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# An exploration of language and identity among young black middle class South African women

Research Report

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## ABSTRACT

The purpose of the research was to explore issues of identity amongst young, English speaking black middle class women focusing on belonging and alienation. Qualitative research using narrative interviews was conducted with 10 middle class women, aged between 20 and 35 years, who were among the first cohort of black children to attend model C schools at the end of the apartheid era and be taught in English. Several themes and findings were identified, starting with the multigenerational influence on the journey into being assimilated into the English language and culture. Grandmothers and parents experienced tensions between loss of indigenous languages and gaining class mobility for their daughters. Participants also unpacked their journeys of being assimilated into the English language and whiteness and the traumatic experiences they went through as their childhoods were racialised and they became positioned as inferior black people. These traumatic experiences of race continued into their adulthood and intersected with gender, class and language, as the women were positioned as 'cultural clones' in the workplace. Language also influenced the women's intimate relationships as they positioned English speaking male partners as providers and therefore potential life partners. Issues of hair and skin colour were also found to be significant identity markers through insertion into western culture through language, and blackness is actively redefined, resisted and reclaimed. This shows how our identities are fragmented and fluid, allowing the women to experience multiple identities and make them work. The women experience tensions between the loss of their mother tongue and culture, and the positive gains of class mobility that they attribute almost solely to their adoption of the English language as their primary (or only) language of communication. They are alienated from their communities because of their immersion into English and western culture but they are actively generating a new sense of belonging and identity within a new imagined community of English speaking black middle class women.

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# 1. CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1. Focus of the research

Issues of language and identity among young English speaking, black middle class women were explored. Questions were posed to young black women who communicate predominantly in English exploring their interpretation of their educational and life trajectories that have brought them to this place. The research focuses on the process of choosing to predominantly speak in English and the impact this has on the participants' identities, their relationships with their families and communities particularly, experiences of belonging and alienation. This research comes at a pivotal time where many black South Africans, who have been exposed to English medium schools, are beginning to question their black identities and sense of belonging. The key question that was asked was: How are the identities of young black women impacted by speaking English as a primary language?

This chapter will present a review of the literature found on the issue of language and identity in South Africa and Africa. This will then contextualise the need for the study that the researcher has undertaken.

## 1.2. Background to the language issue in South Africa

To contextualise the discussion on language and identity in South Africa, it is important to begin with events that helped shape the research question, to explore issues of identity amongst young black middle class women. To do this, an investigation into the changes that have happened in the education system, in the decades while the participants were growing up, and the meaning of these, is required. The consequences of these changes for the black middle class are addressed. Finally, the review will frame the language and

identity issue in the broader context of colonization on the African continent. This background will provide the rationale for conducting this research in South Africa at this time.

### 1.2.1. Why study the English language in South Africa

Proficiency in the English language has been seen by many South Africans as paving the way forward for improving one's socio-economic status, political and social success (Alexander, 2005). In the context of unequal apartheid education, the introduction of 'multi-racial' model C schools in the 1990s offered the promise of quality education, through the English medium, viewed by some black parents as the key to help secure their children's future (Makalela, 1998; Ndzimande 1993). Historically, families made decisions informed by the political situation of the country, which were informed by the political ideologies in play. An ideology is defined as "the production of knowledge…bound up with historically specific regimes of power and, therefore… every society produces its own truth which have a normalising and regulatory function" (McNay, 1992, p. 25). From the time the National Party came into power in 1948, it began to consolidate its hold on power and central to its apartheid programme was racial segregation. The government propagated its ideology of white supremacy and black inferiority by ensuring African children (and parents) accept their inferior positions in society through Bantu Education and promoted their ethnic identities as opposed to their national conscious (Pampallis, 2000). This effectively relegated black people to being second class citizens in their own country (Nieftagodien, 2014).

However, the introduction of model C schools in the 1990's, allowed children from different races, languages and backgrounds to attend the same classes, under the same conditions and be taught by the same teachers (Ndzimande, 1993), disrupting the apartheid principle of separate schooling according to race, as stipulated by the Bantu Education Act

No. 47, 153 (Mdepa & Tshiwula, 2012). Model C schools are schools that used to be for only white children under apartheid. Model C schools were allowed to operate as semi-public schools, where teachers were paid by the state but the school community would pay for operational expenses (Carrim, 1998).Children in these multi-racial schools were taught in English or Afrikaans. These schools were not 'integrated schools' rather, these schools accommodated black children, but were not required to change curricula to accommodate their backgrounds. It meant that black learners had to conform to a different way of life (that of white children) (Ndzimande, 1993). This also meant that use of the children's mother tongue was often punishable, even in democratic, post-apartheid South Africa where the social use of an African language is allowed (Baldwin & Painter, 2004). "Multilingualism is often portrayed with assimilationist and compensatory models as a necessary evil to facilitate transition" (Burman, 2008, p. 197) to the dominant language. As with all previously colonised countries, in these institutions the use of English was considered an achievement in schools, that is, it became a measure of intelligence (Wa Thiong'o, 2005). It determined the child's progress into higher education. As a result, children were often encouraged to converse in English not only at school, but also at home. The two main reasons why this assimilation into English would have been agreed to by parents were, firstly, English was, and still is, regarded as the language of the world economy, commerce and cultural globalisation. Secondly, English in South Africa is regarded by many as the language of national unity (Baldwin & Painter, 2004). This emphasis on English is extended and reinforced in further education studies and, in turn, in order to improve one's economic circumstances, the use of English is further critical in the work place to advance an individual's career.

Language is central to collaborative human labour throughout history, as Alexander (2003, p.8) observes:

> Since human beings are dependent on one another for the production of means of subsistence, they necessarily co-operate in the labour process and in order to do so, they have to communicate with one another. In this process of communication, language plays the most important role (Alexander, 2003, p. 8).

In the context of the 21st century and global networks of the economy, English is viewed as critical for full participation in the economy and serves as the de facto lingua franca in the South African workplace. This is because it is the language of business, of those who hold economic power.

The use of English is based on and perpetuates inequality between the 'haves' and the 'have-nots'.

> Hence, the development of linguistic markets, especially in the modern world of the capitalist mode of production, is directly related to economic functions of a language or a set of languages. These functions are automatically and objectively determined by the profit seeking interests of the dominant sectors of economic production and of those who control the means of production (Alexander, 2003, p. 8).

In order to fully participate productively in the global economy, these languages of the colonisers continue to play a critical role in the postcolonial countries. English is one such language that assists in the capitalist modes of production. Those that know the language and are eloquent have a greater chance of improving their socio-economic status (Alexander, 1989). English is then not only limited to use at work, but is also valued in social settings where one wants to make an impression and advance their lifestyle and status. Consequently, some South African black middle class people now speak predominantly in English on a daily basis regardless of their surroundings or to whom they speak.

This new elite often use English as the main language of communication and consequently may feel a sense of belonging amongst a community of black English speakers and possibly alienation from others who do not use English in the same way as they do. They may even view the use of indigenous African languages as too 'primitive' in certain contexts such as education or business for example, and unable to compete in the modern world. Research on using English as the main language of communication was done by Ayo Bamgbose in Nigeria in preparation for addressing the 25th Anniversary of the Annual Conference of African Linguistics (ACAL) on the topic 'Three decades of African linguistic research' (as cited in Alexander, 2005). He maintains the African elite are often happy to maintain the status quo and he claims that the elite are quick to point out how African languages have not developed to the point where they are able to communicate complex concepts. There is a strong belief that indigenous languages will not help people progress in the global market. This is not surprising because "an increase in the average level of education worldwide is likely to accelerate the use of these widespread languages" (Mackey, 2003, p. 68). English and other foreign languages were considered adequate to address communication needs. However, the risk of not developing indigenous languages far outweighs the advantages of speaking only the dominant language of English. Skutnabb Kangas (1988) as cited in Burman (2008) articulates it well by saying: "Monolingualism is a psychological island. It is an ideological cramp. It is an illness, a disease which should be eradicated as soon as possible because it is dangerous for world peace" (p.199). The truth is, even in South Africa, the majority of people do not speak English and, if they do, they are at least bilingual (Baldwin & Painter, 2004). Therefore, there is a case for developing African languages for use in multiple contexts, including academia where the inclusion of multiple languages offers new conceptual resources. Following the case of the development of Finnish

nationalism (Anderson, 2006), print media, languages can be developed and extended to new uses:

> The leaders of the burgeoning Finnish nationalist movement were 'persons' whose profession largely consisted of the handling of language: writers, teachers, pastors and lawyers. The study of folklore and the rediscovery and piecing together of popular epic poetry went together with the publication of grammars and dictionaries, and led to the appearance of periodicals which served to standardize Finnish literary [i.e. print-] language, on behalf of which stronger political demands could be advanced (Anderson, 2006, p. 74-75).

Clearly, the view that only English, and no other languages, can be developed to communicate complex ideas can be refuted. Given political will, any language can be developed to the point that it adequately addresses all the communication needs of the community (Anderson, 2006). Within South Africa, does English, being the most extensively written and spoken language, the language of education and work, have the ability to create a sense of belonging amongst the majority of South Africans? On the other hand, do individuals who predominantly communicate in English, mainly the black middle class, feel like they belong to the wider indigenous community of South Africa? In order for us to tackle these issues, we need to understand how language can influence identity and consequently people's sense of belonging and alienation.

### 1.2.2. Language, colonisation and apartheid

On the continent of Africa, "colonial conquest, imperialism and globalisation have established a hierarchy of standard languages which mirror the power relations on the planet" (Alexander, 2003, p. 5). The establishment of this hierarchy has been through a long process

of colonisation, which mainly sought to control the indigenous people and their wealth. The process of colonisation and the colonisers sought to do this through controlling "the language of real life" (Wa Thiong'o, 2005, p.16). That is, they sought to control how indigenous people communicated with each other, what was produced, how it was produced and how the produce was distributed.

In order to get open access to the wealth of the countries that were colonised, colonisers sought to control the minds of the colonised (Wa Thiong'o, 2005). The colonisers sought to actively destroy how indigenous people perceived themselves. This was done through destroying the cultures of the indigenous people and through implementation of language policies of the conquerors (Alexander, 1989; Wa Thiong'o, 2005). This erosion of African culture and languages, deeply affected how people defined themselves in relation to others (Hall, 1996; Wa Thiong'o, 2005). Through the use of power, violence and ideological institutions (Fanon, 2001) the European showed how superior they were to the African, thereby leading to Africans feeling more inferior in comparison to the coloniser. The aim of the colonisers was to ensure that the colonised did not have a sense of identity and self that would compete with that of the colonisers. This meant that their indigenous knowledge would be replaced with the knowledge systems and ways of life of the colonisers. By presenting the coloniser's knowledge and way of life as superior to that of the colonised, Africans would be constantly comparing their own knowledge and way of life to that of Europeans (colonisers).

Evidence exists that indigenous people of Southern Africa had contact with Europeans before the process of colonisation, as we understand it today, began. This early contact was often violent but sometimes voluntary and productive for the indigenous people of the present day Cape, the Khoi-Khoi. For example, "in 1613…two Khoi men were seized against their will and taken to England" (Crampton, 2014, p. 11) because the English wanted

to establish a refreshment station in the Cape to facilitate their trade with the East at that time. This is an example of the violent nature of contact between the European and African. On other occasions, individuals voluntarily boarded European ships to learn more about the other's culture, aiming to make a living for themselves. For example, sometime between 1613 and 1652, Autshumao (a Khoi-Khoi man), voluntarily "boarded a large English vessel…. Natural curiosity, the possibility of earning provisions and other perks, such as rice and clothing and the opportunity to learn language and customs of these potential trading partners" (Crampton, 2014, p.12) were his motivators. However, such instances of mutually beneficial relations between the indigenous people of Southern Africa and Europeans were limited. In most cases, the indigenous people were forced into a relationship they did not want because it was focused on labour power (Allen, 2000). Later in the process of colonisation, attempts were made to change the language of communication of the indigenous people namely, the Khoi-Khoi, San and Xhosa, to the language of communication of the Dutch who arrived in 1652 to establish a refreshment station for the Dutch East India Company in the Cape (Alexander, 1989, Crampton, 2014). Alexander (1989) documents how 'half-hearted' attempts were made to teach slaves and captured indigenous people in Dutch. For example, in 1658, the Dutch opened up a school for their slaves and other indigenous children, wherein "the pupils were encouraged to attend with a daily glass of brandy and two inches of tobacco" (Crampton, 2014, p. 24). It was realised that in order to establish legitimacy and hegemony of the European masters, that it was better to gain consent rather than use force and that language would be a critical tool in this approach. Although these attempts were understandably met with bitter resistance by the adults, however in time, many children of slaves adopted the language of their masters and a new language that was a mainly Dutch, but mixed with the indigenous languages of Southern Africa and those of

Eastern slaves brought in by the seamen, and other European languages such as German and French, started to emerge (Crampton, 2014).

As the Dutch settlers expanded their territory and set off on exploration missions to find gold in the early 17$^{Th}$ century, they enslaved many indigenous people to use as interpreters as they headed north (Crampton, 2014). Through these journeys, the Dutch made contact with new groups of people with their own languages such as the San, Nama and Tswana people. European languages were assimilated by the indigenous people, as trade was conducted. This often one way exchange of language would benefit the then 'free' indigenous people of Southern Africa. At that time many other people outside of the Dutch colony and "beyond the Hex River mountains were virtually all the indigenous people were still living in independent, if fragile, sovereign political entities" (Alexander, 2013, p. 4).Therefore, those who spoke the language of the people they were trading with were more likely to gain (economically) the most and their status in their communities would rise. For many indigenous people, this 'independence' continued well into the second half of the 19$^{th}$ century (Alexander, 2013).

However, the Dutch Colony was succeeded by the era of British colonialism from roughly 1795 (Terreblanche, 2012), bringing about a change in the hegemony of the Dutch and Afrikaans languages and the languages of the slaves who had become the "enforced subjects of the Dutch Colony" (Alexander, 2013, p. 4). Furthermore, together with a much more aggressive settling and occupying colonial approach, the English language was similarly more forcefully imposed. The language of the British became the dominant language. In the early colonial occupations of South Africa, there was clearly a tension between the use of English, Dutch and Afrikaans, to the exclusion of any consideration of indigenous languages, and English soon became the lingua franca of the colonialists in business and law, achieving a higher status in the society. English was the language of the

courts, central and local government offices, the schools, the newspapers, etc., while Afrikaans and Dutch were spoken mainly in the home and in church respectively" (Alexander, 1989, p.16).

The late 19th century saw this tension rise, culminating in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899 – 1902 (Untehalter, 1995). "This was compounded by Milner's zeal for Anglicization in the former Boer republics" (Unterhalter, 1995, p.226) suppressing the Dutch and Afrikaans language even more. Later Dutch/Afrikaans people could not compete in the labour market when faced with competition from skilled immigrant British labour (Alfred, Bethlehem, Joffe, Selikow & Webster, 2000; Unterhalter, 1995). This led to the rise of nationalism amongst those who saw themselves as Afrikaaners and wanted more political and economic determination (Unterhalter, 1995).

By the turn of the 20th century, with the rise of Afrikaner nationalism, there was an outright rejection of English amongst the colonialists of Dutch descent (Alexander, 1989). When the national party came to power in 1948, the poor white Afrikaner problem was recognised as an issue to be resolved (Terreblanche, 2012). As a result, jobs were created within Afrikaner government institutions, during the politico-economic apartheid government such as Eskom and Iscor (that often supported British or colonialist capitalist ventures in mining) for poor white Afrikaners. However, there was fragility in this union amongst Afrikaaners as it was still highly divided along class, gender and religious lines (Unterhalter, 2000). Consequently, the, "primary male labour market was a result…to retain their skilled workforce to keep wages and conditions undisrupted and to reduce staff turnover" (Anthias, Cain & Yuval-Davis, 1993, p. 116). The labour market was segregated according to gender and race, with white male workers considered as superior labour. Women in the workforce were often treated as unskilled and dispensable and, from a class perspective, as homogenous

(Anthias, Cain & Yuval-Davis, 1993).The main exclusion criterion was, however, the colour of your skin (Terreblanche, 2012). These gender and 'race' exclusions were justified on the basis of the essentialist position that naturalised gender and 'race' roles, 'proven' using 'scientific' methodologies and meant that women and black people were excluded from specific roles in corporate South Africa.

The historical evolution of language in South Africa impacted on the implementation of the various language policies that were followed and their impact on the culture and identity of indigenous South Africans in later years. In addition to the half-hearted attempts to teach slaves the Dutch language, it was missionaries that played a critical role in the landscape of identities for indigenous South Africans. Dr. John Philip, as cited in Alexander (1989) saw the

> Christianisation of African people as a means of scattering the seeds of civilisation and extending the British interest, British influence and the British Empire. It brought to the savage tribes a new confidence in the colonial government and the fostering of industry, trade and agriculture. In the schools, which they established, often against the resistance of white colonists, the missionaries reared a tiny English-knowing black middle class and working class that was trained to be a docile and efficient labour force which would accept European religious and political authority and social superiority (Alexander, 1989, p.17).

The British saw themselves as the 'saviours of the savage African' bringing new ideas and ways of being through religion and commerce and affecting these changes through language. British colonialism sought to 'change' Africans and make them more receptive to domination. As the quote above describes, the use of the English language was used to

develop a new identity, a black labour force that spoke English and participated in the colonial economy. Therefore the adoption of English meant the assimilation to English culture and the production of compliant, cheap labour (Alexander, 1989).

The most powerful tool, Wa Thiong'o (2005) suggests, in developing a docile and inexpensive labour force was the process of assimilating the written language of English. He writes:

> There was often not the slightest relationship between the child's written world, which was also the language of schooling, and the world of his immediate environment in the family and the community. For the colonial child, the harmony existing between the three aspects of language as communication was irrevocably broken. This resulted in the dissociation of the sensibility of that child from his natural and social environment, what we might call colonial alienation. The alienation became reinforced in the teaching of history, geography, music, where bourgeois Europe was always the centre of the universe (Wa Thiong'o, 2005, p. 17).

Therefore, the colonial child was made to see the world through the language of the coloniser and became increasingly alienated from his/her own family and communities. This worked through the reinforcement of images through the spoken and written images produced by the language of education, English. The child was separated from the indigenous language of her/his mother tongue through the reinforcement of European discourses. "Therefore, she/he could not relate what was being learnt at school to what she/he was experiencing at home. This was worse when she/he compared exposure to her/his world to that "mirrored in the written language of his coloniser" (Wa Thiong'o, 2005, p. 18). S/he began to see her/his world as inferior to that of the coloniser (Wa Thiong'o, 2005).

In present day South Africa, through text, television and various discourses, the child assimilates the identity of a (Black) English woman/man at school. This assimilation into the English language is reinforced through American programming further influencing the child's accent. Children who learn to

> speak in expensive or merely television-mediated accents are indicative of the super-absorbency…They also absorb the diction in which the programme, games and classes register in the mind. Not just what they hear, see and learn, but their very tongues get disciplined (Ratele, 2013, p. 124).

Accent plays a decisive role in how the child will be perceived as they grow into adulthood and look for work. In some ways, this 'disciplining of the tongue' may therefore be argued to be necessary. Accents present the opportunity to "propel subjects along different social and political trajectories; and they enable and restrict vertical and horizontal mobility across social and political terrain" (Painter, 2008, p.175). Bourdieu (1991) as cited in Painter (2008) speaks about a 'linguistic capital' that children (and adults) will gain through attending state education administered in English and gaining a good accent, enabling hopes for upward mobility. This is because a speakers accent may elicit positive or negative reactions and it has been found that individuals with 'no accent' or television mediated accents are more likely to gain access to the workplace (Carlson & McHenry, 2006).

As an extension of our colonial pasts, children in the 20$^{th}$ and 21$^{st}$ century are still feeling a sense of conflict between their realities at home and what they read or see in television and the majority of black children are still being influenced to become cheap, compliant labour through unequal schooling and other institutional mechanisms, including the continued dominance of the English language that serves to exclude the majority of people from full participation as citizens in their own country. However, in post-apartheid

South Africa, political democratisation has enabled class mobility for some black people and the rise of the black middle class has brought about new forms of assimilation. Access to 'quality' education, has enabled different forms of participation in the capitalist system, including as professionals in the corporate sector and active consumers of (luxury) goods, and even company ownership for a small minority. Western ideology is constantly communicated and reinforced using language, shaping the identities of the black child and adult. The brief history of colonisation, apartheid, and childhoods of schooling in post-apartheid South Africa outlined here above, provides a good foundation for exploring the complexities of language and identity for the present day black middle class.

# 2. CHAPTER 2: THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The theoretical framework for the study is provided by a focus on language and identity and, in particular an intersectional conceptualisation of identity and how language intersects with other socio-political dimensions of identity. The chapter begins with a rich definition of identity to understand the various nuances of this phenomenon. We also specifically focus on how language, through culture, helps construct our identities, and how language helps create categories that are used. This will be followed with a specific discussion of the construction of black identity, also encapsulating a discussion on how language was mobilised to create categories of black identity and how it was used to segregate the South African society. Finally, we have a look at the intersections between race, class and gender and gain an understanding of how these intersections are mobilised to both advantage and disadvantage black middle class women in contemporary South Africa.

## 2.1. Defining identity

Hall (1996) states that in defining identity it is not transparent or unproblematic. During the enlightenment period, the subject was understood as a sovereign, rational, unified, fixed entity and self - sustaining (Hall, 1996; Mama, 1995; Weedon, 2004) with a never changing individual identity. This is the usual, common sense understanding of identity often employed in everyday language (Weedon, 2004). However, there has been much critique of this essentialist construction of identity and it has been put 'under erasure', meaning that this definition of identity is no longer "good to think with" (Hall, 1996, p. 1).

This is because during the postmodern era, the meaning of identity and the subject has been deconstructed and reconstructed. Our identities are no longer our 'final' identities.

Instead, new ways of thinking about identity are helping us to further understand how our identities are constructed for us and how they may vary. Althusser (1971) theorises this as a

> "… process of hailing, that is the process of constitution of the individual as a subject within language and ideology as fundamental to human societies. In Althusser's theorization, the process of recognition by the individual of herself or himself as the one addressed by the call to recognition interpellates the individual as a subject within ideology (Weedon, 2004, p. 6).

From this perspective, "the individual is born in pre-existing ideological structure with which he (sic) comes to identify" (Mama, 1995, p. 126). Through language, various categories to define people are constructed in order to categorise and create meaning for certain characteristics that help us understand the world in which we live. The languages we speak and the cultures to which we belong form important categories that position people hierarchically. In South Africa, English is a language associated with multiple forms of power (both financial and symbolic) whereas speakers of indigenous African languages are marginalised. In addition to this sense of linguistic identities as significant categories, language performs a general categorising function, differentiating groups and individuals from one another. All such social categories are created within ideologies.

Language and more specifically, our ability to use speech as a communication tool has a significant impact on our sense of identity and belonging. When defining identity, belonging and differentiation are two key characteristics (Weedon, 2005). Belonging speaks to, but is not limited to, our emotional attachment to specific collectivities and our identification (Yuval-Davis, 2011). In this sense, belonging can be understood as gaining access to or membership of a specific group. As a result, belonging is also political. "The politics of belonging refer to the process of individuals, groups and societies, and polities

defining, negotiating, promoting, rejecting, violating and transcending the boundaries of identities and belonging" (Croucher, 2004, p. 41). Belonging is fluid in nature. Belonging is" mediated through the symbolic resource of language" (Sung-Yul Park, 2012, p. 1080). Through language, we are able to name these collectivities, show differentiation between people and pass on their meanings to the next generation.

Wa Thiong'o (2005) comments on the dual character of language, as a means of communication but also importantly, carrying culture.

> Culture embodies those moral, ethical and aesthetic values, the set of spiritual eyeglasses, through which they come to view themselves and their places in the universe. Values are the basis of people's identities, their sense of particularity as members of the human race. All this is carried by language. Language as culture is the collective memory bank of people's experience in history (Wa Thiong'o, 2005, p. 14 - 15).

