a hero after what I'd done…Everyone was absolutely clueless about what life was like up there."
Participant 15
"Of course I wasn't debriefed, I repeatedly tell her. I get so angry sometimes I want to say No, major, get it – understand – digest – grasp it – bloody well believe it – there was no counselling or directing or even (especially?) thanking – no indication of how, having not died physically, we were meant to return home and live."
Participant 17

Many of them spoke about the problems they had with relating to other people.

"Adjusting was not easy at first. I was not used to so many people around me anymore as I had spent most of my time in the bush with miles and miles of nothing around me."
Participant 1
"…there were expectations that we would interact with civilians normally. It was impossible to move out of the danger zone of the border and integrate into normal society."
Participant 7

A number of conscripts also mentioned problems they had with sleeping and nightmares.

"…the consequence of that was for about five years after that, I couldn't lie on my back, I couldn't sleep on my back, I would just break out into a cold sweat."
Participant 4
"I could not sleep, had vivid nightmares and could not face a war movie (to this day)."
Participant 15

These difficulties were exacerbated by the fact that many South Africans could not accept the truth about the Border War.

"I think it was like Nazi Germany – everybody knew that something really bad was happening but were afraid to get close to the truth because that would make them culpable and would force them out of the neutral 'I don't know' position."
Participant 15

In terms of their discourses of effect, conscripts mentioned both positive and negative effects. Positive effects included perseverance, discipline, teamwork and a respect for elders.

"If I want to do something, I can do it. I've got a lot of determination...I've been there. And also if things are really tough, I can also say, well I've experienced the worst."
Participant 4
"I learnt a bit about endurance, I learnt a bit about tenacity...I guess discipline too..."
Participant 6
"But there also taught us how to work together in teams..."
Participant 3
"Basically I think I learnt a lot about respecting people...it taught me just to generally respect elders...to respect and to listen."
Participant 5

However, these positive effects were outweighed by negative effects. Many conscripts did not enjoy their experience, and felt it was a waste – of time and lives.

"I would not wish war on anybody...The trauma, the hurt, the loss and the unexpected – all so unnecessary...I've fought a war, lived through it and have done my bit for the country. Never again!"
Participant 1
"Now of course you can reflect back and say, you know, what a bloody waste. People who were killed and injured there for what?"
Participant 8
"...I do know that I felt very, very bitter towards our wonderful Nationalist government, for a long time after the army..."
Participant 9
"...if someone tried to explain to me now, or justify, explain is a different word, justify why we were there, I'll laugh at them, because, it happened...nothing happened at the end. No one won, we just lost I think...there was a lot of good okes who lost their lives for that cause...because that's what it was – some oke's cause, and all it is at the end of the day, is some oke's cause."
Participant 10

Conscripts mentioned a number of ways in which their military experiences had adversely affected them, and these included difficulties with social interaction, problems with aggression, shouting, and alcohol abuse. For some, this effect was not that clear, but they felt sure that they had somehow been changed by their time on the Border.

"...I still talk about myself being socially unacceptable, because I do say the odd thing where I put my foot in it...every now and again these memories come back and one's behaviour becomes antisocial...I don't have many friends. I don't fit in well with crowds, I'm a bit of a loner."
Participant 4

"I was incredibly aggressive when I came back, it was like this Rambo 'I'm invincible' type of thing..."
Participant 8
"I was traumatised by it directly afterwards...it was making my life really, really difficult. I was exceptionally aggressive, which is not acceptable, just not acceptable."
Participant 12
"And I think one of the problems which I experience is obviously, I do not have a long span of concentration, and shouting. That's one thing that gets to me..."
Participant 2
"...from time to time, I drink in excess, the alcohol abuse is definitely evident. But it's controllable."
Participant 4
"I think the word traumatised is possibly too strong. I know it definitely changed me – took away my innocence and made me a man (in every negative sense). But it does not affect my daily life much except that I do not get excited about things like normal people do. I believe we all died up there in the bush. The lucky ones went home in body bags and the rest of us were sent home as zombies."
Participant 15

In comparing these discourses and family members' discourses, the most obvious similarity is the fact that both conscripts and family members, despite referring to some positive effects, emphasised the negative effects that Border War experiences have had on the men involved. Conscripts however, discussed far more extensively the difficulties of readjusting to civilian life, and a possible reason for this would be that that time period just after they returned from the Border was extremely tough for them. It was a time during which young men were forced to reconcile war and real (civilian) life; they had come from a kind of 'surreal' situation, and were returning to the lives they had left behind, returning to people who did not understand where they had been, what they had done and what they had been faced with. It is likely that family members did not speak as much about readjusting because they simply did not fully realise how hard it was for their son/brother/husband, and did not have sufficient insight into the stark contrast between war on the Border and real life at home.

Family members seemed to have gone into much more detail in their discussion of the effects of the Border War on their son/brother/husband, as well as the more specific changes that have come about in these men. They mentioned some of these specific effects, similar to those mentioned by conscripts , e.g. problems with social interaction, aggression, sleeping and nightmares, but differ from the conscripts discourses in that they also talk about more general effects and personality changes that have come about, not only in their son/brother/husband,

but also in men generally. A comment made by one of the conscripts sheds some light on these general effects, and gives some support to the claim by some family members that experiences on the Border can bring about change in personality:

"I think if you give me a person for four months I can make him a psychopath. As simple as that. I mean you can actually change a person's personality in a very short space of time. And that's what they did. They actually changed you from a schoolboy to a king. And you don't think about it."
Participant 12

Family members go on to mention many more effects that they feel have come about as a result of Border War experiences, and these include changes in political views, difficulty communicating, emotional distance, the loss of capacity to love, fear, flippancy and carelessness about life, problems with relationships, difficulty finding direction and achieving in life, and battling to settle down. What family members have discussed with regards to effects and changes goes far beyond what conscripts spoke of, and there are a few possible explanations for this. Firstly, family members may feel entitled to comment on the changes that have come about in their son/brother/husband, and discuss these effects and changes so extensively and in such great detail in an effort to gain sympathy and put the army in a negative light (the function of these discourses mentioned in Chapter Five). Secondly, the majority of these effects and changes are negative, and it is likely that conscripts do not want to speak about and dwell on the negative aspects of their own behaviour or personality characteristics; they may be less inclined to try and elicit sympathy or compassion as this might infer weakness. Thirdly, conscripts may also not be aware of some of the changes that have come about in them, and family members may be in more of a reliable position to comment on such changes. Granted that family members do not offer a completely objective point of view in this regard, but may be slightly less subjective about this topic than the conscripts themselves.

Discourses of coping *and* Dealing with effects

With regards to the discourses of coping of both conscripts and family members, in spite of the fact that conscripts are referring to coping *in* the army, whereas family members are referring to coping *after* the army, there are a number of parallels that can be drawn, and it is worth comparing these two sets of discourses.

Conscripts discussed both practical and mental or psychological ways of dealing with life on the Border. On the more practical side, conscripts mentioned that writing and receiving letters was very important and helpful for many.

"Mail was a very important issue to us. It was those letters from home and the occasional parcel that was the driving force in keeping us going and sticking out the hardships when the going got tough."
Participant 1
"I wrote letters to everybody I knew, family, friends, every girl friend that I knew at the time that I was dating or not dating...I would write to them because that's what kept you going, the communication, waiting for a letter, knowing that you're going to write back."
Participant 2

Some conscripts found that keeping busy helped them to cope, and this included passing the time and alleviating boredom by physically doing things, or by keeping one's mind active and creative.

