

**Impoliteness in Context:
Impoliteness, Gender and Construction of Identities at a
South African University**


BY

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DECLARATION

I Busayo Olamide IGE declare that this PhD thesis entitled “**Impoliteness in Context: Impoliteness, Gender and Construction of Identities at a South African University**” is my original and independent research. It has not been previously submitted for any degree, and is not being concurrently presented in candidature in any other University. All sources and literature have been duly acknowledged.

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I dedicate this thesis to the loving memory of my late
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John Olawole Sadare

His sweet memories continue to inspire me.

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores gender and impoliteness in the multilingual and multicultural context of the University of Natal, South Africa. My study uses respondents' perceptions of impoliteness to investigate how male and female students of different African cultures and language backgrounds construct and reconstruct their identities through their choices to use the languages available at the University of Natal. The study was motivated by a perceived dearth of research into gender-sensitive accounts of multilingual situations. The goal of this study is to contribute to the understanding of the invention of identities in a multilingual, multicultural and multiracial environment, while interrogating the relationship between impoliteness, whether perceived or intended, and the gendered identities available to the different African subgroups at the university. Hence the thesis reviews recent theoretical approaches to intercultural communication, impoliteness and gender, and attempts to identify a suitable framework for the understanding of gendered aspects of multilingualism in the university.

A combination of qualitative and quantitative research methodologies was adopted for the study. I used several modes of data collection which included indirect observation carried out through the reporting of perceived impoliteness, questionnaire surveys for evaluations of instances of impoliteness and focus group discussions with different categories of students. Discourse analysis was drawn on for the presentation of the data.

The body of data reveals that while there are some general perceptions of impoliteness amongst the students that transcend culture and language diversity, differences in the perceptions of and responses to impoliteness impact greatly on the ability of individuals to communicate effectively. The study shows that the different

groups identified in the study: *Zulu bradas*, *dilute males*, *Model C guys*, *diverse males*, *modern Zulu women* and *decisive females*, whilst they are attending university, decide on and construct their identities according to their preferences. This is not necessarily a matter of their original cultural identity, especially in the case of the *modern Zulu women*, *decisive females* and *Model C guys*. A range of different identities from which the individual may choose is made possible at the university, given that the university has its own, non-ethnic culture. The preferred identity varies amongst the students: for instance, the *Zulu bradas*' desire to be seen as 'traditional' pushes them to construct a 'traditional' – as they see it – Zulu identity. The *decisive females* in contrast are far less culture-conscious and construct an identity that is related to their personal needs. Consequently, some respondents construct communal and others individual identities.

The students' interpretations and judgements of impoliteness reveal that the preferred identities influence their evaluations of behaviour. Similarly, the gender of perceiver or speaker may influence the interpretation and assessment of the degree of impoliteness. A majority of the male respondents draw on gendered cultural expectations in their judgements, while the female respondents were more egalitarian in their approach.

Identity in this study emerges as crucial for the understanding of impoliteness. The study further shows that whenever the individual's constructed identity is seen to be under attack, a student may respond with equal impoliteness to defend him/herself. While this research is specifically located in the context of the University of Natal, it is relevant to the South African workplace today, where linguistic and cultural diversity may enhance or impede racial integration and gender equality.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CC	Conversational Contract
CD	Courtroom Discourse
CofP	Communities of Practice
CP	Cooperative Principle
DF	<i>Decisive females</i>
DLM	<i>Dilute males</i>
DM	<i>Diverse males</i>
DRC	Democratic Republic of Congo
ERT	Eritrean
ETH	Ethiopian
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FTA	Face threatening Acts
HKC	Hong Kong Chinese
KEN	Kenya
L1	First language
L2	Second Language
LE1	First Language of exchange
LE2	Second Language of exchange
MC	<i>Model C guys</i>
MOZ	Mozambican
MT	Mother tongue
MZW	<i>Modern Zulu women</i>
NES	Native English Speakers
NIG	Nigerian
NL	Native Language
OC	Ordinary Conversation

PP	Politeness Principle
RWD	Rwandan
SLA	Second Language Acquisition
TD	Therapeutic discourse
UGD	Ugandan
UKZN	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UN	University of Natal
ZB	<i>Zulu bradas</i> (brothers)
ZIM	Zimbabwean

1

INTRODUCTION: DEFINING IMPOLITENESS IN A MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

1.1 INTRODUCTION

This thesis is a study of impoliteness in the multilingual and multicultural society of the University of Natal (UN) and its successor, the University of KwaZulu-Natal. My research is concerned with issues relating to language and cultural diversity and the way in which these factors shape the language usage, behaviour and interpretations of others' language and behaviour amongst multilingual students in a complex community. To achieve this main goal, the study uses occurrences of impoliteness (or alleged impoliteness) to investigate how men and women of different cultures and languages overcome communication barriers, communicate intentionally and unintentionally, and negotiate who they are or what they represent.

This thesis investigates the complexity of language use in a multicultural community through several lenses: the lenses of identity, gender and impoliteness. I intend to show that multilingual persons in those inter-cultural interactions which they see as potentially threatening often seek to protect their cultural identity. The issue of identity is shown to be crucial in inter-cultural linguistic exchanges such as when a non-South African speaks (for example) to a Zulu. The non-South African is likely to adopt many of the linguistic and cultural norms of the host country, but he or she is equally likely to retain some traces of his or her own culture, not least to assert his or her cultural identity.

Gender is a second core focus of my study, in that I explore language usage and reception of language in a multicultural context as gendered. Gender was selected as a second lens, because the understanding of how gender impacts on language use is crucial for our understanding of the interface between language, culture and identity.

Although gender is a social construct, gender roles become primary building blocks in our identity development. Talbot rightly asserts:

Gender is an important division in all societies. It is of enormous significance to human beings. Being born male or female has far-reaching consequences for an individual. It affects how we act in the world, how the world treats us. This includes for instance, the language we use, and the language used about us. (Talbot 1998:2)

From this passage it is clear that identities are constructed through social interaction.¹ The common gender stereotypes affect the ways in which we perceive ourselves, though we tend not to think about them or about their power to mould and shape our attitudes and opinions about 'what is female' and 'what is male'.

Finally, I explore impoliteness phenomena and use them in this study to unpack language usage, behaviour and interpretations in a multilingual complex university context. This also serves as a much overdue contribution to the neglected research field of impoliteness. I intend to show in this study that impoliteness can be used as an instrumental tool by an interlocutor to communicate his or her mind, and to assert his or her identity. Until recently researchers have focused primarily on the study of politeness, and of the few studies on impoliteness, some have claimed that impoliteness is simply the reverse of politeness (Lakoff 1989; Culpeper 1996). Others have argued that impoliteness can be instrumental, and can function as a tool used by interlocutors intentionally to communicate a desired goal (Kasper 1990; Beebe 1995). The investigation of impoliteness in my study draws on both perspectives, but focuses more on the latter, to explore impoliteness as a tool used by interlocutors to construct, deconstruct and reconstruct identities in a multicultural context.

¹ For more on the social construction of gender see Moore (1998); Connell (1998); Boulden (1997); Lorber and Farrell (1991).

To sum up, this study focuses on the factors that produce impoliteness, or what is perceived as such, in multilingual and multicultural contexts, with special focus on the gendered nature of such impoliteness. It is concerned with the ways in which impoliteness is perceived and experienced by multilingual women and men, and how they regularly draw on impoliteness to construct preferred identities when interacting in different languages with different cultural groups.

1.2 CONTEXT OF THE STUDY

The study is based on the data I collected amongst students of the former University of Natal, by means of focus group discussions, rating and ranking scales, and indirect observation.² The data were collected from November 2002 to November 2003. Structural changes have occurred in the University of Natal, Durban, in the intervening period and the institution has been renamed. Since the data were gathered, it has been merged with the University of Durban/Westville, and is now the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal. For simplicity's sake, and because the data I shall use were collected at the University of Natal, I shall refer to it throughout by this name.

The merger is part of a South African Government initiative to transform higher institutions in order to reflect the country's new political dispensation. At the time of writing up of this thesis, the merger has been in process for two years, and I have become aware of further instances of cross-cultural miscommunication which are likely to be termed impoliteness. It might however be premature to rush into a second phase of data collection since the current transitional status of the institution is different from the more established one existing in the period when the data were gathered. The University of Kwa-Zulu-Natal is *becoming*, and has not yet reached its full status. In another year or two, follow-up research may be necessary.

² I have termed the data collection process indirect observation because the observations were carried out by participants from three cultural groups.

The University environment which has developed since the first democratic election in 1994 brings together students from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds. By the time they arrive at the UN, young men and women have become linguistically and culturally competent members of their own communities through interactions with other competent adult members. At university these young people find that the language of instruction, and hence the lingua franca, is English. Because of this, and because of the history of the University of Natal, many of the norms are what could be termed 'westernized' values. By this I mean that the English language and associated norms have dominated this institution since its inception. These norms, and even more, those of non-South Africans and South Africans of non-British origins, may well be strange to incoming students. This study considers the diverse body of African students at the University, which includes Zulu, Xhosa, Sotho, Batswana, Zimbabweans, Shona, Setswana, Swazi, Basotho, Kenyans, Burundians, Nigerians, Ghanaians, Eritreans, Ethiopians, Congolese, Rwandans, and Mozambicans. Most of the foreign African students who supplied data were at the graduate level of studies.

Undoubtedly, when members of such a diverse student population interact, it is likely that misunderstandings will occur daily. In addition, there is a tendency amongst students of all cultural groups to ignore certain social norms that they have internalised through socialisation³, such as age and gender appropriate polite behaviour (both linguistically and culturally) in a context where there are no family members around⁴. It is therefore of importance to investigate how multilingual African students manage communication and behaviour when switching from one language to another. Given that Africa consists of many linguistic and cultural systems, and that there are differences between these social systems and the types of

³ According to Schieffelin & Ochs (1984, 1986) children become linguistically and culturally competent members of their community through interaction with caregivers and other more competent members of their community. Through this language socialization, children learn the behaviours that are culturally appropriate in their community.

⁴ See de Klerk (1997); Pujolar (2000), on youth culture.

interaction allowable for individuals, intra-community diversity must be taken into consideration. Bilingualism is undoubtedly on the increase as a result of the world population movements in the 20th and 21st centuries.⁵ It is expedient for us to understand the bilingual world of communication.

1.3 PROBLEMS AND ISSUES TO BE INVESTIGATED

Research investigating impoliteness, unlike all the other key issues interrogated in this thesis (which include gender, culture and identity), is sparse, as well as research investigating the supposed connection between gender and impoliteness, identity and impoliteness, and culture and impoliteness. An initial substantial challenge will be the definition and theorisation of impoliteness, given the limited literature and the lack of a commonly accepted theoretical definition. Crucial to developing a definition will be an acknowledgement that what is actually considered impolite will and must vary between members of different cultures and speakers of different conventional styles (Tannen 1990). In my study, I will begin with Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness and Lakoff's (1989) threefold classification of language as polite, non-polite and rude, and draw on subsequent attempts to develop an analytical framework by Brown and Levinson (1987); Kasper (1990); Beebe (1995) and Culpeper (1996).

Furthermore, in this thesis I shift the focus of previous research into politeness and impoliteness away from monolingual situations towards a multilingual context, which is a more 'typical' language situation in the world today, especially within the postcolonial milieu. The context of the University of Natal offers a suitable example of a multilingual and multicultural language situation.

⁵ In today's global world, half of the population speaks more than one language. This typical language situation in the world today cuts across all classes of society, with more marriages between people from different countries, and more children being raised in bilingual households (Grosjean 1982; Beardsmore 1986; Spolsky 1998 and Piller 2002).

At this university, students from a wide range of linguistic contexts meet and negotiate interactions, out of necessity for the most part in English. Within this context, I differentiate two types of impoliteness. On the one hand, analyses of communication across cultures (Blum-Kulka et al 1989; Kasper 1990; Scollon and Scollon 1995, Harris 1997, 2001; Cheng 2003) have revealed that in a context where representatives of many cultures and language groups meet, instances of unintended impoliteness are likely to occur frequently. On the other, it is possible that impoliteness is on occasion used deliberately, as a communicative tool. This present study seeks to understand, especially, acts of impoliteness of the second type in the University of Natal context, and to explore the impact of multilingualism on perceptions of impoliteness of men and women, as a way of interrogating the core topics of this study: impoliteness, gender, identity and culture.

Gender is a crucial variable in any study of language use, but the ways in which language is gendered have been little studied in South Africa (de Kadt 2002; de Klerk 1997); further work is urgently required. At the same time, international studies of gender and impoliteness have only recently begun to appear (Mills 2002; Mullany 2002). Given the lack of research on these important issues, it would seem inadequate to limit this proposed study to investigating impoliteness only, without similarly interrogating its gender implications. Hence I investigate not only ways in which impoliteness may impact differentially on men and women, but also offer a way of understanding of how impoliteness is used as a tool in constructing gender identities. I shall collect and analyse both types of impoliteness, and shall endeavour to understand the effect of gender on perceptions and judgements. On the basis of focus group interviews in which students reflect on issues around impoliteness as gendered, I shall, as a means of interrogating the interaction between impoliteness and gender, seek to conduct a broad-based exploration of the roles of impoliteness in negotiating power between men and women and in constructing gender identities.

Key Questions Addressed in the Research

The following key questions, which focus primarily on impoliteness and gender, were designed and used to elicit data on language behaviour and language attitudes in the multilingual and multicultural university community under investigation.

- Can impoliteness be theorized as simply the inverse of politeness? In terms of my stated goals, this question sets out to interrogate the understanding of impoliteness in relation to politeness and whether it is simply the inverse of politeness, or in addition also an active communicative tool (Beebe 1995).
- Does what is perceived as impoliteness have characteristics common to all, or many, languages and cultures? This further interrogates the definition of impoliteness with regard to cultural differences and perceptions in a multicultural, multilingual and multiracial context like UND (Kasper 1990).
- To what extent, and how, can one distinguish clearly between deliberate and unintended instances of impoliteness? I intend to explore my research subjects' perceptions and interpretations of instances of impoliteness as deliberate or inadvertent.
 - In what ways may unintended impoliteness be a product of communication problems across cultures? Can gendered differences in behaviour and judgements of behaviour be observed?
- When do men and women intentionally employ impoliteness, and how do they express deliberate impoliteness? Are there differences between the strategies of men and women? This question explores gender strategies employed by the different groups in perceived situations of impoliteness

and thus aims to interrogate a key topic of the thesis, the interaction between impoliteness and gender.

- Are there differences in male and female perceptions of impoliteness? This further explores how gender impacts on the perceptions and consequently the responses of men and women from different cultural backgrounds – or even the same cultural backgrounds – , following on an incident of perceived impoliteness.
- How do men and women respond to perceived impoliteness?
- In what ways does impoliteness (both intentional and unintentional) contribute to the construction of identity? This last question touches on the impact of impoliteness on the construction of gender and group identities, and on possible conflict in a multicultural context (Weedon 1987; Pavlenko and Piller 2001).

1.4 MOTIVATION FOR THE STUDY

Research investigating impoliteness and the relationship between impoliteness and gender is sparse both in mainstream linguistics and in the field of language and gender. In addition, there is a gap between research into single language use and the multilingual situation. Researchers like Burton, Dyson and Ardener (1994); Pavlenko et al (2001) have pointed to the gap between the frequent investigations into gender and single language use, and the un-gendered accounts of bilingual language situations. As a result, the body of research on gender and language has been critiqued and labelled Eurocentric.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) universal theory of politeness has influenced almost all theories and analyses of politeness in mainstream linguistics. According to Brown and Levinson, politeness strategies are developed in order to save hearers'

'face', and 'face' can be conceptualised as either positive or negative. Positive 'face' refers to the need to be thought of as desirable, and negative 'face' refers to the need not to be imposed upon or intruded on by others. However, Brown and Levinson's notion of 'face' has been rightly critiqued for overgeneralization. For instance, the use of 'self' in their discussion of negative 'face' connotes a notion of individualistic self, which (Kasper (1992) considered to be a behavioural paradigm in the western cultures, and fails to accommodate the notion of 'collective self' that is dominant in non-western cultures⁶.