As we communicate through the medium of language to others, we learn to do similar things and actions which we pass on to the next generation. These experiences we hand down as values which govern our perceptions of what is wrong or right. As we continue in this way of life, we begin to distinguish our way from other ways of life; we begin to create culture and identity (Wa Thiong'o, 2005). Therefore, language plays a critical role in our sense of cultural and historical identity. "Cultural practices produce the discourses" (Weedon, 2004, p. 6) through which are able to define our identities.

The identities and ways of life of the powerful groups are 'unmarked' and established as the norm for example, whiteness, masculinity, heterosexuality, middle class status and Christianity. Whiteness, for example, can be seen as a collective silence, a denial of racial

identity, culture and history by white powerful men (Hale, 2010).These powerful normative identities are supported by a large network of ideological institutions and practiced at the local level. Thus, the 'ideal' identity is reproduced in different forms within society and becomes normalised and unmarked. Individuals who exhibit these traits are those that set the standard. Other individuals, who do not exhibit or comply with the standard, become 'marked'.

Language is used as a powerful tool to 'mark' these individuals and stigmatise them. Language used by the established order is used to communicate undesirable identities, whilst desirable identities are not overtly communicated .The ideological concept of erasure takes place. Here, other (desirable) identities are erased because they are not being actively communicated, and the individuals that are marked become subordinated, stigmatised and undesirable (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). In this way we sustain racism in 'non-racial' societies, by perpetuating "differences, based on seemingly acceptable characteristics such as culture, nationality, ethnicity, language and tradition" (Baldwin & Painter, 2004, p. 2). Individuals find themselves marked as different by those in power, through language used in ideological institutions, for example, the church, schools, and economic practices.

What is of interest is how language works with power to stigmatise individuals in a society. Power and hierarchy through language are important in the process of establishing a desirable identity, where those in power ensure the organisation of difference is systematised in particular marked ways, as previously discussed. Those in power will create categories with specific meanings that are used to normalise and control people. These meanings are communicated, through language, and people in society will learn through language, to recognise that these categories (identities) are being used to define them. Recognition can be understood as a person "understanding who they are, of their fundamental defining

characteristics as a human being" (Taylor, 1994, p. 28). In this way, a person is interpellated – s/he understands and recognises that s/he is the person that has been defined, in a specific way. Hall (1996, pp. 5-6) further confirms this understanding of the process of identification by stating:

> I use identity to refer to the meeting point, the point of suture, between on the one hand the discourses and practices which attempt to 'interpellate', speak to us or hail us into place as the social subjects of particular discourses, and on the other hand, the processes which produce subjectivities, which construct us as subjects which can be spoken. Identities are thus points of temporary attachment to the subject positions which discursive practices construct for us.

Hall's argument suggests that society calls us to recognise ourselves in categories created (constructed) through different discourses and through different ideologies. In this way, our identities are not necessarily permanent; instead they are defined according to the discourse and ideology that are at play. What is critical to understand here is that our identities are constructed and therefore, can be deconstructed to understand how these categories came about and to shift present to future identities. Identities are fluid and intersectional. Depending on where we are and who we are with, we can take up different subject positions.

The fact that the individuals are temporarily attached shows that various subject positions can be constructed by discursive practices. As result, Alexander (2002) rightfully concludes that "we never have one identity. All of us have multiple identities, that is, we identify in different degrees with many different groups" (p. 104). That is, "identity is not fixed, but can be broken down and transgressed at many points" (Mc Nay, 1992, p. 133). This is in direct contradiction to the Enlightenment understanding of identity and highlights how,

> ...identities are never unified and in late modern times, increasingly fragmented and fractured; never singular but multiply constructed across different often intersecting and antagonistic discourses, practices and positions. They are subject to a radical historicisation, and are constantly in the process of change and transformation (Hall, 1996, p.4).

Identities are not fixed, but are constantly changing. Further, our identities are fluid and fragmented, sometimes causing tensions within ourselves, especially when we hold different roles or occupy different relational positions that shift in history, at the same time. Identities are defined not only on basis of sameness but importantly on the basis of difference. We come to know who we are, not only by making connections, highlighting sameness with certain people, but more importantly by highlighting differences from others (Ndlovu, 2012). Hall (1996) elaborates on this point by saying:

> Precisely because identities are constructed within, not outside discourse, we need to understand them as produced in specific historical and institutional sites within specific discursive formations and practices, by specific enunciative strategies. Moreover, they emerge within the play of specific modalities of power, and thus are more the product of the marking of difference and exclusion, than they are the sign of an identical naturally-constituted unity – an 'identity' in its traditional meaning that is, an all-inclusive sameness, seamless, without internal differentiation (p. 4).

Our identities are socially constructed, and are based on difference in relation to an Other (Hall, 1996). In these terms, the formation of black identity for the child is based on differences between black and white people, which are racialised and unequal. It is important to note that these differences are not limited to race, but can include gender, sexuality, class,

language spoken and religion and these other dimensions of identity operate simultaneously, creating intersectional positionalities. This is often mediated through language, enabling us to achieve a sense of belonging to a community or many communities at the same time and helps us in "how we position ourselves in a social context" (Sung-Yul Park, 2012, p. 1080).

### 2.2. Black identity and language

The discourse under English colonial rule reinforces in the colonised child that progress could not be found in their indigenous cultures and languages. Language policies and practices are particularly pertinent and powerful in the process of normalisation and othering. Alexander (1998) shows how European linguists arbitrarily drew lines between various languages spoken by African people in order to establish territories to control indigenous people and exercise colonial political power.

> …, by drawing usually arbitrary lines through language continuums because of need, as they saw it, to demarcate their sectarian territorial boundaries, their work was now used to justify pernicious social, cultural and political practices, consciously geared towards the fragmentation and subjugation of the black people. … . Consequently, linguistic and other boundaries were erected in order to restructure the African world in a way that would make it comprehensible to Europeans (Alexander, 1989, p. 22-23).

Through arbitrarily separating the various indigenous languages of Southern Africa, Europeans were able to mark language groups and their speakers as different from one another. The European ideological institution of the church was employed to justify their intent of restructuring African society so that it could be easily understood and manipulated and used the economic advantage of the European centre. The use of difference, according to

what Europeans defined as different not only between white and black but also between African people was heavily exploited.

Difference was created at social, cultural and political levels. This was achieved through scientific methodologies "where categories such as "tribes", "ethnic groups" and "nations" were supposed to be God-given trans-historical entities which are therefore, not really subject to fundamental change" (Alexander, 1989, p. 24). Through the use of quantitative 'science', racist ideologies described and 'proved' differences amongst people to a point where they were unable to co-exist. Again, using ideological institutions, those in power mobilised language to separate people. This had particular implications for language policy in apartheid schooling.

> Inevitably, once the consistent application of apartheid ideology gave rise to ideas of "separate freedoms", the implementation of mother tongue instruction in black schools to a high a standard as possible was projected as an inalienable human right, one which the Afrikaner nation itself had struggled for and attained finally in 1925 (Alexander, 1989, p. 24).

Therefore, on the basis of the assumption that people of different 'races' and other cultures should not and could not co-exist, each group had to achieve their development separately, in their indigenous language. This meant that in the designated ethnic areas, a separate language policy was applied where individuals would be taught in the language of their ethnicity at primary school, and learns basic English and Afrikaans (Alexander, 1989). However, in order to access progress into further education, English and Afrikaans were the languages that were required for tertiary institutions. Therefore, the apartheid ideology further entrenched the idea that in order to progress materially, one would need to be as western as possible. This meant one had to learn English (or Afrikaans). As previously stated

by Alexander (1989), English, was the language of business and law, whilst Afrikaans was the language used at home and in the church. In addition to this, because of the ideology of separation during apartheid, English and Afrikaans were not positioned as equal languages. It is clear from the excerpt above that prior to 1925, English was seen as a superior language, carrying more linguistic capital (Painter, 2004). It was considered that those who speak English possess "cultural capital if they have acquired competence in society's high status culture" (Throsby, 1999, p. 4). However, during the height of apartheid, there was an attempt to reverse this unequal relationship and position Afrikaans as more superior. But English remained superior due to it being a more globalised language.

Therefore, the black child was taught to speak and write English, to dress in a European fashion, to be 'white' in order to get access to progress. The black child would therefore aspire to gain these attributes. In order to be able to do this, their way of life would have to change; their *identities* would have to change.

Assimilation to English language and culture would bring the promise of education, material possessions and status. Having this knowledge for the colonial child, aspiring to become English would result in her/him alienating themselves from their family and community. It is theorised that the colonial child would therefore develop an inferiority complex, a result of what Fanon, as cited in Clarke (2008) calls "projective identification" (p 523). Projective identification is a psychodynamic concept that is "a process during which the subject first projects the unpalatable aspects of her- or himself onto another person" (Mama, 1995, p. 131). Clarke (2008, p. 523) writes that in the process of racism, projection is "far more intense form of projection where feelings are forced onto an other to make them feel and behave in a certain manner". Through projective identification, the racist forces her/his

feelings into the recipient, through the many forms of interactions (such as teacher and pupil) and various forms of communication (for example textbooks).

Fanon, (as cited in Clarke, 2008) explains that black people were physically objectified and are psychologically alienated from their cultural identity by racist whites. He concludes that "white people's fantasies about black sexuality, about bodies and biology in general, are fears that centre on otherness that they themselves have created and brought into being" (Clarke, 2008, p. 524). The formation of the black identity is therefore a result of identifying racist differences between black and white people. Therefore, black "cultural identity is a stereotype of the black person constructed in the mind of the white person, and then forced back onto the black person as the black historical subject" (Clarke, 2008, p. 524). Therefore, present black identities are not identities that black people have constructed about themselves over a period of time, historically. They are actually constructed by white people based on racist fears, based on their discursive images of being black. This means that through the various discourses of black ethnic identity, the stereotype of what it meant to be Zulu (for example) is constructed by racist relations between white and black people. These racist constructions of black identity are essentialist, fixed and permeate through time, i.e. they are resistant to change. These stereotypes have continued due to the unequal relations between black and white people as a result of colonisation and have extended into contemporary life through various media such as books, newspapers, television, etc. For example, Khunou (2015) argues new programmes of research position black middle class people as conspicuous consumers, whilst similar consumerist patterns of behaviour by white people remain unremarkable, unmarked and erased because they are not scrutinised at the same level (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Black identity thus exhibits a 'multiplicity' (Ndlovu, 2012) because our identities are not fixed permanently. Instead black people can take on

different identities in different contexts at different times, or different identities can intersect at the same time.

Considering the South African context, the subject position of 'black' which has been constructed by the discursive practices of ideological institutions through history and the political conditions of the country temporarily attach people to their identity as black but the notion of 'black identity'; is also not fixed or permanent (Ndlovu, 2012). What is important to discuss in Hall's (1996) definition is this idea of *temporary* attachment.

### 2.3. The intersections of race, class and gender

Since 1994, the post-apartheid South African government of the African National Congress (ANC) has implemented a number of economic policies to give rise to a black middle class (Terreblanche, 2012). "Public policy interventions such as affirmative action and black economic empowerment has moved a sizeable proportion of black South Africans into the middle class" (Mattes, 2014, p. 1). The economic principle here is that an increase in the middle class will lead to an increase in consumption, therefore boosting economic growth. Markers of the middle class are often restricted to relatively high levels of income, specific occupations and specific types of education (Mattes, 2014). Marx and Engels (1992) (as cited in Mattes, 2014) argued that the relevance of being middle class is that the membership of this class shares the same values and aspirations of the capitalist class but they do not own the means of production. What is of interest are the subjective experiences of women who are marginalised by race (black) but empowered through class mobility. Black women as subjects undergo a process of subjectification, changing their meaning and understanding as subjects. Subjectivity is defined as "a process of constitution and movement through already constituted positions" (Mama, 1995, p. 98).

We now have a female black middle class that speaks English but comes from an indigenous African background and families whose mother tongues are not English. This new generation might be thought of as the "hinge generation" (Hoffman, 2004, p15). It is the generation whose parents were disadvantaged by apartheid but who were themselves fortunate to profit from their parents' struggles both during and in the transition from apartheid through access to (English medium) schools and further/higher education. This generation did not themselves directly experience apartheid but is indirectly impacted by it through their parents' hardships. This generation may see themselves as experiencing a sense of loss although ostensibly they have gained. This 'loss' is often phrased as a feeling of being disconnected from their history, cultural roots and communities. Experiencing this sense of loss may lead some to preserve their cultural heritage. This wanting to keep in touch with cultural practices was witnessed in research conducted on the children of Fish Hoek Valley. In particular, the children of Masiphumelele are encouraged to show respect (ukuhlonipha) "linking power with age and particularly generational difference" (Bray, Gooskens, Kahn, Moses & Seekings, 2010, p 60). But this group of individuals belongs to shifting "imagined communities" (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). These are communities that do not share borders or cultures, but are a community of people who have shared experiences and feel a sense of belonging. They are imagined "because they will never know most of the fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each, lives the image of their communion" (Anderson, 2006, p. 6). This experience and articulation of an 'imagined community' can begin as early as in childhood friendships, where children are drawn to others who have similar characteristics such as age, gender, race attitudes, beliefs, plays styles (Cook & Cook, 2009) or particularly language.

In the South African context, the process of identification in relation to class is a highly complex experience. In an article sourced from the Mail and Guardian (2013),

research conducted by Khunou and Krige highlighted that black middle class South Africans had no issue with being identified as black. This is because, although, the identity of 'black' as differentiated from 'white' under racist apartheid ideology was pejorative and oppressive, it is now in a democratic context an assertion of positive identity. However, it was when the notion of 'middle class' was being used and being associated with 'black' that complexities emerged. The black individuals in the study were not comfortable with being called 'middle class'. The finding was that "history matters in how research participants make sense of their race, gender and class" (Khunou & Krige, 2013, p.2). The idea of 'middle class' was always associated with whiteness in apartheid South Africa, the dominant discourse was that being black meant being working class. Therefore, labelling black people as 'middle class' could be equated to labelling the 'black middle class' as white. As a result, this strips away the positive meaning and association of being black and being middle class. This may be due to a prejudice towards whiteness. What is of interest is how the women perceive themselves as middle class in present day South Africa. Today's middle class is not only white and male.

The second finding of the Khunou and Krige (2013) study was that class identity is experienced on situation, contextual and relational levels. This comes from the understanding that identities are not fixed. Depending on where the person is, the history of that person, especially in relation to others, class identity can be redefined for the subject. For example, a black woman may have been positioned as working class historically, however, due to access to a good education and a higher income, depending on who she is with may not be positioned as that anymore. The women's socio-economic status meant that they were constantly negotiating their identities. In the homelands/ townships, they would be excluded because they were not working class. However, amongst white middle class people they would be excluded because of their race.

In both studies (Khunou & Krige, 2013; Khonou, 2015), it was found that the women either rejected or reluctantly accepted the term 'black middle class'. This could be due to the essentialising work done by market research to negatively view the black middle class as only "conspicuous consumers, foregrounding the tradition of conceptualizing class and general life experiences of black people as homogenous and fixed" (Khunou, 2015, p. 90). The intention, at a socio – political and economic level, was to develop a consumption led economy and negative, racist stereotypes of the black middle class have been created by various research companies. Krige (2012) as quoted in Khunou's (2015) paper has concluded that the "one dimensional emphasis of the conspicuous element of consumption among the black middle class is a result of racialization of the meaning of middle-classness" (p. 91). The experiences and meaning of being middle class and being black are only be conceptualized in economic terms for black people. This market research has often negated the complexities and varying experiences of being black, middle class, and female and predominantly English speaking in South Africa. The aim of this project is to understand how women engage in the processes of identification considering the intersections of these various identifiers.

This imagined community of English speaking, black middle class women has unique experiences that are intersectionally created through language, race, gender, and expressed in, for example, ideals of beauty. "In South Africa, beauty has been and continues to be violently raced or articulated through the medium of skin colour and hair texture" (Bhana & Pattman, 2009, p. 27). Through the ideological process of erasure, it is possible to see how ideals of beauty could be westernised. In the South African context, where the majority of the people are black and may hold political power, the markers and representations of beauty are still defined by those who are considered the "sociological majority" (Charles, 2009, p. 154) because they control financial and cultural capital, namely white people. However, Mama (1995) points out that accepting these ideals may not necessarily simplistically imply that

black women want to attain whiteness. Rather, the adoption of these ideals of female beauty reflects the complex intersectionality of race *and* gender, with black women measuring themselves against notions of attractiveness defined by white men. "The racial hierarchies and values of colonial racism have left a deep mark on our conception of beauty" (Erasmus, 2011, p.12). Racist discourses have continuously defined black women as 'ugly' and their sexuality as "pornographic and crudely featured" (Mama, 1995, p. 149). For these reasons, black women are consistently concerned with how they look and have often desired "flowing hair, lighter skin and aquiline features" (Mama, 1995, p. 150). In the South African context, these are typically markers of whiteness. This means that for black women, to be acceptable they have to "look as white as possible and repress their sexuality" (Mama, 1995, p. 150). All forms of blackness have to be denied and silenced (Erasmus, 2011).This is a form of internalised racial oppression. The psychological definition of internalised racial oppression, as conceptualised by Pyke, (2010),

> Emphasizes the psychic costs of internalized racial oppression defined as the individual inculcation of the racist stereotypes, values, images and ideologies perpetuated by the White dominant society about one's racial group, leading to feelings of self-doubt, disgust, and disrespect for one's race and/or oneself (p. 553).

This definition focuses on the individual's experience of the psychological costs of internalised racial oppression. As Mama (1995) has described, black women will aim to look as white as possible by periodically or permanently changing their features. The women may be filled with self-hate because of the black markers (for example hair and skin colour) and this may lead to a low self-esteem or worse, self-disgust. The experiences of self-hate would be and in some cases, continue to be traumatic and layered with pain (both psychologically

and physically) (Erasmus, 2011). At times this illustrates "male dominance in setting the standards" (Mama, 1995, p.150) of beauty would influence how women feel about themselves. Language and gender also contribute to this internalised oppression. This is because language, in particular English, is a marker of being in the middle class. Therefore, gender and class, together with race presents itself as a 'triple oppression' (Mama, 1995) for black women. Black consciousness movements focus on this internalised oppression and slogans such as 'black is beautiful' attempt to improve black self-esteem (Biko, 2009; Pyke, 2010). Nonetheless, in contemporary South Africa, internalised oppression amongst black women persists.

How hair is styled and skin is coloured continue to be used as a marker of your class. It is about class because, in this day and age women do not only straighten their hair (Erasmus, 2011), they also buy hair extensions and the more expensive, the better. In addition, expensive products aide skin lightning, with some women aiming to bleach their skins through cosmetic surgery (Pyke, 2010). Through these actions black women may aim to achieve upward mobility but perpetuate the process of internal oppression and identification with whiteness (Erasmus, 2011), and heterosexual women are positioned by concerns to attract male admirers (Mama, 1995). For black women, discourses of class, gender and race are articulated to position them as aiming to achieve whiteness.

However, Erasmus (2011) warns against the discourses of black women aspiring to whiteness, especially concerning issues of hair. For her, this explanation

> …represents a simplistic binary: black women who straighten their hair are reactionary and black women who do not are progressive. Furthermore, there is an underlying essentialism in this logic, namely, the assumption that there is a single, pure and natural black way of wearing one's hair. This argument

> empowers a kind of hair police to check on degrees of blackness in terms of degrees of naturalness for the purposes of exclusion (Erasmus, 2011, p. 15).

Moving away from the discourses about aspirations to whiteness, Erasmus (2011) calls on us to reflect on the potential danger of assuming a fixed, singular black female identity. She questions the language of 'natural' being seen as 'progressive'. Mama (1995) adds "a discursive analysis points to the fact that black radical discourse condemns hair-processing, skin bleaching and other alterations of appearance in the direction of whitening" (p.136). Erasmus (2011) warns us that this line of thinking opens up the possibility of further exclusion and policing of women's behaviours around ideals of beauty. In this way, she reaffirms the notion that our identities are fragmented and layered, giving us the flexibility to position ourselves differently and redefine our identities.

In conclusion, as much as subjectivity is racialised in racist societies, it is also gendered in patriarchal societies (Mama, 1995). The history of South Africa is both raced and patriarchal, and these race and gendered differences have both continuities and discontinuities within post-colonial and post-apartheid South Africa. For example, public policy not only focuses on ensuring more black people were employed, but through employment equity, much focus was put on recruiting more women in the workplace (Terreblanche, 2012). In this way, employment equity is a departure from the past in terms of both race and gender, although there is much contestation on the inclusion of 'white women' as a designated group. Despite the positive effects of employment equity practices for black women, they experience homogenising pressures and are expected to be 'cultural clones' of white men: "look-alikes representing more of the same images and values" (Essed, 2004, p.114) of their white male colleagues. In addition, the stereotypical roles for all women in democratic South Africa continue to powerfully inform possible roles and lives for women, very often primarily as

heterosexual partners and mothers. Women are still positioned as mothers who are "positioned as the relay point in the production of 'democratic citizens'…who will accept the social-political order by imagining that their occurrence is through independent choice rather than coercion" (Burman, 2008, p. 133). Therefore, much like in the past, women of today, even if they are working, are expected to continue in essentialised roles that position them in sexist discourse. Essed (20014, p. 114) argues that these stereotypes remain raced: "The ideology depicting good women as wives and mothers builds on racialized images, no doubt of *white* housewives married to middle class white men who can afford to "take care" of their wife and children". Nonetheless, despite the power of historical legacies, 'new' opportunities that black women have in post-apartheid South Africa, have created alternative roles and possibilities for active, agentic identity construction.

# 3. CHAPTER 3: METHODS

## 3.1. Methodology

The methodological approach for this study was qualitative and data were collected through narrative semi-structured narrative type interviews. Identities are constructed through narratives as we tell stories of our lives to others (Murray, 2013) and as such, this approach was ideal. The aim was to get a full understanding of the narrators' experiences and the approach assumes that through telling stories, the narrators' experiences can become conscious (Squire, 2008). Therefore, the interview was not merely focused on collecting data but it became the site where data were created (Elliott, 2007). Qualitative research aims to provide a detailed description of an individual's account. Ultimately, the rich information generated is highly specific to that situation. However, where possible, the researcher hopes to achieve transferability of the understanding of the experience (Kelly, 2009).

The internal validity of narratives and qualitative research is created by the in-depth detail the researcher is able to extract from a narrative account (Elliott, 2007). In this way, the information generated ensures that the research question is being answered. The researcher aims to provide a detailed description of the narrator's account. Narrative research is powerful as it allows the respondents to set the agenda. Unlike in structured interviews, the respondent does not have to follow the agenda set by the researcher.

The researcher's question provided the impetus for participants to give a temporal account of their experiences through their narratives of their lives. The intention of the study was to get a sense of the life experiences of the women being interviewed and the meanings the women attached to these experiences. The challenge for the researcher was to ensure that the women being interviewed felt that they were being listened to. This required a form of active listening wherein the researcher nodded encouragingly, made remarks and sometimes

made commentary. This meant that although the researcher followed a broadly narrative approach wherein the participant spoke the majority of the time, the interviews were interactive, allowing for co-construction of the narratives (Josselson, 1995).

In this study, the researcher studied a small group of unusual women with specific experiences. Ultimately, the researcher aimed to understand the subjective interpretations and the meanings they make of their lives. This richness ultimately provided perspectives on the struggles and joys of being English speaking middle class women and working in the corporate sector.

### 3.2. Participants

The target group for this study were young black women who are currently 'middle class' for purposes of this study defined as earning between R100, 000 p.a. – R500, 000 p.a. Similar to Amina Mama (1995), the researcher generated new knowledge about this group of women. The young women predominantly speak English in everyday life. The age group range was between 20 – 35 years. The women were Johannesburg based working in the corporate sector.