"I kept myself busy all the time. Because the minute you sit by yourself, and that's what happened to a lot of guys, the minute you sit, you withdraw completely, and it's right in your mind, and that's when you start...you get homesick. And when you get homesick, you go bananas."
Participant 2
"Boredom set in very quickly after the initial excitement was over. At the beginning of the operation there were a number of books doing their rounds but that source soon dried up as all the books were snatched up and read quickly...one had to allow one's mind to be creative to pass the time."
Participant 1

Camaraderie and support gained from fellow soldiers also helped conscripts to deal with the situation.

"...your mates pulled you through, and you pulled them through, and you spoke and you joked..."
Participant 5
"...the camaraderie was what helped you get through it."
Participant 8

Some conscripts resorted to possibly less positive, yet practical ways of coping with being on the Border: the use and possible abuse of alcohol and drugs.

"...we all started drinking, heavily, while we were there...I think it was another thing to try cope..."
Participant 13
"We used the dried fruit in our ratpacks to make an alcoholic brew and we got plenty of dagga from a 32 Battalion company in the bush with us. This helped kill the dangerous idle time."
Participant 15

Some of the more mental/psychological ways of coping included sitting it out, making the best of the situation, and focussing on the job at hand. This often required men to '*vasbyt*'[xvi] – 'bite the bullet' and survive.

"The hapless feeling of being locked irrevocably into the predicament of warfare prevailed and, having decided long before not to choose six years in jail courtesy of conscientious objection, there seemed little choice but to sit it out and see where it led."
Participant 17
"I decided I was going to make the best out of it, and that was the way in which I went about it."
Participant 6
"...I felt that I had to survive that, and I could survive it, because if you're mentally strong, you can...the easiest thing in the army to do is if you are instructed to do something, execute that instruction to the best of your ability. Don't fight it mentally. Become a moron, and you learn to have a breeze in the army."
Participant 3
"...you actually felt you were there to do a job, these were the bad guys and you were going to take them on. So that certainly helped you get through it."
Participant 8
"And then in the army I realised that you just need to really vasbyt. *And* vasbyt *is a...it's a terminology used by people who do not know what it's really like to actually grind your teeth and having to get there."*
Participant 3

Some more negative mental/psychological approaches opted for by some were cynicism and emotional detachment.

"You can only be cynical, it's the only way you can survive."
Participant 9
"...I call it the shutter door comes down, where you just basically cut off what you see. That's not really happening, but it is, but it's not in your own little mind. Everything's cool."
Participant 10

At first glance, these ways of coping that have been spoken about by conscripts seem vastly different to those spoken about by family members. In many ways they

are, but similarities are evident in the *types* of coping that both conscripts and family members have spoken about and there are a number of parallels between these two groups. The first parallel or type of coping that is common to both groups is personal or people oriented coping, and for conscripts this would include letters (written interaction between people) and camaraderie; for family members it would be the support of others, identifying with others, family closeness and family support. Other parallels that are apparent are –

Families	*Conscripts*
Focussing on the positive	Keeping busy
	Making the best of the situation
Coping out of necessity	'Vasbyt'
Distancing emotionally	Cynicism
	Emotional detachment

Apart from these similarities, there is quite a difference between discourses of coping of conscripts and family members, and the most obvious aspect of this difference is that family members spoke far more on the topic of coping than conscripts did. This could be attributable to a number of factors. Firstly, the main focus of the research on conscripts was on their experiences *in* the army and how they dealt with that, and the main focus of the research on families was the effect *after* the army, their experiences of the effects of the Border War, and how they dealt with these effects. Secondly, conscripts may have had an increased sense of their experience on the Border as their *duty*, and therefore something they just needed to accept, as opposed to something they needed to analyse and *cope* with. Thirdly, all but one of the family members interviewed were women, whereas all the conscripts were men. Many family members (women) brought up gender differences in coping, and in particular, the fact that women talk more about things, hinting that women maybe cope better than men. It is possible that the belief that women are better equipped to cope than men, and are thus more likely to speak about coping, holds true in the case of these conscripts, i.e. they are less inclined to talk about coping because they are men. Lastly, some of the ways of coping mentioned by family members may simply be more applicable to them because they are a part of their reality and are meaningful to them, e.g. religion, helping others and coping as a result of past experience.

Other discourses

There were a number of other dominant discourses that emerged from the talk of family members that did not emerge from the talk of conscripts, i.e. views on the Border War; feelings towards the SADF and/or apartheid government; the effect on families / life after the army; and feelings towards / responses to the soldier. The latter two sub-categories of discourse are probably not evident in the talk of conscripts because these discourses are concerned mostly with the perspective of families. Furthermore, as was mentioned previously, the main focus of the research on conscripts was on their experiences *in* the army whereas the main focus of the research on families was the effect of these experiences, which focuses more on what occurred *after* the Border War. As a result of this, conscripts were not asked to comment on the effect of their Border War experiences on their families, what their family members felt about them, or how they treated them.

In retrospect, it is surprising that conscripts did not express more of their views on the Border War and their feelings towards the SADF and/or apartheid government. In light of the fact that they actually endured experiences on the Border, one would think that conscripts would be more bitter about their experiences and more resentful towards the system that sent them to fight on the Border. Although some conscripts did voice their bitterness, family members seemed to be decidedly more bitter, resentful and angry, and this was clearly apparent in their talk.

Regarding their views on the Border War, some conscripts did claim that it was a waste, but it is possible that they had greater insight into the rationale behind the Border War, and therefore did not express this view as strongly as family members did. The threat of communism was palpably real to them; they knew who the enemy was and what this enemy was capable of, and may have therefore been more aware of the reasons for fighting this enemy. Families back home, due to the secretive nature of the apartheid government's activities, may have been blissfully unaware of the war going on, and this naivete was indeed claimed by some family members. If family members were ignorant about what was happening on the Border, it is probable that they also had limited knowledge and understanding about why exactly the war was being fought, and if one considers their misinformed

position, and even ignorance in some cases, it is conceivable why they would feel so negatively about this war.

With respect to conscripts' feelings towards the SADF and/or apartheid government, it is possible that conscripts, more so than their families, saw conscription as their duty as a South African, and acceded to it as such. They may have come to a point of acceptance much earlier on in life and seen it as part of growing up as a white male in South Africa. If they had reached this point of acceptance, it is feasible that they would be less likely to blame the apartheid government for forcing them to do National Service. As was mentioned by both conscripts and family members, conscription was seen as one's patriotic duty, and opposing it could be construed as unpatriotic. It is therefore possible that conscripts do not want to be seen as unpatriotic by voicing their objections to the SADF or the apartheid government. Because conscription was the accepted norm for men in South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s, opposing it may be interpreted by many as a sign of weakness and a lack of manliness. In an effort to avoid being depicted as weak and unmanly, conscripts may have avoided speaking out too strongly against conscription.