Until recently researchers have focused primarily on politeness, which has been extensively researched over the past three decades, both in mainstream linguistics and in studies of language and gender. The existing body of politeness research cuts across the continents of the world⁷.

Most of the limited literature on impoliteness, however, has focused on western groups and societies. For instance, attempts to investigate impoliteness in its relationship to gender include those of Mills (2002), Mullany (2002) and Harris (2000), all of whom are located in Britain or America. Harris (2000) and Mullany (2002) investigated impolite occurrences in the political discourse of the British Parliament, and Mills (2002) analyses a single encounter with a male colleague in the workplace in terms of impoliteness. All these works interrogate the relationship between impoliteness and gender identity in contexts where language is common and cultural meanings are shared. My present study is based on a multilingual and multicultural community and interrogates the relationship between impoliteness, perceived or intended, and the meanings of gender identity for different subgroups

⁶ Brown and Levinson's model has been critiqued by scholars and researchers working on non-western languages mainly for its over-generalisation of Eurocentric norms. In particular its claim of universality has been the target of rebuttal, from the perspective of languages from the Far East and from Africa. (See researchers such as Ide (1982; 1990), Matsumoto (1988); Gu (1990); Nwoye (1992); Strecker (1993); de Kadt (1995, 1996) and Pan (1995))

⁷ See Lakoff 1973, 1979; Leech 1983; Brown and Levinson 1987; de Kadt 1998; Nwoye 1997 Ide 1999; Ide (1982; 1990), Matsumoto (1988), Gu (1990), Nwoye (1992), de Kadt (1995, 1996), Pan (1995), and Strecker (1993); Ige 2001; Ige and de Kadt 2002),

within the community. For example, I study the ways in which the individual's presentation of his or her gendered identity is likely to shift as he or she moves from one language to another.

Part of the motivation for this study was an incident that happened on campus at the University of Natal. At that time, a department adjacent to the Gender Studies Programme at the University hosted two male students from the northern part of Nigeria. Shortly after their arrival, they approached a female African (local, Zulu) student of the same department, handed her a packet of groceries (including uncooked chicken) and requested that she cook it for them. The behaviour was perceived to be 'grossly impolite' by this female student and the entire department. The first question that comes to mind in relation to this dramatic incident is – what could be responsible for such (perceived?) impolite behaviour? If we draw on cross-cultural explanations, the behaviour could be understood as an instance of pragmatic failure, due to ignorance of the expected norms on the part of the male students; perhaps it was not intended as a presumptuous act. In other words, it may have been unintended rudeness due to unfamiliarity with culturally appropriate forms of polite behaviour in a new environment, and it may have been related to the cultural expectations which some African immigrants have of their African hosts and vice versa.⁸ These foreign students' ideas of gender and their own norms and the particular characteristics of their ethnic group would probably be useful information for such an analysis.

However, an analysis of the above incident in terms of Kasper's (1990) model would only be appropriate if we consider this an instance of motivated rudeness. To do so is to suggest that though the male students concerned were aware of the acceptable norms, they intentionally breached them. The suggestion could be offered that their actions were a deliberate attempt to achieve the goal of being impolite, and possibly of asserting male superiority, since gender appears to be a major factor in the

⁸ See de Kadt and Ige's (2004) investigation of Nigerian identities in South Africa.

described incident (although there is insufficient information to justify conclusively such an interpretation). If we interpret the behaviour as a means of asserting male hegemony, it might be taken to suggest that men, or African men, or Nigerian men are generally more impolite; though of course we cannot make such a generalisation based on the two men concerned. Although some language and gender researchers such as Lakoff (1975); Zimmerman and West (1975); Fishman (1980); Tannen (1990) and Holmes (1995), have argued that women are more polite than men, this study moves away from binary and essentialist gender oppositions that have assumed a stereotypical correlation between masculinity and impoliteness (deliberate and unintended), and femininity and politeness, to more temperate statements about specific groups of women and men in particular circumstances, who negotiate their interactions within socially sanctioned behaviours (Mills 2002).

Hence my strong interest in contributing to the understanding of the predicaments of bi- and multilingual men and women in a formal context where the lingua franca is not their mother tongue, and in particular to investigate how bilingual and multilingual African students experience, construct, reconstruct and negotiate their identities.

1.5 DEFINING IMPOLITENESS

Given the paucity of literature mentioned at the outset of this research, defining and theorising impoliteness has proved rather problematic since there was no established theoretical framework that could be used. Additional complexity came from the linguistic and cultural diversity of the context under consideration. Linguists are well aware of how our different cultures have a direct impact on how we relay and process information, especially information that originates from a foreign language.⁹ This is mainly because the pragmatic principles¹⁰ by which people adhere to a set of

⁹ See some of the very many studies on cross-cultural communication such as Gumperz (1982); Kasper (1985); Scollon and Scollon (1991); Chick (1996); Erickson (1997).

¹⁰ Pragmatics studies what governs peoples' choice of language in social interaction and the effects of the choice made, on other people (Leech 1983 Sperber and Wilson, 1986).

rules in one language, often lead them to behave differently in another. For instance, politeness is believed to be culturally specific; the same thing can undoubtedly be said of impoliteness. Research in cross-linguistic and cross-cultural studies has shown that what is considered polite in one language or culture is sometimes impolite in another. For instance, Strecker's (1993) study of 'face' amongst the Hamar community of southern Ethiopia reveals that culturally specific notions of 'face' affect both the concept of physical face and the metaphorical extension of it:

While the European and Mediterranean concept of 'face' relates more to the lower part of the face, especially the mouth, the Hamar's concept of 'face' relates to the upper part, especially the forehead. And while in the former cultures [European] the term in its metaphorical extension speaks of social fear and shame, the latter speaks of fortune and freedom of action (Strecker 1993:199).

Such cultural variations of 'face' will for instance influence how 'conflict talk' is managed in a given context. The variation of 'face' is closely associated with other social variables such as power, age and social distance.

Impoliteness has only recently begun to gain the attention of sociolinguists, since the focus has long been on politeness. This neglect largely explains the paucity of material on impoliteness as a 'face threatening' strategy. Culpeper (1996) posits that impoliteness is the opposite of politeness, which is generally associated with considerate and kind forms of behaviour (Blum-Kulka 1992:258), and with tolerance and good manners. It is also associated with behaviour appropriate to the particular context, being friendly, respectful, and usually leading to pleasant interactions (Ide et al 1992:290). Lakoff (1989:102), defines politeness "as a means of minimising confrontation in discourse" and therefore of promoting social harmony. Culpeper (1996:350) extends this definition, claiming that impoliteness is designed to have the

opposite “effect to politeness - that of social disruption”, and can also be used as a means of social sanction.

Eelen (2001) argues that politeness and impoliteness are two sides of a coin. What he is implying is that both suggest the speaker’s or actor’s awareness of his/her effect on someone else. This definition suggests that there are always two sides to whatever kind of language behaviour we engage in. One side is positive (politeness), and the other negative (impoliteness).

However, in the present study, the underlying definition of impoliteness is two-dimensional, focusing on intention and reception. By intention I mean the intended effect the speaker or actor sets out to achieve in a conversation or other exchange. Reception refers to the meaning that the listener or spectator draws from the utterance. Given the linguistic and cultural diversity involved, impoliteness cannot have a single meaning, applicable in all cultures, because behavioural norms vary from community to community: some acts that are perceived as impolite in one culture could turn out to be polite in a different culture. For example, researchers on the South African situation like Chick (1989, 1996); de Kadt (1994; 1996; 1998); Gough (1995); Wood (1992); and Ige (2001), have shown that avoidance of eye contact in Zulu culture is an expression of politeness, especially when it relates to age or status, but the same strategy is perceived as impolite in British-South African culture.

Kasper (1990:213) argues that research into politeness should be confined to certain specific contexts which have “well-defined commonalities”. Her argument is applicable to impoliteness as well, because it is also culturally constructed. It must be noted that cultural influence in communication can lead to linguistic and auditory

errors.¹¹ The interference of cultural norms in communication often alters meanings, and such failure in communication can be attributed to either speakers' or hearers' ignorance of social norms. Hence, communication across culture often results in misunderstanding caused by the inability of language users to comprehend or produce a communicative action in conformity with the norms of others.¹² Nevertheless, since multilingualism and multiculturalism are characteristic of many societies, large and small, at the present time research into contexts which do not have such "well-defined commonalities" has become important, and I intend my study to break new ground in this respect.

Other forms of impoliteness identified in this study include defensive impoliteness, displaced impoliteness, and inappropriate language/behaviour/manner. These categories of impoliteness are not necessary the reverse of politeness, but are tools of expression. Fraser (1990) points out that societies define certain behaviours as socially unacceptable though they may not necessarily be the reverse of what is accepted. This suggests that impoliteness can also be discussed as an entity without reference to politeness.

In this study, inappropriate language/behaviour/manners as a form of impoliteness are also recognised and discussed. An example of inappropriate behaviour is the use of familiarity in a formal situation and vice versa. For instance, if a person walks into an unfamiliar space and makes a joke, it could be perceived as impolite. Likewise, in a situation where a person responds formally to a greeting from a person very familiar to him or her, this could be perceived as impolite. However, following the preliminary examination of the set of data collected, I had to categorise inappropriate language as a form of impoliteness. Almost any act, verbal or otherwise, may be interpreted as impolite by particular persons or in a particular

¹¹ Linguistic error is the result of wrong choice and use of words or phrases, and auditory error is noise that interferes with reception and interpretation in interactions. Noise can be physical noise or poor articulation of words or phrases. (Ndheriire 2000).

¹² See Thomas (1983); Wolfson (1989); Kasper (1992); Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) on pragmatic transfer and misunderstanding.

context. All acts may be clouded with misunderstanding, on the part of speakers or hearers.

The study of language use in a multilingual and multicultural context is definitely an area of research that requires the urgent attention of seasoned researchers. The analysis of the use of language helps us not only to uncover principles underlying social interaction, but also to gain access to the ways of thinking, belief systems, and worldviews of people from various cultural backgrounds, and thus can enhance empathy, mutual understanding and dialogue. The investigation of social conventions and of ways in which central concepts such as impoliteness/politeness and 'face' are gendered differently across cultures has two major functions. First, it can allow us gain insight into ways in which language can be used to empower and disempower people in terms of gender. Secondly, it can enable us better to comprehend different discourse patterns of people from different cultures, thus helping to eliminate ethnic stereotypes and misunderstandings.

1.6 STRUCTURE OF THE THESIS

In line with the key issues addressed in the study and research questions above, the thesis is structured as follows:

Chapter 1- Introduction

This chapter discusses the background to the study and the context. The chapter presents the research problem, rationale for the study, and the key questions addressed in the research. An overview of the thesis structure, highlighting the major themes of each chapter, follows.

Chapter 2: Literature Review and Theoretical Framework

My aim in this chapter is to review the considerable body of relevant literature, with a focus on impoliteness, and gender, in multicultural and multilingual situations. Three sections are presented in which pertinent literature is listed and its contribution considered: these are communication in multicultural contexts (including issues of miscommunication, issues of transfer and identity construction); gendered language use (here too including issues of gender identities); and theories of impoliteness. Finally, the theoretical framework and the theorisation of impoliteness adopted for this research are presented as a model emerging from the literature review.

Chapter 3: Research Methods

In this chapter, the research methods and their justification are presented. The chapter commences with a discussion of the research design, together with an explanation of the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods employed to elicit data. I further describe each phase of data collection in chronological order, starting with the pilot study, followed by records of observations, two surveys of students' rating of exchanges, and focus group discussions. I also discuss the way in which the data were organised and analysed, in terms of discourse analysis approach.

Chapter 4: Instances and Understandings of Impoliteness at the University

This chapter initiates the discussion of my body of data by introducing the types of behaviours that students at the University of Natal find impolite, or rude. This is done in two ways. First, actual instances of perceived impolite behaviour are presented in the form of vignettes, to show typical cultural values, interpretations and what I term the frequent power play of impoliteness experienced at the University of Natal. Second, by means of rating and ranking of some typical instances of perceived impoliteness, I seek to establish the group identities utilised in the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

Chapter 5: Group Discourses and Identities

This chapter explores in greater detail the language diversity on the campus and its possible influence on respondents' perceptions of impoliteness. Given that the focus of this study is on black African students, this chapter and subsequent chapters present and analyse the black African students' focus group discussions. The respondents, comprising black South African students and black non-South African students, are divided into six categories of male and female students. In this chapter, I explore and interrogate the possible interaction of respondents' norms and language choices with their interpretation of interactions, and subsequently, how self-definition may determine or influence language choice and use.

Chapter 6: Interpretations of and Responses to Impoliteness

Chapter six explores further the constructed identities presented in chapter five and their possible influence on perceptions of impoliteness. Through the terms employed by the respondents to define impoliteness, their understandings of impoliteness, and their reactions and responses to perceived impolite behaviour, are examined. The chapter attempts to show how the various identities constructed by the students impact on their understanding of and responses to perceived impolite behaviour.

Chapter 7: Gender Discourse

In order to understand fully the pattern of student responses to perceived impoliteness, in this chapter I further explore their interpretation of impoliteness in relation to the gender of their interlocutors, men or women, and their own gender. This chapter will show, through data from focus group discussions and the results of surveys, that gender plays a crucial role in determining and identifying the sense of a communicative act. The chapter starts by focusing on a core stereotype from politeness research, that women are more polite than men, and expands this theme to explore a variety of other gender issues relating to politeness.

Chapter 8: Discussion

This chapter will discuss the findings of the data presented in chapters four, five, six and seven, in terms of the key issues drawn from these chapters. These are presented in four sections. The first identifies and discusses issues that are essential for the understanding and conceptualising of impoliteness in a multicultural and multilingual context, such as the University of Natal. The second discusses the types of motivated impoliteness that may occur in such multicultural and multilingual situations. The third discusses motivated impoliteness as a form of identity defence. Finally, the fourth section considers impoliteness in a context in which many seek to alter and adapt their behaviour and ways of thinking in terms of new cultural encounters and, especially, new relations between gender groups.

Chapter 9: Conclusion

This concluding chapter presents a summary of the findings, the significant contributions of the study and further research suggestions. The argument I have developed in this thesis is concluded in this chapter.

2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter one of this thesis, I presented the background to the study and considered its potential significance in terms of studies of cross-cultural communication and gender. In the present chapter, my aim is to review the considerable body of relevant literature with a focus on impoliteness, and gender, in multicultural and multilingual situations. Three sections are presented: section 2.2 focuses on communication in multicultural contexts (including issues of miscommunication, issues of transfer and identity construction); section 2.3 on gendered language use (here too including issues of gender identities); and section 2.4 on theories of impoliteness. Finally, in section 2.5, the theoretical framework and the theorisation of impoliteness adopted for this research are presented as a model emerging from the literature review. In this way, the literature review is informed by the research questions defined and discussed in chapter one, and anticipates the major research themes presented in more detail in chapter three.

2.2 COMMUNICATION IN MULTILINGUAL CONTEXTS

Intercultural communication studies compare the discourse of people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds interacting either through a lingua franca or through the native language of one of the participants (Blum-Kulka et al 1989; Scollon and Scollon 1995, 2001; Harris 1997; Cheng 2003). There are three main approaches to the consideration of the role of culture in discourse:

1. the contrastive approach, which compares the discourse of native speakers of particular languages – the discourse of mother-tongue speakers of Yoruba, for example, might be compared with that of mother-tongue speakers of Zulu;

2. the interlingual approach allows for examination of the discourse of speakers in a language which is not their mother tongue;
3. the interactive inter-cultural approach examines and compares the discourse of people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds interacting either in a lingua franca or in the mother tongue of one of the interlocutors.

Approach 1, although well-researched, is not of relevance to the present study. Rather, this literature review will focus on approaches 2 and 3.