The sample size consisted of eight young women. The sampling strategy relied heavily on convenience sampling, taking cases based on their availability. More specifically, the procedure that was employed was critical case sampling which involved identifying exceptional cases that generated information rich data (Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim, 2009).These were characteristics that are similar to the researcher's own background. The researcher therefore began her recruiting process by requesting friends, work colleagues and university students to help identify candidates for the research.

Table 1: Demographic details of research participants

| Name (Pseudonyms) | Age | Approximate Gross Income (p.a) | Industry | Mother Tongue |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Dineo** | 32 | R500 000 | Financial | Setswana |
| **Boitumelo** | 25 | R300 000 | Arts and Culture | Sepedi |
| **Lerato** | 28 | R300 000 | Financial | Setswana |
| **Andile** | 28 | R400 000 | Financial | Sizulu |
| **Nonhlanhla** | 30 | R250 000 | Financial | Sizulu |
| **Kholofelo** | 22 | R250 000 | Education | Sepedi |
| **Matlhodi** | 26 | R350 000 | Financial | Sizulu |
| **Phuthanang** | 30 | R500 000 | Financial | Sesotho |

### 3.3. Data collection

The interview process was focused on eliciting a narrative. The researcher aimed to discover the interviewee's own personal account of identity, and gain a greater understanding of the research topic. The approach taken was one of asking for the story of the participants (Squire, 2008). The opening narrative question that was asked of the young women was: "Tell me the story about how you came to use English as your dominant language?" This open-ended question invited the participants to tell stories in a way they saw fit. The interview style assumes minimal intervention from the researcher. However, some more specific questions were asked to probe key issues (see Appendix 1), asking participants to

elaborate or tell specific mini-narratives about experiences. Active listening was employed, where the researcher was attuned, connected and engaged, demonstrating a caring attitude and desire to truly understand what the participants had to say (Yukelson, 2010). This was demonstrated through body language (Squire, 2008). Where the participants were not engaged or the researcher wanted to get more detail on a specific experience, the researcher asked probing questions. This encouraged interviewees to speak more and is a technique used in reflective listening (Yukelson, 2010).

The nature of the question and the characteristics of the participants ensured that the interview was highly context dependent. The young middle class women were educated under an apartheid education system in transition, in private or what were previously called model C schools and self-identified as predominantly English speaking even if this was not their mother tongue. Therefore, the interview was conducted in English.

## 3.4. Data analysis

### 3.4.1. Transcription

The data analysis process began with transcribing the data. The researcher sourced professional transcribers to transcribe all eight 2-hour interviews. The reason for this was due to time pressures. Transcription focused on capturing the words and some significant nonverbal actions (e.g. laughter, sighing) performed during the interview. Therefore the technique used was essentially aimed at identifying meaning (Braun & Clarke, 2006).

### 3.4.2. Thematic analysis

The approach proposed to analyse the data was thematic analysis. The researcher identified narrative themes that give an explanation of the stories, moving back and forth between the interviews and the themes in hermeneutic circles using a combination of top-down and bottom-up interpretive perspectives (Squire, 2008). This method assisted the researcher in ensuring that during her interpretation, the meanings of the parts were always considered in relation to the meaning of the whole and vice versa (Kelly, 2009). In this way, interpretation and meaning that was created was always context specific.

However, the form of thematic analysis that was conducted was informed by discourse analysis in that the subject positions of the women are linked to social discourses. For example, discourses on race, gender and class were used to provide insight into the narrative identities of the women that were formed. This helped contextualise the data provided by the women and ensured that the themes that were identified were not universalised or seen as essentialist (Parker, 2013).

The key steps, as highlighted by Braun and Clarke (2006) to coding data and identifying themes were followed. The researcher began with the process of generating initial codes wherein the researcher looked at the data that was relevant to the topics of language and identity and used the excerpts that were coded in the most meaningful way to build a theme of interest. This meant that the codes were sorted visual aids such as mind maps, colour highlighters, and cutting and pasting physical paper, were used. Next the researcher then reviewed the themes in relation to the research question. The researcher reviewed all the coded information to see if they created a pattern. The researcher considered the validity of the individual themes in relation to the entire data set and whether the thematic map accurately reflected the meanings in the data set.

Lastly, the researcher defined and named themes in a manner that was reflective of the research question, the interviewees and the South African context. The researcher aimed to capture the essence of what each theme is about, aimed to ensure that there was not too much overlap between the themes and that when naming the themes that they were precise and punchy. The researcher then organised the data in relation to the broadly narrative flow of participants' stories.

Due to the narrative nature of the research, the thematic analysis was organised temporally. First, narrative childhood histories and the ways in which these impact on present identities are explored. Second, the focus shifts to present identities and their projected impact in the future. The stories of the women relayed to the researcher were organised in this fashion to reflect how the women's identities were not fixed and how they changed (or will change) over time, especially in relation to language. The themes that emerged from the analysis were organised for presentation into two chapters, namely: 'A journey into the past and its impact in the present' and 'present identities and hopes for the future'. The themes that emerged in relation to the past and the way in which it manifest in the present include:1) the intergenerational nature of learning the English language, 2) perceptions of loss of using their mother tongue, 3) schooling experience and learning the English language. Themes focusing on the present and future projections considered the role that learning language at school had in forming the women's identities and their sense of belonging. It also considered the influence these discursive identities currently have on them as young working, women in terms of gendered experiences at work and their sexualities as black middle class women. The chapter further explores the role of accents in defining current identities. Lastly, it considers future possibilities of linguistic identities in relation to 1) preservation of mother tongue, 2) multilingualism and 3) the use of English in a global context.

### 3.5. Ethical considerations

Due to the personal nature of the production of the information, it was key that the researcher was sensitive in the interpretation of the feelings and experiences provided by the narrators (Elliott, 2007). The research proposal was subjected to the ethics committee approval to ensure that participants and researcher were not harmed in any manner during the research process (see Appendix 2). The researcher strove to ensure that participants in the research were well informed about the research that was to take place. This included providing research information (see Appendix 3), information about the researcher and the reasons why the research was taking place, i.e. for the fulfillment of a Master's degree. Participants were asked to sign a letter of consent (see Appendix 4) to participate in the research and were also being informed about their rights (Jesani & Barai, 2003).

The researcher, in her introduction, ensured that she informed the participants about their rights to confidentiality which was guaranteed. The anonymity of the participants was protected by changing the names of the participants and any other people they mentioned during the research (Jesani and Barai, 2003). In this case, the researcher discussed the dissemination of the research through publications and thesis and sought permission from the respondents (Elliott, 2007). At all times, participants were informed that their participation was voluntary and could be withdrawn. The researcher ensured that all meetings were scheduled at a time that was convenient for the participants. This ensured that participants were in no way incurring loss of income or jeopardising their work performance. At the same time, the researcher ensured that a suitable venue was used (Jesani & Barai, 2003).

### 3.6. Reflexivity

"The ways in which we theorize a problem will affect the way we examine it, and the way we explore a problem will affect the explanation we give" (Parker, 2006, p. 13). The role the researcher plays in qualitative research is very important. This is because the researcher actively participates in the research process from thinking about what they will research, framing and affecting the data collection process, and thinking about the key findings and conclusions to be made from the research. As such, it is not possible for the researcher to claim to be objective and merely an observer of the phenomenon that they are studying. It is therefore key to understand the role the researcher plays to enhance the validity of the research being conducted (Parker, 2006).

The aim of the researcher in conducting this research project was to obtain a degree. Therefore during the conceptualization phase of a research question there were a number of alternatives that were presented that the researcher explored with various supervisors. The initial interest for the researcher was always in the education field. However, upon viewing a video produced by Neville Alexander on language in the education field the researcher's emotional experience and identification with the struggles of black children learning English, refined the focus of the possible research questions. The researcher then fleshed out the research topic with her supervisor, to include the concept of identity.

The next big phase was writing the research proposal. This took a considerable amount of time for the researcher as she is a full time employee for a banking institution. Therefore, there was always the feeling of moving between two worlds: the academic world of the research project and the 'real life' world of work, company politics and work deliverables. The researcher struggled to find time to dedicate reading academic literature and understanding key psychological concepts to be explored during the research project. With

much guidance from the supervisor, the need to look at history, gender, race and class for example to gain an understanding of black middle class women and the issue of being predominantly English speaking. The research proposal took a year to develop and submit for ethics approval.

Once this was done, the next phase was data collection. The researcher was presented with an opportunity at work to discuss her life story and used this opportunity to recruit participants. The researcher used this opportunity to briefly tell her story with language and the loss of belonging to her community and family. Essentially, the researcher was aiming to recruit women who were very like her, meeting the selection of criteria of being black, middle class professional women who use English exclusively or predominantly in everyday life. The women from work who volunteered identified with the researcher's story of her journey into speaking the English language and the various meanings this generated for her. Many of the women and men who heard the researcher's story identified with her story to a certain extent. For some of the women, they expressed that they had followed a similar journey when they had learnt the English langue. The men empathised with the researcher and suggested relatives and friends to be interviewed. A white Afrikaaner woman was also impacted by the journey into learning the English language and wondered if Afrikaaners could also participate in the research. The researcher expressed that due to the narrow definition of the sample, the size of the research and the time given to conduct the research, only black middle class women would be considered. In summation, the researcher found that it was easy to secure time in these women's diaries to collect their life stories.

The researcher then collected the data from the first four women. Each interview was two hours in length with much interjection from the researcher as she engaged the life stories of the women. Throughout the process the researcher, through commentary or self-reflection,

identified with much of what the women said. The interview process brought back forgotten memories from childhood about schooling experiences and first interactions with children from other 'races'. The first four interviews were highly conversational, moving away from the classical narrative approach of beginning with a single open-ended question and listening to the participant's response. This was mainly due to the lack of understanding of how to conduct good narrative research and also the researcher recognizing her own experiences in the participant's stories. Reflection on the process at this stage, acknowledged that the interviews were not strictly narrative in form but that the process of co-constructing the narratives was yielding rich data.

The second phase of data collection continued with the next four women. Two of the women, like the first four, were colleagues of the researcher. The other two were current and previous students that were working. The researcher sensed a difference in approach during the last phase of gathering data. Fewer interjecting questions were asked during the interviews and more listening of the stories of the women. Of all the eight interviews conducted, the most challenging for the interviewer was the last interviewee. Whilst her story was extremely interesting, she was visibly nervous. Her answers were short and highly repetitive. The researcher decided to ask more questions during this interview to get as much content as possible. This was the shortest interview the researcher conducted.

Post all the interviews, due to time constraints, the researcher opted to use a service provider to transcribe all the interviews. This kick-started the analytical phase of the research project. Coding was a very involving process and the researcher had to sift through a lot of data and make sense of this. These often mean sleepless nights which impacted on her work performance. At the same time, the researcher had pressures of submitting the final research before the deadline in order to fulfil her bursary requirements.

The researcher identified with most of the stories told by the women. In the researcher's life, the assimilation of English is also generational. Both of the researcher's grandmothers were teachers during apartheid – occupations that were deemed typically middle class for black people back then. The researchers parents were also highly educated, both having attended tertiary education and like the women, her parents were both politically active. Similarly, both grandparents and parents were willing to forgo teaching the researcher her indigenous language. Instead, the family's choice to educate their child in English was driven by the prospect of gaining social mobility for her.

Similarities between the women and the researcher can also be identified in how the researcher presently defines her identity and her projected future. Like the women in the research, she currently holds a position in the corporate world. Many of the intersectional issues faced by her participants she faces in the world of work. For example, she too is positioned as a cultural clone in the working world and finds that she has to behave in 'white' ways to be recognised and climb the corporate ladder. Similarly, she too has found that it is much easier for her to have a relationship with an English speaking partner as this facilitates communication. However, the key difference is that she does not necessarily position her partner as a provider. Nonetheless, her aspirations for her family and the future are similar to the majority of the women in the study.

# 4. CHAPTER 4: A JOURNEY INTO THE PAST AND ITS IMPACT IN THE PRESENT

The journey into learning the English language for the women begins in their childhoods and the influences of multigenerational families shape this process. The chapter traces not only individual autobiographical childhood experiences, but also the impact of longer histories, as the past shapes present (linguistic) identities and experiences. In addition, the schooling experience was of critical emphasis in the participants' lives. For most, it was their first interaction with the English language, children of other 'races' and moving away from their communities. These experiences are also discussed in some detail and how these have impacted on the women's adult identities.

Discussions on the generational influences of learning the English language will kick-start this chapter. The women recall how in their youth, the journey of learning the English language began with their grandmother and their parents. This helped elicit the reasons why the women's linguistic identities were amenable to change. Discussions on issues of loss of the use of their mother tongue languages as everyday languages will follow, including attempts to preserve the use the mother tongue and the cultural aspects of their African identity, whilst generational shifts were taking place with regards to the use of their mother tongue and the English language. In addition to learning English through their families, the women also recalled their experiences of being assimilated and immersed into the English culture at school, highlighting the issues of their African identities being misrecognised, experiences of learning about race as an identifier and alienation and distancing themselves from their communities. Finally, the women discuss how this currently impacts their present identities. This temporal structure of the discussions had by the women will highlight how narratives construct identities over time.

### 4.1. Generational influences in learning English

The women who were interviewed spoke to two generations that influenced their assimilation to the English language and English culture as they grew up: their grandparents and their parents. A key finding is that it was most often the grandmothers who played the most influential roles in these women's lives. It is also interesting to find that grandmothers were highly influential in the process of learning English. A few questions immediately come to mind as we analyse the experiences of the women. For example: in what way was the grandmother influential in learning English? And what were the societal factors at play?

#### 4.1.1. The role of granny and learning English

The assimilation to English was evident in earlier generations. In the early memory of many interviewees, the English language was first spoken by their grandparents, specifically their grandmother.

> *Dineo: And my gran also, because my gran was like… a matron, she was like a nursing professional, a nurse or whatever and then she became like a matron over the years and she spoke like really good English. And I didn't know where this woman like knew the stuff from, you know and she used to make us recite Desiderata. You know Desiderata? My grandmother used to make my sister and I recite that stuff and you know, 'you are a child of the universe', I didn't even know what that stuff, 'the trees and the stars', you know that stuff?... And she read a lot of papers on the side on Sundays, there was always the Sunday Times or something and she spoke like, she got mad in English. My grandmother was weird. Like really, she would swear at you in English. What was wrong with this woman, you know?*

Dineo's grandmother worked as a professional nurse, a highly qualified individual for her time. She was also very involved in raising Dineo and took it upon herself to raise her and ensured exposure to English. Children's language learning is often seen as the responsibility of the mother or the primary caregiver (Burman, 2008). In the case of Dineo (and other participants) this primary caregiver was her grandmother. She began with teaching her to recite poems. Reading was also an important aspect in teaching her grandchildren to speak more English. Learning poetry and reading are two key tasks that promote the insertion into English culture. Text, as a form of language, carries values and ways of life that are historically bound and carried into the present and the future. What is interesting is the way in which Dineo recalls how her grandmother chose to speak to her grandchildren whilst teaching them English, she often swore at them. This shows how fluent in English her grandmother was; it was part of their everyday life in their home and used for all kinds of spontaneous communication. An additional piece of evidence that elaborates on this point is provided by Boitumelo:

> *Boitumelo: I don't know and my gran, my gran is very, very strict like when it comes to language she's, she's what we call now a gramanazi[1] you know? You say a sentence wrong and she'll correct you immediately (.) it's like you won't even think twice but in Sepedi she doesn't. She'll just comment she's like 'next time you must do it this way'.*

[1] A term created by the interviewee which is a combination between grammar and Nazi, to emphasize the strictness of adhering to using the correct grammar when talking to her grandmother. This is an interesting metaphor because of the racist fascist and connotations associated with Nazi oppression in Germany. Therefore, in a similar manner, Boitumelo's grandmother used strict (even oppressive) means to bring about a change in her linguistic identity.

In teaching her grandchildren to speak English, Boitumelo's grandmother was strict and corrected her grammar as often as was required. However, the grandmother was indifferent to teaching her grandchildren their indigenous language of Sepedi. What stands out is the strictness in learning the correct grammar for the foreign language and not the indigenous language. In general, people are not concerned about their grammar when they just talk. Kholofelo's grandmother was similarly unconcerned about the use of mother tongue at home.

> *Kholofelo: You know, my grandmother's a very considerate person. So she wouldn't make you feel uncomfortable if you weren't able to speak Sepedi.*

These grandmothers, as primary caregivers, did not put much emphasis on their grandchildren learning their indigenous languages. It appears as if there was a fear that multilingualism would interfere with the assimilation to the English language. Or perhaps, English was seen as a more unifying language in democratic South Africa (Baldwin & Painter, 2004), representing more linguistic and cultural capital (Painter, 2008; Throsby, 1999) and therefore encouraged over learning the mother tongue. The willingness shown by the grandmothers suggests that they were not reluctant to sacrifice their own languages and cultures in order to ensure a future for their grandchildren through the use of the English language.

It appears that the role of the grandmother is key in acquisition of English and the fact that there are at least two generations in the families of the women interviewed who spoke English prior to their assimilation to English as the primary language. The grandmother, who was often fluent in English, opened the gateway for the younger generation to learn a language. The grandmother herself was an educated person enabling her to take up typically

lower middle class jobs that were assigned to black people under apartheid. Therefore, in this family there is a relatively longer intergenerational history of social mobility, impacting on the choices that their children (the parents of the women in the study) then made for their children.

### 4.1.2. The role of parents and their professions

Grandmothers, due to their knowledge of English, were able to ensure that their own children (the parents of the participants) could get access to better work opportunities. What this section will highlight is the parents' influence on the journey for the women to learn English.

#### 4.1.2.1. Typical professions

Some of the parents studied in tertiary institutions and held professional jobs. The impact of earlier generational insertion into the languages of education (English or Afrikaans) is evident. For several participants, they were not first generation university students but the earlier professional access of parents was curtailed by apartheid.

> *Andile: My mother was a nurse, or still is a professional nurse. But, it was almost like all the nurses' kids, the parents who can almost afford, teachers, policeman, you know how it is. You know how it is with the black culture; it is always those professions as if they earn a bit more.*

> *Lerato: My mom…was working as a dry cleaner, then she went to school and then she worked as a cleaner in the school before she was given that whole assistant teacher. So it was quite an interesting upbringing. We were considered the privileged in the village.*

Andile and Lerato's statements highlight the initial opportunities for the parents' generations. These jobs in the black community were the higher paying jobs and this meant that these parents could afford better schooling for their children. Therefore, these 'typical' government jobs under apartheid are the first influencing factor for the rise of the black middle class women.

#### 4.1.2.2. New political access

The second factor that can be attributed to the journey that the young women followed is the political involvement of their parents or caretakers.

> *Lerato: My dad's very politically active, so he went from - he was a bricklayer to working in the mines, to being a district councillor.*

Involvement in political movements also opened up job opportunities for the parent generation in the transition from apartheid. This enabled a movement away from the typical professions that were previously stereotyped as 'black professions'. This social mobility helped the parents to earn income to give their children a better education. However, an increase in income was not the only motivator for the parent generation to send their daughters to English medium schools.

> *Phuthanang: So my uncle became a comrade type of thing…During the holidays he told me I'm not going back to my normal school and he bought me a uniform for Parkington Primary School and he told me that is where he's taking me when schools start.*

Black parents understood that, in post-apartheid South Africa, in order to ensure a good future for their children, a good education was and still are key. An increase in political activity gave some parents the knowledge and know-how to tackle discriminatory systems of the falling apartheid state and positioned them to take advantage of new political power in the democratic South Africa. In this way, the parent generation became the agents of change in the discriminatory schooling system. As a result, some of the women began their journey to learning English through their parents' sense of agency.

#### 4.1.2.3. New professions

The last key factor for the women to begin their journey into English was the new professions that the parent generation could access due to increased access to universities.

> *Boitumelo: Okay my dad, particularly my dad struggled a lot growing up…he studied a BSC in Swaziland then he came to South Africa - because it was the year Medunsa [Medical University of South Africa] was at, was taking in black people. And then he applied at Medunsa and then they declined him because he didn't have Afrikaans as a subject… And then he worked like really hard, he went on like a… he was the, one of the first black people to go on a British Medical Scholarship to go study overseas…So I think through his experience he just thought 'I don't actually want my children to go through everything that now I had to go through'.*

Parents had to work very hard and get around the system to get access to a good education and therefore a good job. This was because decades of superior education and training given to white workers (Lipton, 2000) ensured preferential access to jobs and other resources under the apartheid regime. In order for black parents to get access to higher education, they had to have an exceptional will. For example,

*Dineo: My mother, by the time she passed, she was a practicing sort of pharmacist and she sat on the South African Pharmacy Board. So she was actually quite accomplished for someone like, for a black woman who had to raise seven kids you know, on her own, well for sort of the last years. So I'm very proud of my mother, but nonetheless what I think I'm trying to say is she spoke good English as well… She was educated, you know?*

*Nonhlanhla: So he did a B-com in accounting, that's what my dad did, and then did the whole tax auditing stuff, so that was what he was doing at work. And then also while still there, he did something at, what's that school of Kellogg's, which was overseas, he did some stuff there as well. So in terms of education, both my parents are educated, in fact in the time that my mom was taking a break, she was actually studying at UKZN[University of Kwa Zulu-Natal] during her space, because she wasn't doing anything. So she decided to take something up, can't remember, it was some certificate in business management that she was doing. So while she was chilling, she was like let me just take up something and use my time.*

Clearly, for the women, the levels of education and professional achievement that their parents attained were an enabling factor for them to learn English. For the parents, this allowed for a shift in class from working class to middle class status, coinciding with the change in political regimes. Potentially, this shift in class meant that the schooling of their children would change accordingly. This may have resulted in sending their children to English medium schools. Whilst this may have been seen as a sign of progress in some communities and for these individual families, what impact did this have on the usage and preservation of indigenous languages for the women?

### 4.2. Loss of mother tongue

Some women felt that their parents were often willing to forego knowledge of their indigenous language and culture to help their children pursue learning in English at school. This had an impact on the women's journey into learning the English language and their sense of belonging in their communities. For the women, learning their mother tongue was their parents' responsibility. This section explores these past experiences

#### 4.2.1. Not speaking the mother tongue

Language is a carrier of culture, resulting from the collective experiences and histories which were handed down as values to the generations (Wa Thiong'o, 2005). But parents are willing to let go of these values, assimilating another foreign language and therefore its culture and values as exhibited by statements made by Phuthanang and Nonhlanhla:

> *Phuthanang: So it's not just about where we come from, it's what the family chose to disregard. That's why, to my father's side of the family, it's not a big deal that they don't speak Tswana or any Sotho properly. It's like, okay, you know?*

> *Nonhlanhla: But I mean, my parents, for them like growing up in Zulu it was like back in the day. I guess that's why speaking Zulu at home, with a bit of English and stuff is okay…My family, we're not hectically into cultural stuff, like we don't do the whole thing of slaughtering.*

Clearly, from the women's statements, there was a willingness from their parents to let go of indigenous languages, values and culture. This was perhaps in the pursuit of

progress made tangible by the use of English. For the parents, having a knowledge of English meant that they were able to lift themselves out of poverty. Therefore, they may have felt justified in encouraging their children to speak more English because of the cultural capital (Throsby, 1999) it possessed in society. Without knowing it, encouraging their children to use more English at home actually meant that their children were being inserted into a foreign culture. Unknowingly, the parents were promoting the process of 'colonising the mind' (Wa Thiong'o, 2005) of their children.

### 4.2.2. Attempts to preserve the mother tongue

The promise of a better education often propelled parents to send their children to model C schools that taught them in English. Yet there is some evidence that parents wanted to preserve some cultural aspects of their indigenous languages, especially when they observed their children interacting with other family members.