Functions of the discourses

Despite the differences between the dominant discourses of conscripts and family members, the discourses that emerged in the talk of both groups seem to serve similar functions in many respects. What could be identified as one of the primary functions of talking about the whole issue of the Border War, one that is common to both conscripts and family members, is to make the issue real. The impact of the Border War has to a large degree been shelved and avoided, and the consequences of this war have not been properly acknowledged. This lack of attention to such a momentous event in South African history, especially one that has had such a widespread affect, is reflected in the very small amount of research that has been conducted on the topic. By speaking about it, and speaking about it so openly (which all participants did), both conscripts and family members emphasised the reality of this issue. They had the opportunity to stress the fact that it did happen, it did affect both soldiers and families, and it is not something that can be packed away and forgotten about along with the rest of apartheid history.

Conscripts spoke about their experiences in a fairly informal way, as was encouraged by the interviewing style, and did not 'psychologise' the issue like family members tended to do through their use of formal psychological and quasi-psychological terminology. This may contribute to the function mentioned above, as conscripts may have been reinforcing the reality of the issue by focussing on experiences and events, rather than psychological effects, and they may be maintaining the position that the Border War was a real-life, tangible event in their lives, and not an abstract psychological phenomenon.

Another common function that is evident in both conscripts' and family members' discourses is that of coming to terms with what has happened in the lives of soldiers and their families. By talking about this issue, clarity is gained as both conscripts and family members attempted to explain and gain insight into any strange or uncharacteristic behaviour (which was not evident before going to the Border), or changes in personality in either themselves, in the case of conscripts, or in their son/brother/husband, in the case of family members. By speaking about these changes in behaviour and personality in relation to the Border War, it would appear that both conscripts and families attributed these changes to the army, and that both groups see the army (and Border War experiences) as being the instigating factor with regards to these changes.

What could also be considered as an important function of both conscripts and family members' discourses is the abdication of responsibility, and while this function is revealed in slightly different ways in both groups, it is nevertheless apparent. Family members seemed to want to abdicate responsibility for their political views and actions as a result of these views, and were continually trying to put themselves in a positive light, while putting the government in a negative light. They were quick to blame the apartheid government for the effect that the Border War has had on their son/brother/husband as well as their family, and were also quick to blame the government for orchestrating such a 'wrong' war. It appears that family members needed someone or something to blame, and that they needed someone or something to hold accountable and responsible for the effects of the Border War.

Conscripts seemed to be abdicating responsibility, not so much for their political views, but rather for their actions. Conscripts began by portraying themselves as powerless to oppose conscription, which could imply that they are not culpable for their actions while in the army, and they also made efforts to justify the prevalent violence in the army by rationalising it and by identifying the army, rather than themselves, as the root of this violence. Family members also tried to play down the responsibility and culpability of their son/brother/husband by emphasising that they were *'brainwashed'* and *'programmed'*. What this all suggests is that both conscripts and family members were attempting to take the focus off the individual, be it the conscript himself, the family member, or their son/brother/husband, and place the focus on the system in power – the SADF and/or the apartheid government.

The function of the anti-communist discourse of conscripts, which is also evident to a small degree in the discourse of family members, could be to emphasise the idea of an enemy. This enemy is identified as communist, which, from the discourse, seems to imply that it is evil, and the actual 'enemies', the terrorists, are perceived as dangerous. Such depictions of this enemy suggest that the fight against this communism is justified, but even if conscripts did not subscribe to the view of communism as evil, they still saw terrorists as dangerous and felt the need for self-preservation and protection, as is reflected in the talk of some conscripts:

"A terrorist...they would say to you, it's either you or them...So whoever shoots first and shoots accurate, that's the one that will survive."
Participant 2
"...knowing that if I didn't kill them they would kill me..."
Participant 3
"It all comes down to kill or be killed on a very basic level..."
Participant 14

This discourse (anti-communism), and hence its function, is more prolific in the talk of conscripts because communism and this 'enemy' were far more real to conscripts. Family members were not involved in the goings on of the Border War, and therefore do not have to justify any acts of violence or inhumanity that they may have committed. Some conscripts however, did commit such actions, and perhaps felt the need to justify them. Anti-communism was also more real to conscripts in

that it was the motivation for the Border War and therefore the motivation for the actions of those involved in the war. By emphasising the pressure from the apartheid government, as well as society at the time of the Border War to combat communism, conscripts may have felt less responsible for their actions, because they claim that they were coerced into fighting for a cause that was not necessarily their own.

Conscripts also spoke far more about violence as part of life on the Border, and the possible function of such discourse may be to come to terms with the violence that they either committed or were exposed to. Conscripts may have been searching for reasons why so many lives had to be lost, and may have been trying to justify their reactions to these deaths. By speaking about violence, which was the harsh reality of life on the Border, conscripts may have also been trying, to some degree, to elicit sympathy for the conditions they were exposed to.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown a number of similarities as well as differences between the discourses of conscripts and those of family members. Some similarities are expected, since both groups are speaking about the same war, the same apartheid government and similar experiences. The differences, however, call for some explanation. What is possibly the main dividing factor of these discourses is the fact that conscripts are speaking generally about *experiences*, whereas family members are speaking generally about *effects*. One cannot say that conscripts' discourses are a more valid expression of reality, because the effects of the Border War are as much of a reality to family members as life in the army is to conscripts, and the construction of each groups' discourses constructs their reality as either soldiers on the Border, or as family members.

A number of functions, common to both conscripts and family members, were also discussed in this chapter. What this could possibly suggest is that, in spite of the differences in the way they talk about it, both conscripts and family members have a collective need to work through the issue of conscription and the Border War.

Chapter 7

Conclusion

Summary of main patterns

There have been a number of main patterns that have emerged in this research in the discussion of the categories of discourse, the types of discourse, and the comparison of family members' and conscripts' discourses. What is perhaps the most recurrent pattern is the negative nature of the consequences of military service on the Border. This negativity also pervades participants' talk about conscription, the Border War, the SADF and apartheid government, as well as their impressions of what life was like in the army. In spite of a few positive aspects, the majority of participants' talk centres around the negative, and their emphasis is on negative experiences and negative consequences and effects.

What also emerges fairly consistently, in both the talk of family members and conscripts, is the shifting of responsibility from the individual to something or someone else. In some instances this involved inferring blame, and in other instances it is linked to participants' attempts to cast themselves in a positive light, regarding political views, responses to a son/brother/husband, the commission of violent acts etc. One gets the impression that both family members and conscripts do not want to be held accountable for wrong actions, behaviour, attitudes, beliefs or changes, and would rather hold someone or something else, in many cases, the SADF and/or apartheid government, responsible and culpable for most of these things.

Another pattern is the prevalence of psychological (both formal and informal) discourse in the talk of family members, who seem to look at the issue of the Border War from more of an emotional, psychological and mental point of view. This is in contrast to conscripts who focussed more on experiences and events rather than feelings. It is likely that this type of discourse forms an integral part of family

members' constructions of reality with regards to the impact and consequences of the Border War. Using this discourse may be their way of coming to terms with and understanding this issue in a way that makes sense to them.

Functions of the discourses

Although the functions of the discourse have been mentioned previously in relation to the various sub-categories of discourse as well as the different types of discourse, it is helpful to restate the common functions of this discourse that have emerged.