Research on inter- cultural interactions of all kinds has generally found that peoples' language usage in communication varies widely between and within cultures. Differences in the use of a lingua franca may arise because words and phrases may be used in different ways according to the cultural context, word order is different, and meanings of words vary. For example, the meaning of the English phrase 'you must' varies from a 'request', a plea for an action in favour of the supplicant, and a 'command', a situation in which one is ordered to do something. Similarly, non-verbal communication, which includes not only facial expression and gestures, but also seating arrangements, personal distance and sense of time, may differ from one culture to another. The variations are usually interpreted in relation to power. Seating arrangements, for instance, can often be understood in terms of power. In addition, different cultural attitudes towards conflict, approaches to completing tasks, decision-making styles, and approaches to epistemologies can result in confusion, misunderstanding and conflict.

My research draws on this complexity of meanings by exploring the understanding of impoliteness of students of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds (South African, non-South African students of African origin, and non-South African students of European and Asian origin). Such students are compelled to interact in English which is, in most cases, a lingua franca, but in a few, a mother tongue. I will

present the literature dealing with matters relevant to my study under three subsections: namely, intercultural miscommunication, intercultural transfer and intercultural identities.

2.2.1 Intercultural Miscommunication

Studies of communicative practice have traced sources of miscommunication to the unique nature of different cultural value systems, pervasive configurations of social relations, and dominant ideologies of cultural groups (Erickson 1979; Gumperz 1982; Wolfson 1992; Chick 1996; and Scollon and Scollon 2001), arguing that culture does not only *influence* interpretation, it *constitutes* interpretation. Such analysis of conversation by researchers and scholars has been strongly influenced by the work of Gumperz (1982) which drew attention to the central importance of the background knowledge and assumptions that participants draw on to interpret the social meanings of others. The conversational approach attaches importance to contextual cues which assist the hearer to interpret what he or she hears in a particular way.

Gumperz (1978) asserts that the interpretation of communicative intent is predictable not only on the basis of referential meaning, but also on matters of context, social presuppositions, knowledge of the world, and individual backgrounds. Gumperz's perspective is grounded in his earlier studies in the ethnography of communication that focussed on speech events, which he defined as interactively constituted and culturally-framed encounters. He subsequently (1982) explored the role of typified communicative practices in interaction, the levels of linguistic signalling they reflect, how they relate to speakers' communicative and social background and how they affect interactive outcomes. Gumperz proposed the notion of contextualization cues and contextualisation processes as a way of accounting for the functioning linguistic sign.

Gumperz defines contextualization cues as "any feature of linguistic form that contributes to the signaling of contextual presuppositions ... such as the code,

dialect and style-switching processes, some of the prosodic phenomena" (1982:131). Such contextualization cues serve to activate and retrieve the necessary background knowledge base so that a contextually appropriate process of inference can take place. For instance, a rise in intonation may signal a question (Gumperz 1982: 147). Interpretation is a function of the context within which an act takes place, and contextual presuppositions are subject to constant change in the course of an interaction. Gumperz is *perhaps* overgeneralizing here, as it is not equally true in all cases that meaning is context based. There could be differences in participants' knowledge or understanding of the context, which impact on interpretations. Furthermore, Gumperz's "shared knowledge" does not include non-verbal communication, yet non-verbal signals are crucial in interaction in some communities. Gumperz (1995: 120) has commented that a "lack of shared background knowledge leads initially to misunderstandings", but it is equally true that shared but incomplete knowledge does not necessarily remove miscommunication or misunderstanding in interaction.

In the communication situations which form the basis for my study, not only do the cultural backgrounds of the interlocutors differ, but they are aware of these differences to different degrees. Individuals are more, or less, willing to envisage the possibility that those with whom they are interacting may legitimately have different expectations of themselves and others. The limited knowledge which each has of the university context means that cultural expectations within it, of the self and of others, must allow for the possibility of ignorance and error.

Wilson (2005) has rightly pointed out that even the presence of shared background knowledge can sometimes lead to misunderstandings. In his analysis of a personal experience of misunderstanding of non-verbal cues in a shared knowledge context he argues that "something may be perceived as a contextualization cue by a receiver when it is not intended as such by a sender, leading to an incorrect interpretation of the sender's utterance or non-verbal act" (2005: 3). Although his analysis is based on a single incident of non-verbal signaling, it can be explored in relation to non-verbal

indicators in other interactions. Likewise, he shows (2005) that miscommunication is not limited to speakers of different languages and cultures, but can occur among people who share similar cultures and speakers of different dialects of the same language. At every level, whether it is between distinct languages and cultures or similar but different ones, errors of interpretation are likely to occur.

Studies of speech acts in different cultures provide evidence for miscommunication in interaction across cultures. I select as an example compliments, which, have been widely studied. As pointed out by Cheng (2003), studies of compliments and responses to compliments have revealed that, in complimenting behaviour, cross-cultural differences are manifested in topics, structure, lexical choice, function, response types, distribution and intent. Wolfson's (1981, 1983 and 1984) studies of compliments in American English focused on formulas and functions of compliments. She argues that what members of particular cultural groups thank or apologize for or compliment on, usually reflects their values, because in performing these speech acts, people are often implicitly assessing the behaviour, possessions, accomplishments, character, or appearance of others. In Wolfson's account (1992) of the language use of middle-class urban Americans she states that Americans compliment frequently because they "live in a complex and open society in which individuals are members not of a single network in which their own place is well-defined, but rather belong to a number of networks, both overlapping and non-overlapping, in which they must continually negotiate their roles and relationships with one another" (205). Hence when an American interacts with a non-American whose society or community defines individual members of network differently, miscommunication is very likely.¹

In her studies of New Zealand English, Holmes (1984, 1986, and 1987) covers a range of aspects of compliments, which include sex-preferential functions, topics,

¹ See also Scollon and Scollon's (2001:1) study of businesses interaction between Chinese and Americans, which supports the claim that miscommunication is caused by "the fact that each side is using different principles of discourse to organise its presentations".

syntactic structure, and semantic and functional features of compliment responses. At the same time compliments and responses to compliments are found to be culture-specific speech acts in social interaction. Holmes accounts for the patterns of compliments and responses in different cultures by the differing perceptions of the notion of 'face' and politeness (1986, 1988). Her (1986) study of New Zealand compliments shows that the New Zealanders' common response to a compliment is to accept it, that is to say, to show pleasure and gratitude. In agreement, Cheng (2003) argues that socio-cultural and linguistic complexities are often involved in the encoding and decoding processes of giving and responding to a compliment in compliment response interchanges.

Herbert (1985, 1989, 1990) investigates the differences in the patterns of compliment responses given by white middle-class Americans and white middle-class South Africans and argues that Americans compliment frequently in order to negotiate social relations and frequently reject compliments to avoid the implication that they are superior to the interlocutor. He observes that white South African males offer few compliments and accept most compliments, which he interprets as the effect of keeping the subordinate at distance.

Chick's (1991) study of compliment responses in South Africa shows that the frequency of performance of particular speech acts differs in the different cultural groups. He also notes different frequencies of choice of strategies for the performance of speech acts, and that these could be potential sources of intercultural miscommunication. Consequently, Chick (1995) investigates Herbert's (1990) findings about the responses of white middle-class South Africans and argues that these findings could not be generally applied. Even though he replicated Herbert's methods of data collection and analysis as far as possible, Chick (1995) found that, contrary to Herbert's data, white males at the University of Natal overwhelmingly rejected the compliments given. Chick acknowledges the possibility of regional variation and suggests that the "differences in pattern of responses on the

Witwatersrand and Natal campuses reflect, instead, the great uncertainty about social relations which is a consequence of the rapid desegregation occurring in the South African universities recently and the concern by whites to avoid the implication associated with acceptance, namely that they are superior to their interlocutors" (1995: 343).

In addition, the topic of a compliment may affect the type of responses given. Cheng (1993) compared compliment responses made by Americans and Chinese and argued that Americans more readily accept compliments based on their appearance than on their ability, while the Chinese, conversely, would accept compliments based on their possessions and tended to reject compliments based on appearance or achievements. This is because the Chinese believe that modesty enhances their 'face' and self-image. "[W]hen being constrained by the condition of 'agree with the complimenter' and 'avoid self-praise', the Chinese subjects tend to adopt the 'self-praise avoidance' strategy such as shifting credit to the complimenter" (Cheng 1993:59).

Compliments and responses to compliments can therefore be said to vary from culture to culture in terms of acceptance or preferred compliment topic, yet within individual cultures or speech communities, agreement exists about the appropriateness of compliment topics. In other words, what counts as a compliment and appropriate subject for a compliment may differ from culture to culture, and it will reflect the different cultural values and norms of behaviour (Manes 1983, Cheng 2003, see also Ye 1995).

Although the studies of compliments by Cheng (2003), Holmes (1984, 1986, 1987 and 1988), Wolfson (1992) and Chick (1991, 1995) are based respectively on Chinese, New Zealand, American and South African societies, the differences in speech patterns between cultural groups identified by Wolfson (1992) as leading to

miscommunication may be experienced in other multilingual contexts. These studies of compliments, from four different societies, suggest that miscommunication is likely to be experienced in most multilingual contexts. The differences in the distribution of compliments demonstrate the urgent need to explore speech act distribution and use in a multilingual context. Wolfson's study shows that not only do the different value systems upheld by different communities lead to miscommunication when different groups interact; in addition, the misunderstandings that result from miscommunication can also contribute to the formation of stereotypes. Stereotypes are generalisations about a person or group of persons, which are developed when we are unable or unwilling to obtain the information required to make fair judgements about people or situations, and – when unfavourable – have been shown to be implicated in discrimination and persecution of groups. At the same time, stereotypes may also be innocently created and perpetuated.

Other intercultural research that has explored interaction between people from different cultural backgrounds includes studies of intercultural communication in the workplace, professional communication and organization and management of discourse in cross-cultural encounters (Clyne 1994; Scollon and Scollon 2001; Cheng 2003). Clyne (1994) has investigated cultural variation in discourse, in order to examine the role of verbal communication patterns in successful and unsuccessful inter-cultural communication. Clyne's study investigates the spontaneous workplace communication of immigrants from diverse backgrounds in Australia, using English as a lingua franca. Clyne focuses on speech acts, which include apologies, commissives, complaints and directives, and he argues that these speech acts are intertwined in complex interactions often containing several speech acts. Clyne further argues that each cultural group uses their own discourse patterns to cope with the power structures of the workplace, in order to protect their own 'face' in terms of their cultural values. He adds that there is cultural variation in the incidence of particular speech acts; for example, he found that apologies were predominant amongst Europeans, directives among European men, commissives among south-

east Asian women, and complaints were frequent among men from South Asia and Europe. Although Clyne's subjects of study did not include Africans, he explored the communication of non-native English speakers from different groups interacting in English, and he demonstrates that the discourse patterns of the different groups are closely linked to cultural values.

Scollon and Scollon's (2001) study of communication between American or European speakers of English and East Asian non-native English speakers led them to include professional communication or, as they call it, interdiscourse communication in the basic principles of discourse as they apply to communication between members of different groups. They argue that every individual is simultaneously a member of many different discourse systems. People may be "members of a particular corporate group, professional or occupational group, a generation, a gender, a region, [a nation] and an ethnic group, literally, all professional communication is communication across some lines which divide men and women into different discourse groups or systems of discourse" (1995:4). The result of these different discourse strategies which evolve from the diversity of discourse may be that unfair and prejudicial stereotypes are developed to exclude or sanction people who are not members of the particular discourse group. Scollon and Scollon point out that in Asian society, much day-to-day professional communication takes place in English, the international language. They add that in many cases communication is often between two non-native speakers of English, such as a Chinese and Japanese who are doing business together, or Koreans doing business in Saudi Arabia. Scollon and Scollon's study focuses on distinctive patterns of discourse, especially western pattern of discourse, which they believe can in many cases lead to confusion or misinterpretation in intercultural discourse. This study contains very useful parallels with the present study, which focuses on communication amongst African students, few of whom are first-language speakers of English, and who come from different cultural backgrounds, yet interact in English.

Cheng (2003) investigates discourse topic management by Hong Kong Chinese (HKC) and native English speakers (NES) in intercultural conversation. The study compares two groups of culturally different participants in terms of the ways they manage the organisational and interpersonal aspects of English conversation. His investigation focuses on five culturally-laden conversational features: preference organisation, compliments and compliment responses, simultaneous talk, discourse topic management and discourse information structure. Cheng's findings show that the HKC participants examined conform to most of the stereotypical assumptions about Chinese. For instance, in the context of conflict management, when disagreeing with the addressee, HKC employ elaborate, redressive language for purposes of face management. Although Cheng's study focuses on exchanges between native speakers of English and non-native speakers of English, it is useful for exploring differences between NES discourse and non-native English speakers. Since his technique is conversational analysis, he is obliged to limit the study to the surface meanings of the exchanges which he discusses. The present study will seek to look beyond what is said, into intention and perceptions.

Relatively little of this considerable body of research has focussed on Africa. In South Africa, Chick's various studies have shown that every culture and language has developed certain mechanisms to signal that speakers are or are not attempting to be polite. For instance, one of his earlier studies (Chick 1989) focuses on the varying approaches to politeness in different cultures. He observes that in Zulu culture, in a conversation, participants with greater social power use "solidarity politeness"², while the less powerful participants, use "deferential politeness" to show respect. The English-speaking South African in his study, on the other hand, employs solidarity politeness at all times. Therefore, in a conversation that involves both parties, when the Zulu participant shows deference where the English

² Solidarity politeness refers to the communication of politeness through ritual friendliness such as informal behaviour, and deferential politeness refers to the communication of politeness through ritual distance: for example, it is expressed through reserve. See Holmes (1995).

participant expects solidarity, the former is assumed to be unassertive and timid. In a similar manner, the Zulu participant will perceive the English speaker as arrogant and disrespectful (Chick, 1989). I must point out here that Chick was interpreting behaviour patterns at an earlier stage of racial integration in the universities and elsewhere, and that my own study deals with a period when far more interracial mingling has taken place. A further element in the situation, not present in Chick's day, is the presence of a variety of people of African, but non-South African, origins.

Chick's later work (1996) leads him to conclude that it is the violation of appropriate norms, due to ignorance, which usually results in forms of miscommunication and leads to communication breakdown. Chick's work has focused on interactions between people of different racial backgrounds: black and white. What have remained largely undocumented (in South Africa, and more broadly in Africa) are 'black-on-black' interactions, which is a topic to be taken up by the current study. An exception is the work by Ndoleriire (2000) on cross-cultural communication in Africa. He points out that variations in dialects of the same language can lead to miscommunication, as each dialect usually reflects values. For example, in Runyakitara, a group of mutually intelligible dialects in western Uganda, eastern Congo, and northern Tanzania, the word *kuswera* means 'to marry' in one dialect; in another dialect the same word means 'to marry' or 'to make love'. (It may refer to lovemaking in a matrimonial context or to extra- or pre-marital sex as well.) He also notes that in some African ethnic groups, women speak more softly than men; in other African communities in Uganda, children who are standing are not allowed to address their elders (Ndoleriire 2000). In my own experience among the Yorubas in Nigeria, children do not stand when exchanging greetings with elders, and this is also a sign of respect. In South Africa, avoidance of eye contact by Zulu is a non-verbal way of showing respect in a conversation with superiors.³ At the same time, the transfer of such values and meanings from one language into another during conversations can lead to miscommunication. Communication conventions shaped

³ For more on the South African situation see also Chick (1989); de Kadt (1998); Ige (2001); Ige and de Kadt (2002)

by social context have culturally specific character. Words, cultural beliefs, socio-cultural practices and biases of communities could result in miscommunication in the communication process.

Thus, sociolinguistic transfer, also referred to as pragmatic transfer, can be the source of miscommunication. This tends to occur where one or more interlocutors use a foreign or second language but employ the rules of speaking which belong to their native language. Cultures have a direct impact on how we relay and process information, especially information that originates from a language or context that is foreign to us. Miscommunication can, of course, also occur in interactions between individuals with the same native language but who belong to speech communities (regional or class-related, for example) that have different rules of speaking (Chick 1991, 1996; Ndoleriire 2000)⁴.