> *Dineo: I think when you get introduced to speaking in English, or at least when you realise that you can articulate yourself in English, it's like this thing, because you want to do it all the time…But then my mom wouldn't have that and I'm like but why not, what's her problem? She pays all this money for me to go these schools, but then when it suits her, I can`t greet, I can't say 'hi' to an elderly person, I can't say 'hello', I've got to – ja! So my mom that was pretty clear in my home that I had to speak vernacular when it was required and it took me a long time to learn when it is that it was required.*

Dineo's experience highlights that not all parents were willing to completely distance themselves and their children from their indigenous languages and cultures. In a sense, her mother wanted her daughter to continue having membership of her linguistic identity as a

Setswana speaker within her family and ethnic community. Through the Tswana language, Dineo would be able to position herself as a Setswana member, showing that she too belonged to the Tswana community (Sung-Yul Park, 2012). Her mother was very strict about when she could use which language and with whom. In their attempt to preserve cultural knowledge and relationships for her daughter, she forbade her from speaking English to her elders. Clearly for Dineo this caused a lot of tension. On the one hand, she had acquired English, which made her unique and special in her community and she therefore wanted to continue to feel this sense of accomplishment/reward. However, her knowledge of English was not always rewarded when she used it with her parents and family elders. The English language gave her an alternative level of membership to and new, imagined community with its own linguistic identity (Anderson, 2006; Croucher, 2004; Sung-Yul Park, 2012).Knowing the English language served to alienate her from her family and community (Yuval Davis, 2011). It took her some time to figure out in which community her knowledge of English would be rewarded. Through multilingualism being valued across multiple settings, her knowledge of her indigenous language could be preserved and she could maintain multiple contexts of belonging. Similarly for Nonhanhla, this distancing from cultural and linguistic norms was not experienced:

> *Nonhlanhla: Maybe it was just like family, or extended family, we never conversed in English. My gran, my aunt and so, we never conversed in English. We just spoke Zulu.*

Parents experienced a tension between wanting the best for their children and not wanting them to forget their cultures. Parents wanted to give their children a head start in life, especially because they had struggled so hard to become successful under apartheid conditions. However, in an effort to preserve some cultural aspects and links with family and

community, speaking to the elders in indigenous languages became the rule at home. This wanting to keep in touch with cultural practices and with relationships with their communities is similar to in research involving the children of Fish Hoek Valley as previously discussed in Bray et al's (2010) research. Particularly the children from Masiphumelele showed respect and reverence (i.e. 'ukuhlonipa') to the adults in their community by communicating with the adults in an indigenous language and behaving in culturally appropriate ways in front of them.

### 4.2.3. Generational shifts in mother tongue

Another key shift that the women noted as they recall their experiences in the journey to learn English was the difference in assimilation to the language amongst their siblings. Because of the historical moment in which these women grew up, some of the women had older siblings who had not had the same exposure to English as their younger siblings (the participants) and they may have harboured some resentment towards their younger sisters.

> *Dineo: But growing up I actually didn't relate to my older sister at all. Like I felt she was really straight, I thought she was different, she thought I was spoilt and I just didn't like her... But for the longest, longest time I didn't relate to her at all, I actually didn't even think we were from the same set of parents, it was just like very different, ja. And I don't know whether there was some level, from her anyway, the oldest one, level of resentment to the last four of us, because maybe she felt we got a better life, or I don't know if there was that, but I think our relationship was strained for a long time.*

Dineo's mother had seven children. As her career progressed and the South African democratic era was ushered in, she was able to afford to take some of her younger children to

better schools and give them access to a better quality of life. However, the older siblings were not been afforded the same luxury and hence Dineo's older sister may have felt that her younger siblings were 'spoilt'. In previous research, Bray et al (2010) found that older siblings were most likely to be caregivers to their younger siblings because mothers were often away from home working long hours to support their families. Therefore, Dineo's sister may have been resentful because she had the burden of raising her younger siblings whilst experiencing a lower quality of life for herself. This could be related to their lack of access to of English and therefore the type of education they received.

Lerato provides another example of how older siblings were sometimes the last ones to benefit the last from the transitioning government.

> *Lerato: I remember in 1994-95 my oldest siblings couldn't go into multi-racial schools before, so they went straight from the African whatever, local schools, to that multi-racial high schools.*

In Lerato's experience, the older siblings were eventually accommodated. Their schooling careers began in the Bantu education system and eventually they migrated to the model C schooling system. However, this late entry into these schools would have impacted on their understanding of English and therefore the quality of their education.

Boitumelo's experience highlights how the move to the suburbs could have also encouraged a difference in acquisition of the English language between older and younger siblings.

*Boitumelo: My two older sisters they grew up in Alexander so there they learnt vernac, so our stories are completely different. But also sometimes like we miss each other with languages because we didn't all learn it in the same environment.*

Boitumelo's remarks highlight how the acquisition of a foreign language can create a difference in identity not only between generations but even between siblings from the same family. She mentions that her story is different from her older siblings' stories. On the other hand, younger siblings of the women interviewed were more likely to speak more English than the participants.

*Nonhlanhla: But with my brothers, my younger brothers, I found that they speak English more, which kind of make my parents also speak English more. So because of that, I think from then there was more English in the house. Not sure why that is?*

There is an increasing pervasiveness of English at home due to Nonhlanhla and her young siblings learning the English language at a young age. This pervasiveness increases as children learn the language at younger ages. In addition, children become more and more assimilated the younger they are when they learn English. This is due to the opening up of 'multi-racial' model C schools in the 1990's (Makalela, 1998; Ndzimande, 1993) as the possibilities of political freedom were gradually becoming a reality for the ANC. Access to English medium schools became easier for black sections of society that could afford to take their children to these schools because of their careers or due to newly found status through the political regime change. The knowledge that English would ensure economic and social progress for their children, together with the better resources of these schools, encouraged those parents that possibly could, to send their children to model C schools.

### 4.3. First to go to model C schools and experience whiteness

The participants thus began schooling in a 'foreign' setting, crossing the boundaries and borders of race as the institutions of apartheid began to be dismantled. Due to apartheid 'separate development' (Pampalis, 2000), this often entailed a movement away from black spaces such as rural areas or townships, into white spaces. Andile recalls her experience:

> *Andile: I never. For me it was a total change. I mean, you can imagine from a rural girl going to Durban, this big City. Jozini is like a one street road. There is the main road and that's where everything happens. Now going to Durban, the big lights - I had never spoken English. We did English at school, but you know how it was. The English was basic and we were still kids, and the English we did was almost like a small fraction. Then now I am in Durban and I remember my first day. Oh Lord! I remember it so well like it was yesterday because I didn't know where I was supposed to go, and it was the beginning of the year and there were all these white kids there and in class, it was only just the two of us in class. Just two black girls. But that girl was there from the beginning, she was from Durban, and she was fluent. And I'm like this rural girl, short hair. And then to find my class and I can't speak the language. I don't remember how I asked but I must have seen something of the class, it was one teacher. I don't remember what she said, but luckily I had a paper telling me my teacher was Mrs. Peter. Telling me that I need to go to this class, and she actually took me to this class and she actually sat there. And first year, at the beginning of the year and you join a class, I mean kids were there already, I had to introduce myself. Can you imagine me trying to introduce myself? I just stood there, had to like - I said my name is Andy.*

For Andile, the experience of going to a model C school for the first time can be captured by one word 'transitioning'. The first transition is from a rural area to an urban area. With this movement, one can imagine it meant a movement from one way of life to a new different way of life and that is there was a transition in culture. The values that Andile may have been inculcated with at home in a rural area could have been vastly different to the values in the urban areas. In other words, place plays a role in the way a person experiences life. Andile, through this transition changed her group membership (Croucher, 2004) from being a 'rural girl' to being an 'urban girl'. This move changed her identity in two ways, the first being through differentiation and the second being through belonging (Weedon, 2005). Firstly, Andile became immediately aware of the difference between rural and urban surroundings. That is, she recognised the difference in culture between urban and rural settings, and was impacted by this. Secondly, her emotional attachment to her rural identity was supplanted by a newly acquired urban identity, from which she initially felt alienated. Andile's experience provides us with an example of the importance of place in individual identity.

The second transition for Andile is from speaking Zulu to English. Whilst there might have been some exposure to the English language at school prior to this, moving to a more urban area and an English medium school meant that there would be a definite movement to a different language. Again, this would result in a change in her way of life and sense of self or identity. The dominance of English in model C schools meant that Andile would begin to belong to a new 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006) of English speakers, therefore bringing about a change in her identity because of her change in language. This new 'linguistic identity' (Sung-Yul Park, 2012) would enable her to position herself differently in a social context using English. This is because language is a carrier of culture (Wa

Thiong'o'o, 2005) and together with learning English, she learnt new values and ways of life, which would have an impact on how she related to people.

The third aspect of the transition is from interacting mainly with children who were black to moving to interacting with children from different 'races'. This movement was a noticeable one for Andile and she comments that she was one of only two black girls in her class. This sensing of difference based on the colour of her skin would 'mark' her and position her as an 'other' (Hall, 1996). Andile, at this moment acquired a racialised identity. Andile's traumatic experience of being one of the first black children to go to model C schools is not unique. Phuthanang also comments:

> *No, we were the first black intake...It was the most intimidating thing ever! {Chuckle} With these kids sitting across me and counting in Afrikaans and I had no idea what they were saying. I didn't even speak English, because on occasion we were exposed to some English so I wasn't like crude, crude, but I was like, what are they saying? What is this? It was like horrific!*

The first exposure to English and white people is highly memorable for both Phuthanang and Andile and it can be considered a traumatic event. These incidents were highly emotional, filled with fear and intimidation. The young women became positioned as the 'other' (Hall, 1996); positioned as something negative and to be feared (Terreblanche, 2014). The young women, as they entered their new schooling environment, were alienated by difference, marked black bodies in a highly racialised context. Their entry into this community was experienced by resistant whites as a 'forced entry' because the transition period from apartheid to a democratic South Africa that was often met with resistance. For

young girls, who may have not had an understanding of their social context, this experience is recollected as traumatic and 'horrific despite the adult 'chuckle' at the memory.

Both Phuthanang and Andile's share a common experience of being previously exposed to limited English. Both comment on having a 'crude' understanding of English. They would have most likely attended Bantu education schools, which were aimed at providing only a working knowledge of English. This was the modus operandi of the apartheid government, as discussed by Pampallis (2000) and Alexander (2003). Through the ideology of 'separate development', ethnic identities would be further reinforced by the system of Bantu education, which taught children in their mother tongues.

In addition, what is important to highlight here is that both women were pioneers and were often among the first cohort of black children to be allowed into their schools and being exposed to English for the first time. They could be termed the 'hinge generation' (Hoffman, 2004) because they were the first group of black children to attend model C schools in the post-apartheid era, bridging the world of segregated schooling and new non-racial schools. Similar pioneer experiences were mentioned by the other women during interviews.

> *Matlhodi: So when I went to school, nursery school, in 1994. Yes, because I started grade one in 1996. I went to nursery school in 1994 the medium that was used was English. That's how I started using English.*

> *Nonhlanhla: Obviously it was school, since pre-primary English, I went to an English school, so I was like those '94 kids, the first black kids that went through the system of black people being able to go through model C schools, so that for me was where I started.*

It was also not uncommon for this hinge generation to be exposed to schools that taught in both English and Afrikaans. This is because the medium of instruction in many of the educational institutions during that time was both English and Afrikaans, the official languages during apartheid South Africa (Carrim, 1998).

> *Dineo: My first, I think I was five or something; I went to my first crèche which is in Lichtenburg. And then I went to Groblersdal ne [right]? Then I got exposed to this other crèche with Indian and Chinese kids and then it was Pretty Bird and then it was like the crèche for this English sort of school. Well it was half English, half Afrikaans.*

For some, the first exposure to English and white people was not only through the schooling system. For some, it was also a movement from townships to the suburbs. This movement to white urban areas would have had a cultural impact of the women:

> *Boitumelo: My parents stay*ed *at Alexander, but they moved from there when I was three years old*. So I always *stayed in a white suburb that was how I grew up.*

> *Kholofelo: Okay cool so we grew up in Mamelodi and we grew up speaking Setswana and then when you know the whole apartheid thing lifted we could go to model C school so we moved from Mamelodi to Waterkloof in Pretoria and that was a, a pretty predominately white suburb. We were probably one of the first black people to move in and they also moved us to a predominately white school, Iona Convent. So then I don't know a lick of English at that time but you learn a lot*.

For these women who were the first generation, exposure to the English language and whiteness were very vivid and sometimes traumatic, involving a form of movement, physically and figuratively. Experiences of otherness would bring about nuances in their

identities that were both racialised and linguistic (Hall, 1996). Their senses of belonging and emotional connections were racialised as they entered new collectivities based on their social contexts (Yuval Davis, 2011). Nevertheless, these families persisted in the view that acquiring the English language and its associated cultural and linguistic capital (Throsby, 1999; Painter, 2004) were highly desirable. Both parent and child were willing to make sacrifices (both financial and emotional) for economic and social reasons.

### 4.4. Names and misrecognition

The women's recollections of their experiences in model C schools are critical to the formation of their identities. A significant memory for many was the explicit change in identification entailed by the requirement to take on new English names or the mangling of their names by English speakers. The analysis begins with the connections made between names and the theoretical concept of 'misrecognition' (Taylor, 1994).

As discussed earlier, first exposure to English and white people for the women interviewed was when the 'hinge generation' went to model C schools. One of the major struggles they encountered was pertaining to their names, an issue that is directly related to their identity. The focus on names provides a useful point of tension between language, culture and recognition in a 'white' space.

> *Matlhodi: I also realised that no-one could pronounce my Tswana name properly and it irritated me. My Tswana name is Matlhodi – but they couldn't pronounce it. It always sounded like Chinese or - no-one can properly say it, except a few individuals. I got irritated and used my English name which is Belinda and ever since, even in primary school few people called me Matlhodi, only the ones that knew how to pronounce it But when I got to high school it changed and I was Belinda, even at*

*work I was Belinda. It only bothered me in primary school, even if I could speak English and I could say Mrs Whoever, Mrs West's name properly, and I could call Sarah's name properly, but she couldn't say Matlhodi and she had to say Belinda. I was irritated by that. I didn't like the name Belinda but I got used to it.*

It was a great irritation for Matlhodi when people mispronounced her name and this bothered her a lot. She felt that she had to make the effort to pronounce English names and yet other people did not make an effort to pronounce her Setswana name. As a result she had to switch over to using an English name. This was not always the case though, with some women showing open frustration at having their names being mispronounced. This was because their understandings of the apartheid systems use of power and dominance was very limited, yet it was displayed in ways that were felt traumatically.

*Phuthanang: Apparently this one time they called me in to say I was a bit strong, because I wouldn't allow them to call me Futhanang. Like it would be a conversation: 'No Phuthanang[2]' - and in my head it's not- I didn't understand the apartheid stuff. I'm just thinking 'where is this person getting this?'*

For the women, the schooling system continued to misrecognise them by dismissing their sense of self. The women recall the devaluing of their identities through the mispronunciation of their names. The message was clear, they were in a white space and what they brought to the table in the form of their names was not appreciated. The children were subjected to 'projective identities' (Fanon as cited in Clarke, 2008; Mama, 1995) forced onto them by the white teachers and children, which worked to build an inferiority complex

[2] The pronunciation of this name sounds like 'p' as opposed to the English pronunciation of 'ph' as 'f'

within them. Through these teacher-pupil or white child-black child interactions, both Matlhodi and Phuthanang experienced racist positioning. Mispronouncing their names and then asking for European alternatives, worked to make them feel that their own languages, cultures, identities as black girls were inferior as opposed to white identities.

> *Boitumelo: I mean even they don't call me Boitumelo everyone calls me Boity, some people don't even know that my real name is Boitumelo and I ask them all the time like 'what's my real name?...Like when they introduce you 'this is Boity' 'no!' I need to say 'you can call me Boity' I, I'd feel like that's very important for me.*

The irritation of having their names mispronounced or using nicknames and English middle names means these young black girls were not being recognised for whom they are and being required to discard their African identities. The process of recognition can be understood as a person "understanding who they are, of their fundamental defining characteristics as a human being" (Taylor, 1994, p. 29). Interactions with schoolmates and teachers in model C schools began to challenge the girls' understandings of who they were. In mispronouncing their names and using an alternative English name, the people with whom they interacted were actually engaging in redefining their identities for them as inferior people or as new versions of themselves. The girls became the 'other' (Hall, 1996) as their identities, through their African names became 'marked' as different.

Through the mispronunciation of their names, the women, reflecting on their childhood, show how they were slowly being assimilated to English and its value system. Through the misuse of their indigenous names, the women, as children, were beginning to understand that there was a difference between languages and that this difference bas based on inequality. Indigenous languages (and names) were seen as inferior and the English

language (and names) were superior. This understanding was crucial to ensuring the immersion into a different culture.

### 4.5. Assimilation and immersion into English

From the discussions with the women, there are identifiable strategies that were employed to learn English both at school and at home. In order to facilitate the learning of the English at school, punitive techniques were often used by teachers.

> *Nonhlanhla: So we weren't allowed to speak isiZulu at school, if you did you got a yellow slip or you ran around the field, which now when I think about it, its abuse actually… I remember when I told my mom, she was shocked - like you got in trouble for speaking your own language, it just didn't make sense. It was like 'no, the other kids can't hear you, so everyone has to hear what you're saying.*

The undervaluing of black children's language was further enhanced through the use of punishment. The reason often given to them for using this level of punishment was that children from different backgrounds could not understand indigenous languages. This was despite the democratic context wherein African languages were constitutionally recognised in any context (Alexander, 2003; Baldwin & Painter, 2004). The teachers sought to impose the dominance of English over the children, engaging in the process of erasure – erasing difference amongst school children whilst subordinating indigenous languages and marking them as undesirable (Butcholtz & Hall, 2005). Ideologies of white supremacy and black inferiority (Pampallis, 2000) played out in the classroom. Even if the school was deemed 'multiracial', differences were played out through language (Baldwin & Painter, 2004). Kholofelo and Matlhodi offer similar reasons as to why they think the teachers banned vernacular languages.

*Kholofelo: When I got to fifth grade it's when the school made a ban on African languages and that was because they were under the impression that they were being talked about. And they, the teachers didn't feel comfortable in a class when a student is talking about them and they can't understand it so only English was allowed at the school.*

*Matlhodi: Primary and high school - we were never allowed to speak in our home languages at school and in class, because no-one could understand you and they thought it's rude. So you need to speak a language that everyone can understand. So that you're not either 'skinnering' [gossiping] about someone, you're not cursing, or muttering under your breath. {Laughing} So you always had to speak in English.*

Teachers or white English speaking children are not used to being excluded from conversation and are suspicious and anxious when this takes place. This reflects the attitude that Burman (2008) critiques: instead of using the languages of all children to create multilingual spaces for learning, multi- or bilingualism was thus treated as a problem that needed to be fixed or is viewed as a 'necessary evil' to facilitate transition to the English language in an assimilationist society. Punishment was used by teachers as a remedial strategy to rid the children of bilingualism at school and to get them to accede to the dominant English (and/or in some cases, Afrikaans) culture.

### 4.6. Different places and ways to assimilate English

However, school was not the only place in which early insertion into English happened. The women recall their experiences of learning English outside of their schools. Below, in this section, are typical places that emerged in the participants' narratives in which children assimilate to English or where shifts in linguistic identities are marked.

### 4.6.1. Taxi

In an effort to learn English, some women talked about how, as children, they spoke more English in different environments such as in taxis whilst they were travelling home from boarding school. This is despite their transitioning between two different spaces.

> *Andile: We would be in a taxi going home, home was like two hours, and the whole time was just talking in English. Going to Jozini, those people are just rural people. They can't even speak the language. Maybe they can pick up a few things, but it irritates them. We would speak English the whole way, and you now school kids - we were loud. In the taxi, and you don't even see anything wrong, but that's how it was. We never did. We never spoke Zulu.*

Andile recalls her experience as a young girl in the taxi going home to a rural area and how, as a group of young girls, they would be speaking English all the time. As the children's linguistic identities shifted, the need to speak English in differing social settings became more apparent. This sense of belonging to an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006) of English speakers was, clearly, highly appealing to the young girls. In a society where English has cultural capital, using it makes others aware of your social status in society. This makes it more attractive for the young girls to speak more English (much to the irritation of the other passengers in the taxi and to Andile as an adult when she reflects on her behaviour as a young girl). This is indicative of a shift in her perspective, whereas as a young girl she found it 'cool' to speak in English in retrospect she finds it problematic. It could also show that the young women were becoming immersed in the language, buying into the idea that it is inferior to speak Zulu. The young girl's perceptions of their culture and language began to change as they assimilated to English and the process of 'colonising their minds' began (Wa

Thiong'o, 2005). Perhaps the young girls were buying into the social hierarchy of language, race and culture? This should not surprise us because learning English in post-apartheid South Africa, in previously model C schools, will come with continuities of the apartheid past, sustaining racism through language (Baldwin & Painter, 2004).

### 4.6.2. Home

In addition to speaking English in the taxi, some women talk about how they continued to speak more English when they got home. In one case, a teacher was an instigator in encouraging the children to speak more English at home.

> *Boitumelo: One of my teachers in primary school was like 'do you guys speak English at home?' so I was like 'yes we do'. They were like 'oh you need to speak more English at home and you must tell your parents you must only speak English' and then the lady that helped at home had to also speak English to me.*

In other cases, parents made it a rule to speak English at home.

> *Kholofelo: It took me about a year to learn English and ja, at that time, we, we had - when my dad realised you know, we need to know English and English is probably going to help you go far. They're very academic and very you know professional so they decided, well he decided that you're not allowed to speak anything but English at home. So that's how I guess, that's where it all began where English became a primary medium of language.*

Kholofelo's father employed his decision-making powers as the 'head of the family' and set the rule that English was going to be the only language of communication at home.

Coming from an academic background he understood the value of mastering the English language to further Kholofelo's prospects both academically and professionally. Economic and social status gains, part of the cultural capital of English (Throsby, 1999) are what parents strive for their children in the context of South Africa, when they send their children to school. As a result, the entire household became English speaking. Kholofelo and Boitumelo were actively encouraged to speak more English at home. As they spoke more English at home, they assimilated to the dominant language of English and lost their ability to speak their indigenous languages. Phuthanang shares her experience:

> *You also speak more English because that's when you learn words and new ways to express yourself and you know less of Sesotho. So people would say things and you don't understand. I remember my biggest thing was the idioms. Like, ha (ba) ne ba crama [when they were cramming], you know? 'We have a test in the morning and I need to know this' - I had no idea what they were talking about.*

It appears that there was a massive trade-off for learning to speak only English and gradually moving towards monolingualism. Although becoming fluent in English provided her with access to other worlds, she loses connection to other children in her home community, and increasingly is shut out of experiences that are only possible in Sesotho, including the deepening understanding of the language that others are developing in school. Phuthanang's shifting linguistic identity thus serves to alienate her from her community.

### 4.6.3. Reading and homework

In an effort to build vocabulary in English, reading was highly valued and emphasized in childhood homes of the participants.

*Andile: One thing that I did a lot was I read a lot. I actually started reading when I went to Maryville primary school. I started going to the library a lot, always reading. I remembered one of the famous books that we used to read was Mills and Boons.*

Parents also encouraged their children to read to build their vocabulary in English.

*Nonhlanhla: You know your black parents would prep you, you know they would make us read English and they were like, 'yes guys when you guys get there you know you must know your stuff', because obviously you don't know English.*

In an effort to give their children a competitive edge in the language domain, parents (mostly mothers) became very involved in their children's homework.