What seems to be one of the main functions is that of making the issue real: emphasising the reality of the effect of the Border War, and getting clarity on this issue, thereby coming to terms with the effects that this war has had on the participants and their loved ones. Linked to this, participants' discourses may also serve the purpose of giving some explanation for strange behaviour or personality changes that have taken place in those men that fought on the Border, and participants may have used different types of psychological terminology to do this, holding the army responsible for this strange behaviour or changes in personality.

With their use of psychological discourse (formal and quasi-psychological), participants have stressed the seriousness of the effects of the Border, and have, in a sense, elevated the effects of the Border War from the level of it simply being part of growing up in apartheid South Africa, to something that has had significant psychological implications and demands serious attention. These discourses therefore do not only serve to emphasise the seriousness of this issue, but could also infer blame on the previous government for not taking this issue seriously enough.

In their discourses, participants have repeatedly placed the apartheid government in a negative light, particularly through the expression of their views against conscription and the Border War. While making the government look bad, the purpose of participants' discourses seems to be to make themselves look good. They do this by portraying themselves as different to the government, as well as by abdicating a large portion of responsibility for their own political views and actions.

They take the focus off themselves and place it on the system in power, and this system may be represented by a number of things: the government and/or SADF as the system in power, society as the system in power, the community as the system in power, or even the family as the system in power.

Theoretical considerations

Apart from discourse analysis, which can be described as more of a theory-method than simply a methodological tool, this study has not been predominantly theory driven. However it is useful to relate the findings of this research to three psychological theories or approaches: 'effects theory', family systems approach, and attribution theory.

'Effects theory'

Under the heading of 'Research questions' in Chapter Two, there was a discussion of my expectation that the impact and consequences of the Border War on families of soldiers would be negative. Mention was made of the influence of some of the surrounding literature on this expectation, but it is necessary to look more closely at this literature because out of it emerges what could be called 'effects theory'. The literature on the psychological aspects of warfare and combat strongly suggests that the consequences of war are detrimental for those involved, and a substantial amount of research has gone into war veterans suffering from posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), a large portion of this focusing on veterans of the Vietnam War. Although PTSD occupies an extreme end of the scale with regards to the effects of war, it is important to note that this disorder owes much of its origins to warfare in the 20th century.

PTSD has a history that goes back to the late 19th century when victims of railway accidents showed symptoms of trauma, termed 'railway spine', but it was the traumatic stress reactions of World War One soldiers, referred to as 'shell shock', that could be identified as the real beginnings of what would later become PTSD. These traumatic stress reactions were then recognised in soldiers who fought in World War Two, as well as victims of other traumatic incidents, such as accidents and natural disasters. These reactions were no longer referred to as 'shell shock',

and a wide range of terms came into being: 'gross stress reaction', 'post-trauma syndrome', 'traumatophobia', 'war neurosis', 'traumatic war neurosis', 'combat neurosis', 'combat or battle stress', 'combat or battle fatigue', 'combat exhaustion', and 'acute combat reaction' (Foster, Davis & Sandler, 1987; Joseph, Williams & Yule, 1997; Scrignar, 1996; Herman, 1992; Marmar & Horowitz, 1988; Young, 1995). Interest in these stress reactions reached its peak after the Vietnam War (Joseph et al, 1997; Herman, 1992), and Young argues that the "origins of the PTSD diagnosis are inextricably connected with the lives of American veterans of the Vietnam War" (1995, p. 108).

It is not necessary to trace the entire development of the term 'posttraumatic stress disorder' and the history of its inclusion in the various editions of the American Psychiatric Association's *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*. However, what is important to glean from the history of PTSD is that for this past century (at least), war has been seen to have negative consequences on the soldiers that are involved, irrespective of what war it is, who is fighting and who they are fighting with. This thesis does not allow for a complete comparison of the Border War with other wars in the 20th century, but it is important to note one particular similarity between the Vietnam War and the Border War. Both Vietnam and Border veterans did not return to their home countries as heroes, and both wars were frowned upon to some degree. Joseph et al (1997) highlight the significance of social context in traumatic reactions, claiming that "responses to trauma are also linked to sociocultural events" (p. 104). Granted that Vietnam and Border combat experiences may differ, the similarities in social context, i.e. feeling disowned by society, may indicate similarities in the traumatic stress reactions of these two groups of veterans. If then the traumatic stress reactions of Vietnam veterans were severe enough to warrant so much attention, it seems only logical, and indeed fair, to acknowledge that at least some veterans of the Border War may also have suffered from similar trauma, and deserve more attention than they have received so far.

My previous research on conscripts, along with this thesis, both seem to support the assertion that Border War veterans have experienced some degree of suffering, difficulty or 'trauma', using this term in a broader sense, and not just referring to PTSD. It is also clear in this thesis that the families of soldiers who fought on the

Border have been negatively affected in some way or another, and no family members spoke of any distinctly positive effect of this war. I believe it is therefore possible to state that this thesis confirms the 'effects theory'.

Family systems approach

What has been spoken about so far with regards to the 'effects theory' is largely referring to the effect on soldiers. What links this theory to families is the family systems approach, which was mentioned in Chapter One as an approach that has been used fairly frequently to make sense of the relationship between the military and families. Although this approach has not guided the methodology of this study, it is useful to consider the application of the approach to the issue of the effects of the Border War on soldiers and their families.

From participants' discourses it emerged that the effect of military service on the soldier is to be seen within the context of the family system and the suprasystem of the military establishment and of South African society during the 1970s and 1980s. What was also clear in the discourses was the pressure placed on conscripts to do military service, as well the pressure that families were faced with to deal with this. In terms of the efficient functioning of the family system that Compton and Galaway (1989) discuss, there is some evidence in this study that in some of the families where a particular family member (the soldier) was unable to perform his function within the family, the family's ability to function successfully was in fact impaired. This evidence however, was not found as much in the discourses of participants as it was in my own interactions with participants, thus making a rather subjective, and possibly unreliable link between the findings of this study and the family systems approach.

Family systems thinking also promotes a move away from the idea of cause and effect (Compton & Galaway, 1989), and it is perhaps at this point that participants' discourses depart from this approach. The fact that many participants expressed the view that their son/brother/husband had changed as a result of his time on the Border, and that they describe the effects of these military experiences ('The effect on the soldier'), possibly implies that they feel that military experiences on the Border are the *cause* for these *effects*. Participants, speaking as family members,

do not seem to go to any lengths to describe the effects that their *family* may have had on their son/brother/husband, whereas the family systems approach would support the notion that the individual's behaviour is affected by the behaviour of other family members (Gerdes, 1988).

Attribution theory

Attribution theory centres on the causal explanations of lay people (Hewstone, 1983), and is interested in everyday events and the way in which these events are understood and explained in common sense terms (Heider, 1958). This makes it an appropriate theory to apply to this research, since participants have endeavoured to identify causes and effects in order to come to some understanding of something that became an 'everyday event' for families across South Africa during the 1970s and 1980s. Despite the fact that participants did employ a fair amount of psychological discourse, their explanations of this 'event' drew heavily on common terminology that is uncomplicated and easy to understand.

Although attribution theory has not directed this research, it is nevertheless helpful to acknowledge that participants, in their discourses, have made a number of attributions, particularly in their perceptions of themselves and their perceptions of their son/brother/husband. My justification for this claim relates to a definition of attribution that is given by Weary, Stanley and Harvey (1989), who state that an attribution is an "inference about why an event occurred or about a person's dispositions or other psychological states" (p. 3). Participants in this study have been largely concerned with trying to offer an explanation of the changes that have come about in their son/ brother/husband, in terms of his behaviour, personality, and his mental, psychological and emotional state. Through their discussion of their political views and their views on the Border War, they have also to some degree been searching for an answer to the question of why conscription and the Border War had to happen.