2.2.2 Intercultural Transfer

Whenever successful cross-cultural communication takes place, it can be assumed that language users have acquired both the pragmalinguistic and sociolinguistic competence that enhances speaker performance in the language. Unsuccessful communication across cultures usually occurs where multilingual speakers implement the rules (linguistic rules and those relating to social language) of one language in another, which has different norms. Thomas (1983) defines the transfer of one language norm to another language as pragmatic failure⁵. She claims that our

⁴ In addition, studies have shown that communication between people who differ culturally often breaks down, as the differences function as 'noise'. 'Noise', according to communication theory, is the interference which prevents or hinders effective communication in terms of reception and understanding of a message. Noise can either be external or internal. External noise refers to actual physical noise such as that of a crying baby as well as visual distractions such as flashing light. Internal noise can be as a result of worry, stress, hunger, anger or lack of background knowledge and experience to make sense of the message. The noise can come from either end of the communication, that is from the sender or the receiver. For example, through poor articulation of words and phrases, unfamiliar ordering of ideas, or over-interpretation of the message, a hearer may take the meaning to be completely different from what the sender intended. Likewise, the receiver can also contribute to 'noise' by not paying enough attention, for example, or by interrupting the speaker to introduce a completely different topic.

⁵ Pragmatics is a subfield of linguistics that developed in the late 1970s. Pragmatics is the study of how people comprehend and produce a communicative act in a conversation; it distinguishes between

misunderstanding of others in conversation is due to our failure to understand the speakers' intentions. This pragmatic failure in cross-cultural communication can occur at two levels: the first is the failure to understand which proposition the speaker has expressed, and the second is the failure to understand the pragmatic force of the speaker's utterance. In addition, misunderstanding of others in conversation can be due to failure to understand speakers' intentions. Kasper (1997) understands pragmatic failure as the inability to comprehend and respond to a communicative action; this applies not only to speech acts such as apologies, requests and compliments, but also to participation in conversation, engaging in different types of discourse, and sustaining interaction in complex speech events. In other words, pragmatic failure is the inability to understand what is meant by what has been said, or to make others understand what one wants to express. Such failure may be attributed either to speakers' or hearers' ignorance of social norms. In a multicultural context, pragmatic failure can be interpreted as impoliteness, and may lead to social disharmony, whether in ordinary conversation or in the workplace. A small misinterpretation can easily result in increased tension between diverse ethnic, racial religious and gender groups. This perhaps explains a growing interest in research seeking to understand how people in different cultures and different languages observe pragmatic principles.

Thomas (1983), in agreement with Leech (1983), distinguishes two elements of the subfield of pragmatic failure: the pragmalinguistic and the sociopragmatic, and hence makes a distinction between pragmalinguistic failure and sociopragmatic failure. She argues that if inter-cultural pragmatic failure is to be avoided, speaker and hearer are required to possess communicative competence in both the pragmalinguistic, the ability to choose the appropriate speech forms, and in the sociopragmatic, the ability to choose appropriate meanings. Thomas uses the phrase pragmalinguistic failure to refer to inadequacies in the resources used to express communicative acts and interpersonal meanings. Pragmatic strategies like the

sentence meaning and speaker meaning. The ability to comprehend and produce a communicative act referred to as pragmatic competence (Leech, 1983; Sperber and Wilson, 1986; Kasper, 1997).

appropriate use of directness and indirectness in language may be involved here. For instance, a second language speaker of Zulu (L2) may employ indirectness, oblivious of the social norm that within the same context, a native speaker or first language speaker of Zulu (L1) would have used a direct communication act. The L2 speaker of Zulu is likely to encounter difficulties in selecting the appropriate speech strategy, simply because the notions of directness and indirectness operate differently in different cultures and languages. This implies that in a multilingual and multicultural context, an L2 speaker's general knowledge of communicative modes (such as directness and indirectness), if simply imported from his or her own language, without an additional understanding of the need for culture and language specific usage, may result in pragmatic failure. Clearly, all users of a language which is not their mother tongue are likely to make frequent mistakes by confusing the norms of behaviour of the language.

Sociopragmatic failure, on the other hand, results from the social perceptions underlying participants' interpretation of and performance of a communicative act. Speech communities are likely to differ in their assessment of social distance and social status between the speakers involved, as well as of rights and obligations and the degree of permissible self-imposition of each speaker on the other (Blum-Kulka & House 1989). Permissible modes of address between men and women, for example, may differ. Chick (1985) argues that due to differences in socio-cultural backgrounds and norms of communicative action in South Africa, interaction between mother-tongue speakers of indigenous Africa languages and mother-tongue speakers of European languages often results in miscommunication. These miscommunications, as he points out, result from misinterpretation and misevaluation of others that lead to ethnic stereotyping, which may be passed on from one generation to another.

Franch (1998), in a study of how non-native speakers understand and carry out linguistic actions in the target language, argues that researchers must attempt to

account for conditions under which pragmatic transfer takes place. This might assist with classifying pragmatic transfer into different kinds, based on the conditions surrounding the instance of transfer, leading to categorisation of types of pragmatic failure.

Pragmatic transfer is one issue in the field of inter-language pragmatics, which has been defined by Kasper (1992:203) as “studies of production and comprehension of a second language (L2) user”. Pragmatic transfer, which refers to the influence of learners’ first language (L1) knowledge on the comprehension, production and learning of a target L2, focuses on how learners’ L1 norms of speaking affects their L2 performance (Kasper, 1992, 1996 and Itukura 2002). Kasper and Blum-Kulka (1993) expanded the scope of interlanguage pragmatics to include intercultural styles in contact situations between bilingual speakers. They identify five research areas: pragmatic comprehension; production of linguistic action; development of pragmatic competence; pragmatic transfer; and communicative effect.

Second language learning research has explored ways through which learners can ultimately attain competence in their target second language. The initial study of language transfer led to the approach known as Contrastive Analysis (Wardhaugh 1974; Thomas 1983; Spolsky 1986; Blum-Kulka et al 1989; Clyne 1987; and Scollon and Scollon 1995). Franch (1998), who has traced the history of studies of language transfer, points out that Contrastive Analysis claims that the native language (NL) strongly influences second language (L2) learning. In this way, language transfer became part of second language acquisition studies (SLA). Ellis (1994 and Odlin (1989) define transfer as a term used generally for all kinds of influences a language may have over another.

Under SLA there emerged two schools of thought, the generalist and the minimalist schools. The generalist school of thought treated transfer as one of several processes

that occur in second language acquisition. Under a generalist approach, the first language influence on the second language is studied as the major determinant of learner achievement in L2. It lays emphasis on the role of L1 in the developmental process of L2 acquisition. The minimalist school on the other hand minimises the importance of the L1 and rather places emphasis on universal learning processes by focusing on the similarity between L1 and L2⁶

I adopt Kasper's (1992) definition of transfer for this study. Kasper argues that "pragmatic failure...refers to the influence exerted by learners'/ [speakers'] pragmatic knowledge of languages and cultures other than L2 on their comprehension and production [within L2]" (207). Consequently, the conditions that promote transfer (which are referred to as transferability constraints) have been limited to sensitivity toward 'context-external' and 'context-internal' factors. Kasper (1992) identifies levels of sociolinguistic factors that condition the occurrence of pragmatic transfer as:

the display of sensitivity towards context-external factors such as interlocutors' familiarity and relative status ... and context-internal factors such as degree of imposition, legitimacy of the requestive goal and 'standardness' of the situation in requesting, and severity of offence, obligation to apologize, and likelihood of apology (211-212).

My contribution to the study of pragmatic transfer is informed by Kasper's notion of the context-internal and -external factors, which I use to explain what I will refer to as motivated transfer and unmotivated transfer. Motivated transfer is goal-driven; it is a deliberate act that is embarked upon when making a statement. Unmotivated transfer is unintentional transfer, mostly due to ignorance of the socially acceptable norms. Motivated transfer is intentional internal or external transfer by speakers or

⁶ See Selinker (1972).

hearers. Unmotivated transfer is unintentional internal or external transfer by speakers or hearers.

For instance it is possible for context-internal status to validate the situation within the speaker irrespective of the external status, which suggests the possibility of a defiant, or of a placatory attitude, expressed in action or speech as a result of internal validation of the situation. Hence, whatever the actor or speaker decides is acceptable to him or her might prevail over what he or she knows is expected. The intention behind every instance of transfer becomes useful information, especially in identifying what is transferred; and the reason why it is transferred, as Franch (1998) suggests, may have explanatory power.

The intentional transfer of conversational features of the NL into the language of interaction may be a form of reinforcement of loyalty to and solidarity of a group with its language and people. Ige (2001) and Ige and de Kadt (2002) point out that the politeness strategies selected by Zulu students when speaking English show that the majority of the male students intentionally transfer Zulu norms when speaking in English as a show of allegiance to their language and culture. Even though most of them are aware of the conventions of polite behaviour in English and are fluent in the language, they may choose to be heard and seen as Zulu. In the same study, Ige (2001) and Ige and de Kadt (2002) show that female Zulu students have a preference for English language norms and tend in language to distance themselves from what is considered 'Zulu'. The female group in some cases chose to communicate using English language norms when interacting with their Zulu male counterparts, even though these female students were competent native speakers of Zulu. On some occasions they would strategically ignore Zulu norms to make a statement. It can be assumed that whenever our group loyalties are undermined or threatened, our reaction may be acted out during interaction, by reinforcing or reconstructing ourselves either through verbal or non-verbal forms that indicate displeasure or disagreement with the issue or situation.

2.2.3 Intercultural Identities

House (2000) presents a framework for analyzing mismanaged communication in cross-cultural interactions using examples of cases of failed interpersonal and interactional relationships. In her presentation she begins with a list of reasons as to why misunderstandings occur in interactions between two or more people. She includes what she refers to as “uncooperativeness on the part of the hearer, who may have understood perfectly well what the speaker had tried to communicate, but just intended to be awkward” (146).

Although House did not pursue this discussion, ‘uncooperativeness’ is a useful concept that I shall explore in the literature in this section to show that interlocutors, whether the speaker or hearer is competent linguistically or otherwise, may deliberately ignore the rules guiding acceptable behaviour or ‘contextualization cues’ during interaction.

Reports on research into multilingual contexts have shown that the choice of language and language usage have significant meanings for the identity of multilingual people in the community. Apart from the ability of people to choose and use language as an instrument of communication, either to communicate information, and/or for interpersonal relations, language is also a symbol of social or group identity, “an emblem of group membership and solidarity” (Grosjean 1982:117). Haugen (1956) argues that language:

is at once a social institution, like the laws, the religion, or the economy of the community, and a social instrument which accompanies and makes possible all other institutions, [and] as an institution, it may become a symbol of the community group (1956:87).

Haugen (1956) further notes that language use is accompanied by the attitudes and values placed on it by its users and non-users of the language, both as an instrument of communication and a symbol of group identity. Individual attitudes towards a language will impact, for example, on the value placed on the language, and invariably, on how much of it is used by the first language speakers or learnt by second language speakers. In other words, the status of the language also influences the attitudes of speakers as well as non-speakers.

Wherever languages are in contact, one is likely to find certain prevalent attitudes of favour or disfavour towards the languages involved. These can have profound effects on the psychology of the individuals and their use of the languages. In the final analysis these attitudes are directed at the people who use the languages and are therefore inter-group judgements and stereotypes (1956:95).

When two languages come into contact, usually one language is dominant over the other. Studies of multilingualism, such as Grosjean (1982); Beardsmore (1986); Holmes (1999) and Spolsky (1998), have pointed out that the dominant language is usually spoken by the group that holds political, cultural and economic power in the community. The others are minority languages (in terms of power relations), spoken by groups that hold less power and prestige. The language users' attitudes toward the prestigious and less prestigious language(s) would influence their willingness to learn or use the different languages.

Fishman's contribution to the study of multilingualism includes his analysis of the domains of language. Fishman (1971) argues that the individual language choices of multilingual speakers in everyday conversation, and their decisions about the appropriate language or variant, are largely determined by domains of language use. A domain is determined by the location of the verbal exchange, participants

(addressee/speaker) and the topic of the discourse. Some factors influencing language choice include participants in the exchange, language proficiency and preference, socio-economic status, age, gender, race, ethnicity, and education. For example, South Africa has eleven official languages; speakers of more than one of the eleven languages, it is assumed, will choose the appropriate language in relation to the domain. We must also keep in mind that the eleven languages, although official, do not have equal status, and this can be described in terms of diglossia, which is explained below. There is also the situational factor, as in the location or setting, the presence of monolinguals, the degree of intimacy between interlocutors, and lastly, the factor of the topic or content of discourse.

Ferguson (1959) introduced the concept of diglossia in relation to the functional allocation of language varieties in societies. Through his discussion we are shown that some languages (or varieties of a single language) have higher status, and are normally used in certain domains, such as place of worship, market place and place of learning (school). He described diglossia as a situation where two varieties of a language, identified as high (H) and low (L) varieties, have distinct social functions in the community. Where an H variety is used, the L variety is not used, and vice versa. Examples of such exist all over the world, such as H German and L Swiss German, which is spoken only in Switzerland. In my experience in Nigeria, Yoruba is H and Ijesha dialect of Yoruba is L. Fishman (1971) extends the theory of diglossia to include the situations of any two languages that are in contact and also uses it to describe what happens where two or more varieties of the same language are used in different social settings. The H language or variety is generally associated with prestige and power, while the Ls are less prestigious and less powerful. In recent years, the scope of diglossia has been further expanded to include more than two languages. Holmes (1992) states that the term 'polyglossia' can be used for multilingual situations where a community uses more than two languages.

Kamwangamalu (2000) illustrates with African examples Ferguson's original theories of diglossia and Fishman's extended definition. He argues that indigenous African languages with a literary tradition, such as "[I]sizulu in South Africa, Kiswahili in Tanzania, Cibemba in Zambia, and Yoruba in Nigeria" have two varieties, the high and low (2000: 104). The H varieties are used in places like church, or taught at school, and the low ones are commonly spoken at home or marketplace. Likewise, the relationship between African languages and ex-colonial languages, such as English, French and Portuguese, is also diglossic. The ex-colonial languages are prestigious, while the indigenous languages are less prestigious and less powerful. Most African countries, at independence, adopted the ex-colonial language as a lingua franca that could also be used as a 'contact language' for inter-group communication. In Africa, ex-colonial languages are "the language(s) of administration, the media, education, diplomacy, social mobility, inter-ethnic communication, and international business transactions" (Kamwangamalu 2000:105).

Despite the diglossic nature of language and dialect usage in Africa, the language attitudes of the people play a significant part in their choice of language. For instance Wolff (1964, 1967) and Oke (1972) have separately studied language attitudes of speakers of small-scale languages in different Nigerian communities and have established that peoples' scale of preference is determined by complex factors ranging from political and cultural to socio-economic. According to Wolff (1964:442) the people of Ishan and Etsako speakers rejected the "universal Edo" orthography, a more prestigious usage, for fear of Edo linguistic imperialism. As Ndukwe (1990) points out, it appears that the differences in language attitudes and choice are strongly linked to people's motivation to identify with groups. The motivation can either be positive or negative and it influences language choice directly. People easily adopt and adhere to the rules of groups which they perceive as socially powerful, to the extent of wanting to be identified with them.

Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) point out that in South Africa, the perception of language as an identity marker⁷ differs from community to community. For instance, in some Afrikaans-speaking areas, Afrikaans is regarded as an indispensable part of the socio-cultural life of the communities and people express loyalty and love for the language. However, in some black communities, Afrikaans is regarded as a “symbol of oppression, triggering anger and resistance” (2000:11). Similarly, Webb and Kembo-Sure point out that the popularity of English in South Africa as a symbol of liberation is also being contested “because of the insistence that a specific set of language norms (namely British English) be applied” (2001:11). In addition, a struggle for ethnic superiority also exists within the South African family of Bantu languages. Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:11) argue that nowadays it is a common occurrence to find a speaker of isiZulu in conversation with a speaker of Setswana, and each speaking his/her own language and refusing to accommodate the other.