*Matlhodi: So every day we would be given reading to do and I had to go home and my mom would have to go through the work with me…I never spoke English at home - only when I was doing homework and through reading.*

*Dineo: I remember we had these Jack and Jill books, I don't know whether you remember these homework books tsa [of] Jack and Jill and then your mom had to like sign that you did our homework or you read a certain chapter. So I used to actually do that with her and then just to read stuff with her.*

*Nonhlanhla: Yes, she would do tests for me, and I would have to write them, and she'd mark them, and that's what my mom did. So I think in that way, that was their way of just ensuring that I was on top of things, going to an English school, because even at school, academically I actually did well.*

It appears that mothers were the ones who were highly involved in teaching their children English. The recollections by the women only speak about their mothers being involved in their homework. One reason for the mothers (and not fathers) being highly involved in their daughter's homework, which included reading and writing, could be because of the cultural belief that women are the best suited to assist with the child's development (Burman, 2008). This highly gendered approach to child development can be attributed to the continuous investment in essentialist research by social scientists such as Bowlby (as cited in Burman, 2008) to prove that mothers are the only people naturally endowed with abilities to raise children. Gender intersects with race, because in the ideology of depicting women as good mothers, it was essentially white women who were married to white male providers, who could afford the luxury of spending time with their children and doing homework with them (Essed, 2004). This occurrence of black women being heavily involved in teaching their children English, could be attributed to black middle class families becoming cultural clones of white middle class families (Essed, 2004).

### 4.6.4. Television

Another popular technique for learning to speak English was through watching television. Phuthanang talks about how this technique was used at home:

*Phuthanang: They used to force me to watch these soapies. That's how English was taught to me - I don't know how it worked. I would just sit there and watch and once*

*in a while my aunt would miss a program o tla mpotsa hore (na) 'ho etsa etseng?[3]' and I don't know how I explained it, but {laugh} it worked!... This one time, I think Ridge said something like 'sit down', and I was like ((shouting)) 'I know what you're saying!'((Laughter))*

*Nonhlanhla: And I was watching TV as well. Trying to watch all these programs like Kideo, all these kiddies' things that we used to watch as kids and obviously not understanding English.*

The memory of learning English through television is fondly remembered and is one that seems to be shared by Phuthanang and Nonhlanhla. What is interesting is that, in Phuthanang's case, at a young age she was allowed to watch age inappropriate programming in an effort to accelerate her English language abilities. The women recalled as black middle class, access to and watching television would have been seen as a recreational yet necessary task to immerse Phuthanang into English.

There are several interesting points about this technique. First, interviewees recalled that they use to watch TV but were not able to understand what was being said. Some interviewees admitted to using English to alienate those who did not know the television programmes and could not understand what was being said, e.g. Matlhodi says:

*Matlhodi: So whenever I go home all the kids would come to my house and watch TV and I'd go like, 'that's whoever, that's whoever!' As most of the homes didn't have TV and we watched at my house, I would catch them out. 'Oh, that cartoon!' I'd speak the loudest, and I'd speak the most, only because I can speak the language.*

[3] She would ask me 'what happened?'

Television and/or even access to pay television networks such as M-net indicate socio-economic status because it is an indicator of income, education and occupation. A link can be drawn between higher socio-economic status, better education and more access to English. That is, the more income a family makes, the greater their access becomes to 'better' forms of education, which in the South African context mean being assimilated to English.

It is clear that there is a long history of speaking English in the families of this 'hinge generation' (Hoffman, 2004) of women. Family involvement is important in the assimilation to English, as witnessed in our previous discussion on the multi-generational influence of learning English. We have seen that the entire family is likely to get highly involved in teaching the children English, encouraging its usage in different environments, including their homes, inadvertently making them even better in a second language as opposed to their indigenous language. What is of interest is what impact this has on the women's sense of their own identity and sense of belonging in the communities (Anderson, 2006; Yuval-Davis, 2011) from which they come.

### 4.7. Race as an identifier in the present

Race and racism persists in the present. In South Africa, 'race' continues to be used to as a classification system by various authorities to correct past mistakes through acts and policies such as Employment Equity for example. What is of interest is the experience of race for our hinge women at model C schools. The women discuss their initial experiences of racism on the playground and the overt awareness that 'race' is a marker of difference.

> *Phuthanang: Actually I remember this because from grade one to three we would play together. We would play kiss and catches and what not, and when we played the same game in grade three I - think I had a crush on this guy who I went through*

*lower primary school with. He didn't want to kiss me when he caught me and I didn't understand why. {Laughter}….I realised when he catches black girls he doesn't do it like when he catches white girls. They also, we wouldn't eat together anymore.*

*Kholofelo: But you know I did realise that I was a bit different from the people in my class because if we play house-house I was always a domestic worker and when house-house is finished someone has to clean and obviously who cleans? A domestic worker when playtime's over so you know I was bit disconnected from these people that are, you know, I'm now forced to know their language.*

Kholofelo realised that she was different because of roles she was assigned during house-house games, conforming her to socially accepted rules of domestic labour in South Africa. It is this self-realization that is interesting. Through the playing of 'innocent' games and the assignment of roles that are meant for black people, Kholofelo has become violently aware that she different, that she is meant to be a black and subservient/inferior person and the other children are white and superior. This form of 'radical reductionism' (Ndlovu, 2012) has conferred a structural social category of blackness upon her. Through the games she plays she has become 'fixed', without any possibility of recognition of her other, multiple identities (Alessandrini, 2014; Ndlovu, 2012). That is, her identity that has been articulated through others and she is not recognised as *a person* but has instead blackness is "conferred as a singular, fixed identity" (Ndlovu, 2012, p. 144) which is pervasive in nature, aimed at defining her politically, biologically, historically and economically. There are multiple pieces of evidence of this form of 'racial reductionism' (Ndlovu, 2012) the women experienced during their schooling careers. One particularly traumatic narrative highlights the violence of this process.

There comes a 'moment of awareness' (Fanon, 2001; Ndlovu, 2012) in children when they play on the playground that they are different. The othering of children's identities is based on difference (Hall, 1996) and in the South African schools of the participants' childhoods, this othering was based on skin colour, according to Phuthanang's recollection. Sometimes, these focuses on difference led to fights between different 'races'. The awareness of difference based on skin colour caused a lot of tension between the children from different backgrounds. Race, as an identifier of difference would often require that the children who were marked as different, the black children, would have to physically resist the subjugation of their African identities. Violence is one of the weapons that racist whites use to show how superior they are to the other (Fanon, 2001).

> *Lerato: There were racial fights. And I was there and got caught in the fire, but I just couldn't stand it. I couldn't stand that.*

> *Andile: We were the first black group to be accepted in the school. So you can imagine the fights, you can imagine these Afrikaner kids now had to live almost with these black kids…I don't know how many times we went to the principal's office because the kids had called one a kaffir and we would fight.*

These recollections by both Lerato and Andile, exhibit the violent nature of the racist ideology. In an effort to display superiority and to subjugate the other to the position of inferiority, violence and name-calling were often the means that white children aimed to show their dominance and power. In the process of colonisation, explicit brutal violence was to ensure that the other did not have a sense of self and identity that would compete with the colonisers imposed 'superior' identity (Fanon, 2001). Parallels can be drawn between the process of colonisation and the incidents on the school ground. That is, the methods of

belittling and othering witnessed on the school ground can be understood as more covert forms of violence, essentially being used to put black people in their place – inferior and not compete with the superiority of whiteness in multiracial model C schools. This level of subjugation appears to have worked and it was traumatic for the black children.

> *Andile: Yes, I hated my colour and I wanted to be light, I thought I was dark…I was surrounded by white people…White people with nice hair and their skin…When I first went to white schools, every white kid was white – obviously! Then I struggled. Then I thought I was too dark, my skin isn't good enough. At one point I remember putting Dettol in the bath…and I put it on my face. I think it burns, and I put it on my face and it was almost like a mask…I went home for three weeks in June, trying to do that every day to try and see a difference, and obviously there isn't a difference. Instead I was burning myself. I burned myself so bad! I locked the door and I soaked my face in Dettol because I am hoping it is going to bleach me.*

At this moment, Andile has become acutely aware of her racial identity. Her experience of her own blackness is traumatic. She applies Dettol to 'bleach' her skin of her own blackness, capturing with clarity, the moment wherein her true feelings about whiteness as a positive attribute are actualized. Andile has internalised these meanings of whiteness through the language she continues to use in her life story. Although she is retrospectively recounting her story, she moves between past and present throughout this insert. For example, she says "white people with nice hair" (present) or "I am hoping it is going to bleach me" (past) whilst she is recollecting her traumatic story. Her use of both past and present tense in the insert above reflect the temporal nature of narrative identities. Her past experience still has an impact on her present identity, in this case her identity in reference to markers of beauty/attractiveness, namely skin colour and hair, which intersect race and gender. It is clear

that these are markers of attractiveness because of the positive adjectives she uses to describe these markers. These ideas of attractiveness are historical and are a reflection of racial hierarchies of the colonial system, wherein white men defined standards of beauty (Erasmus, 2011). Black women (and children) exposed to these markers of whiteness, will aim to periodically change their features (Mama, 1995). This process of changing one's features will have a psychological cost, as black women and children, internalise racial oppression (Pyke, 2010). This is clearly the case with Andile. Her experience is layered with both psychological and physical pain, making it traumatic (Erasmus, 2011) as she aims to or more accurately becomes positioned as a cultural clone (Essed, 2004).

Andile's misuse of tense could also be because English is her second language, and therefore her use of tense should be excused; but this may be interpreted as a reflection of the trauma that is experienced through the process of identification. The violent and traumatic knowledge that you are considered inferior by the other (in this case the white person) makes her aware that "she is subjected to the power of the other to identify her as singularly black" (Ndlovu, 2012, p. 150). The political nature of identity leaves her powerless as she suffers through her identity crisis. Her once imagined "fixed, coherent and stable" self is "placed in doubt and uncertainty" (Ndlovu, 2012, p. 150). The other white children that she is now surrounded by have caused her to doubt who she thought she was. She has 'seen' herself through the eyes of the other. Lerato shares her story of when she first experienced this racialised positioning:

> *When I got into that high school, it was the first time that I saw myself really, really like - you know in primary school you think you haven't even an idea of race. You know that's history. Somehow the other kids are a bit more interactive and I had sleepovers at white kid's families, but in high school, it was, you could really, really*

*see that you're different. In primary school you saw that you're different, but it was so (pause), I don't know (pause), the energy was a bit (pause) - ja.*

There had always been an awareness of difference from primary school for Lerato; however she had assigned this knowledge to the apartheid past, evidenced in her comment "that's history". However, in high school, her racial identity was invoked by her surroundings (classmates and teachers) and wielded as weapon against her own coherent understanding of herself as an individual with multiple identities to tap into and use as and when she pleased/needed to. The determinism of her identity as singular, black policed the boundaries of her (multiple) identity "resulting in dogmatic assertions of the primacy of one category over the other" (Ndlovu, 2012, p145).

For other children, there was a need to overcome this sense of difference and aim to be become inconspicuous; therefore, there was no resistance to whiteness.

*Nonhlanhla: Obviously when there were just the two of us, you just feel like you kind of want to blend, you don't want to stand out because you're different, and more of the people are more white, and I think it was kind of like you end up becoming white in a sense. I had white friends, and I think it's simply because of that, not that there weren't black kids, there were. I just found myself, like my really, really best friends was white, to the extent that when my parents moved to Joburg - because my parents moved a year earlier because of jobs - and I had a decision to make: Do I stay in Durban? My mother said we were moving, but I didn't want to do matric in a different school. My parents are really chill and they said I could stay with friends. I had this one friend that I told you, the black girl who I was in class with in grade eight, Mbali, she came from a strict family, her dad was a pastor, I was like, 'I don't*

*know hey!'. And then I had the white girl that I was friends with, Faye, and I actually chose to stay with a white family, believe it or not. So I stayed with my white friend when I was in matric, I had white friends.*

Being one of only two black girls in her class became both a curse and a blessing for Nonhlanhla; a blessing because it allowed her to explore relationships beyond racial boundaries. A curse because it caused her to question her understanding of herself, making her want to 'blend in' and surrender to the dominant, hegemonic aspects of a white racial identity. She understood that she was 'marked' as different to the other 'white' school girls, whose identities remained 'unmarked' (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005). Schooling, as an ideological institution (Althusser, 1971), normalised whiteness and regulated blackness (Mc Nay, 1992). This normalising/regulation happened through language, and in this case English, which is a carrier of white culture (Wa Thiong'o, 2005). For Nonhlahla, this meant 'becoming more white in a sense'. However, there is an understanding now that our identities are not fixed, rather they are fluid and individuals have some agentic scope to resist imposed identities and to be creative with their identities (Ndlovu, 2012). By choosing to go to live with Faye, Nonhlanhla "psychologically connected" (Ndlovu, 2012, p. 144) herself with the other but this need not be interpreted as subjugation or a rejection of her blackness. Her actions expressed that she was 'more than just black' (Ndlovu, 2012) and she was rejecting the idea that her entire identity was defined solely by blackness. Ultimately, this allowed her to be creative with markers of sameness across 'race'. In this manner, Nonhlahla's experience at school and consequently, living with 'white' people gave her an opportunity to layer her identity and use new knowledge about herself as a resource to tap into when she relates to others (both black and white) in social contexts.

### 4.8. Alienation and distancing

Whilst the women were looking to survive in their (new) school environments by adapting their identities to feel a sense of belonging to their new communities, they were alienating themselves from their families and communities. During the process of identification, markers of difference actively include and exclude people, offering membership and a sense of belonging to a 'chosen' group (Anderson, 2006; Hall, 1996; Croucher, 2004). For example, the 'good' schools were located in the (previously) white suburbs of towns and cities. Due to the spatial planning of the apartheid regime, white families were found in the cities and towns and black families in the rural or peri-urban areas (townships). As a result, when parents decided that they wanted to send their children to the 'best' (English medium) school during the transitioning period from apartheid to democracy, their children had to go to schools in the cities and suburbs. For the parents, this was a form of class mobility, enabling transitions from being working class to middle class. For the children, this movement between different spaces often meant travelling long distances over lengthy periods of time.

> *Lerato: We spent 45 minutes going to school, 45 minutes coming back… We couldn't play. We stayed far already and that already, that kind of structure already isolated me.*

In addition to travelling long distances, there were differences in their experiences of schooling that contributed to isolation and made it difficult to integrate back into their homes and communities. For example,

> *Phuthanang: But ja, I think that was my journey through the lower primary and the language thing. It was also quite hard, I think, integrating back. So most of the day,*

*you come back in a different uniform, you've got different things. You don't necessarily get the practice with their games. So when you're playing after school you're not good baatchie[4] anymore, so you're not picked.*

The different experiences in schooling marked these children going to English medium schools as different. For example, different uniforms and amount of homework meant that they looked and behaved differently from their former schoolmates and friends, serving to isolate them from their communities.

*Nonhlanhla: People will always find things to make you feel out of place because of your education or because you speak good English, whatever good English is. It can sometimes be something negative, the fact that you speak English well. I think around communities and people. I guess it is a bring-you-down-syndrome. I think it's just that people make you feel uncomfortable for the fact that you speak English which shouldn't be the case, but in some instances they do make you feel uncomfortable.*

As a result, sometimes the way you speak can mark you as different and make you feel out of place. This 'feeling out of place' is underscored by the accent of the young girls. Through being immersed in English, they may have lost their ability to speak in their mother

[4] A game played in the townships with two opposing teams with tennis ball and empty cans of different sizes. The aim of the game is to eliminate the defensive team using the tennis ball. There is a starting point and a designated end point Briefly the game is made up of a defensive team which aims to build a stack of empty cans as high as possible in a pre-specified area (the end point), whilst the offensive team aims to prevent the cans being stacked up by throwing tennis balls at the defensive players as they run towards the cans over a specified distance from the start point. The defensive team gets eliminated is the tennis ball touches any part of their body. The defensive team wins if they manage to stack all the cans and loses if all the members of the teams are eliminated.

tongue or speak their mother tongue with and English accent. On the other hand, this sense of alienation the children began to feel from their communities could have been brought about by the education system itself.

> *Boitumelo: Looking back I do think that it was an educational thing because I think its, its subliminal things that people say that you don't notice growing up. And I see that particularly in my niece because my niece remembers things to the tee. So whenever she says something inappropriate or politically incorrect I will always correct her and then she's say 'no but teacher whoever said it.'... No she'll say 'teacher whoever said it they were teaching us about this and she said that'. Then I was like 'ah - actually like school is kind of tense because it like forms the foundation of everything that you think in your life'.*

By talking with a younger generation, a connection has been made by Boitumelo with how education can be used as a state apparatus to promote ideologies of people in power (Althusser, 1971). In this case, the teacher who takes a position of power in the classroom is teaching her niece 'politically incorrect' ideas, ideas about whiteness. These ideas may serve to alienate school-going children from their communities because of their political content. Boitumelo further comments how this distances her niece from a 'black' identity.

Being in model C schools and associating with white people made racial difference a part of everyday experience for the participants growing up. Further inclusion meant assimilating the language of othering, making it possible for the participants to actively distance themselves from their communities.

> *Boitumelo: I always othered everything because even when I spoke about white people, uh! White people, you know white people that was an interesting that I'd*

*always say' white people' but when I was speaking about black people I'd always say 'these people' or 'those people' so it distanced them even more from any sort of identity that I had.*

Because she is in a 'white' school surrounded by 'white' people, in an effort to 'belong' to this group of white people, Boitumelo has learnt to use this language of othering, identifying herself a part of this dominant group and distancing herself from black 'others'. She has taken on the language of differentiation based on race, which utilises power and aims to exclude identities that are deemed undesirable (Hall, 1996). In order for her to gain access to and membership of her new group, she begins to use the words 'they', 'those people' and 'these people' to refer to black people as different from her. These terms are often employed by people to show differentiation from the group they belong to. In order for her to feel like she belongs to a specific collectivity (the white children with whom she is schooling), Boitumelo will adopt the English language but moreover whiteness. In order to truly be a member, Boitumelo will have to muster the racial resources (such as using the language of othering). In this pursuit of belonging to one group (her white school friends), she simultaneously alienates herself from her community. Andile, describes her experience of distancing herself from her community and friends.

*Andile: I mean you know when you have got friends from white schools; obviously you want to be friends with them. They [black friends with whom she grew up with in the rural areas] wanted to. If they [black friends with whom she grew up with in the rural areas] see me in town, they would say 'hey Andy', and I would reserve myself and 'don't come close to ask me questions, just move on, just walk by', and that is how it was and obviously you are going to give up on someone who treats you badly.*

Andile has become aware that there is a difference between her community at home and her community at school. This difference is based along racial and linguistic lines. By using the words ”they wanted to” in referring to her community at home, she has shown that she identifies with her school community more that her home community and, through this, actively alienates herself from her community. In other words, her identification is along racial lines where she self identifies with whiteness and differentiates herself from her black friends. What is interesting is the present tense she uses in her commentary above. This could be because she has not ‘mastered’ the English language as well as she thinks; however, this is still a present experience for her. To some extent she still feels alienated from her community. Nonetheless, this experience of alienation has often resulted in some form of loss for the women.

### 4.9. Friendship and imagined communities

Consistently, the women interviewed associated alienation from the community with loss of friendship. These friendships within the home community were supplanted by the social relations taking place on the playground at school. As a result, one community was replaced with another community.

> *Phuthanang: Ja - I think I just made it my own. So I understood that I don’t fit in, so you make new friends. Friends that you went to school with or friends that go to similar, um, I, I, I had one best friend growing up, on’a kena ko sekolong sa lokeishineng [who went to the township school in the location], but she wasn’t like that. She was my only friend, because we stayed for a while, and then we moved a bit later. Ja, so your life just changes. So you become closer to people who are like-minded or like-experienced, if I can call it that.*

Phuthanang gradually lost her friends. This is because she went to schools in a different area from her peers in the community she was growing up in and she got involved in different activities because of her schooling, as discussed above. Model C schools were only found in the suburbs, whereas township schools were found away from the cities and suburbs where white people lived. This meant that she then became closer to individuals with whom she had shared experiences. "Children are drawn to others who are like them" (Cook & Cook, 2009,p. 422) but these dimensions of 'likeness' are not just individual preferences, they are socially defined and embedded in structural relations. Even these new friends in can pose a challenge for defining a new community.

> *Lerato: I was so torn between the white friends and the other friends. White friends, black friends, black friends that are more, you know, we called them coconutish*[5] *and black friends that were not coconut. So that was literally the battle, connecting to everyone.*

Lerato's comments emphasise the fragmentary experience of identity (Hall, 1996). Her exposure to model C schools and her immersion into the English language, introduced a new way of being for her. This meant she interacted with white and black children differently and her subjective experiences with her friends from different 'race' groups impacted her identity in different ways. In addition, because of where she lived (due to apartheid spatial planning) she still maintained strong links to her community, which was largely black and strongly linked to the 'Tswana' ethnic identity. As a result, she often experienced tensions between the different identities she could belong to. What is interesting is that Lerato viewed

[5] Derogatory term used to refer to black children who predominantly speak English and/or are perceived to behave like white people; black on the outside and white on the inside

her white friends as homogenous, whilst her black friends were more heterogeneous. So essentially she was torn between connecting with three distinct groups of friends. Selecting the right type of friends and being the right kind of black became important.

> *Kholofelo: Ja, so it definitely meant that I had to select my friends wisely. I couldn't have people around me who are going to bring me down because of the way I was brought up because I couldn't particularly help it. So I, I wasn't the type of person to have a big group of friends even though a lot of people did like me I couldn't have them close by in case you know I would get judged. I'd have a very select group of people as friends, three or four at a time at the most.*

Kholofelo's new community of possible friends is much smaller; they were most likely to be speaking English and black. She belongs to a new 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006). Language is a signifier of belonging in a community; because she speaks English, she belongs to this imagined community, along with all the interviewed women and she can thus reap the rewards of belonging to an English speaking community and imagines herself and her identity anew. Identification with and membership into this specific collectivity brings about an emotional attachment that differentiates her from other communities (Yuval Davis, 2011). Belonging to this community of English speakers equips her with new resources that she utilizes to her advantage.

### 4.10. Conclusion

The aim of this chapter was to begin to describe the journey into learning English that was followed by the women interviewed. Clearly the journey begins at home and is influenced by the multiple generational experiences with the English language. It was found that two generations influenced the learning of English for the women, particularly

grandmothers and parents. It was found that in some of the women's lives indifference towards assimilation into their own indigenous languages and cultures had a two-generation history. However, some parents aimed to preserve their languages and cultures and ensured their children grew up multilingual. Given that they were among the first cohort of black children to enter desegregated schools, some of the participants recalled how their older siblings were not as assimilated into English and this may have caused some resentment between them. The women commented that their younger siblings learnt the English language earlier and were even more assimilated. The intergenerational story is very interesting because it provides evidence of the role of social context and family in acquiring a language. Through the implementation of language policies by colonisers and rulers of Apartheid (Alexander, 2003), the dominance of the English language was felt in different ways by earlier generations despite closed and separate forms of schooling, and this permeates through to the participants' generation.

The participants recalled their first experiences with whiteness were when they moved away from black spaces (township and rural areas) to suburbs and model C schools. This group of women were the first group of black children to enter the model C schooling system. Misrecognition of the women's identities (as girls) began with the mispronunciation of their names, with some women resorting to using their Anglicised names. Nonetheless, learning English became a necessity because of their schooling environment. The women recall different spaces and ways they became assimilated into English. Firstly at school where they were punished for using their indigenous languages when they communicated, in taxi's and at home with their families where they were encouraged to use English and through watching television. For the participants of this study, the hegemony of English and whiteness has brought about traumatic experiences as children, bringing about an identity crisis. The women recall experiencing violence on the playground where they were othered and

positioned as black during play. English has also served to differentiate the families of the participants from their communities, changing their identities and alienating them from their home communities. However, despite these difficult childhood trajectories, English has helped these adult women earn membership of an 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006) of black English speakers, with its own characteristics.