Heider (1958) would maintain that attributions could be divided into those that are external and that refer to physical and social circumstances, and those that are internal and refer to factors such as emotional state, attitudes, motivation and ability. In the context of this research, external attributions could involve references to

factors such as South Africa's political climate during the 1970s and 1980s, the threat of communism at the time, and the need to fight this communist force, and the pressure on white males to do conscription and to serve one's country. Internal attributions, on the part of conscripts and other soldiers, could make reference to factors such as their emotional state and their state of emotional 'readiness' to deal with war on the Border and what they would see and experience there; the attitudes of these young men, in terms of their political views and their views on the value of National Service and the Border War; their motivation for fighting against communism and serving their country; and their physical and mental ability to deal with what they would face on the Border. Internal attributions made by family members could refer to factors such as the emotional state of family members; their attitudes, also in terms of their political views, and their views on military service and the Border War; their motivation for supporting or opposing the Nationalist government; and their ability to provide the necessary support for their son/ brother/husband and cope with the impact of the Border War on their family.

The types of attributions that have been discussed thus far are causal attributions, and these can be distinguished from responsibility attributions, which are related to causality attributions, but are different in concept, and causality is merely one dimension of responsibility attributions (Weary et al, 1989). The issue of responsibility emerged often in participants' discourses, and family members seemed more inclined to attribute responsibility to something other than themselves or their son/brother/husband. Conscripts also seemed more inclined to attribute responsibility to external factors rather than accept responsibility themselves (Draper, 1999).

Shaver (1975) discusses some of the factors influencing responsibility, and some of these can easily be applied to this research. Shaver (1975) argues that if an action is seen to be intentional rather than accidental, then more responsibility is assigned, and she agrees with Heider in stating that responsibility increases when the effect of an action appears to be under the actor's immediate personal control. Shaver (1975) also mentions the characteristics of the actor as well as his/her motivation and ability as factors influencing responsibility attribution. Relating this to the issue of the Border War and military service, soldiers may seen to be less responsible for their actions because they were forced into a situation of which they were not

ultimately in control. The motivation of many of these soldiers may have been in contrast to that of the apartheid government, thus making them less responsible for their actions, and in terms of their characteristics, family members may have portrayed their son/brother/husband in a positive light in order to avoid attributing responsibility to him for his actions.

Although attribution theory and the family systems approach have been considered in hindsight, and are indeed very helpful in understanding the findings of this study, future research may do well to include such theories in the design and method of research investigating this issue of the impact of the Border War on both soldiers and their families. Unless research is guided by theory from the outset, it is difficult and potentially problematic to claim that the findings of a study confirm or contradict a particular theory. It is nevertheless helpful to weigh up research findings against a number of theoretical standpoints, if only to suggest prospects for future work.

Implications of research findings

It could be argued that the point of view of family members of soldiers who fought on the Border is too subjective, and that family members would be inclined to over-emphasise and over-exaggerate. Anything obtained from family members should therefore be treated with caution and 'a pinch of salt'. While I would agree that family members would offer a particularly subjective perspective, I would disagree that their perspective should be entirely disregarded on these grounds. Family members do offer the perspective of those closest to the soldiers, and it is possible that what their perspective lacks in objectivity, it makes up for in reliability.

In light of this, I believe that the discourses of family members have significant implications, and that what family members have to say should be taken seriously, and what they are saying in the case of this research is that the Border War has had a serious impact on innumerable lives. South African society, and the previous government especially, have a very long way to go in acknowledging this impact. The absence of any type or form of debriefing or counselling offered to those returning from the army (and the Border in particular) is indicative of the lack of acknowledgement on the part of the apartheid government. The result of this is that there are literally thousands of soldiers and family members of these soldiers who

need some kind of treatment or help. Unfortunately, I have only come across two support networks that exist for SADF veterans (South African Veterans Association and www.geocities.com/sadf_scrapbook/).

What this research also implies is that there is a serious need for more research in this field. It is almost impossible to compare the findings of this research with other research, because no other available research exists on the topic of how families have been affected by the Border War, and there does not even appear to be literature that documents the stories of family members. This is sad, but true, and it leaves enormous room for more work to be done.

The Border War in the context of healing and reconciliation

Since the ANC came into power, South Africa has been engaged in a process of healing and reconciliation, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) being the main forum where memories, past trauma and human rights abuses have been dealt with. As was mentioned in Chapter One, the TRC did address the issue of conscription, and provided a space for individuals to share about their personal experiences of conscription. A number of accounts were also presented by individuals who had been in strong opposition to conscription, and who had suffered as a result of their objections to National Service.

The TRC acknowledged the damage caused by conscription, and this sentiment is embodied in some of the comments made by TRC Commissioners:

"...I feel that as you were describing the symptoms of post traumatic stress disorder, very many people in this room recognise those symptoms either in themselves or their brothers or their friends, their husbands, their boyfriends. Which leads me to realise that there are so many damaged and injured young men amongst others in this country who have been really very severely damaged by the experience of conscription and which leaves us with an immense challenge of what we do to heal that damage. That's one of the challenges that faces not only the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, but all of us..."

(Dr. Wendy Orr, TRC Special Submission on Conscription, 23 July 1997, Cape Town)

"...we have heard a number of submissions from ex-conscripts and with all of them there is this sense of helplessness and one can almost feel this crying out that someone must listen, I want to talk to someone. Many of these people feel that no one wants to listen, no one understands their experience and there is this very deep sadness that nothing can be done about their experience, and I think Wendy is right to say that this is an immense challenge. Post traumatic stress disorder in particular, is not an easy condition to control and to treat. Perhaps this is why it's been ignored. Perhaps mental health specialists are avoiding dealing with it because they know they are going to be opening up a can of worms. I think you're right to say, Gary that those who hope to help in this regard have got to sharpen their personnel because there is a lot out there judging by the statements that we have received and by the number of people who just wanted to talk, who were not ready to make statements but simply because they heard the Commission was going to attend to this issue. They just wanted someone on the other end of the phone who will hear them and it's a pity that many of those voices will pale into the silence that has characterised the history of conscription."
(Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela, TRC Special Submission on Conscription, 23 July 1997, Cape Town)

A common perception of the TRC was that is was important only for victims, and many would argue that conscripts and Permanent Force members are not victims, but are perpetrators. The TRC addressed this issue, and supported the view that conscripts were indeed perpetrators *and* victims, many of whom have been seriously affected by their experiences. Dr. Laurie Nathan captures the complexity of this question:

"Were conscripts victims or perpetrators? In particular were White conscripts who served in the defence force victims or perpetrators? In my view there is no neat clean-cut answer to this question. The conscripts who served in the defence force were clearly both victims and perpetrators. On the one hand they were subjected to relentless propaganda about the virtues of White Christian civilisation and the evils of Black communism and terrorism. Many conscripts served willingly because they believed the propaganda. They were also victims in the sense that they were subjected to physical brutality during their basic military training and some of them suffered and continue to suffer post-traumatic stress especially where they were deployed in combat situations."
(Dr. Laurie Nathan, TRC Special Submission on Conscription, 23 July 1997, Cape Town)