Studies in second language acquisition like that of Peirce (1995) have also pointed out that ‘social identity’ means the various ways in which people understand themselves in relation to others. This also includes the ways in which people view their past and their future, and how they want to be viewed and understood. The ability to speak a target language is sometimes constrained by the power relations between speakers, and structural inequalities such as gender, race, ethnicity and class can limit learners’ exposure to the target language and the opportunities to learn it. Peirce (1995) cites the example of immigrant women from Vietnam, Poland, Czechoslovakia and Peru living in Canada who pretend not to understand English in order to retain their identity as elderly women, which attracts a lot of respect for them. Peirce’s investigation shows how far people will go to ensure that they are seen and received as they desire. This suggests that the identity desired by a person involved in an interaction, and the way in which he or she aspires to be represented, may well impact on the outcome of the conversation.

⁷ ‘Identity marker’ refers to the language functioning as a symbol of individual and group identity, which is probably the most important feature of language in multilingual and multicultural societies.

Scollon and Scollon (1996), in their investigation of misunderstanding and conflict between members of the different ethnic groups in Alaska and Northern Canada, argue that problems arise from ideas and information. The way in which a claim is presented is usually influenced by the presenter's identity. Drawing on Goffman (1974) they point out that the concept of 'self' manifests itself in everyday interaction between people. According to Goffman, identity is the way in which one views oneself in interaction, since it is through talking that we present ourselves and our self-view to others. Scollon and Scollon (1995) argue that the presentation of self occurs in many ways, for instance, it is reflected in our choice of words, in our tone of voice, in the attitudes we display and in the topics about which we talk. In talking each participant presents a particular view of the world and of self (1995:62). The self people want to portray is usually displayed when engaged in discourse. The self which people present may also vary from one discourse type to another.

Similarly, Tajfel and Turner's (1979) social identity theory states that a person has not one 'self', but rather several 'selves' that relate to particular situations⁸. For instance, as Turner *et al* (1987:45) point out, the different social contexts may influence an individual to think, feel and act on the basis of his personal, familial or national "level of self" which may be different from other "levels of self"; an individual has multiple "social identities". According to Hogg and Vaughan (2002), the individual's self concept is derived from perceived membership of social groups. In other words, it is an individual-based understanding of what defines the group identity that is exhibited for others to see. Hence the sense of self is presented which has been developed through interaction with the group(s) with which the self identifies.

It would therefore appear that the attitude of people towards languages of communication can sometimes influence their own choice of language, dialect and

⁸ Social Identity Theory was developed by Tajfel and Turner in 1979, with the original intention of understanding the psychological basis of inter-group discrimination.

type of vocabulary and pronunciation, which may lead to an intentional modification of the 'self' which they present in speech which the self identified with. It is possible to associate "favour or disfavour" (a language attitude identified by Haugen, 1956:95), with a speaker's choices of language or dialect, and this may produce an intentional pragmatic transfer. Haugen (1956) equally identifies as "favour" or "disfavour" a positive or negative attitude in an addressee to the language which he or she hears, and suggests that this too may lead to intentional, or unintentional, pragmatic transfer.

Researchers such as Ferguson (1971); Fishman (1965); Huagen (1956) and Lambert (1955) have defined multilingualism at individual and societal levels and have broadened its scope to include the interaction of the norms and protocols of multiple languages and cultures. According to Spolsky (1998), multilingualism evolved historically from voluntary or involuntary migration of people speaking one language into the territory of another group of speakers of another language, and hence is the result of "conquest and subsequent incorporation of speakers of different languages into single units" (1998:53). This is occasionally true for African communities that were colonised by major European powers in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries (of course South Africa which was colonised earlier): the Khoi language, for example, has left some traces in Afrikaans, and the remaining descendants of the Khoi are for the most part speakers of Afrikaans. However, colonialism is not the only reason for migration. Nowadays, there are internal wars, economic hardship, educational and religious factors and a whole range of political situations in which people are displaced (Grosjean 1982; Beardsmore 1986; Holmes 1999).

Multilingualism remains a fact of social life in Africa today. Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000) estimate the languages of the world as numbering 6600. In Africa about 2000 of the world languages are spoken as first languages by more than 480 million people. Some of the languages are closely related, others are mutually unintelligible.

Some of the languages belong to the same language family and have been classified according to their linguistic relationship, that is, their lexis and structure or syntax (in which case their words and sentence formation are similar). African languages have been classified into four language families: Afro-Asiatic languages, Nilo-Saharan languages, Khoisan languages, and Niger-Congo languages.⁹ This diversity of language families and languages represents different cultures. As pointed out by Coulmas (1997:34), language is a 'genetic fingerprint of unmistakable cultural identity'. Oyelaran (1990), in agreement with Coulmas, argues that the most important "carrier" of people's culture is their language, which is the most distinctive of all the traits which separate human beings from each other. In other words, language is not just a product of culture, but also the tool employed for the expression of cultural norms and practice.

In a multilingual community, individuals make a number of choices in their daily interactions, whether as monolinguals or multilinguals. Coulmas (1997), in an investigation of people's choices of language, argues that individuals' choices of words, registers, styles and languages in a multilingual setting are strongly linked to their various communicative ideas, their association with and separation from others, and the concession, establishment or defence of dominance. This suggests that during interaction multilingual people will constantly be choosing amongst varieties of language and languages to communicate their understanding of a situation without losing, or too greatly modifying, their preferred identity. In the present study, identity negotiation through the use of antagonistic discourse, that is, impoliteness, appears to play a crucial role in the different groups' performance of communicative acts. It is therefore essential in this study to explore identity as a tool

⁹ The Afro-Asian language family consists of the semitic language Arabic, and related dialects which are the language of some Islamic peoples. The African family includes the Amharic languages of Ethiopia, Oromo or Gala of Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, and Northern Tanzania, and the Hausa language of Nigeria. The Nilo-Saharan family consists of Samburu, Kpsigis, and Nandi, spoken in Kenya; Dholuo as well as Masai, spoken in Kenya and Tanzania, Padhola and Acholi spoken in Uganda, and Dinka, Par, and Nuer spoken in Sudan. The Khoisan family includes Khoikhoi and San (also referred to as Bushman) in southern Africa, including Namibia, Botswana, Angola, Tanzania. Niger-Congo languages form the largest family and include the Bantu languages of sub-Saharan Africa: Yoruba and Ibo in Nigeria, Kiswahili in Central and East Africa, Kikongo, Kinyawanda, Makua, isiXhosa and isiZulu in southern Africa (see Webb and Kembo-Sure 2000).

for the understanding of the different perceptions and reactions displaced by the participants.

2.3 GENDERED LANGUAGE USE

In order to pursue the gender-related questions raised in chapter one, I present in this section a review of relevant literature on issues of language and gender, while maintaining a focus on multilingual language situations. One of the earliest challenges in the gender debate was the sex-gender distinction, and debate as to whether gendering is the result of sex, and to what extent gender is a social construct (Stanley 2002). Sex has been defined as a set of biological differences. Gender is a set of attitudes, behaviours and practices which are seen as related to sex, but which may have no essential connection. Two approaches have emerged from the sex-gender distinction: biological essentialism and social constructionism. People who take the biological approach hold the essentialist view that differing reproductive systems and strength, body shape and size, brain structure, and capacity for physical exertion cause gender roles to develop logically and naturally, since they are based on biological reality (Lough 1998); in other words, essentialists argue that the social manifestations of our maleness and femaleness are a direct product of biological factors.

The social constructionist view, which is generally more acceptable to feminists, argues that biological essentialism is based on popular prejudice or ignorance. Social constructionism asserts that gender is formed by cultural forces that indicate how people should – in terms of their sex/gender - act, play, move and dream. To this view, sex here is biological, but gender is an identity shaped through interaction with others.

Weatherall (2002) argues that what gender is varies between cultures, and may even vary in a culture over time and space. Entry to particular professions, forbidden to women 150 years ago, is nowadays acceptable in most cultures. Gender, therefore, like impoliteness, can be said to be culture specific. According to Bergvall (1996) a

society creates gender, and its meanings are determined by a composite of shared expectations and norms within the society, concerning appropriate male and female behaviour, characteristics and roles. Ochs (1992) argues that for humans, gender construction starts with assignment to a sex category on the basis of the genitals at birth. Thus, at birth, the sex category begins to become a gender status through naming, dressing, and later on toys and other gender markers. Gender debates range from women's rights as individuals, through to career and marital choices. There have been movements (such as women's movement in the 60s and 70s) to expose gender oppression in terms of economic class in the broader framework of capitalism, and to expose patriarchy as a system characterised by dominance, hierarchy and competition. A gendered system almost always subordinates women in the society.

Gender roles are constructed and enacted largely through discourse. Men and women are actively involved in constructing their gendered identities.

[W]e, as individuals and as groups, are not passively shaped by the larger societal forces such as schools or the media, but are active in selecting, adapting and rejecting the dimensions we choose to incorporate, or not, into our version of gender. (Allard et al 1995: 24)

People actively adopt different masculine and feminine practices, depending on their situations and beliefs. Nevertheless our understandings of gender are dynamic, changing over time with maturity, experience and reflection.

Butler (1990) argues that gender is performative, and that the feminine and masculine styles of conversation are the products of repetitive acts by women and men. "Gender is the repeat stylisation of the body, a set of repeated acts within a rigid regulatory frame which over time produce the appearance of substance, of a 'natural' kind of being (1990:33)". Cameron, in support of Butler's position, argues that "people are who they are because of, *inter alia*, the way they talk" (1997: 49).

Without doubt, language use and the choice of language used daily reinforce the constructed gender identities. Gender, therefore, is a process that creates social differences which define women and men. Butler (1990) and Connell (1992) agree that it is through social interaction that individuals learn what is expected, see what is expected, act and react in conventional ways, and in the process of learning construct and maintain the gendered order. "The very injunction to be given gender takes place through discursive routes: to be a good mother, to be a heterosexually desirable object, to be a fit worker" (Butler 1990:145).

Although the above quotation implies that men and women behave for the most part according to what they have learnt to be appropriate behaviour in society, most of the literature on language and gender focuses on the gendered situation of monolingualism.¹⁰ As Piller and Pavlenko (2001) rightly point out, most of the studies of language and gender make incidental references to multilingualism. Thus little or nothing is known about the language choices and uses of men and women who speak two or more languages. Yet because the multilingual language situation involves having access to and use of several languages, the issues of identity with regard to language are complicated and cannot be generalised. Multilingualism has important implications for the relationship between gender and language, just as it has for communication in the societies where it is a fact of life.

2.3.1 African Critique of Gender Theory

Some of the recently emergent African discourse on gender issues as they relate to Africa includes the African feminist critique of the western approach to the conceptualisation of gender and the over-generalisation of eurocentric norms. African feminists have argued that the concept of gender has frequently been judged in relation to the Euro-American norms of culture and experience. Mikell (1997) explains gender from an African perspective and argues that the African feminist

¹⁰ See for instance the following studies of language and gender which for the most part focus on monolingual language situations: Coates (1996, 1998) Cameron (1996), (1998); Mills (2002, 2004); Crawford (1995).

approach to the concept differs completely from the western approach, which is based on western forms of feminism since the 1960s. She states that gender dynamics in Africa are different from those generated by western feminism. She points out that the gender struggle in the west is shaped by individualism and patriarchal control over women within capitalist industrialized western societies. African feminism, she argues, is shaped by resistance to western hegemony and its legacy within African culture. The notion of individualism which is so strong in the west, and the hegemony of western ideas within modern African culture are of significance for this study, because many of my respondents show strong (positive or negative) reactions to this hegemony.

Furthermore, African feminism, according to Mikell (1997), is typically heterosexual, pro-natal, and concerned with “bread, butter, culture and power” issues (1997:4). Mama (2000) and Kolawole (2001) also express concern about the indiscriminate application of western gender theories in Africa. Amadiume (1997) argues that the western notion of family, which is nuclear, differs from that of African society where the extended family system is (or was) practiced. In the West, the typical nuclear family consists (or used to consist) of a dominant husband/father, a subordinate wife and their children. Family experiences within a nuclear group must necessarily differ from those in an extended family.

Oyewumi (1997), in agreement with Amadiume (1997), but with a radical view on the applicability of gender theories to Africa, argues that the application of gender to African realities is problematic, because the concern that has produced gender debates and research is born out of Euro-American women’s experiences and desire for change. Oyewumi rejects the western feminists’ use of gender as a universalising model for describing women’s subordination and oppression. Her argument suggests that ‘woman and her subordination’ is not universal. Furthermore, Oyewumi’s (2002) later work points out that western feminists’ concept of gender is deeply rooted in the nuclear family system. The western nuclear family, she explains, is a gendered unit, a ‘male-headed two-parent household’, where the male head is the

breadwinner and the female is associated with home and nurture. She argues that it is alien to Africa “despite its promotion by the colonial and neo-colonial state, international-development agencies, feminist organisations, [and] contemporary non-governmental organisations (NGOs)” (2002:3). She further argues that within the African family system, which is non-nuclear, the family is non-gendered. She demonstrates this with Yoruba kinship examples where kinship roles and categories are not gender-differentiated. Oyewumi argues that in the Yoruba family, power centres within the family are diffuse and not gender specific, but centred on age. Power is vested in seniority, based on relative age and not on gender. According to Oyewumi, “seniority is the social ranking of persons based on their chronological ages, and thus the words *egbon* refers to the older sibling and *aburo* to the younger sibling of the speaker, regardless of gender. She concludes by arguing that the seniority principle is “dynamic and fluid; unlike gender, it is not rigid or static” (2002:5).

Oyewumi’s generalisations about Euro-American women and their families, as well as about African families, now seem in turn somewhat essentialist and old-fashioned in an intellectual climate which acknowledges the great diversity of African cultures. In this thesis, diversity of cultures and languages, and therefore of expectations of the self and others, is crucial. Politeness and impoliteness are both related to cultural expectations and the ways in which behaviour conforms or fails to conform to them. What I am concerned with is a situation in which these expectations are frequently likely to differ.

The above critique nevertheless must acknowledge that the issue of language and gender identities in the African multilingual situation may be different from the images of men and women constructed through choice and style of language use in bilingual or multilingual European communities. The period of African history to which Oyewumi (2000) refers was the pre-colonial era. The findings of this study may allow for an understanding of African pre-colonial and colonial practices as

they survive in the post-colonial generations, especially since Mama (2001) claims that there is no word for 'identity' in African languages.

Bakare-Yusuf (2002), in response to Oyewumi's critique of the conceptualisation of gender, argues that to reject outright any attempt to assign a particular conceptual category as belonging only to the 'West' and as therefore inapplicable to the African situation is to "violate the order of knowledge" (2002:11). She argues that, because for centuries, Africa has been in contact with Europe and Europe with Africa, from this relationship a whole series of borrowed traditions have continually spread and been adopted. She sees the denial of this cultural exchange as a denial of inter-cultural exchange between Africa and Europe.

Members of the groups on which I shall focus, and on which my research is based, though for the most part of African origins, come from a diversity of national, cultural and linguistic backgrounds. No essentialising sense of what is 'Africa' is appropriate to their behaviour or their expectations of each other. For this reason, my research, in dealing with their encounters, is based on 'difference' and not on some purported 'similarity' between all Africans.

2.3.2 Studies of Gender and Multilingual Situations

As mentioned above, gendered investigations of multilingual communities have only recently begun to appear. An early seminal study by Gal (1978, 1979) investigates language shift in the Hungarian village of Oberwart and reveals unmistakable influence of gender on the language choice of bilinguals. Her study reveals that Oberwart women's choices promote language change. The younger women opt for German language as a tool of freedom from the Austrian traditional male-dominated system of subsistence agriculture, while the older women protect and guard Hungarian. Following on this study, until a decade and half later, the gendered nature of bilingual situations remained under-researched. *Bilingual Women: Anthropological Approaches to Second-Language Use* (Burton et al 1994) was one

of the first collections of papers to deal with the experiences of bilingual women in different situations of language contact. It appears that women are often regarded as the guardians of minority languages and by implication, of ethnic identity. They are held responsible for imparting and sustaining the mother tongue in the midst of the many other languages with which the community comes into contact. The book gave insights into complexity of gender in bilingual communities; through their investigations, the authors revealed the role of women in creating understanding and cooperation between people. At the same time, several papers in the volume document the refusal by women to take on this role.