# 5. CHAPTER 5: PRESENT IDENTITIES AND HOPES FOR THE FUTURE

The women interviewed have all entered the professional working world in some way. Looking at their life trajectories, one could conclude that this was partly made possible because of their exposure to the English language. That is, their parents' dreams and wishes, learning English would open up working opportunities for their children later in life, have been realised. Now having crossed that bridge, the women now talk about their experiences as women, working women and the futures they would like to see for themselves. Throughout the interviews, the women talk about how the English language has impacted their current world-view and begin to imagine what this will mean for their futures.

There are clear links between language, gender and race. These identities intersect for this group of black middle women in very interesting ways. They are all key markers of exclusion (or inclusion) that the 'hinge generation' experience in the work environment. Historically, the women would have been excluded from these work environments due to the markers of race, gender and class. Black females were assigned to working class positions such as being maids or kitchen girls (Terreblanche, 2012; Unterhalter, 1995). Due to the nature of apartheid and through the means of language, discourses of black inferiority and white superiority were forced upon black working class women and consequently internalised (Clarke, 2008; Wa Thiong'o'o, 2005). These belief systems have remained entrenched in the women's lives, because of the discourses that remain in present day society and consequently have led them to believe that in order to achieve success in the work environment; certain behaviours are rewarded (entailing dis-identification) from categories of belonging as black women.

### 5.1. Experiences of language, gender and race in the work environment

The women have gained working opportunities that a 'good' education in an English medium school was aimed at providing. However, the women talk about new challenges in the working environment that they have to face and how these intersect with race and gender. In the work environment, the women feel that they are constantly being compared to their male counterparts. There is a general feeling that they have to work harder and prove themselves.

> *Andile: I wonder why we are always trying to prove ourselves that is my biggest struggle. I struggle with (us) always trying to prove ourselves and act like men. I don't know why? A good example, my assumptions, I feel that Bronwyn, I know she is a white lady, I felt that she lost who she is. She lost herself because she is trying so hard to be in this boys club and I don't know why? I see a lot of black women doing that, trying to fit in. We know the language already, but why aren't we proud?*

Andile feels that, as black women, we constantly have to compromise who we are to 'get ahead in life'. First, we have to learn a foreign language to get access to work. Then when we get to the work place, we have to compromise our femininity and start behaving in a masculine manner to get any form of recognition and move up the career ladder. Black women then have to follow the lead of white women, that is speak English, and behave masculine, to further their careers. This causes a sense of frustration within Andile. She highlights issues of gender and race and concludes that in order to be a part of this 'boys club', you have to be or behave like a white, male and proficient in English (or Afrikaans), in other words, become a 'cultural clone' (Essed, 2004). This experience of exclusion often peaks for the women when they interact with, white (Afrikaner) men.

*Dineo: And the one time I said that to someone who I felt was actually condescending and I felt was actually being disrespectful was one of my, the guys I used to service when I was at Momentum who was a hectic, hectic sort of Afrikaner guy and one time, he actually never gave me the time of day. I'd get into meetings with him and he was always like where's Ingrid? Ingrid was my boss, so and he wouldn't let me present to his team even if Ingrid wasn't there. And the one time when she was like 'actually I'm here, but Dineo is actually going to do this piece of work' and I did my presentation. And then afterwards as we were walking out of the room, I mean the minute we walked out of the room he was like 'Dineo you actually speak very good English you know?' But he speaks in a very funny Afrikaans accent, obviously. And I said to him 'why does that surprise you?'*

Even though Dineo is qualified on paper and importantly, from her perspective, speaks English, to perform her duties at work, there are still some invisible barriers for her to actually do her work. These barriers have to do with her race, gender, class and language, particularly in the form of accent. The world of work, which in South Africa remains relatively untransformed, remains a 'white man's world. That is, the labour market remains gendered and racialised, due to the labour market discrimination discussed by Anthias, Cain & Yuval Davis (1993). They have highlighted how under apartheid, white male workers were considered as superior labour in comparison to female workers which were treated as dispensable and where black labour was only meant to be cheap. The racialised apartheid systematically ensured the black labour force remained excluded from the middle class (Khunou, 2015). These forms of discrimination continue in a post-apartheid, democratic country. For Dineo, and the other women interviewed, all these invisible criteria intersect and result in her being marked as different and excluded (Clarke, 2008) from performing her

work duties. The women were expected to become cultural clones of white middle class men (Essed, 2004). Boitumelo offer another example of how exclusion is exercised in the work place:

> *Boitumelo: I was confronted with the situation where I went for an audition and the guy, when I walked in, the guy was like 'oh no - we don't have a place for you'. I hadn't even sung, I hadn't done anything, I just walked in. So then I was like 'oh okay, okay.' I mean when, when the casting people say that to you, okay I left. Then I said to my friend 'I think it's, it's the way that I look' because I don't dress up. I don't, like, it's too much for me to do that so then I was like 'I think it was the way that I looked' you know? Then a few months later I met somebody who was on the cast and they were like 'no that show, they only wanted white people' but it would have been a problem if they had put it in like advert to say they only want white people because the audience is elderly Afrikaans people so they didn't want that. They didn't want to lose their loyalty there by now introducing black people but apparently now they've decided to change their angle because obviously eventually those people are going to die you know?*

It would appear that for both Dineo and Boitumelo, women, are judged on their appearances, using criteria that have been made invisible to them. The main exclusion characteristics seem to be based on 'race' and gender rather than their knowledge of the English language, especially and ironically by Afrikaners; their efforts at work often misrecognised by this group of individuals. Terreblanche (2012) provides an historical reason for this misrecognition in the form of the 'poor white problem' and naturalized gender and race roles.

*Phuthanang: I think it's sad, because I think it's not just about English, it's about being black and not being able to speak English. Because if there's a white French guy the dynamics are different. Ja, so I don't think we've advanced that far. I think it has a lot to do with the colour of your skin. Even amongst the white South Africans, English and Afrikaans speaking, there's a difference in their culture and their interpretation of English and how they speak it. But they are more accepting of Afrikaans people who can't speak English than they would be accepting of a black person who doesn't speak English - even though the differences are similar - especially in a South African context. I haven't seen many black people who can't speak fluent English who are at a level equal to Afrikaners who can't speak English. The Afrikaners are still slightly - maybe it's the function of them being absorbed earlier, or being here longer, but they disrespect you if you don't know how to speak English. That's what it is.*

Phuthanang highlights that the issue of race remains the main criteria for success in the workplace. If you are white, despite your background, you remain at an advantage. The issue of language is secondary and only applies to black people. English does carry cultural and linguistic capital but its effects are limited. The use (and abuse) of highlighting these markers consistently in conspicuous and inconspicuous ways has led to traumatic experiences in the work place.

*Kholofelo: A lot of shame. I was a bit, but I'm not a, I'm not a crier, but I was really, really sad and I was, I was feeling very - every day my confidence was going away and then one day I think it was like the 4th of September or something I had a complete meltdown. I packed my stuff, booked a plane and I went home and like I'd completely just broke down. Then I emailed my boss and I was like 'I'm not coming*

*back to work, I do apologise for it being so abrupt I just didn't realise how much all of this was affecting me'. The corporate culture wasn't really for; I was basically three evils in one: black, female and like I'm speaking too well. Ja so, so ja they, they didn't like me it was very difficult to make friends at work luckily I made friends where I'd lived in Worcester but I do think that a lot of people must have been pretty glad to see me go.*

The open racism and sexism practiced at the workplace can be traumatic for this "hinge generation" (Hoffman, 2004). This can lead to psychological costs of 'internalised oppression' (Pyke, 2010) and feelings of self-doubt, trauma and even psychological breakdowns. The 'three evils' of race, gender and accent (language), the markers of 'triple oppression' (Mama, 1995), are opertionalised in a manner that particularly alienates the women, especially in small rural places such as Worcester, which remain overtly racialised and openly practice segregation based on these markers. This is a legacy of the apartheid era, which aimed to ensure middle class jobs were guaranteed for white, male Afrikaners and working class jobs for others (Terreblanche, 2012). Black women entering these hostile working environments are expected to be 'cultural clones' (Essed, 2004). As a result, it becomes difficult for the women to form friendships with colleagues and it may destroy their confidence in themselves.

### 5.2. Women's sexuality and race

As highlighted above, our identities are defined by differences (Hall, 1996; Weedon 2004). At the same time, our identities are not fixed and as such we are able to identify with various markers of identity to varying degrees. For some 'hinge generation' women, the issue of identity resonated deeply with them, particularly in relation to the topics of skin colour and

hair. Unsurprisingly, in all eight interviews conducted, skin colour and hair were mentioned in relation to their sexuality, during and after the interview. These issues touch on language, whiteness, sexuality and gender.

Language, as has previously been mentioned, is a carrier of culture and influences our way of life. In addition, "cultural practices produce discourses" (Weedon, 2004, p. 6) and learning English for these women has meant learning the discourse of whiteness. Matlhodi highlights how the discourse of whiteness, as a racial identity, is unmarked, silenced and ahistorical (Butcholtz & Hall, 2005; Hale, 2010) meaning it is set as the norm.

> *Matlhodi: That's another thing that was associated with English - which people try to be white. I'm like, 'what's wrong with you? Why are you trying to be white? There's nothing wrong with being black. Look at Michael Jackson, he tried to be white and his nose fell off!' {Laughter}*

As Matlhodi comments above, a desire to conform to these norms (such as having typically white features, such as a pointy nose) may be expressed in extreme negation of the self. This deep seated need to change and want 'to be white' is rooted in historical representations of blackness as inferior. Amina Mama (1995) talks about how psychological research by black and white researchers in the 1930's and 1960, "repeatedly constructed a unitary black American subject: a self-hating person who rejected his (sic) own ethnic group" (p. 49). Therefore, through research, psychologists constructed false, negative and inferior images of blackness (Mama, 1995). In comparison to whiteness, blackness was made to be unappealing to black women.

> *Nonhlanhla: Like how we want long hair. We spend so much money, R3, 500 for a weave, really? You know what I mean to try and be something…and again I'm like*

*according to whose standards does having long hair actually make you beautiful? Who has decided or said that to say this is a standard or this is - are we trying to be white? Are we trying to just be beautiful? What are we trying to achieve actually? Are we trying to look good for guys and did guys say that they want women with long hair, European looking? Is that what they want? I don't know and I don't have answers.*

Nonhlanhla questions the need for 'long' (white) hair and to be 'European looking'. She comments on how much money black women are willing to spend to achieve western ideals of beauty. She shows an implicit understanding that certain ideals are constructed. According to Mama (1995) flowing long hair (amongst other white features) has been constructed as a desire for black women therefore, black women want to achieve these ideals because they have self-identified with whiteness (Erasmus, 2011). Learning English improves the socio-economic status of those who use it (Alexander, 1989) and a woman's hair style is a marker of her class (Erasmus, 2011) meaning long, straight 'white' hair is a necessary symbol of upward mobility. However, some black women appear to be rather defensive of their need to uphold western standards of beauty.

*Dineo: It's like a hair thing and I'm going to make this example. So people always think when you have a weave and I get this all the time, like 'oh these girls with the weaves and these girls with hair with chemicals and hair that's not natural', I'm not 100% African and this and this and I'm - but who the hell are you to tell me what African is, because I am not my hair. And I always say that to people that I may not, maybe have dreadlocks or natural hair or whatever, which is a personal style anyway that every person is allowed to choose, and if I feel like I look better with weave on or with short hair or with no hair or with a wig or whatever. It's a personal thing and it*

*has absolutely nothing to do with the core sort of part of who I am and what I represent as a human being, so no, I don't actually think language is a reflection of who we are as people.*

For Dineo, her hairstyle is not a reflection of the influence of western culture, or the insertion into the English language and whiteness. There are a number of ways that her comment could be analysed. One would make a comment on the hegemony of western ideals of sexuality on black women (Mama, 1995). This is true in South Africa, as Bhana and Pattman (1999) have observed, where female attractiveness in continues to be violently communicated through mediums of skin colour and texture. Nonhlahla's comment above reflects this point. It reflects how the dominant group (white people) whilst at school, managed to influence ideals of beauty. Through the normative experiences at schools (overt or covert) and in her attempt to fit in and belong, she unconsciously assimilates western ideals of beauty.

Alternatively, Dineo's comment could be viewed as more positive, alluding to new versions of blackness. She mentions that the English language (and therefore culture) does not impact on what she does as a person. Instead, her preference for weaves is a 'matter of style'. For Dineo, preference for a specific hairstyle is not "suggestive of deeper dimensions of personality" (Mama, 1995, p. 49). She asserts that it is simply about taste or style and about attractiveness. While we may critique this heterosexist positioning, this may be more positively interpreted as about finding fluidity (Ndlovu, 2012) between our layered, multiple identities (Mama, 1995;Ndlovu, 2012) as black English speaking women. Moving away from fixed, essentialist notions of black female identity, Dineo shows us, through hair, how black female identity should not be policed (Erasmus, 2011) and can be re-imagined. Whilst there

may be differences on issues of hair between the two women, there appear to be some agreement on issues of skin colour.

> *Dineo: You know how like in black communities they make you for like the lighter skinned is like the prettiest*

> *Nonhlanhla: Then as black women we tend to - for example some people are uncomfortable in their skin like for example the women that bleach their skins. It goes back for me to an identity thing. If you don't feel comfortable as a black women, and that might be shaped by your upbringing, language, might have played a role and see yourself more white as opposed to black or you have the perception that the women who are light skinned are supposedly more beautiful. That's how I see it*

The intersection between gender, race and language for Dineo and Nonhlanhla is captured by the issue of skin colour. Exposure to the English language as children came with exposure to whiteness and racist discourses in everyday life (Alexander, 2003). Black women's sexuality has been historically portrayed as 'crude' and 'pornographic' (Mama, 1995). For some black women (and black people in general), these negative, anti-black skin discourses have been internalised through the process of 'internalised oppression', filling them with feelings of self-disgust, self-doubt and a low self-esteem about their blackness (Pyke, 2010). White people having power and being the sociological majority (Charles, 2009) have normalised a light/white skin colour and this has meant that beauty has been 'violently articulated' (Bhana & Pattman, 2009) through the medium of skin colour. This means that through the use of violent means, black skin has been inferiorised in the minds of black people (and women in particular) and has made them want to go to extremes to change the

tone of their skins. This could explain the concerns/observations that Dineo and Nonhlanhla have made about the issue of skin colour.

The markers of hair and skin colour have been and continue to be used to identify people, race them, and label them as different or similar; included or excluded in everyday discourse. Through 'projective identification' (Clarke, 2008; Fanon, 2001; Mama, 1995), racists have forced negative feelings about themselves on to black subjects. This has, sometimes, led to 'internalised oppression' (Pyke, 2010) resulting in detrimental feelings towards black identity. In addition, through the process of identification, discourses of hair and skin colour have positioned women in particular ways that are linked to whiteness. Black women have been coached to "look as white as possible and repress their sexuality" (Mama, 1995, p. 150). In the South African context (and throughout the world) even where the majority of the people are black and may hold political power, these markers and representations are still defined by those who are considered the "sociological majority" (Charles, 2009, p. 154), because they control financial and cultural capital, namely white people. Consequently, black women's identity relating to hair and skin colour is an indication of how they feel about their blackness. In a patriarchal society in present day South Africa ,the male dominance of setting the standards of feminine attractiveness (Mama, 1995) have influenced the language that black women used about their own sexuality.

> *Nonhlanhla: I think how they've grown up, the family structure, the language; everything shapes you to become who you are as a woman. And whatever woman you become in your twenties and your thirties, chances are you were shaped way before you even realised it and that's why the language and everything will make you be that person. I think as a woman those would be some of the issues.*

Nonhlanhla highlights that ideals of womanhood are constructed by families and are communicated through language. Her outlook is that women's behaviours are shaped by our families (and their communities) to behave in particular ways. For many of the women, the learning of the English language brings with it constructed ideals of white beauty and sexuality.

### 5.3. Class, sexuality and belonging

Having been immersed in English language since childhood has had a powerful impact on their sense of themselves in adulthood. It has impacted on who they choose to befriend and with whom to have an intimate relationship. It has also impacted on how their families perceive them. Lastly, it has impacted on which communities they feel that they belong to. The women clearly demonstrate a state of ambivalence about the benefits from the 'advantages' of English and western culture. That is, whilst they may have gained materially from learning English and becoming westernised, the women experience a tension between their gendered roles as submissive girlfriends and lovers and progressive working women. As most interviewees are still single, dating for the women interviewed is a regular activity and a good English accent is key. It is a 'marker' of class. Phuthanang acknowledges this by stating:

> *Phuthanang: In some of the circles that I find myself in, it is a big thing, the ability to speak English. Certain girls wouldn't date guys who have got issues with grammar, English grammar. Ja, a number of my extended friends who be like, 'ja, this guy's English!' And it is a big thing and it's like, okay?*

Phuthanang has made this observation about her friends. Similarly, for Dineo, dating a man who cannot speaking English is not an option:

*Dineo: He spoke really bad English and like, I just couldn't! And when he typed, and texted messages to me, it was a problem. Like I could barely even understand what he was saying and I thought maybe if we speak on the phone all the time we will be better, because then it's different to reading, you know? And then I still had a bit of a horrible time and then I was just - then the sexual attraction wasn't there.*

The ability to communicate in a relationship is important. Some young women see English as a common language that can be used to bridge the communication divide. For example, if people who are in a relationship come from different ethnic backgrounds, knowledge in English creates a sense of commonness, an imagined community with English as the common language. However, English is particularly important as it indicates the person's level of education and ultimately, his ability to be a provider for a future family. Being able to speak English well positions men as 'providers' and in sense also makes them 'cultural clones' of white male providers who take care of their wives and children (Essed, 2004). The ability to speak English also determines their status in society and therefore their class and lastly, plays into the cultural normative experiences of gendered roles. If a man can speak English, and there is a mutual attraction, then it is more likely a relationship will develop, even beyond the race divide, as Nonhlanhla comments:

*Nonhlanhla: I've dated white guys and for me it's also the comfortability.*

For Nonhlanhla, language has given her the opportunity to be assimilated into western culture, find a sense of belonging and identification with people regardless of 'race'. This is important to note especially in the context of South Africa, where in the past laws were passed to prohibit interracial relationships and marriages (Nieftagodien, 2014). From an identity perspective, language is seen as a marker of inclusion and of class position for these

women. It is therefore a stronger indicator of belongingness than other markers such as 'race'.

### 5.4. Accent and ways identity can be redefined

The issue of how well you speak English is important. It marks where you got your education from. Accents differentiate those who went to English medium schools from others who went to Bantu/township schools which are considered inferior and people become ostracized by society because they are not able to articulate themselves in English as well as those with 'television mediated'(Ratele, 2013) accents. As a result, these accents falsely create an impression of someone is more superior in intelligence, education and status. These coconutish accents can also be a form of exclusion (or inclusion), marking individuals with these 'television mediated' accents as different from and alienated from their black compatriots. In this section we discuss the meaning of this as highlighted by the women.

#### 5.4.1. South African English and education

Accents are used to include and exclude people for certain groups. It can cause tensions between individuals who are considered 'coconuts' and those who do not have 'television mediated' accents.

> *Dineo: But in the same breath you could be hanging out with a friend…but maybe their articulation of that language is not so good, or whatever and they get treated so differently. And yet they have, they have earned their space, they have earned their right to be there, they have gotten distinctions, they've gotten university entrances… they just don't speak good English. But they get ostracised and they don't get treated in a way that you got treated*

Accent is used to create exclusions between people. In the extract above, the exclusion is primarily understood as a marker of class. This is because those who went to previously Bantu education, despite their intelligence, are treated differently from those who would have gone to more expensive English medium schools. This type of thinking is a relic of the apartheid system that created language divisions on notions of hierarchy, where English was preferred over other indigenous languages (Alexander, 1989). As a result, English spoken with a 'Bantu accent' is considered inferior and therefore its speakers are marked as such. English spoken with a 'white' accent is superior.

> *Mathlodi: I think because of the accent and the way I speak, it comes across as more refined and so-called polished. Like someone else who comes and says: 'Ah, wena [you], ah you went to school in Diepkloof!', you know? So you have your Bantu, or so-called Bantu, accent and it's still not polished enough and you're being associated with not being learned enough, unfortunately. And it's not the case! Just because you pronounce it differently, or we have different accents, doesn't mean jack*[6]*!*

This difference in accent is even picked up inter-generationally by the young women's families. Their parents appear to value a good accent because it symbolizes a good education and class progression. Accents present the opportunities to "propel subjects along different social and political trajectories" (Painter, 2008, p.175).

> *Matlhodi: What we have, our parents dreamed of. And they made means for us to get what we have and to be where we're at. How we speak, our parents dreamed of. Sometimes my mom, like if these telesales people call, and I'm with my parents and I'd speak English, and they will even reduce the volume, just to listen to me speak.*

[6] Slang for anything

*And I'll speak and speak and they go 'Hey, my child, your English has gone beyond coming out of your nose, it's coming out of your ears!'*

What our parents 'dreamed of' appear to be the 'television mediated' accents. In the case of Matlhodi, her accent is considered so good that they comment that it's "coming out of her ears". This speaks to the 'linguistic capital' (Bourdieu, 1991) that a good standardised accent will have for children who have attended (white) government schools. This is in contrast to many of the women's parents who would have attended Bantu education schools in townships due to the apartheid system (Terreblanche, 2012). This would have resulted in them being excluded from jobs that ensured class progression.

*Nonhlanhla: I think I must look at it from a generational perspective because I actually think there is a difference. I find that I'll take my parents for example. My parents went to Bantu schools. Their English sounds completely different to someone who went to a model C school. You can definitely hear the difference. So what I term good English is someone who sounds like me. For me that's what I consider good English.*

Possessing a good accent is considered aspirational and it is seen as a marker of good education. Amongst black people, a good education provided by government was impossible to attain during the apartheid period and racialised schooling meant their English was not learned from mother tongue speakers and never used in interaction with English speaking children. Therefore there will be a generational difference in accents between parents (or other adults) and children.

### 5.4.2. American English and identification

There is an interesting trend that the women began to identify during their education at English medium schools into their adulthood. Amongst black people there is a move away from Bantu education mediated accents not just to South African (white) English but to Americanised television mediated accents.

> *Matlhodi: Now everyone was trying to speak like we are American and there was a lot of twanging. The more you twang and the more you roll you tongue, the more you were associated with being able to speak the English language properly.*

She observed in her high school that individuals who use the American accent were more likely to be considered to speak 'proper' English and was considered a 'cool' way to express yourself in English. This is largely due to the domination of American media in South Africa. The influence of American television would make sense considering the popular use of television by those who want to learn English. The Americanisation of our accents intrigues some of the women interviewed.

> *Nonhlanhla: We just fall into the trap of thinking that looking or being a certain way or sounding a certain way…At which point do you make a conscious decision to say 'I'm going to start talking with an American accent'? Is it because you're not comfortable with the way you speak? Is it because you want to be American?*

For Nonhlanhla, the Americanisation of the English accent has a profound impact on identities, indicating attachment to American values. She is particularly intrigued by people who speak in an American accent and the questions she pose are linked to the idea that

people make a conscious decision to speak in an American accent. It seems fake or artificial to her. However, for Dineo it's not about deciding to speak with an accent.

> *Dineo: When you're forced into a moment where English is the only thing you have to go with, I think then you get into it and if it comes from a reference point of good literature or grammar or language skills or whatever. Then it just flows on its own and then you find you almost twang naturally, if that's what you're supposed to sound like, but I don't think it's a conscious decision necessarily. That's what I think, but I don't necessarily think 'oh I'm twanging' - no.*

Dineo makes the observation that black women begin to 'twang' (speak with an American accent) because it shows that they are educated. Dineo provides a possible answer to Nonhlahla's question. In addition to this, using an American accent is a way of being black that is associated with success. American media has projected images of successful black people, African-American celebrities, and to black South Africans, this is a new way of redefining their identities.