There seemed to be a consensus among both speakers and commissioners at this hearing that ex-conscripts and other military servicemen need to speak about their experiences in order for healing and reconciliation to take place. Some hope is provided by knowing that the TRC did address the issue of conscription and emphasised the importance of speaking about it, but unfortunately the hope may

have ended there. The hearing on conscription contained a handful of testimonies and stories, barely scratching the surface of the thousands and thousands of soldiers, not to even mention their families. Even in the wide range of literature on the TRC, conscription receives very little attention. One then needs to ask: what did the TRC actually accomplish for these men? One of the participants of this study (on families) is the sister of one of the men that testified at this hearing, and she expressed the belief that his testifying at the TRC had not had a positive outcome:

"He decided to put in a submission to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. He didn't have to, because he wasn't in South Africa, he was in Namibia, so it was a voluntary submission, and he was on national television, and ja it was pitiful to hear this. He thought that it would be a release, he could get it off his chest, tell everybody what happened, and ask for forgiveness and then try and carry on. But it actually, I think it made things worse, because initially after this, the whole hoo-ha had died down, and all the backslapping and handclapping, 'you've done a brave thing', that was it. No support, no back-up, no nothing, he was just left. And I really feel that that made him feel worse, and pretty much after that, he took to the streets."

One could not comment on whether this was the outcome for all who testified at the TRC, and it would be very sad if that were the case. Even if it was a positive and helpful experience for all but one individual, the fact still remains that not enough has been done to hear the stories of these men and their families. Silence and an unwillingness to properly face the past still seem to surround the issue of conscription, and this was even acknowledged by one of the TRC commissioners. Perhaps this is the case because many men do not want to rehash or relive their army experiences by facing them. Perhaps the South African public is too scared to find out the truth about what happened in the SADF and especially on the Border. Perhaps white men feel their experiences in the army were just normal and don't warrant special concern. It is also possible that the majority of sympathy and attention was extended to the black freedom fighters who fought for a New South Africa and the gross human rights violations that they endured. The woes of young, white men, training and fighting to uphold the dictums of an apartheid government, therefore paled in comparison with those laying down their lives for freedom and equality.

There is a great deal of healing that still needs to take place in the lives of men who fought on the Border, and in the lives of their families. This issue has not been

completely dealt with, and it is possible that we as South Africans are guilty of trying too hard to put the past behind us. As much as this country needs to move on, we still need to face up to the memories that persist. Stories need to be told and the truth needs to be uncovered in order for there to be true understanding, healing and reconciliation. In his submission to the TRC, an ex-conscript who went AWOL, closed with the following words from a song by Sinead O' Connor, which seem to sum up so aptly the needs I have spoken of:

"If there's ever going to be healing there has to be remembrance and then grieving so that there can be forgiving there has to be knowledge and understanding."

Limitations of research

There are a number of potential flaws in my research, mainly with regards to the design. However, at the outset, it should be made clear that the positivistic notions that are generally applied to quantitative, and some qualitative research, are not applicable in the same way to discourse analysis. Discourse analysis is not carried out with the aim of generalising its findings, and smaller samples are preferred, and indeed recommended by Potter and Wetherell (1987) in order to allow for more in-depth and detailed analysis of the texts.

Some discourse analysts could argue that my sample was possibly too big and that the interviews could have been longer. I do not believe that the size of my sample hindered the depth and detail of the analysis, and owing to the sensitive, and often private nature, of this topic, I feel that the interviews were the appropriate length; having more than one interview, or longer interviews may have put participants under pressure to reveal sensitive and personal information.

Apart from sample size, the issue of sampling is problematic. Participants were self-selected and made themselves available for involvement in this research. It is highly likely that an appeal for this type of research would attract those that have had negative experiences – those that possibly feel particularly bitter towards the SADF and the apartheid government. This would obviously skew the results in a negative direction by favouring the view that the Border War has only had a

negative effect. A possible way around this could have been to appeal more clearly for those who have had negative *and* positive experiences.

It is also clear that the sample is made up mostly of women, with only one male participant. This could be for a number of reasons. Firstly, many male family members (fathers and brothers) could have also been in the military, and may feel positively about these experiences, seeing no need to be negative about the Border War. Secondly, male family members may feel more strongly than women that one's service on the Border was part of growing up as white and male in South Africa, and that to complain about it would be seen as being 'unmanly' and possibly even disloyal. Thirdly, in light of the gender differences mentioned prior, men may be less inclined to talk about their experiences and how they have felt about the Border War. Following on from this, men may also be less inclined to volunteer for research if they know it involves speaking about personal experiences or issues. Despite the apparent reluctance of men to be involved in this type of research and to speak about their views and experiences, their perspectives on the Border War and its effects would be extremely valuable, and research that would focus on their views is very necessary.

This study was to a large extent limited to those living within the greater Cape Town area, and this may have had some effect on the sample, in terms of the language groups that are more predominant in Cape Town. The majority of participants were English speaking (i.e. first language), with only one participant speaking in Afrikaans during the interview, and a few others making reference to their Afrikaans background. The inclusion of Afrikaans participants in this study was determined largely by the fact that I, as the interviewer, was not fluent enough in Afrikaans to be able to confidently conduct interviews in Afrikaans.

Participants were not asked to specify their home language, as it has been my experience in previous research that many individuals who may have come from an Afrikaans background now see English as their home language. The issue of language groups and home languages can therefore complicate matters rather than simplify them. However, bearing in mind what emerged in the discourse regarding the differences between English and Afrikaans, it seems clear that members of these two language groups could have very different perspectives on the apartheid

government, the SADF and the Border War. Although there are Afrikaans speaking people in and around Cape Town, it is possible that they are influenced by the large proportion of English people. There may be truth in the claim that Afrikaans people from Cape Town are vastly different to the Afrikaans people you would find in provinces such as the Free State or Gauteng. Whether or not this is true would be hard to gauge, but it would no doubt be extremely useful to conduct research on the effects of the Border War in other parts of South Africa, and it is very likely that one would obtain a far broader perspective on this issue.

Sample collection for research such as this seems to be a complex issue. On the one hand, the sample should be representative of an array of experiences (ranging between negative and positive), family members (both male and female) and language groups (English and Afrikaans). On the other hand, the composition of the sample is strongly influenced by the fact that participation must be voluntary. People cannot be asked, and especially not forced, to speak about a topic as sensitive as this – they must come forward of their own free will to tell their stories because they feel comfortable to do so.

Reflexivity

Reflexivity refers to the influence of the researcher on the research findings, and Potter and Wetherell pose the following question regarding the reflexive nature of discourse analytic research: "How should we deal with the fact that our accounts of how people's language use is constructed are themselves constructions?" (Potter and Wetherell, 1987, p. 182). Reflexivity is very much a part of discourse analysis, and in fact qualitative research in general, and within this field of research it is acknowledged that the "ways in which we theorize a problem will affect the ways we examine it, and the ways we explore a problem will affect the explanation we give" (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor and Tindall, 1996, p. 13).