In their investigation of Georgian women in the former USSR, Chinchaladze and Dragadze (1994) argue that women are traditionally seen as the “guardians of literacy” in Georgian villages. The men have access to Russian by virtue of movement and service in the army, and thus need to use Russian, while the women who remain in the district in which they were born are restricted to their home language. When Georgian was recognised as the national language and the language of education, this worked to the women’s advantage. Women as home educators in the Georgian language are key instruments in the preservation of national identity and are committed and loyal to the cause. Georgian women are said to be more enthusiastic about the Georgian language as the medium of education, and their enthusiasm is in conformity with Georgian nationalist sentiments.

MacDonald (1994), basing his claims on his investigation of women and their linguistic conservatism in Brittany (France), also reveals that women play a critical role in the survival or death of minority language, such as Breton. This is evident in the activities of the Breton nationalist movement. MacDonald (1994) argues that although Breton is generally conceptualised as feminine, in opposition to French culture, and is the mother tongue of the Breton nationalist movement, the women of the village of Kerguz associate Breton with a hard and deprived way of life, and associate French with femininity, refinement and sophistication. The women of

Kerguz have ended up speaking predominantly French at women's gatherings, and refusing to transmit Breton to their children, and this has led to the death of the language in the area. Loyalty to a language, when the cultural baggage with which it is associated is disagreeable to a particular group, is certainly not automatic; we shall see that young Zulu women at the University of Natal have reacted against their mother tongue in a way comparable to the women of Kerguz.

Recent studies of gender and second language learning depict women as guardians of the home language and culture, and sometimes as rebels (Pavlenko and Piller 2001). Women are portrayed by studies as slower learners of second language, for a number of reasons, which include restricted access or symbolic resistance to mainstream culture. Blackledge (2001) describes how working-class immigrants' mothers from Bangladesh, now living in Britain, and who are literate both Bengali and Arabic, are constructed as illiterate, incompetent caregivers in their interactions with their children's teachers. Even though these women may have other accomplishments which allow them to support their children's learning of Bengali and Arabic, their lack of competence in English and in the rules of 'middle-class culture' causes them to be undervalued by British educators. Goldstein (2001) investigates the language choices of Portuguese immigrant women in Canada and argues that the women are faced with a choice between speaking Portuguese or English in the workplace. The choice of English would automatically offer them access to better employment opportunities. Yet the women stick to Portuguese for motives of solidarity with fellow Portuguese, even though it could cost them the chance of a more skilled and better paid job, which they are willing to trade for solidarity, support and companionship.

Despite the diversity of issues discussed in Chinchaladze and Dragadze (1994; Blackledge (2001) and Goldstein (2001), the common focus is on the role of gendered social and discursive practices in the production and reproduction of identities and social inequalities in multilingual communities. However, the focus of

these studies is mainly on women, and little or nothing is known about the role men play in the communities with regard to their language choices and usage. The present research attempts to bridge this gap by investigating exchanges between men and women. Some other studies present women as cultural brokers, sensitive to the demand of the linguistic marketplace. Fast learners of L2 languages and culture can arm themselves with language varieties which are prestigious in the society (Gal 1978). This contradicts the images of women as custodians of the home language discussed above, and further confirms that it is dangerous to generalise about the meaning of gender identities, especially in a multilingual situation.

In a related study of the relationship between performance and perceptions of gendered and linguistic identity in an informal setting like the family, Piller (2001) investigates the linguistic practices of married couples, of whom one is German and the other English. Piller argues that women are disadvantaged in two ways: they are often denied the status of natives in their national communities when they have married a foreigner, and they may be refused acceptance as part of their husbands' communities. As a result, the women become marginalised both in their birth and marital communities and must learn to inhabit the borderlands and forge new multicultural, post-national identities for themselves. Although Piller's study is of married couples, it explores the language choices of men and women and their impact on their identities. The findings of the study indicate the need to interrogate the languages and identities of both females and males in multilingual communities. In her conclusion, Piller (2001:223) suggests the need to further investigate "the question to what extent fluency, be it native fluency, near-native fluency, or second language fluency, is a matter of perception rather than performance".

In another recent study of language and gender in a bilingual context, Pujolar (2001) studied youth culture in Spain, focussing on the ways in which young people speak and how they construct their identities when they get together, away from the controlling power of parents, teachers and priests. Using discourse analysis (2001)

she argues that the development of particular speech styles in the contexts of bilingual young people's leisure activities is strongly connected with struggles over gender, ethnic and class relations. Pujolar's study indicates that gender, ethnicity and class are important categories of social identity in a bilingual context. Her study is an important contribution to the new literature on bilingualism and multilingualism which is beginning to emerge.

Although this review has shown that there is a growing interest in gender and language among scholars, the ways in which language is gendered in Africa are under-researched in comparison to the USA and Europe. Most of the multilingual and gender researchers are located in European bilingual or multilingual societies, where for the most part the focus is on European languages. Certainly the linguistic dynamics of European diversity and African diversity are not the same. Because Africa is home to larger numbers of languages, complex interactions are more likely to occur in African contexts. My research will attempt to address this existing gap in multilingual and gender studies.

The main focus of work on language and gender in South Africa has been on the 'powerless' language use of African women. Some of the early works on gender and language use include the study of "*hlonipa*" – the 'language of respect'. *Hlonipa* is a traditional language practice among Xhosa and Zulu people of South Africa. To show respect, a Zulu or Xhosa woman must avoid using the syllables in the name of her father in-law or brother in-law in speech. Zungu (1985) demonstrates this with a Zulu example: where a brother in-law's name is *Kwazi* (Knowledge) she must avoid the *zi* or *azi* syllables, whereby "*angazi*" (I don't know) will become *angagci*. Finlayson, (1995), Zungu (1985) and Dowling (1988) argue that, traditionally, Zulu and Xhosa married women practice "*hlonipa*" more than their male counterparts.

The studies of “*hlonipa*” stress the fact that men’s and women’s languages differ in such societies, and present women as weaker than men, and as users of language forms which suggest that they belong to a subordinate group. These findings reinforce Lakoff’s (1975) concept of genderlect. In other words, they reflect the status ascribed to women in these communities. As Dowling (1988) points out, the historical existence of “*hlonipa*” as an obligation on women has influenced the ways in which men have marginalised women in social, economic and political arenas in such communities.

De Klerk (1997), one of the few researchers exploring language and gender issues in South Africa, investigates the gendered use of expletives (extreme forms of slang, usually seen as amounting at least in intention to an assertion of the speaker’s masculinity) among young South Africans. She argues that, contrary to the social norm, which regards the use of slang and expletives as a display of masculine identity in the eyes of their listeners, females have encroached on the “masculine language” space and thus are closing up the gap between the two gender groups in terms of taboos (1997:145). De Klerk (1997) further argues that conventional sex role theory can no longer account for the use of expletives by either males or females, since expletives were previously used to display masculinity. I must however observe that I have never encountered the use of expletives by young Zulu women students.

More recent research has consciously sought to create an awareness of language and gender as an important research topic in South Africa. The *Journal of Southern African Linguistics and Applied Language Studies* published in 2002 a first slender Special Issue on language and gender, a reflection of emerging interest in this topic. Among the four articles in this volume, Appalraju and de Kadt (2002) investigate the relationship between gender and bilingualism in South Africa, and Ige and de Kadt (2002) explore gender and politeness and discover that attitudes towards cultural identity not only vary between men and women, but also vary between individuals.

2.3.3 Feminist Post-structuralism

Gender is a crucial variable in any study of how men and women use language. It is through language that people learn what gendered behaviour is appropriate to them in particular circumstances (Schieffelin and Ochs 1986). As Johnson (1997) points out, language is one of the resources that individuals and society draw upon in constructing gender roles and identities. For several decades, research in language and gender has posed and attempted to answer questions like “In what ways do men and women speak differently?” (Bing and Bergvall 1996:4). This line of questioning assumes that men and women *do* speak differently, and it was often found by these researchers, and by others, that the language of women tends to relate to their expectation of subservience. Similar to the above is the question, “How does language usage and choice of language reflect, construct and maintain male dominance?” which has been a major preoccupation in language and gender research (1996). On the other hand, I shall explore ways in which, amongst students whose mother-tongue is Zulu, women’s choice of English in interactions with members of their language group represents a means of moving away from the cultural norm of female-to-male deference. This choice is, not surprisingly, much resented by the male interlocutor.

Historically, the three early approaches to language and gender studies are: (a) the deficit model, (b) the dominance model and (c) the difference model. The deficit model presents women as disadvantaged speakers, based on their early sex-role socialisation. Lakoff (1973, 1975) suggests that women interact in a “powerless language”. The second model, the ‘dominance’ model, is exemplified for instance by the work of Zimmerman and West (1975). West (1984) and Fishman (1983), too, recognise male control of language and focus on how language reflects, constructs, and maintains male dominance. Zimmerman and West conclude that women tend to perform poorly in cross-sex conversations in comparison to their male counterparts. Feminists like Spender (1980), and others, are interested in exploring how

dominance is achieved through language. They consider how interruptions, the use of gendered pronouns and nouns, deference and self-assertion, reflect and maintain language power relations. Whilst the gendered use of language has changed greatly over the last three decades, it is still true that the expectations of particular cultural groups (Zulu, Afrikaans, Indian, black or white) within the university may differ, and in the same way, impoliteness may be perceived differently in terms of gender expectations by the different groups.

The difference model sees itself as an alternative approach to the first two models. Its objective is to discourage those working on women's speech from a perpetual comparison with male norms, which continues to place women in a position of deficit. This approach, therefore, stresses that women's language is not inferior to men's language, but simply different. It resembles other social divisions like race, since the segregation of the sexes during childhood and adolescence produces marked differences in conversational goals and styles (Maltz and Borker 1982; Coates, 1986, 1995).

The 1990s saw a resurgence of interest in language and gender, which resulted in a critique of early approaches and the emergence of poststructuralist approaches. This critique argued that earlier models of language and gender studies had all been influenced by an essentialist understanding of gender, which is preoccupied with a view of men and women as binary opposites. What is required is an approach with anti-essential perspectives. The roots of the male/ female binary opposition can be traced to structuralist approaches to language. Within the structuralist paradigm, language is conceptualised in terms of a series of contrasting sounds, which are connected to form words, and still continue to make meaning only in opposition to each other. Thus, language is seen as a closed system that generates its meanings solely from internal features with no relation at all to external influences like society. For instance, Jenkins (1996), from a narrowly structuralist view, defines identity by dividing the world into two social categories, 'man' and 'woman'. For instance, I am

a woman, not a man. It is from such structuralist understandings that essentialist feminists derive their binary approach. Such interpretations ignore the fact that meanings and identities are constructed and renegotiated in social interactions (Pujolar 1997).

The poststructuralist theory which centres on Foucault's theory of deconstruction, discourse and power has now been drawn on to analyse the dynamics of language and how they impact on gender identities. Weedon (1987) argues for feminist post-structuralism as a means of conceptualising the relationship between language and the individual consciousness of language use. This approach focuses on how power is exercised, tolerated and resisted through language. Feminist post-structural theory is a theory of subjectivity, conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions, which accounts for the relationship between the individual and his or her environment.

Poststructuralist theory enhances our understanding of why women tolerate social relations which subordinate their interests to those of men. Weedon (1987) argues that it is not enough to understand female subjectivity without investigating male subjectivity. It is equally important to understand the discursive strategies used by men in the project of sustaining their male hegemony in society. Unlike the essentialist approach, post-structuralism deconstructs the notion of gender relations by deconstructing the male-female dichotomy. Cameron (1996) argues that instead of looking for gender differences the focus should be on the "difference gender makes". Weedon (1987) points out that under post-structuralism, patriarchal power is not decided or held on an individual basis, it is a system that exists in institutions and social practices. Patriarchal ideology and its value system consider man as superior to woman and give him authority and control over the woman's life. According to this world-view, man is the natural head and leader at all times. He is stronger than women and children. A woman on the other hand is man's helper. Although biologically weak, she has the responsibility of bringing up children. She is the home manager and is patient, kind, loving and committed to the well-being of

the family... (See Gierycz and Reardon 1999). Feminist poststructuralist theory claims that patriarchy has been and is a fundamental organising principle in past and present human communities. It claims that such organisation is neither natural nor inevitable; it is a socially-produced phenomenon. In support of Weedon, Cameron (1992) Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992) have argued that no individual exists in isolation but only in relation to other individuals, and therefore femininity relates to masculinity. Both men and women are connected to other social categories in society.

Pavlenko (2001) points out that feminist poststructuralism offers a useful framework for understanding that gender is not just a system of social relations, but may also be hierarchical, since maleness may be more valued than femaleness in many societies. The theory highlights the way discourse practices are arranged in a hierarchical structure, which promotes the notion of prestige or lack of it. In many communities, women's ways of speaking are considered inferior or are less valued than men's linguistic behaviour. In other communities, certain types of men are associated with less prestigious language and yet they may have some power. This social construction operates most significantly in what Weedon (1987:75) calls "commonsense". "Commonsense" refers to those values which are taken for granted, and beliefs that are rarely justified, explained or commented upon. When "commonsense" beliefs about gender structure the ways in which we define ourselves through linguistic behaviour, then the power of gender oppression is often invisible to those whom it affects. Feminist poststructuralist theory exposes the operation of such "commonsense" beliefs by identifying and tracking the words, gestures, and practices that signify gendered meaning in our culture. According to this theory, culture itself is constructed through discourse, and Weedon (1987) notes that discourse produces subjectivity.

The feminist poststructuralist approach posits that identity is not given, but constructed in discourse (Hall, 1996). Research that draws on the poststructuralist approach to language and gender argues that it is through discourse that men and

women in different communities produce and reproduce the three senses of self: the gendered self, the ethnic self and the racial self. These senses of self are presented and represented in multiple forms and discourses, whether public or private, written or oral. The discourse types, individual or institutional, become the key sites of construction and negotiation of powerful and powerless gender placings and other social identities. In a multilingual context, the power struggle for recognition of group identities is constructed and negotiated in discourse. The 'self' that is constructed in discourse, depending on the circumstances surrounding the situation, is usually influenced by other socially and culturally constructed categories into which that 'self' must also fit, if an appropriate identity is to be constructed. For example, the type of discourse used by a woman may be influenced by the fact that she is a postgraduate student and a Zulu. 'Self' for multilingual speakers tends to vary in discourse as it is communicated through different languages. In other words, as Weedon (1987) points out, the struggle concerning the social definition of self results in the production of subjectivity in different forms in various social contexts; and all are ordered by power relations. For instance, self plus group would present ethnic identity, and self plus sex and age would present gender- and age-appropriate identity. In all communities these influences interact with one another. In the present study, the members of the diverse student population of the University of Natal interact daily and are therefore constantly involved in identity negotiation through language behaviour.

The feminist poststructuralist approach is an anti-essentialist approach. It rejects the essentialist assumption that any 'nature' belongs essentially to women or men. As Weedon (1987:121) points out, the theory provides a "conceptualisation of experience, and an analysis of its constitution and ideological power", and insists on the social construction of gender in discourse, a social construction that encompasses desire, the unconscious and the emotions. The theory therefore offers a useful framework for understanding gender relations, gender identities and the interaction of gender with other social forces, and the ways they are produced, reproduced, challenged, and negotiated in all forms of discourse.