> *Andile: I still pick that up from women in particular, it's almost like the better it sounds, if they can say it better, then you know they are twanging and clicking. It almost makes them look almost like empowered -I don't know. I think I suffer from overanalysing things, but I think that is what I picked up. Like it makes them look better.*

For Andile, the use of an American accent amongst black women seems to allow women to feel more in control of their lives. In many respects, this is a positive form of black identification. This could be due to the positive image of blackness that has been projected by some American television programmes, which provide particular kinds of positive role

models, for example Oprah Winfrey. The positive discourse surrounding American accents is overlaid by positive images about being a black person who is empowered, because black American actresses and actors are viewed as highly successful due to their celebrity status. These images and ideas were internalised by some of the women Andile observes, allowing them to progress in their work environments. The use of accent as a marker of identity shows how women (and people in general) can foreground sameness with these positive images of success (Ndlovu, 2012) as and when it is required.

### 5.5. Multilingualism and preserving links to the community

One particular woman has experienced a different approach to learning English whilst maintaining her indigenous languages from a young age. Matlhodi's family employed a multilingual approach, where they spoke Tswana, Zulu and English. She says:

> *Matlhodi: At home it was always Tswana and Zulu. So I'll get home and I remember I'd go 'Hello Dad' and he'd go 'Sawubona' ['Hello' in Zulu]. So he always forced me to speak our home language. He would say he has nothing against it, but he doesn't want me to lose who we are. So literally the only time I would speak English was when I'm doing reading with my mom, reading out loud to her.*

The need to preserve one's indigenous culture is apparent in her parent's generation. Similarly, Matlhodi's mother encouraged her to speak English only when doing homework and Tswana when speaking to her:

> *Matlhodi: I remember I'd go home and speak my loose, broken English and my mom would go, 'Nana, boa Setswana' which means 'Nana, speak Tswana.' Because she'd be like 'I don't know what you're saying'. Even if she did, I think it was her way of*

*saying we're going to stick to our home language and you'll speak English when you do homework and when you go to school.*

In the case of Matlhodi, both her parents encouraged her to learn all three languages at the same time. Matlhodi comes from a multicultural background where her father is Zulu and her mother is Tswana. The explicit intention of both of her parents was to ensure that she did not lose her connection with her cultures. This is because language is a carrier of culture and history (Wa Thiong'o'o, 2005). By ensuring that Matlhodi remains multilingual, she is able to learn about being African through the language. For example, positive virtues such as the ease that Africans communicate with each other (Biko, 2009), can be extracted from language. Importantly, positive attributes about blackness are passed on in African language.

What is interesting is that both parents did not discourage her from learning English. The common understanding was that there was a time and place for it – during homework and at school. Therefore, the encouragement of multilingualism provides an opportunity for a person to gain access to "multiple cognitive and problem solving skills and more general benefits of being less tied to a particular world view" (Burman, 2008, p. 199).

For children who come from disadvantaged backgrounds, the ability to learn the dominant language gives them access to better educational and employment opportunities (Burman, 2008). In our context, English is the dominant language that the women learnt to achieve the highest level of education, even though their home language would have been different. This shows how at the same time children can hold multiple positions of different identities. Matlhodi is able to tap into different identities through different languages and also in different places, to varying degrees. This is the advantage of multilingualism. But, in as much as a person may gain by having the resources of multiple identities, s/he may feel

'unanchored' and too fragmented. In other words, they might not feel a sense of belonging to any specific culture, for example.

Despite the fact that some families did not put an emphasis on retaining multilingualism when participants were children, as adults there is a high level of concern around the preservation of indigenous languages. For Matlhodi, this will merely be a continuation of what she learnt from her parents, because she knows that it is possible.

> *Matlhodi: That's why I will continue to speak Zulu and when I do have children I'll do what my parents did. When we're at home I'll speak Zulu and Tswana to them. The only time I'll speak English to them is when we're doing homework and when I'm teaching them how to speak English, because of school. I'll encourage it, but I'll always encourage them to speak to me as their parent, in our home language. Just to preserve it and make sure it doesn't die out. English will never die, I think.*

There is a clear understanding of the link between language and culture. There is a real concern of what the loss of an indigenous language will mean for future generations and their culture and identities.

> *Dineo: I will be different with my own kids, I don't know. But, and I've literally seen with my sisters and my brothers who have kids, maintain that and for their own reasons.*

> *Nonhlanhla: I would like my kids to know their language - for me it's important. I find it a bit embarrassing if I am black and I can't hear a word of my own mother tongue. It would bother me because languages are kind of a sense of who we are and where we really come from. I feel like we are losing a bit by bit of ourselves as we are*

*engaging in this English language. But it's a catch 22 because what do you do? What's the trade off?*

Preservation of indigenous languages for the future generations is topical for our women. It is interesting that they speak into the future and into their future roles as mothers.

*Phuthanang: On Power FM this one time a lady called in, in tears. She took her kid to a black primary school, I mean crèche, with that whole "ke batla ba tsebe Sesotho[7]" and in the child's first year of formal schooling, grade one, he failed. And he failed because he didn't understand English. And she was distraught, because now, you know how black people are, she is trying to do these remedial classes and she knows ngoana oa hae ha se setlaela[8] but she's trying to do the Afro black thing. And she feels like she's failed her kid - it's insane! And with us, I've got a guy friend, a very close guy friend of mine whose has three kids, the older one about five, and I was impressed in how she spoke Sepedi relatively well. So they've got - and they've got strong linkages with their family in Limpopo. So it's like twice a year the kids go there, like he used to, for a full two weeks. At least he has an optional[9] dad and he can also speak Sepedi and he was in a model C school. His parents were also quite hectic. So, I don't have my base of my Sesotho, Sepedi or Setswana is not good and I don't have linkage with any of our rural family. {Sigh} So I think that's the one thing I wonder about.*

[7] I want her/him to know how to speak Sesotho

[8] Her child is not stupid

[9] Meaning present father

All the women share a great concern about what will happen to future generations. Due to their ages and cultural expectations of them having children, the women have begun to imagine their roles as mothers and what they will do to ensure the preservations of their mother tongues. Within the context of South Africa, the role of women as nurturers is well defined because of the nature of apartheid and patriarchy (Burman, 2008; Terreblanche, 2012). Before they even have children, they are already trying to find solutions to eliminate the sense of loss they are currently feeling about not interacting frequently in their indigenous language. For them, English is not the problem; rather it is the loss of their mother tongue that is an issue. Multilingualism is key to ensuring some form of preservation of indigenous languages and for children not to suffer a sense of loss. One woman sees the arts as another form that can be explored to preserve indigenous culture.

> *Boitumelo: Then I had the challenge of I actually have to listen to the music to be able to compose it so that's like what I've been doing this year and next year I'm just going to be volunteering and getting more into that indigenous space and ja because I thought it's a, it's an important thing for me because I saw with my niece and I was like I think I really want my kids to be able to speak vernac. Ja, that's something that bothers me a lot so ja next year I'm starting that indigenous thing.*

Preservation of language is linked to cultural activities. The link between language and cultural activities such as music is key to ensuring the conservation of black culture is not surprising for Boitumelo. As a musician she had identified a way to preserve indigenous languages through cultural activities. For the women, it is important to preserve their indigenous cultures for their children, but none of the women envisage choosing not to teach and assimilate their children into English culture. English is firmly established for them as the

language of economics and cultural globalisation and it is considered the language of national unity in South Africa (Baldwin & Painter, 2004).

### 5.6. English in context

Whilst their experiences of being exposed to the English language and western culture (in particular media/popular Americanisation) has had some negative effects on the women such as losing their mother tongue and culture, eroding their sense of worth as black women, the women all comment on the advantages of knowing English in present day South Africa. These advantages, according to the women, will ensure English is predominantly spoken in future.

#### 5.6.1. The hegemony of English in South Africa

The women interviewed are very much aware that English is revered in the communities from which they come.

> *Matlhodi: So I think that's… English will always be the queen's language and will always be glorified, and I think that's why people aspire to speak it more, to this day. Now, it's the American English and now they're twanging and {sigh} - ja, interesting times*

There is an acknowledgement of the hegemony of English, even though this saddens Matlhodi. She releases a sigh after her acknowledgment of this. The reason she offers is because of our colonial and apartheid past. In South Africa "English…is both admired and despised" (Herbert, 1992, p. 14). This is because, in South Africa, English was always opposed to Afrikaans which was seen as the language of oppression (Nieftagodien, 2014), often erasing the colonial history of English (Crampton, 2014). During apartheid, Afrikaans

and English were upheld as superior to indigenous languages and the languages of education and progress. This was in an effort to make black people feel like they were second class citizens, especially during apartheid (Nieftagodien, 2014). These effects continue even today as Dineo reflects:

> *I still think Ntebaleng, that even although I can sit here and I will say a, English comes as the only measure, da da da da, I think because it's been engrained in who we are as people, people feel a bit insecure, or people feel a certain way if they don't speak really good English and confidence, their confidence or esteem levels are never really all that great because this is what society has said. It's sad you know, you can't, you've got to be really good at speaking English or at least you've got to try and get better at it, or you can't walk into a room and express yourself in your own language to a board of people or a MANCO [Management Committee] session, you know what I mean?*

Colonial and apartheid ideologies of racism and class inequalities persist in communities through language. People lose self-esteem or confidence, affecting their minds and bodies, because of their lack of knowledge of English. Because English is considered superior and indigenous languages are considered inferior, this inferiority is internalised by people (Wa Thiong'o'o, 2005). This is because of the high status that English has within the global market and within South Africa, and the cultural capital it possesses (Throsby, 1999).

> *Phuthanang: The thing about English is that most of us have been indoctrinated into thinking that it's superior. So whether I'm talking crap or not, the fact that I'm firstly there in the capacity of caregiver and speaking English fluently, everybody just sits up and listens. So it gives me that level of respect which I have to very sensitive and*

*responsible with. But again, they will listen to me when I'm speaking on a podium, but during break nobody will come speak to me. You're like that Holy Grail.*

As much as English is revered and their ability to speak it advantages these young women considerably, it still alienates them from their communities. Phuthanang comments on how she is considered "that Holy Grail" because she speaks English so well. Her community find it hard to relate to her on a more personal level and will avoid contact with her, given the opportunity. This is despite them (the community) revering her and considering her highly knowledgeable. Phuthanang simply attributes this reverence to English being considered superior to indigenous languages. This is another way that the majority of South Africans have 'internalised oppression' and have taken on an 'inferiority complex' about their language and culture. Therefore, it would appear that most people will want to learn to speak English more so that they too can gain some cultural and linguistic capital. However, the poor will be the ones that ensure the survival of indigenous languages (WaThiong'o, 2005); this is despite their aspirations to speak English. This is because, despite the government's efforts to teach English in government schools (Baldwin & Painter, 2004), "the language of real life" (Wa Thiong'o, 2005, p.16) for most South African working class citizens is still conducted in indigenous languages. Therefore, despite the hegemony of English in South Africa, class is a critical determinant of the survival of indigenous languages because most South Africans are still trapped in poverty (Terreblanche, 2012).

### 5.6.2. Globalisation

For the first time in history, English appears to have become a global language, not just spoken amongst the elite, but also on a massive scale, threatening many other languages

(Hamel, 2003). Therefore, it should not come as a surprise that some of the women interviewed felt advantaged by speaking in English.

> *Matlhodi: I'm positive towards it, because you can better understand the world, as the world is in English. Every language is translated into English. You can find an English word for 90% of the words in the world. So that's why I'm positive towards it, because I can go to China and I'll struggle a bit, but we will both know how to say 'hello'. And we'll both know how to throw in the words in English. He can speak Mandarin; I can speak Zulu, whatever. But English is still the most commonly used language and that's why I'm positive towards it.*

Again, the main advantage of English being a global language is due to the economic benefits. This is the point both Phuthanang and Andile make below. They also show an aversion to the use of indigenous language in the education system and feel that it would disadvantage students globally.

> *Phuthanang: Because with globalisation and English being a commercial language, you would be disadvantaged if you don't understand it and you cannot have an intellectual conversation in English. I'm saying I'm aggrieved that I didn't do Sesotho or Tswana or Sepedi throughout my life, but I don't think I should have done maths in Tswana.*

> *Andile: All across the world. That's what I mean. That's like the medium language that is used. My worry is that though how do you communicate when you get a job. That is my biggest worry. Let me just give you an example to explain when I was in tertiary the first, second, and third year, the first year there were 50 in the class. It was a big class. By my final year there were 12 of us. Kids had dropped out, not*

*because they were stupid because of the language. They didn't understand English. These kids went to Zulu education, and then in your in tertiary and everything is in English, they had dropped out. I promise you when we were in our final year there were 12 of us. We were less than 20, because all the kids failed, dropped out because they couldn't connect the dots.*

Phuthanang highlights that English is a global commercial and education language and Andile believes it is the language that will secure a better education and a job. Both women also show commitment to being educated in English, even in tertiary institutions. This is because the language that individuals are educated in is likely to be the language that will be used in different environments, even at a global level (Mackey, 2003). Since the women are educated in English, they are more likely to be speaking in English and maintain the dominance of the language.

Most languages of education, especially at the highest level, tend to be few and European, with English being one of them. Knowledge that is created and captured in books, especially in South Africa, is most likely to be in English and Afrikaans. This is an issue for the survival of many languages as "it may indeed be the readers more than the speakers who prolong the vitality of the language" (Mackey, 2003, p. 69). This appears to threaten the continued use of indigenous languages. Mackey's (2003) statement about written language surviving ahead of non-written indigenous languages seems to contradict Wa'Thiong'o's (2005) statement that the poor will ensure the survival of indigenous languages. However, perhaps both positions may have relevance if we link the forms of linguistic survival to class.

As previously discussed, the working class's "language of real life" (Wa Thiong'o, 2005, p.16) is dominated by the use of indigenous languages. However, participation in the spaces

of the formal economy is only possible through a command of written standardised forms of particular languages (in South Africa, English). For this reason, Mackay (2003) claims that it is the written language that individuals will read that will survive, as it is text that preserves and transmits knowledge (and hence access to economic and other forms of power) across generations. Written forms of language can be stored for long period of time, whilst oral forms of language can be 'lost' because they are not recorded. But yet, language is constantly changing, regardless of whether it is written or orally communicated, because it carries culture and value systems (Wa Thiong'o, 2005) which change over time. The question of the preservation of languages is thus related to contexts of use and forms of social value.

Some of the women link the global dominance of the English to colonisation. In their statements they allude to the fact that the new global language will be Mandarin, due to the commercial dominance of China presently.

> *Phuthanang: Because they colonised us. So, you see, this is the old age question: do you bow or do you go with the grain and change as you go along? And you need to be realistic to your current needs, that if you go to London with Sesotho and nothing else, you'll not get - let's not kid ourselves. There's nothing that you will do there, without the double effort of getting an interpreter and trusting the interpreter to interpret what you're saying and all sorts of other things. So we want to spread your wings as far as possible. So ja, start it now, start teaching it, but understand that you need to do it on parallel, until you have conquered more of the world, so that they can start learning your language. The Chinese are big on that. They've understood that Mandarin is not understood anywhere else, so all their kids understand English and they go conquer everywhere else, and what do they do when they get there? They teach other kids Chinese. You know what I mean?*

There is an acknowledgement of the role of English as the hegemonic language presently. Due to the global domination of English, the suggested approach to ensuring the country's languages become useful and productive in different contexts, is to follow a bilingual/multilingual strategy in education. There is some acknowledgment by the women that the monopolistic hold of English will take a long time to change; however, this is not impossible.

### 5.6.3. English used to communicate across cultures

There are several advantages to speaking English and the women are all benefiting from them. For some the advantages of speaking English are related to communication.

> *Dineo: Yes, it will open up doors for you, yes a lot more people will want to listen to you speak because they relate better to you and they don't have to struggle with words you're saying and you're not stumbling over your words,*

Dineo believes that the ability to communicate to a wider group is an obvious advantage of English. This is because many of the indigenous languages would only enable you to speak to a particular community that talk the language or understand it. It is important to have the ability to be able to communicate not only with people of your race, ethnicity and nationality. English enables you to 'tap' into other experiences that connect you with people (Ndlovu, 2012). This creates a greater circle of belonging and possibly, some would argue, may be and effective tool for black consciousness and unity.

> *Mathlodi: If there is someone in the room who can't understand it, let's not make them feel like and outcast. Let's speak a language that we all can understand, and if it*

*happens that you do jump into Zulu or Tswana, it's okay, just explain it then to the person in a language that they will understand*

The idea is to enable people from different backgrounds to feel included. The reason for this is to promote understanding.

*Phuthanang: I do feel that there are advantages. I think especially in South Africa there are a lot more people that speak English than those who don't; so one can interact with a whole lot more people.*

She further comments on the flexibility and range of the language, acknowledging that this may be her sense because of how it feels like 'her' language

*Phuthanang: I don't know if it is because I've grown up understanding the language, but I feel it has more words to express what I'm thinking. Obviously it's a vocabulary issue, but more things are relevant to what I want to say.*

Phuthanang's view is related to the attitude that indigenous languages are not as advanced as European languages (Alexander, 2005) and therefore, there are not enough words to comprehensively express complex ideas in the spaces in which she lives. English is seen as the language of science and the language of work.

*Matlhodi: So, it will take you far. English will take you very far and it's basic, a basic requirement in any field. Even your CV will be in English. You can't pick up a phone looking for a job, speaking to a receptionist, and speak Zulu, unless that person can speak Zulu, and then you'll naturally switch to Zulu. But as soon as you get there, it will be in English. Maybe in the interview, as it goes, if you've got people who can*

*speak your language, then you can jump here and there into your language, but for recording purposes, for procedure purposes, it will be English. That's why I think I'm positive towards it.*

English is the lingua franca of the corporate world. When people are looking to secure a job, English is the language that is used in documents and in interviews. This is because historically, in the South African context, English has always been the language of business (Terreblanche, 2012) and it carries cultural capital, giving status to its users (Throsby, 1999). As a result, the ability to communicate in English at work ensures you secure a job and material possessions (Alexander, 2003).

*Andile: There are advantages to English. Obviously with the fact you can communicate to wider group - ja, a wider group. Then you can communicate and I think also with opportunities. Opportunities you get offered in life. For example go for interviews, if you can't speak you are not going to go to a corporate and be interviewed and expect to speak Zulu, or your own language, you aren't going to go far. I think those are advantages - job, salary house.*

In companies, the ability to speak English is essential; it is a signifier of your education and your ability to communicate with colleagues and clients. Vernacular languages will not help you secure work. Once you have secured work, class mobility is possible.

*Andile: My life is different because I think the education helped me. And my lifestyle - I can afford to live. I can afford to buy a house and have a car. I am supposedly the middle class.*

Andile ambivalently comments on her identity as being middle class. This is not a surprising finding as it correlates with findings from research conducted by Khunou and Krige (2013). They found that in relation to black people's ambivalence or an aversion to being classified as middle class, history matters. Due to our racialised past, middle class was by definition raced and white. However, because Nonhlanhla can speak English, she could get a good education at a tertiary institution and therefore was able to secure a job at a major corporate in South Africa, she has access to assets, although this remains a precarious due to the financial and emotional indebtedness of South African black people, and thus can be labelled middle class. While it is not only the black middle class that is highly indebted – debt is a typical middle class characteristic (Terreblanche, 2012) black emerging middle class families are more indebted due to generational histories. In addition, there is both a global and national push to build an economy that is built on consumerism, therefore making different forms of credit easily accessible to the black middle class.

Lastly, because of the material gains to which English speakers have access, they are respected by the communities from which they come. As highlighted above, for the majority of South Africans, who are asset-less because of their working class status or unemployment, respect (and sometimes envy) is given to those who are perceived to be financially well off. As Phuthanang comments:

> *Phuthanang: So, I'm respected for my opinion, but not on cultural stuff - like somebody's got a banking issue, they call me.*

She is aware that concerning cultural matters, people do not solicit her opinion. She does, however get respect on financial matters. This respect given to her can be due to the

fact that she works for a bank. However, she still believes that her family respects her for her opinions on other matters, as she comments:

> *Phuthanang: I think for my family, I think I'm more respected and I don't know if it's an English thing or because I'm like that … but my opinion is more respected. And I deliver that opinion mostly in English. So I don't know if there is a relation?*

She ponders whether there is a possible correlation between the level of respect and speaking English. This is possibly because of the fact that she has been able to secure a job in the financial sector. This is a result of the cultural capital of English. Her knowledge is recognized is some spaces and not others, but it does carry back into the home space. Conversely, within the work place, knowledge of indigenous languages and culture do not hold the same weight. This inequality between English and western knowledge and indigenous language and knowledge is apparent in different spaces.

### 5.7. Conclusion

English has opened many opportunities for the women, experiencing upward mobility by ensuring they secure a good education and consequently a good job. However, within the work environment there remain challenges that intersect around issues of race, gender and language. The women recalled how they were often expected to be 'cultural clones' (Essed, 2004) of white men in the working environment. These expectations often brought about traumatic experiences for the women as they internalised their oppression (Pyke, 2010) leading to nervous breakdowns (or 'nervous conditions') at work. These issues can all be contextualised within the frame of South Africa's colonial and apartheid past. Continuities with the past are further performed through the women's perceptions of their own raced and gendered sexualities. Issues of hair and skin colour, first experienced during their schooling

careers, continue to plague the women. The women seem to have internalised western, patriarchal ideals of beauty determined by (white) men (Mama, 1995) and hair (and skin colour) are seen as markers of social mobility (Erasmus, 2011). However, many of the participants talk of choice and active fluidity in matters of the body and accent as empowering, redefining negative black self-images in positive ways. Some participants explicitly stated that their romantic partners must speak English to ease communication between different cultures and as a sign of upward mobility. Despite their own middle class status, the women continue to position men as providers for themselves and their (future) children. The participants were indifferent about English for their children. Whilst preservation of culture is important for the women, they remain committed to using the English language for their children simply because it has enabled their class mobility; it is a globalised language and it has become the common language of communication in the circles to which they feel they belong. For these reasons, the women are positive about using English as their primary language, as they contemplate their futures.

# 6. CHAPTER 6: CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of the research was to explore issues of identity amongst young, English speaking black middle class women, with a specific focus on belonging, alienation and the impact their use of English has had on their relationships with family, friends and their communities. The exploration began with an analysis of childhood histories, where we began to identify the specific routes through which the families of the young women embraced new schooling opportunities for their children to learn English.

We now have a (albeit small) black middle class that predominately communicates in English. This group of individuals can be defined as the 'hinge generation' (Hoffman, 2004) because their parents lived through apartheid but they did not. Despite the clear advantages of being born into a democratic post-apartheid society, they nonetheless speak of a loss that is experienced as alienation from indigenous culture, which is carried through the mother tongue, and alienation from communities of kin and wider black society. However, this black middle class, due to its exposure to the English language and culture, have created new forms of identification and belonging.

## 6.1. Tracing childhood histories

The research revealed that insertion into the English was multigenerational for these families that some of the grandmothers of these young women were highly qualified individuals for their time. Poetry and reading were used as mechanisms to insert their grandchildren into English culture. Grandmothers were found to be very strict and corrected their grandchildren's English when they spoke. The parent generation, through the influence

of their mothers were also assimilated into the English culture and ensured their children were assimilated too. In the dying phase of apartheid, schooling was opened up and deracialised, and these families were uniquely poised to take advantage of these opportunities for their children. Both Grandmothers and parents were found to be indifferent to the participants learning their indigenous languages. Perhaps there was a fear that being multilingual would interfere with the assimilation into the English language, even though bi-/multilingualism can be used as a transitioning tool in assimilatory societies to learn the English language (Burman, 2008). It was found that English carries cultural and linguistic capital (Painter, 2008; Throsby, 1999) and it is seen as a unifying language for the democratic South Africa (Baldwin & Painter, 2004). Some parents did, however, attempt to preserve their indigenous cultures and languages for their children and tried to ensure their daughters maintained an indigenous African 'linguistic identity' (Sung-Yul Park, 2012), retaining a sense of belonging in their community. It is clear that the parents experienced a tension between wanting the best for their children and not wanting them to forget their indigenous cultures. Sometimes this frustrated the participants who had just acquired a new linguistic identity that they wanted to gain proficiency in and gain further membership into a new 'imagined community' (Anderson, 2006; Croucher, 2004; Sung-Yul Park, 2012). This sometimes alienated the participants from their communities. However, multilingualism would be valued in different spaces, giving the participants multiple contexts of belonging.