Reflexivity has most certainly featured in this research, and this was discussed in Chapter One with regards to the labelling of categories of discourse as well as the classification of words as 'positive', 'negative' or 'neutral'. The various categories of discourse are my own constructions and simply reflect my classification of the text and the emergent themes. Going even further back than this, the interview

schedules, although rather flexible, are also my own constructions and imposed a certain degree of structure to the interviews. The information contained within the texts is therefore reflective of what I deemed necessary to include in the interview. Despite this, I do believe that my role in the interview process was an overall positive one. By creating a relaxed and non-threatening atmosphere in the interviews and playing an active and participatory role in the interviews, I was able to put participants at ease, and as a result, all participants involved in this study seemed comfortable and willing to talk.

Another factor, which may have further facilitated the interview process, was my age. Participants could tell by my young age that it was unlikely that I would have had any personal experience of the effects of conscription or the Border War. What this may have possibly suggested to them was that I was approaching the issue from a relatively objective standpoint, not being swayed by my own subjective experiences, thoughts, emotions etc. regarding conscription and/or the Border War. The truth of the matter is that I do not have any personal experience of or involvement in conscription and/or the Border War, and while this may limit my insight into and understanding of the whole issue, it does allow me to be more objective. I have also investigated this issue from a neutral political standpoint, and have tried as much as possible to examine this issue with sensitivity to both ends of the political spectrum. I have no axe to grind with the SADF, the former Nationalist government, or even the present government; I am merely striving to uncover the truth about the Border War and its effects, and I am trying to create the space for people to tell their stories.

Strengths of research

Possibly the main strength of this research is its focus on the stories of family members. The semi-structured, narrative and fairly informal structure of the interviews gave participants lots of room to speak about things from their perspective and tell their story of how the Border War had impacted their life, either directly or indirectly. Participants were also not pressurised by time or a strict schedule of questions that had to be worked through, and this allowed participants to steer the direction of their own interview. Working outside of a set framework for the interview, participants were able to spend more time on those points or issues

that were meaningful and significant for them. As was mentioned previously, the interview format often changed to suit the participants, with respect to their relationship with the soldier.

Bearing in mind the lack of research on this topic, and the general lack of interest that is often shown, it is possible that participants were grateful for an opportunity to speak about their experiences, and this was evidenced in the openness and willingness to talk that was shown by participants. Interviews could therefore have had a twofold function: firstly, allowing myself as the researcher to gather information, and secondly, to give people a chance to tell their story. This can only enhance the value of such research, since it seeks not only to gather information, but also to help those who need a voice and a space to speak.

Another strength of this research is that it has engaged in an in-depth and detailed analysis, from which the relevant discourses have emerged, while also exploring the function, construction and variation of these discourses. A simple content or thematic analysis may have uncovered the relevant themes in the texts, but would probably not have gone further than that. Discourse analysis of these texts has given a wealth of more information as well as insight and understanding into this issue.

Prospects for future work

Before looking at the possibility of future research in this field, it is useful to evaluate what we know from research that has been done already. What we do know is that despite some positive effects, the Border War seems to have had a generally negative effect on the soldiers involved, as well as their families. What we don't know however, seems to far outweigh what we do know. We don't know *what* exactly these effects have been, the *extent* of these effects, *who* exactly has been affected, who has been affected the *most*, who has been affected the *least*, and how these people can be *helped*. We simply do not know enough about the effects of the Border War.

Since so little has been done by way of research, there is room for much more to be done on a wide range of issues: the effect on conscripts; the effect on those in the

Permanent Force and other security forces, e.g. 'Recces', 'Koevoet'; the effect on the family members and wives of these men; and even the effect on the children of these men. Research that has been done has been done from a more qualitative perspective, and more of this type of research should be done, along with more quantitative research, i.e. research that uses actual scales or measures to quantify these effects mentioned above. Research such as this may prove to be extremely helpful in the formulation of appropriate clinical treatment for affected individuals.

Apart from formal research, there is an incredible amount of work that can be done regarding the issue of the effect of the Border War. In my opinion, the main thrust of this work (including research) is to increase the awareness of the impact of this war on South Africa. The first step in raising this awareness is to acknowledge the effect on those directly involved, i.e. conscripts, etc. There needs to be a mind-shift from the view that military service was simply a milestone in one's life, and must therefore be dealt with as such. Once this is acknowledged and the effects of military service are taken seriously, it is more likely that awareness will increase regarding the effect of this war on those close to these men.

The main obstacle to this would be the silence and secrecy that has surrounded the Border War and the apartheid government, and it is highly unlikely that this silence will be broken that easily or that quickly. Perhaps time will be the only thing that eventually wears this silence down, and it may be in many years time that it is acceptable to openly deal with what went on in the 1970s and 1980s. The sad truth is that the damage will have been done by then – damage that is often irreversible and that has been inflicted upon many generations. In light of all this, it is vital that research done on this issue is published, and that people's stories are published, in whatever form they are written. Support networks need to be established, and thankfully some already do exist. Those suffering from the effects of the Border War need to know that there are others out there who are in a similar position to them, and they need to feel the support of these individuals and families.

Conclusion

The conclusion of this research is in many ways a sad one, as it has been shown that the families of soldiers who fought in the Border War have been adversely

affected to some degree. To add to this, so little has been done to help these families and their sons/brothers/husbands, and it is possible that the effects of the Border War may persist for generations to come through broken marriages, broken families, domestic violence and all kinds of abuse. I do not believe that the impact of this war can ever be fully grasped, and because this impact was never properly acknowledged, it could be too late now to repair the full extent of the damage.

My involvement in this research has been a truly unique experience. I have been touched by the stories I have heard, and have been moved by the pain of those still coming to terms with the effects of a shameful and often forgotten war. I do believe that many soldiers and families of soldiers have lived through this war and its effects, and have emerged as stronger people. However, I fear that there are many more who have been defeated by this war – some physically, some emotionally, some mentally. It is my hope and prayer that peace reaches their hearts and their homes.

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Appendix A –

Participant details

Participant	Relation to participant	SADF status of brother / son etc
Laura	Brother	Conscript
Pam	Close friend	Member of Reconnaissance Commando
Erika	Son	Conscript (Intelligence)
Yvonne	Brother	Posted at Koevoet (Security Police Counterinsurgency Unit)
Sarah	Husband	Conscript
Jenny	Brother	Conscript
Ursula	Son	31 Battalion
John	Son	Conscript
Mary	Son	Conscript
Liz	Brother	Member of Panser Division
Joan	Son	Conscript
Karen	Husband	Member of Permanent Force
Angela	Husband	Conscript
Sandra	Husband	Conscript
Debra	Brother	Conscript

Appendix B – Appeal letter in *Cape Argus* and other local papers (2001)

Have you been affected by war?

Did your husband, boyfriend, partner, son, brother or father serve in Namibia and/or Angola for the SADF during the '70s or '80s?

After completing a study on the effect of these military experiences on SADF conscripts, I am now conducting a psychological study to investigate the effects of these military experiences on the families of these conscripts.

This study aims to afford family members space to talk about the possibly traumatic experiences they may have endured over the last few decades.

Contact me at (021) 689 6582 or cathdraper@iafrica.com.