Poststructuralist theory also offers me scope to accommodate the African feminist position. As I have indicated earlier, there is at present no single, unified African feminist theory acceptable to women of all cultures and nations in Africa. African women's major concern has been to make western theories of gender relevant to Africa¹¹. Since my study focuses on African students at the University of Natal, African feminist resistance here cannot be simply ignored, though it is likely to be diverse. Poststructuralist theory allows for diversity of meaning, and the meaning of linguistic behaviour is always examined, interpreted, and evaluated within specific historical and cultural circumstances, and as a result, differs across cultures. Because interpretation is context-dependent, the difference in gender roles, gender identities, and the interaction between the genders as well as the influence of other social forces can be made specific to the different language groups. In view of this, in my analysis, I will approach gender not as a trait, a variable or role, but as a product of social actions, that is, culturally constructed power relations, produced and reproduced in interaction (Pavlenko and Piller 2001).

Another reason for using poststructuralist theory arises from the fact that it acknowledges the variability of gender identities, in spite of perceived regulation and policing by rigid social norms. For instance, for a number of reasons women and men at times break out of their early socialisation and indulge in infraction, subversion and resistance. A change of environment may result in a change in behavioural attitudes of men and women. Such shifts in behaviour can be brought about by a new environment with different social norms. In my study the university in itself is a new environment for almost all students, very few of whose parents are likely to have had tertiary education. It is characterised by a culture with a strong western influence, where students are away from controlling influence of their parents. A large number of the students whose contributions appear in this study are newcomers to South Africa. The possible impact of these different kinds of 'foreignness' on their gender and other identities will be considered in this study.

¹¹ See Oyewumi (2002) and Nnaemeka (1998) on African feminist concern.

In terms of the foregoing framework (outlined by Weedon 1987 and Cameron 1992), this study focuses on the role of language in the production of gender relations, and gender dynamics in language use. Of particular importance to my study is the poststructuralist focus on language as a form of symbolic capital and as the locus of social organisation, power, and individual and group consciousness. Subjectivity is central to poststructuralist theory (Weedon 1987); it refers to the conscious and unconscious thoughts and emotions of the individual, his/her sense of self and ways of understanding his/her relations to the world. These have implications for the ways in which the different student groups as members of the University of Natal (and members of their different ethnic, national or religious groups) perceive themselves and how they express this view of themselves to fellow students from different cultural backgrounds.

The feminist poststructuralist approach proposes a route to find answers to my research question concerning the discursive construction of gendered subjectivities in multilingual language situations, which comprise clashes in ideologies of language and gender, and this is why I choose to work within this framework. I shall focus on how people behave in terms of gender and why they choose this behaviour. 'Who we are' is strongly determined by 'how we represent ourselves'.

2.4 THEORISING IMPOLITENESS

Every attempt that has been made to define or conceptualise impoliteness has positioned it in relation to politeness. Culpeper (1996) defines impoliteness as a group of strategies designed "to have opposite effect to politeness which is social disruption" (1996: 350). Lakoff (1989: 102) defines impoliteness as strategies oriented towards antagonising face, while politeness implies strategies oriented towards saving face. Impoliteness has on several occasions been defined as face-threatening acts, whereas politeness involves face-saving acts, while minimising confrontation in discourse (Mills 2002; Mullany 2002 and Harris 2000. Eelen (2000) also argues that politeness and impoliteness are two sides of a single coin. The

presupposition is that we cannot have one without the other. Hence it will be impossible to review literature on impoliteness without similarly engaging with work on politeness. In this section therefore, I shall start with a brief review of work on politeness before turning to impoliteness.

2.4.1 Theoretical Approaches to Politeness

Fraser (1990) identified four major approaches to theorising politeness. These include, firstly, the social-norm view of politeness which is embedded in societal interpretations of accepted and unaccepted behaviours (Fraser 1990; Ide 1989; Nwoye 1992). Secondly, the conversational-maxim approach, relying specially on the work of Grice (1975), proposes that interlocutors obey certain principles in their interactions so as to sustain the conversation; works that draw on this approach include Lakoff (1973). Thirdly, the conversational-contract approach to politeness presented by Fraser (1975) and Fraser and Nolen (1981), further expanded by Fraser (1990), and which also draws on Grice's work, suggests that individuals enter into conversation with prior understanding of expectations and responsibilities. Finally, most influential is the 'face-saving' approach, as developed by Brown and Levinson (1987), and I shall myself give preference to this view.

The 'face-saving' approach

Brown and Levinson's (1987) theory of politeness has influenced almost all theories and analyses of politeness both in mainstream and feminist linguistics. Their framework in turn draws upon Goffman's work on the construction of 'face' (1967). Brown and Levinson's further development of this theory of 'face' is based on everyday usage of the word in terms of 'losing face' and 'saving face'. Politeness, according to this model, involves the mutual maintaining of 'face' by observing two different kinds of face needs or wants. Brown and Levinson state that '[f]ace is something that is emotionally invested, and that can be lost, maintained or enhanced, and must be constantly attended to in interaction' (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 66).

A threat to a person's face is labelled a 'face threatening act' (FTA). Brown and Levinson argue that such threats require some kind of verbal repair (politeness) to avoid a breakdown in communication; and that this is what politeness is. They propose three social variables for consideration: (1) the relative power differential between the speaker and the hearer; (2) the relative social distance between the speaker and the hearer; and (3) the degree of likelihood that an FTA will occur. They argue that these variables determine the strategies that speakers can employ. They divide politeness into two broad categories: positive and negative politeness, which relate to the concepts of positive and negative 'face'.

Positive face: the positive consistent self-image or 'personality' (crucially including the desire that this self-image be appreciated and approved of) claimed by interactants.

Negative face: the basic claim to territories, personal preserves, rights to non-distraction – i.e. to freedom of action and freedom from imposition (Brown and Levinson, 1987: 61).

Positive politeness on the one hand is concerned with showing closeness and affiliation; it speaks of an individual's desire to be liked (for example, the offering of compliments). On the other hand, negative politeness is described as a 'public self-image', and is concerned with distance and formality, which suggests that the individual person becomes territorial, claims rights to non-distraction, and avoids any imposition by another person (for example, deference and avoidance) (Ige, 2000).

In spite of the considerable explanatory power of Brown and Levinson's model, it has increasingly been critiqued by scholars and researchers working on non-Western languages, mainly for its overgeneralisation of eurocentric norms. In particular, its

claim of universality has been the target of rebuttal, from the perspective of languages from the Far East and from Africa. It has been pointed out by researchers such as Ide (1982, 1990), Matsumoto (1988); Gu (1990); Nwoye (1992); de Kadt (1995, 1996); Pan (1995); Strecker (1993) and Ige (2001) that the concept of negative face in particular connotes the notion of an individualistic self, which is considered to be a behavioural paradigm especially typical of western cultures. Hence the major criticism made against Brown and Levinson is that although they conducted their research into three unrelated languages and cultures (Tamil of South India, Tzeltal spoken in Mexico, and the English of the USA and England), they failed to accommodate adequately the diversities in and of the 'self'. A typically Western paradigm is seen as being imposed on these other cultures, especially in the proposition of negative face, which has been faulted for its inability to accommodate notions of the collective self.

In the African context, a main focus of concern has been Brown and Levinson's perceived interpretation of face, which relies on an individualising concept of 'self'. Here again, the construct 'negative face' is considered not to accommodate the concept of 'self' in African contexts and has therefore been declared inappropriate. For instance, Nwoye (1992) finds Brown and Levinson's model unsuitable for describing the phenomena of politeness in the Igbo language. In Igbo society, requests, offers, thanks and criticisms are carried out in accordance with the dictates of the group within which individuals belong, age is revered and achievement is also honoured (Nwoye, 1992).

For similar reasons de Kadt (1994, 995) queries the applicability of Brown and Levinson's theory to the Zulu language, and instead bases her analysis on the concept of face as originally developed by Goffman (1967). Zulu society, like the Japanese and Chinese, strongly emphasises positional status (Raum, 1973). Zulu hierarchies are marked by authority and submission, based on the categories of age, gender and social status. Age groupings are generally maintained throughout life (Krige, 1936); a great deal of authority over the young is vested in the elderly, and

the younger are required to show respect to those who are older. Social relations are largely structured by the resulting group identities (de Kadt, 1998:182; see also Ige 2001, and Ige and de Kadt 2002).

2.4.2 Perspectives on Impoliteness

There have been few studies of impoliteness to date, because the research focus of the past few decades has been on politeness. This neglect of research into impoliteness has been attributed to the dominance of Brown and Levinson's (1978) universal theory of politeness¹². Mullany (2002) argues that Brown and Levinson's concentration on strategies which *avoid* or minimise the performance of FTAs led to the area of linguistic and gestural impoliteness being overlooked. Brown and Levinson's study was an analysis of the strategies people use to promote social harmony in society. Eelen (2001:90) points out that Brown and Levinson's (1978) positive and negative politeness strategies "stipulate how to be polite rather than impolite". Other research publications simply adopt the Brown and Levinson model for analysis, and invariably limit their focus also to strategies of politeness.

Since the realisation of the lack of research on impoliteness, researchers have begun to focus on impoliteness, in order to contribute to the understanding of what constitutes impoliteness, and the usage of impoliteness phenomena in discourse. However, prior to this recent development there were some minor references to impoliteness in a few studies. In the next section, I shall discuss the earlier references to impoliteness contained within studies of politeness and then go on to discuss current attempts to theorise it.

2.4.2.1 Attempts to develop impoliteness theory

In most case impoliteness is defined in relation to politeness, as the absence, the opposite, the reverse, and the inverse of politeness. Eelen (2001) points out that the

¹² See Mullany (2000); Eelen (2001); Mills (2002); Harris (2001); Culpeper (1996) on the neglect of impoliteness as an area of research.

commonsense relationship between politeness and impoliteness is absorbed by quasi-scientific conceptualisations: “Impoliteness is associated with, or represented as inappropriateness, unfavourableness, unsupportiveness, non-abidance by the CC [conversational contract], the PP [Politeness Principle] or other societal rules, non-politeness, lack of cultural scripts, or lack of FTA-redress” (2001:95).

The conversational-contract approach to politeness presented by Fraser (1975), and by Fraser and Nolen (1981), and further expanded by Fraser (1990), draws from Grice’s (1975) concept of the cooperative principle (CP) and Goffman’s notion of ‘face’, but differs significantly from Brown and Levinson’s (1987) view of politeness. The conversational-contract approach (CC) claims that participants in conversations enter into a conversation conscious of certain initial quasi-contractual obligations. Fraser (1990) argues that individuals enter into conversations with prior understanding of expectations and responsibilities. In the case of context change in the course of the conversation, the participants can renegotiate the initial contract. These rights and obligations are based on participants’ social relations, which can be adjusted or readjusted during the course of time or to suit changes in context. According to Fraser and Nolan (1981), no sentence is inherently polite or impolite. We often take certain expressions to be impolite, but it is not the expressions themselves but the conditions under which they are used that determine the judgement of politeness or impoliteness (1981:96).

For Fraser and Nolan, impoliteness results from failure to abide by the terms of the CC. Some of the terms of the CC are imposed by conventions, which are subject to modification in terms of culture and sub-culture, such as the use of mutually comprehensible language in conversation or turn-taking by speakers. However, Fraser and Nolen (1981) dwell on politeness and do not go beyond the definition of impoliteness as the result of the breach of the CC.

Leech adopts and expands Grice's CP to account for impoliteness within the domain of rhetorical pragmatics, focusing on goal-directed linguistic behaviour. In his approach, he makes a distinction between speakers' illocutionary goals (what meaning(s) the speaker intends to be conveying by the utterance) and speakers' social goals (what position the speaker is taking on truth, politeness, irony and the like). In the light of this Leech posits two sets of conversational principles, which include interpersonal rhetoric and textual rhetoric. Interpersonal rhetoric consists of both Grice's CP and Leech's politeness principle (PP). Politeness principle maxims are divided into maxims of tact; of generosity; of approbation; and of modesty. While the CP and its maxims explain how utterances may be interpreted to convey indirect messages, the PP and its maxims are useful for understanding the rationale behind the speaker's selection of a particular content and form. According to Leech the role of politeness is "to maintain the social equilibrium and the friendly relations which enable us to assume that our interlocutors are being cooperative" (1983:82).

Leech (1983) furthermore makes a distinction between "relative politeness" and "absolute politeness". Relative politeness refers to politeness with respect to a specific situation or context, whereas absolute politeness refers to politeness that is inherent in the actions of the speaker (for example, the making of an offer of assistance of some kind). Leech (1983), working within a 'face-oriented' model of politeness, also argues that even within absolute politeness, some illocutionary speeches are inherently impolite (for example, in many cases, giving an order). Leech further claims that conflictive communication tends to be "rather marginal to human linguistic behaviour in normal circumstances" (1983:105). Culpeper (1996), Lakoff (1989) and Harris (2001) show on the contrary that confrontational discourse may be marginal but can be as frequent as polite discursive strategies.

In her investigation of politeness in Israeli society, Blum-Kulka (1992) briefly discussed impoliteness but for the most part focused on politeness. She explains that the diminishing use of politeness strategies results in impoliteness. She associates impoliteness with a lack of cultural knowledge of a situation, in which the proper

cultural interpretation of 'face' concerns is not made explicit, or perhaps differs from cultural conventions. Face is based on the everyday idiomatic usage of 'losing face' or 'saving face.'¹³ In other words, the interpretation of 'face' can vary from culture to culture, and determines what is impolite or when the absence of politeness leads to impoliteness. However, Blum-Kulka focuses her main investigation on politeness, and says very little about impoliteness.

Lakoff (1989), in her examination of psychotherapeutic discourse and the discourse of the American trial court, attempts to expand the theory of politeness to accommodate impoliteness by extending it to "non-polite" and "rude".¹⁴ She identifies three levels of the politeness continuum as 'polite', 'non-polite' and 'rude'.

'polite' [refers] to those utterances that adhere to the rules of politeness whether or not they are expected in a particular discourse type; 'non-polite' [refers] to behaviour that does not conform to politeness rules, used where the latter are not expected; and 'rude' [refers] to behaviour that does not utilize politeness strategies where they would be expected, in such a way that the utterance can only or most plausibly be interpreted as intentionally and negatively confrontational (1989:103).

Lakoff (1989) claims that non-polite behaviour amounts to non-conformity with politeness rules where conformity is not expected, as in the cases she explores of therapeutic discourse and courtroom discourse. While the first two types, labelled 'polite' and 'non-polite', differ from the third, 'rude', in that they are in conformity with politeness rules that are socially sanctioned norms of interaction, non-adherence to politeness principles may lead to rudeness. Rudeness constitutes a deviation from whatever counts as polite in a given social context, and is inherently

¹³ For more on face see Goffman 1967; Brown and Levinson (1978, 1987).

¹⁴ See Lakoff's early works on politeness (1973, 1977, 1979).

confrontational and disruptive of social harmony. Lakoff (1989) argues that the classification and analysis of discourse types must be based on their function, rather than their form. The idea is that forms may appear very similar on the surface, while in fact discourse types may differ in function. Lakoff's analysis of ordinary conversation (OC), courtroom discourse (CD) and therapeutic discourse (TD) demonstrates how discourse types (OC, CD and TD) are either designed for interaction or for eliciting information. Ordinary conversation is classified as a type designed to achieve interpersonal interaction, in which case politeness is of great importance. CD and TD, on the other hand, both professional discourses, are designed to elicit information, and specifically to discover the truth.

Lakoff (1989) further explains that discourse types determine the kind of language that is employed. Some discourse types, (like therapeutic or courtroom discourse) warrant the use by one of the participants of provocative language to elicit information. Courtroom discourse and therapeutic discourse illustrate the 'instrumental non-politeness' that is employed in discourse adopted by professionals in order to achieve a goal, the revelation of truth, "by a non-reciprocal question and answer format the courtroom dialogue is adversarial" (1989:108). It is potentially antagonistic and confrontational in nature, as is apparent in the dialogue between lawyer and witness. Lakoff's distinction sheds light on a possible expansion of the theory of politeness to include the analysis of impoliteness. Her proposal encourages further research into impoliteness and serves as a point of departure for other researchers.

Kasper (1990) introduces another dimension to Lakoff's threefold categorisation making a distinction between motivated and unmotivated rudeness. According to Kasper, unmotivated rudeness refers to the violation of the norms of politeness behaviour due to ignorance. It may therefore lead to "pragmatic failure" and other forms of miscommunication (1990:208).