Post-apartheid South Africa provides us with an historical moment to explore how identities are being redefined through language. The hinge generation's (Hoffman, 2004) narratives enable social scientists to explore how historical identities of blackness are being redefined and constructed within discourse and why intersections of race and language are so pertinent here and now. Through research, we have the ability to analytically and critically

provide explanations of these intersections. In this way we promote a greater understanding of the fragmentary nature of identity construction.

The findings also show that there was also a difference in the assimilation to English between siblings and therefore a difference in identity within the same generation. Older siblings would have not had the opportunity to go to model C schools and in some instances harboured resentment toward their siblings, by contrast, younger siblings were found to be assimilated more quickly into English culture.

This intergenerational experience of learning language also highlights the ambivalence experienced by the families of the women. Whilst the parents and grandparents of the women were saddened by the loss of the mother tongue by their daughters (and their siblings), they equally encouraged their daughters (and their siblings) to be monolingual and use English as their only means of communication. For the grandmother and parent generations, the hope of class mobility was a key driver for them. As they were in most instances, the first generation of black children in model C schools in the context of a still racially segregated society, their race entailed moving away from black spaces to white suburbs This group of participants would be 'pioneers' in their own right and could be called the 'hinge generation' (Hoffman, 2004) because they benefited from their parents struggles. It was found that there were typically three levels of transitioning for the participants. The first was a transition from rural to urban areas, changing their membership and sense of belonging (Croucher, 2004) simply through geography. The participants became aware of the difference between a rural and an urban identity. The second transition was specifically concerning language, where the participants slowly stopped using their indigenous languages, using more and more English. The dominance of English alienated the participants from indigenous language speakers in their families and communities and shaped them as members of a new

imagined community of English speakers. The third transition in parallel with these first two shifts was marked by interacting with children from different 'races'. For some, this interaction with white people would be highly traumatic, wherein for the first time their bodies would be 'marked' as different through violence experienced on the playground. This would also be the first time participants became positioned as racial subjects and aware of their racialised identities.

Names, for the participants are illustrative of the tensions between language, culture and recognition in white spaces. The participants recall how, as girls, their identities were devalued due to the mispronunciation of their names. The children were subjected to 'projective identities' (Fanon as cited in Clarke, 2008; Mama, 1995) and this worked to build inferiority complexes within them. This meant that for some children, they had to resort to using Anglicised names as alternatives. This challenged the participants' identities further and their identities were redefined by the teachers and white schoolmates.

The participants recall different processes that were followed to assimilate them into English. Firstly, as children, the use of their indigenous language in the school setting was often punished; this is despite being in a post-apartheid environment (Baldwin & Painter, 2004). Secondly, English was learnt, used and practiced in different settings such as on their way back home in taxis, at home with their parents or caregivers, when they did their homework, reading, and whilst watching television. As children, the participants' use of English in these different context shows that they were buying into the idea that it was inferior to speak their indigenous languages and they were in the process of 'colonising their minds' (Wa Thiong'o, 2005).

Experiences of racism on the playground continue to influence the women's identities in the present. The women recall how they were othered on the playground and how violence

was often employed to position them as black and inferior. Games on the playground were used to 'fix' their identities (Ndlovu, 2012). This made the girls become even more aware of their skin colour, giving them an identity crisis, causing them to question their blackness and internalise meanings of whiteness. Reflections of these traumatic experiences are recalled and still experienced through the process of identification. However, some of the women felt that exposure to whiteness allowed them to be creative with their identities, where they "psychologically connected" (Ndlovu, 2012, p. 144) with the other and new versions of themselves.

As the women were becoming more assimilated into English and whiteness at school, they were similarly alienating themselves from their communities. This was mainly because of apartheid spatial planning that forced the children to spend much of their time travelling between black and white spaces. This alienation was also felt because of the difference in education and use of the English language, which affected their accents and 'marked' them as different to the English 'Bantu accent' used in the townships. It was also found that at times, some of the women had internalised whiteness and had begun actively distancing themselves from their community and using the language of othering. Due to this sense of alienation and distancing the women began to feel towards their communities, they sought a sense of belonging within an imagined community of black English speakers

### 6.2. Present identities and hopes for the future

The key finding of the study was the ambivalence felt by the women concerning issues of language and identity. The women experienced a tension between the perceived sense of loss of their mother tongue and culture and being assimilated into the English culture. This further alienated the women from the families and communities they came from. However, the women continue to reap the reward of learning and using the English language

in their daily lives. Due to the cultural capital of English, the women have experienced a form of class mobility that they would have otherwise not have had, if they were not taught in English at model C schools.

The women spoke about their current experiences and began imagining how they would tackle identification in the future, possibly as parents themselves. This began with admitting that through a good education, the women have experienced upward mobility and are currently employed and have high incomes. This positions them as the black middle class. However, the participants felt that they had to constantly compromise their femininity to 'climb the career ladder' at work. Essentially the women were expected to become 'cultural clones' clones of middle class white men (Essed, 2004). The 'triple oppression' (Mama, 1995) of race, gender and accent were often used as markers of exclusion for the women to progress in their careers. This often led to traumatic racist experiences at work and psychological costs of 'internalised oppression' (Pyke, 2010) leading to feelings of self-doubt, low self-esteem and sometimes even culminating in nervous breakdowns.

Racialised questions of sexuality and gender, in particular, skin colour and hair, and were of particular importance for the women. Due to their experiences at school and in their work environments, which are both white spaces, the women were aware of how whiteness had become the unmarked and silenced norm (Butcholtz and Hall, 2005; Hale, 2010). Together with language and accent, western standards of beauty are used as markers of social mobility. These markers intersect gender, language and class. Some women appeared defensive of these definitions of beauty and embraced them as matters of personal choice or natural, sexual preference. This may be read as indicative of internalised oppression or could be viewed more positively as building new versions of blackness. Erasmus (2011) warns against policing women's identities (through the politics of hair for example) as they make

new, layered, multiple identities, layered identities that extend definitions of gender, as a social construct, into a greater understanding of female sexuality.

Language also had an influence on which the women chose to have relationships with. The ability to speak English was found to be critical in finding a male partner. This enabled communication but importantly, also ensured the class mobility of the men, positioning them as providers for the women and their (future) children. The women thus showed an acceptance of traditional gendered roles despite being upwardly mobile working women.

The women found that more than just their fluency in English, their accents played an important role in their identities. Some were positioned as coconuts because the spoke using 'television mediated accents' (Ratele, 2013). However, given the context of attending government school, this gave the women 'linguistic capital' giving them the opportunity to propel their social and political trajectories in different ways (Painter, 2008). In addition, their Americanised accents allowed the women to self-identify with positive images of black American women such as Oprah Winfrey.

The women expressed differing opinions about the importance of multilingualism and how it preserved links with their communities. Some women recognised its importance mainly because they had been raised in multilingual environments themselves and suggested the possibility of using the arts as a vehicle to preserve indigenous cultures and enrich our cultural world and that of future generations. However, some showed a level of ambivalence towards multilingualism, citing other women's traumatic experiences of teaching their children indigenous languages.

The women feel that English has many advantages and do not seem anxious about the hegemony of English in South Africa, from which they of course benefit. The first advantage

of speaking English for the women is its cultural capital. Secondly, English allows people from different cultures to communicate with each other. Lastly, English is the global language of commerce and therefore it is essential for social mobility. It would appear that the women have managed to mostly foreclose the negative perceptions of whiteness and the English language and express more fluid and creative versions of themselves as black, English speakers.

Ultimately, the issue of language amongst this group of women presents tensions between belonging and alienation. Whilst the women may have suffered a sense of loss and alienation because of their immersion into English and western culture, they also express new forms of belonging in the construction of an imagined community of English speaking black middle class women.

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# APPENDICES

Appendix 1

*Key questions to be asked:*

- How are the identities of young black women impacted by speaking English as a primary language?
- What are their experiences of belonging to or differentiation (alienation) from their families and communities?
- Tell me about how you came to use English as your preferred language?
- Do you feel discriminated against because you are a female who prefers to speak English?
- Tell me about a racist experience you may have gone through because you prefer speaking in English?
- How do you experience class issues and privileges in relation to others?
- How do you feel about the use of English and the advantages that it has given you?

Appendix 2

University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

***Ethics Application Form* for *Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC Non-Medical)***

(Revised December 2012)

Use this form in applying for clearance of research involving human participants

Instructions

1. Completed applications must be submitted to the Research Office approximately three weeks before each of the monthly meetings. The deadlines are available on the Wits Research website
   http://www.wits.ac.za/academic/research/ethics.htm/7075/ethics.html
2. Applications must be submitted as hard copies, one of which must be an original (see checklist below for numbers of copies required). Electronic submissions will not be accepted.
3. All submissions and materials must be typed. Handwritten submissions are **NOT** acceptable.
4. Incomplete applications will **NOT** be considered.
5. Applications will **NOT** be processed if signatures from applicant or supervisor are missing.
6. Photocopying should be done 'back-to-back' to save paper.
7. Glossy and fancy binding is **NOT** necessary.
8. Necessary supporting documents (e.g. *Participant Information Sheet, Consent Form*, copies of instruments), must be stapled to the *Ethics Application Form.*

**Complete this checklist to show what documents you have submitted.**

# Check list

**No. of copies required**

**For all research:**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Completed *Ethics Application Form* | |
| | Copies of the research proposal | |
| | Copies of proposed research instruments (e.g. questionnaires/interview schedules) | |
| | *Participant Information Sheet* (for each different sample group) | |
| | *Consent Form* [*Assent Form* for under 18s] (for participant's signature) (for each different sample group) | |

**Where applicable (Attach to this form):**

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Relevant permissions (from, e.g. company's HR department, National authorities such as Education, Correctional Services, etc.) or other legally required consent | |
| | Any other appropriate consent forms (e.g. consent forms for members of focus groups, consent forms (for video or photography), etc. | |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| | Guardian *Consent Form* (for participants under the age of 18) | |
| | Other (please specify) | |

Declaration

I recognise that it is my responsibility to conduct my research in an ethical manner according to Guidelines of the University of the Witwatersrand, according to any laws and/or legal frameworks that may apply, and according to the norms and expectations of my discipline.

In preparing this Application for Ethics Clearance form, I have consulted the ***Guidelines for Human Research Ethics Clearance Application/non-medical*** (available on this web site http://web.wits.ac.za/Academic/Research/Applications.htm) and have familiarised myself with the ethical guidelines specific to my discipline.

Signature

Name of researcher/applicant Ntebaleng Makgalemele

**1. Researcher's personal data**

| | |
|---|---|
| Surname: Makgalemele | Name: Ntebaleng |
| Title: Prof ☐ Dr ☐ Mr ☐ Ms ☐ Mrs ☐ Other: | |
| School: Psychology | |
| Staff / Student number: 0107380p | Full time ☐ Part time ☐ Staff ☐ |
| Your telephone(s): 072 204 7063/011 295 7127 | |
| Your Email: ntebalengm@nedbank.co.za / nmakgalemele1@gmail.com | |
| Name of Supervisor (if applicable): Jill Bradbury | |
| Supervisor's email address: Jill.Bradbury@wits.ac.za | |
| Supervisor's tel. number(s): 011 717 4515 | |

| 2. Specifics about the research project |
|---|
| **Title of research project** |
| **An exploration of language and identity among young black middle class women** |

| | | | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Is this research for degree purposes?** | | **Yes** | | **No** | | | |
| **If so, for what degree?** | | **Honours** | | **Masters (dissertation)** | | **Masters (research report)** | |
| | | **PhD** | | **Other (specify):** | | | |
| **Has it been approved by the relevant higher degrees committee or other relevant unit?** | | **Yes** | | **No** | | **Submitted & pending** | |

| **List the names and affiliations of any *additional* researchers who will be covered by this ethics protocol** |
|---|
| n/a |

| |
|---|
| |

| **Where will the research be carried out?** |
|---|
| **Johannesburg** |

| **What are the aims and objectives of the research?** (Please list; be brief) |
|---|
| • To explore issues of identity and language among English speaking, black middle class women.<br>• To understand they English speaking, black middle class women's sense of belonging or alienation to their families and communities.<br>• To profile the identity of the young women who communicate predominantly in English and their interpretation of their educational trajectories that have brought them to this place. |

| **Do you have any financial or material interest associated with your research participants or with the organisations that you will work with during your research?** | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| | Yes | | No | | Potential conflicts of interest may |

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| ☐ | ☐ | ☐ exist |

Please **explain how you will manage any existing or potential conflicts of interest, if applicable.**

| **INFORMATION RELATING TO ETHICAL MATTERS** |
|---|
| *Protocols submitted to the Committee must have sufficient information to enable the committee to judge the ethical implications of the proposed research. Please be brief and concise but also as specific and informative as possible* |

| **3. Formal permission** | | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Has appropriate formal permission been obtained, if required (e.g. employer, government department, land owner, etc.)?** | | | | | |
| ☐ | Yes (attached) | ☐ | Not required | ☐ | Pending (must be supplied before permission is granted) |
| Obtaining permission is necessary when conducting research *within the premises* of a particular site such as an ethnography of the functioning of a supermarket or a school, or the way staff interact with clients in a clinic, or of how the HIV Unit in the City of Johannesburg functions. Please read the detailed guidelines on the Ethics website http://web.wits.ac.za/Academic/Research/Applications.htm | | | | | |

| | |
|---|---|
| **4. How will data on human research participants be collected (instruments, methods, procedures)? (Attach instruments as an appendix)** | |
| | In written format (e.g. questionnaires, diagnostic tests, etc.) |
| | Completion of on-line instruments (e.g. questionnaires) |
| | Individual interviews (e.g. structured, semi-structured, etc.) |
| | Group interviews (e.g. seminar/discussion groups, focus groups, etc.) |
| | Ethnographic observation, participant observation, other informal descriptive, and/ or interactive methods |
| | Community-based methods or techniques such as drama workshops, community theatre, training workshops, participant rural appraisal (PRA), rapid rural appraisal (RRA), etc. |
| | Research on/in therapeutic or counselling contexts |
| | Observation of public performance, and/or public behaviour observation |
| | Photography, video and/or audio recording (**specific separate consent forms may be required**) |
| | Other research methods or techniques (specify in this line). |
| **Brief details of instruments to be used** (attach instrument or draft to this | |

application)

- Interview schedule (attached)
- Digital voice recorder

**5. Who will the research participants be**?

Brief description of human participants, including age range and sample size, for each sample:

The target group for this study will be 6-8 young black women who are currently "middle class" (earning between R100, 000 p.a – R500, 000 p.a). The young women would have attended private or Model C schools and predominantly speaks English on a first language basis currently. The age group range will be 25 – 35 years.

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Does this research expose either the participant or the researcher to any potential risks or harm that they would not otherwise be exposed to? | | Yes | | No |

If 'yes', explain:

| | | | | |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Will research involve vulnerable categories? | | Yes | | No |
| If so, state which ones: | | | | |
| How will any existing vulnerabilities among research participants be addressed? | | | | |

**NB:** The term 'vulnerable categories' includes, among others, children under 18, orphans, prisoners, persons with cognitive or communication disorders, people who are traumatised or currently in traumatic situations.

Where necessary, include details of steps to be taken to facilitate data collection across language barriers (e.g. interpretation or translation).

**6. How will informed consent be obtained?**

How will potential participants be identified / selected / recruited?

The sampling strategy will rely heavily on convenience sampling, taking cases based on their availability. More specifically, the procedure to be employed will be critical case sampling which involves identifying exceptional cases that will generate information rich data (Terre Blanche, Kelly and Durrheim, 2009).

What will participants be told about the research (including the promises to be made)?

**Purpose of the study**

The purpose of this study is to:

- Explore English speaking, black middle class women's thoughts on English and its general day-to-day use and the impact it has on a young woman's sense of belonging.

Note the researcher is a student at the University of the Witwatersrand and is conducting the study to comply with the university's requirement to complete her masters.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are:

- Middle class black young female, who attended in English medium schools and universities and mainly speaks English at work or home

**What will happen during this study?**

The researcher will sit with you and ask you questions concerning the issue of teaching that takes place in English as opposed to a mother tongue language. The interview will be like a conversation where questions will be asked to ensure that you or the researcher understands each other. A digital voice recorder will be used to record the conversation. The researcher will also use a notepad to capture key points or events during the conversation. Food and drinks will be readily available.

| |
|---|
| You will be asked to spend two (2) hours in this study. The reason for the length of the study is because it is an interview. It is not a structured interview with specific questions. Instead, the interview will be more like a conversation. |
| How will informed consent be obtained? |
| ☐ Formal (Signed form) ☐ Informal (e.g. verbal) ☐ Other |
| Briefly explain your strategy for ensuring informed consent<br><br>The participants will be requested to sign an informed consent form before the interview takes place. |
| **Attach *Participant Information Sheets* and *Consent Forms* for each sample group, and/or other related materials** |

**NB**: ***Consent*** in social science and humanities research involving human participants: Where informal ethnographic or participant observation methods are used, or where signed *Consent Forms* are not possible, or for research involving group contexts (focus group, Participant Rapid Assessment, Rapid Rural Appraisal, public performance, workshops) **state how the quality of informed consent will be assured**. It is essential that participants in research be fully informed and agree, on this basis, to participate in the research.

| **7. Protecting participant identities** | | |
|---|---|---|
| Can **confidentiality** be guaranteed? | ☐ es | ☐ o |

| Can **anonymity** be guaranteed in resulting reports, theses and/or publications? | | es | | o |
|---|---|---|---|---|

**Explain** how this will be done? (What will participants be told in this regard?)

The researcher will keep your interview records private and confidential.. The only people who will be allowed to see these records are:

- The Principal Researcher and Research Supervisor

The researcher aims to publish what she learns from this study. If she does, she will not include your name. She will not publish anything that would let people know who you are.

**NB**: While confidentiality may be desirable, it cannot be guaranteed in, for example, focus groups, or ethnographic observation. Similarly anonymity should be preserved in questionnaires, but cannot be offered in workshop methodologies, focus group research, etc. Participants should have the right to remain anonymous in the final report, and this must be respected in handling of all data relating to them. Participants need to be informed about these issues.

**8. Protection of data during and after the research**

How will the data be protected while the research is in progress? (This includes how the identities of participants will be protected).

The interview records will be kept on the researcher's computer which is password protected. The names of the participants will be changed in all documents that are to be shared with her supervisor.

What is to be **done with the research data** after completion of the project?

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Stored in archives (specify) | | Stored in on-line data base (specify) |
| | Stored in password protected computer | | Stored in digital form with all identifying feature removed |
| | Destroyed after … years (insert numbers of years) | | |

Explain how the data will be securely stored during this time

The interview records will be stored on her password protected laptop.

**NB**: 'Raw' or unprocessed data, especially **where the identity or personal data of research participants is included, must be safeguarded** and preserved from unauthorised access. Data may be destroyed after use,

but **preservation in an archive or personal collection** may also be appropriate, desirable or even essential. For instance, data sets that contain **historically important information** or information that relates to **national heritage** must be preserved and should be placed in a public archive where possible and appropriate.

All data should be preserved in a way that **respects the nature of the original participants' consent**. If you are unsure about the procedure of data management and storage, please contact Nina Lewin (ninalewin@gmail.com)

| **9. Access to the research results / reports** |
|---|
| How will the results be **reported**?<br><br>The results will be provided in a research report. |
| Who will have access?<br><br>The researcher and her supervisor (Jill Bradbury) |

Note: All Wits Masters and PhDs are stored in the main library as well being made available on the www.

**SIGNATURES (REQUIRED)**

**In signing this form, the researcher and supervisor (if any) of this project undertake to ensure that any amendments to this project that are required by the Human Research Ethics Committee are made before the project commences.**

***Declaration: We, the signatories, declare that all information on this form is correct and that we will strive to maintain the highest ethical standards in this research at all times, according to disciplinary and university expectations, recognising that ethical practice in research is always a continuing process.***

| | Date | Name | Signature |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Applicant** | | | |
| **Supervisor** | | | |

Appendix 3:

*Informed consent to participate in research.*

You are being asked to take part in a research study. Research studies include only people who choose to take part. This document is called an informed consent form. Please read this information carefully and take your time making your decision. Ask the researcher to discuss this consent form with you, please ask her to explain any words or information you do not clearly understand. The researcher encourages you to talk with your family and friends before you decide to take part in this research study. The nature of the study, risks, inconveniences, discomforts, and other important information about the study are listed below in the document.

We are asking you to take part in a research study called:

**How do young black English speaking women experience belonging and alienation in relation to family and community**

The person who is in charge of this research study is Ntebaleng Makgalemele**.** This person is called the Principal Researcher.

The interview will be conducted at a neutral venue, ideally the University of the Witwatersrand campus in Braamfontein, Johannesburg. Should transport become an issue, the researcher together with you will conduct the interview.

*Purpose of the study*

The purpose of this study is to:

- Explore English speaking, black middle class women's thoughts on English and its general day-to-day use and the impact it has on a young woman's sense of belonging.

Note the researcher is a student at the University of the Witwatersrand and is conducting the study to comply with the university's requirement to complete her masters.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are:

- Middle class black young female, who attended in English medium schools and universities and mainly speaks English at work or home

*What will happen during this study?*

The researcher will sit with you and ask you questions concerning the issue of teaching that takes place in English as opposed to a mother tongue language. The interview will be like a conversation where questions will be asked to ensure that you or the researcher understands each other. A digital voice recorder will be used to record the conversation. The researcher will also use a notepad to capture key points or events during the conversation. Food and drinks will be readily available.

You will be asked to spend two (2) hours in this study. The reason for the length of the study is because it is an interview. It is not a structured interview with specific questions. Instead, the interview will be more like a conversation.

*Confidentiality and anonymity.*

The researcher will keep your interview records private and confidential. Only the principal researcher and the research supervisor will have access to the records. The researcher aims to publish what she learns from this study. If she does, she will not include your name.

*Voluntary participation/withdrawal.*

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study. You are free to participate in this research or withdraw at any time. There will be no penalty if you decide to stop taking part in this study.

You should only take part in this study if you want to volunteer. You should not feel that there is any pressure to take part in the study to please the researcher. If you decide not to take part in the study you will not be in trouble or lose any rights you normally have.

You can decide after signing this informed consent document that you no longer want to take part in this study for any reason at any time. If you decide you want to stop taking part in the study, tell the researcher as soon as you can.

*You can get the answers to your questions, concerns, or complaints.*

If you have any questions, concerns or complaints about this study, call Ntebaleng Makgalemele at 072 204 7063 and/or her Supervisor Jill Bradbury at 011 717 4515 or Jill.Bradbury@wits.ac.za.

Appendix 4

*Consent to take part in research and authorization for the collection, use and disclosure of interview.*

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please read the statements below and sign the form if the statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study and authorize that my interview information as agreed above, be collected/disclosed in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to take part in research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

_____ _____

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study Date

_____

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study

*Consent for recording.*

It is up to you to decide whether you want to take part in this study. If you want to take part, please read the statements below and sign the form if the statements are true.

I freely give my consent to take part in this study and authorize that my interview information as agreed above, be collected through the use of a digital recorder in this study. I understand that by signing this form I am agreeing to be recorded for this research. I have received a copy of this form to take with me.

_____ _____

Signature of Person Taking Part in Study Date

_____

Printed Name of Person Taking Part in Study