Cathi Draper
Mowbray

Appendix C – Appeal letter in *Fair Lady* (1999)

Calling conscripts

Was your husband, boyfriend/partner, son, brother or father in the SADF during the Seventies or Eighties? I'm doing a psychological study on the experiences and effects of military conscription during that time in an attempt to understand this very significant and possibly traumatic period in men's lives. I hope to interview men in Cape Town who fought for the SADF, particularly in Namibia (including Caprivi) and Angola. If you know of a man who fits the bill, please encourage him to contact me at ☎ (021) 689 6582 or email me at draptoti@iafrica.com.

Cathi Draper, Cape Town

Appendix D – Guide questions

Narrative approach

- Open-ended questions
- Elicit stories
- Avoid 'why' questions
- Follow-up using respondents ordering and phrasing

Feelings about conscription at the time of conscription
Feelings about the separation from your son / brother / husband
Circumstances surrounding commencement of National Service

Impact on family of returning conscript
Effect of conscription on family at the time

Effect of conscription on family now
Feelings about conscription now

Traditional approach

- How would you describe your family?
- How would you describe the members of your family?
- How would you describe the relationships in your family?
- What kind of impact did conscription have on the relationships in your family?
- Did your family change as a result of conscription?

- How does your family cope with change, and stressful change in particular?
- How did your family cope with the separation from your son / brother / husband?
- How did your views on conscription and the struggle impact on dealing with this separation?
- How did your family react to the changes brought about by your son / brother doing his National Service?
- How did your family react to the changes in your son / brother that were a result of his conscription experience?

- What kind of community were you living in at the time of your son's / brother's conscription?
- How did the nature of this community impact on your family?
- What can you remember of society's attitudes to conscription during the 1970s and 1980s?
- What effect did these attitudes have on your family?

Appendix E –
Written interview guide questions

Written interview questions

I am primarily interested in hearing **your story** about how conscription impacted your life and your family's life. Feel free to write *as much or as little as you want to*, and specific details (like dates etc) are only important in so much as they add to **your** experience of conscription.

The following points may serve as a framework for your story:

- Feelings about conscription at the time of conscription (i.e. during the 1970s and 1980s)
- Feelings about the separation from your son / brother / husband
- Circumstances surrounding the commencement of your son / brother / husband's National Service
- Impact on your family of your son / brother / husband returning after their National Service
- Effect of conscription on your family at the time of conscription
- Effect of conscription on your family now
- Feelings about conscription now

I am also interested in investigating any possible links between family dynamics / the family system, and the impact of conscription on the family. The following questions focus on the relationship between your family and your family's experience of conscription:

- How would you describe your family?
- How would you describe the members of your family?
- How would you describe the relationships in your family?
- What kind of impact did conscription have on the relationships in your family?

- Did your family change as a result of conscription?

- How does your family cope with change, and stressful change in particular?
- How did your family cope with the separation from your son / brother / husband?
- How did your views on conscription and the struggle impact on dealing with this separation?
- How did your family react to the changes brought about by your son / brother / husband doing his National Service?
- How did your family react to the changes in your son / brother / husband that were a result of his conscription experience?

- What kind of a community were you living in at the time of your son's / brother's / husband's conscription?
- How did the nature of this community impact on your family?
- What can you remember of society's attitudes to conscription during the 1970s and 1980s?
- What effect did these attitudes have on your family?

Thank you for your willingness to participate in my research. I trust that some of this experience of recalling memories has been positive for you.

Cathi Draper

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Appendix F – Participant details (Draper, 1999)

No	Home language	Age	Age conscripted	Period of conscription	Highest rank	Other information
1	English	32	19	1986 – 1987	None	-
2	English	37	17	1979	None	-
3	Afrikaans	37	17	1979 – 1981	None	SWATF – Equestrian unit
4	English	47	19	1971	Major	32 Battalion 1977
5	English	42	19	1976 – 1979	None	-
6	English / Afrikaans	41	17	1975 – 1976	Corporal	-
7	English	38	18	1979 – 1981	Sergeant	-
8	English	52	24	1971	None	-
9	English	31	18	1986 – 1987	None	-
10	English	34	16	1981 – 1982	Corporal	-
11	English	40	22	1981 – 1982	Lieutenant	-
12	Afrikaans / English	35	18	1982 – 1983	None	Parachute Battalion
13	English	29	18	1988 – 1989	Sergeant	-
14	English	31	19	1987 – 1988	None	Operations medic
15	English	37	21	1983 – 1984	None	-
16	English	39	17	1977 – 1978	Sergeant	-
17	English	36	18	1981 – 1983	None	-

Appendix G – Guide questions (Draper, 1999)

- What was your experience of conscription?
- What effect do you feel that your experience in military had on your personal life, family, friends, etc?
- Do you feel traumatised by your experience in the military?
- Was any help offered for those who were traumatised?
- What coping mechanisms did you use to deal with any trauma you experienced?
- What was the reaction to conscripts in the 1970s and 1980s, particularly on their return from military service?
- What was the influence of anti-communism in the 1970s and 1980s?
- What was the influence of Afrikaner Nationalism?
- What do you think made men in the military into perpetrators of violent atrocities?

Appendix H – Request for written submission (Draper, 1999)

Dear _____

Thank you for offering to help me with my study. Since this is a kind of 'unstructured interview via correspondence', I have just put down a few things that I am looking for. Most importantly, I would like to know about your experience in the army, not necessarily facts and details, but more about how you felt about it, the effect it had on you, what you remember most about it etc. The points below are merely a guide. Please feel free to write as much as you want.

- Your experience in the army, i.e. your story (as explained above).
- The effect of military service on your personal life, family, friends etc.
- Whether or not you feel traumatised by your experience in the military.
- The help offered / not offered for those traumatised.
- Ways of coping you used to help you through your time in the army.
- The reaction to conscripts in the 70s and 80s, particularly on their return, e.g. family, friends.
- How you feel now about your time in the army, e.g. angry, bitter, it was a waste, you want to go back...
- The influence of anti-communism and Afrikaner Nationalism at that time (70s and 80s).
- What you think made some men involved in the 'Border War' into perpetrators of violent atrocities, e.g. Koevoet, others involved in brutal violence.

Please could you also complete the attached form with some biographical details. Dates are not the most important, so don't panic if you can't remember all of them.

Please could you return all of this (excluding this letter) to me either by post, fax or email, as soon as you can. Confidentiality is assured.

Thank you once again.

Regards
Cathi Draper

Postal address:
PO Box 23791
Claremont
7735
Fax & phone: 021 – 689 6582
Email: draptoti@iafrica.com

[i] Colloquial Afrikaans term for 'soldier'.
[ii] Afrikaans for 'challenge'.
[iii] Referring to conscript or member of SADF Permanent Force.
[iv] Author's own emphasis.
[v] Afrikaans for 'black danger'.
[vi] Armoured vehicle widely used in the SADF.
[vii] Afrikaans for 'but'.
[viii] Afrikaans for 'community service'.
[ix] Afrikaans for 'minister'.
[x] Afrikaans for 'black man, must kill him'.
[xi] Afrikaans for 'soldier'.
[xii] Referring to Joe Slovo, former leader in the South African Communist Party.
[xiii] Armoured vehicle widely used in the SADF.
[xiv] 'Oke' is a South African expression a male individual; sometimes refers to both male and female individuals.
[xv] Referring to 32 'Buffalo' Battalion.
[xvi] Afrikaans term for 'sticking it out', 'gritting one's teeth', 'put up a brave face'.