Unmotivated rudeness is largely caused by speakers' or listeners' unfamiliarity with culturally appropriate norms of behaviour and their linguistic encoding; this is prevalent amongst second language learners (Thomas 1983; Gumperz 1982 and Wolfson 1989) and is therefore likely to occur in the multilingual, multicultural group with whom the present study is concerned. Pragmatic failure, among other things, is a component of cross-cultural pragmatics. Kasper (1990) points out that the study of unmotivated rudeness in cross-cultural interaction could enhance understanding of the transferability of polite behaviour between members of different speech communities and of the types of conversational behaviour that lead to stereotyping. She claims that 'motivated rudeness' refers to impolite behaviour that is intentional, where the speaker intends to be perceived as impolite or rude. She further distinguishes three types of motivated rudeness, those "due to lack of affect control, strategic rudeness, and ironic rudeness" (1990:209). All the three categories are intentional and goal-driven.

There have been attempts to extend the scope of politeness theory to include antagonistic or confrontational communication. Beebe's (1996) discussion of polite fictions included instrumental rudeness as an extension of Lakoff's model of confrontational discourse. However, the first article that focuses comprehensively on impoliteness, investigates how it operates in practice, and considers its theoretical basis is that of Culpeper (1996) and is entitled '*Towards an Anatomy of Impoliteness*'. He begins by defining impoliteness as the use of strategies that are designed to have the "opposite effect – that of social disruption – these strategies are oriented towards attacking face, an emotionally sensitive concept of self" (1996:350).

Culpeper argues that by conceptualising face redress and face threatening acts (FTA), Brown and Levinson's theory is capable of expanding and accounting for impoliteness. However, the expansion involves building a framework for impoliteness in relation to politeness, since impoliteness, according to Culpeper, "is

very much the parasite of politeness” (1996:355). He argues that an adequate account of the dynamics of interpersonal communication requires consideration of hostile as well as co-operative communication, and he thus proposes the inclusion of impoliteness as the reverse of politeness theory.

Culpeper draws on Leech’s (1983:83) category of “absolute politeness”, where some illocutions are inherently impolite, for example, orders; and others, like offers, are said to be inherently polite. Brown and Levinson (1987:65) point out that “it is intuitively the case that certain kinds of acts intrinsically threaten ‘face’, and the effect of this recognition is to establish that some acts are inherently polite, while others are inherently impolite”. Culpeper explains that some intentions are polite, but that no amount of polite intention could eradicate the impoliteness of some acts, such as the request: “Do you think you could possibly not pick your nose?” (1996:350).

Following Brown and Levinson’s (1987) politeness model, Culpeper (1996) develops a framework for impoliteness that relates to politeness. He argues that the proposed super-strategies enumerated below are opposite to those of politeness in terms of their tendency to attack ‘face’. He presents five impoliteness super-strategies in parallel with Brown and Levinson’s four politeness super-strategies, yet with opposite effects on interaction. These five strategies are arrived at with full consideration of the three crucial social variables: relative power, social distance, and the forcefulness of the act involved (otherwise referred to as power, solidarity, and weight). The following comparison below illustrates Culpeper’s proposed impoliteness framework as parallel and yet opposite to politeness:

1. (a) **Politeness:** Bald on record politeness - Face threatening act (FTA) is performed ‘in the most direct, clear, unambiguous and concise way possible

- (b) **Impoliteness:** Bald on record impoliteness – FTA performed in a direct, clear unambiguous and concise way in circumstances where face is not irrelevant or minimised.
2. (a) **Politeness:** Positive politeness – the use of strategies designed to redress the addressee’s positive face-wants.
 - (b) **Impoliteness:** Positive impoliteness – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s positive face.
 3. (a) **Politeness:** Negative politeness – the use of strategies designed to redress the addressee’s negative face want.
 - (b) **Impoliteness:** Negative impoliteness – the use of strategies designed to damage the addressee’s negative face want.
 4. (a) **Politeness:** off-record – An FTA is performed where “there is more than one unambiguously attributable intention so that the actor cannot be held to have committed himself/[herself] to one particular intent” (Brown and Levinson 1987:69).
 - (b) **Impoliteness:** Sarcasm or mock politeness: “the FTA is performed with the use of politeness that is obviously insincere, and thus the politeness remains a surface realisation.” (Culpeper, 1996:356).
 5. (a) **Politeness:** Withhold the FTA.
 - (b) **Impoliteness:** Withhold the act: the absence of politeness where it is expected.

The fifth category of politeness is Culpeper’s addition to Brown and Levinson’s classified strategies. Culpeper points out that there are some areas of politeness that are not well represented in Brown and Levinson’s politeness model. He notes that the model is primarily designed for handling matters relating to linguistic forms. The fifth category, in which the FTA or politeness is withheld, draws on Leech’s (1983) politeness model, which is content-oriented, to complement Brown and Levinson’s

model. Thus Culpeper reverses Leech's approach to generate impoliteness resulting from an absence of politeness: "one general way of being impolite is to minimise the expression of polite beliefs and maximise the expression of impolite beliefs" (1996:358). Culpeper also points out that Brown and Levinson's model fails to address non-politeness.

Although Culpeper's (1996) attempt is the most comprehensive effort to theorise impoliteness, it has been criticised by Eelen (2000); Harris (2000) and Mullany (2002), as insufficient in terms of universal application. Given that Culpeper's theory of impoliteness works as a parallel framework to Brown and Levinson's (1987) universal theory of politeness, it would be susceptible to the criticism raised against this politeness theory. Mullany (2002) argues that all the inadequacies found in the Brown and Levinson model of politeness, such as the over-generalizing of eurocentric norms, the overextension and the limitation of the use of the term 'face', are also applicable to Culpeper's theory of impoliteness.¹⁵ For the present research, the applicability of Culpeper's theory becomes problematic, given the diversity of language and culture that are involved. Above all, Culpeper, as well as Brown and Levinson, pays insufficient attention to differences in cultural norms, which may lead a hearer or observer to interpret a speech or action as non-polite or rude when the speaker/actor has no intention of this kind. Ignorance of each other's 'politeness codes' or even ignorance of the 'politeness code' of the lingua franca which both feel compelled to use is an important factor in my discussion of impoliteness.

Similarly, Eelen (2001) finds 'face' in the Brown and Levinson model of politeness inadequate to offer a full understanding of impoliteness. He argues that notions of 'face' and 'face-wants', which are central to Brown and Levinson's theory, lie in the fact that people expect their wants to be satisfied and can only get others to satisfy wants if they in turn satisfy theirs by means of politeness. To incorporate impoliteness would require an inclusion of another kind of 'face' with no desire that 'face-wants' to be satisfied, (which contradicts the term 'face-want'), but with a desire to disappoint the wish for 'face'.

¹⁵ For more on the critique of the Brown and Levinson model of politeness see also Mao (1994).

A major gap that I have found in Culpeper's theory of impoliteness as well as in all the other attempts to develop a theory of impoliteness (such as Lakoff 1989; Kasper 1990; Beebe 1996; Harris 2001 and Mills 2002), is their failure to see identity as a factor in the deployment of confrontational language. The notion of the 'collective' and 'identities' of language users in multilingual situations in Africa will prove to be crucial for our understanding of the reasons for employing strategies like motivated impoliteness. Constantly, in an interaction, multilingual language users deconstruct, construct and reconstruct their identities as the need arises, and as such make use of different strategies to achieve their goals. It is arguable that such strategies may include deliberate impoliteness intended to cause confusion, to reject the identity that is being imposed, and to re-impose a person's own idea of him-/herself.

Recently, Culpeper et al (2003) revisited Culpeper's (1996) theory of impoliteness. After justifying the need to develop an 'impoliteness' framework that is not "simply a mirror image of the politeness framework" of Brown and Levinson (2003:1576), they recognised the need to move beyond the single theory (lexically and grammatically defined) as to how impoliteness occurs in discourse and the role of "prosody" in conveying impoliteness. On this occasion the investigation by Culpeper et al (2003) accounts for impoliteness encountered between traffic wardens and fined car owners¹⁶. The situations analysed are so different from those which are likely to occur in the multicultural interactions between students as to have little relevance here.

2.4.2.2 Research investigating instances of impoliteness

Beebe (1995), investigating motivated rudeness in ordinary conversations in the New York streets, argues that rudeness can be instrumental. She argues that instrumental rudeness is employed by speakers to achieve a specific goal in a conversation. In that case, it is no longer a failure of mastery of the social norms but

¹⁶ I will not go into detailed discussion of this article, not only because it is marginal to my own work, but also because I discovered it late in the course of the final editing stage of the thesis. I also would like to acknowledge here my awareness of Watt's (2003) recent work on politeness and impoliteness, but have been unable to access it due to non-availability in South African libraries.

rather a mastered skill employed to achieve a desired goal. She argues further that motivated rudeness is a display of pragmatic competence rather than a failure, as with unintentional rudeness. She supports this claim with empirical evidence from everyday conversation in the city of New York, where rudeness in ordinary conversation appears to be designed intentionally to convey the speaker's sense of power relations and to vent negative feeling. Rudeness, she argues, can be goal-driven. Her study provides vivid examples of rude interactions that are perhaps not intentional in the sense that they were consciously planned in advance, but are intentional in the sense that they fulfil a function that the speaker intended. The reasons for such consciously impolite behaviour, according to Beebe (1996), could be any of the following: "to appear superior", "to get power over action", "to get power in conversation", "to express impatience", and "to express contempt" (Beebe 1996: 160 – 165).

Beebe's data reveal how both women and men display pragmatic competence via rudeness. While some intended to be heard as rude, others intended their hearer to feel slighted without being able to accuse them of rudeness. Beebe (1996) expands on Kasper's (1990) concept of motivated rudeness to include instrumental rudeness, volcanic rudeness, "no frills" rudeness, and conversational management rudeness. She explains that instrumental rudeness is similar to Lakoff's (1990) and Kasper's (1990) strategic rudeness and refers to rudeness intended to achieve a goal. Leech's (1983) ironic rudeness also forms part of instrumental rudeness. Beebe (1996) describes volcanic rudeness as similar to Kochman's (1984) loss of affect control. She terms it volcanic because it relates to loss of temper, which could include violently explosive expressions of anger, as well as minor outbursts of impatience and contempt. The third category, "no frills" rudeness was chosen by Beebe to designate situations of "blunt, unsoftened rudeness" situations where briefness or silence is used to the point of rudeness. Finally, conversational management rudeness is a term also coined by Beebe and is explained as the rudeness perceived when people try to get the floor, hold the floor, make the other person talk, or stop talking.

Harris (2001) also attempts to extend politeness theory to include formal situations of adversarial political discourse, using the Prime Minister's Question Time in the British Parliament. Drawing on the theory of communities of practice, Harris (2001) explores the concepts of politeness and impoliteness against identified sets of members' expectations. As Harris points out, "much of the discourse of the Prime Minister's Question Time is composed of intentional and face-threatening acts; secondly, systematic impoliteness is sanctioned and rewarded in accordance with the expectations of members of the House. The study reveals a high level of approved impoliteness in the Prime Minister's Question Time through an adversarial and confrontational political process. This rightly shows that impoliteness in this regard is not a pragmatic failure, but rather a pragmatic competence, because skilfulness is required to employ such confrontational strategy in this kind of interaction." (2001:451) In addition, Harris (2001) argues that research on politeness and impoliteness should be confined to certain specific contexts to avoid generalization. The confinement of politeness and impoliteness to certain contexts, as suggested by Harris, would allow for a better understanding of the variation in the concepts from one context to another.

Research on gender and impoliteness

As in mainstream linguistics, studies of gender-related impoliteness are sparse in the discipline of gender studies. Until recently, investigation of the relationship between particular acts of politeness and gender has been a tool for probing into and explaining gendered differences in language use and their effects more generally. A much debated topic has been whether women are 'more polite' than men, and this has been investigated and analysed by Trudgill (1974) and Lakoff (1975)¹⁷. However, research interrogating impoliteness in ordinary and institutional conversations and its implications for gender and gender identity construction is now

¹⁷ For more on the studies of politeness and gender, see also Deuchar (1988); Zimmerman and West (1975); Fishman (1980); Tannen (1990); Holmes (1995); (1998); Cameron (1995); Bergvall, Bing and Freed (1996).

beginning to appear. Since gender is constructed and negotiated in discourse, it is necessary to interrogate the links between impoliteness and gender, with special focus on power, and on the factors that influence the use of impoliteness in equal and unequal relationships. The understanding of the one requires the understanding of the other, especially since the two are sides of a single coin, as has been claimed by Culpeper (1996). I tend to agree with Beebe (1995) that impoliteness is not the mere opposite of politeness, but is independently goal driven. However, while it is true that impoliteness is a product of 'face' encounters, my contention will be to investigate the relationship between impoliteness and identity.

Recent work on gender and impoliteness includes that of Mills (2002) and Mullany (2002). Mills (2002) explores the impact of impoliteness on groups and the role gender plays in assumptions about who can be impolite to whom, and who needs to repair the damage. She appeals to researchers in gender and language to look beyond the different linguistic behaviour of male and females as groups, and to explore and analyse the "various strategies which gendered, raced and classed women and men adopt in interaction with particular goals and interests" (2002:69). She draws on a "community of practice" (CofP) model and explains that the model makes it possible to analyse a range of gendered identities rather than just a single gendered identity. Clearly, she is making an attempt to present the CofP model as the ideal framework for theorising gender and language research.

Lave and Wenger (1991) first proposed the concept of communities of practice, with the central focus as "legitimate peripheral participation". By this term, they imply that newcomers to a group, through a process of "situated learning", progress toward full participation in the socio-cultural practices of the community. They argue that the development cycle of such a learning process is important for shaping new identity or membership. Thus changing knowledge or new knowledge and the skills and discourse of the group form part of the identity development of a full and legitimate participant in the community.

Wenger (1998) further develops the concept of communities of practice and argues that it consists of “mutual engagement, a joint negotiated enterprise, a shared repertoire of negotiable resources accumulated over time” (1998:73). It is this added dimension to CofPs that caught the interest of Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999) who developed the concept of CofPs in relation to language and gender research. Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999) argue that research on language and gender needs to move beyond the current analysis of individual linguistic acts between individual speakers, and should rather locate the individual act and the speakers’ performance in a shared community, which is “an aggregate of people who come together around mutual engagement in an endeavour. Ways of doing things, ways of talking, beliefs, values, power relations – in short, practices – emerge in the course of this mutual endeavour” (1998:490).

This model (CofP) makes it possible to make more general or global statements about men’s and women’s linguistic behaviour and yet gives room for variations within categories. It allows for the possibility of contestation and change, without losing sight of the power of stereotypical linguistic community norms and the varying positions different CofPs take in relation to stereotypes. Although Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1999) have urged that the CofPs approach be used for analysis of language and gender research, it is not adopted in this present study. This is because the notion of community judgement of people’s practice appears limiting for a multilingual, multicultural situation. In such a context, a person that speaks more than one language may display a series of identities within the same community. If he or she is judged only by the immediate community in which the act occurs, some of the identities may be lost in the process. An identity lost would further hinder the understanding of the language use of multilingual people. Moreover, a university, in this case, the University of Natal, is a community in which the large majority of its students members are relative newcomers, whose behaviour is still likely to be affected by the norms which prevailed in the home

communities (in most cases very different communities to the university) of which they were until recently members. (In chapter four, I shall consider the ways in which norms and expectations drawn from these earlier groups shape the behaviour and responses of students).

Mills's (2004) recent cross-cultural perspective study of gender and politeness focus on how class, race and gender positioning influence judgements of politeness and impoliteness. She argues that politeness and impoliteness are judged by individuals in terms of class and gender positions, which may then influence the assumptions that interactants make about the class position of the 'other'. Interactants also make judgements of levels of politeness and impoliteness. She points out that politeness and impoliteness are often analysed from middle class perspectives, and middle class standards are likely to be used for all other members, even of a diverse community.¹⁸

Adopting Mills's approach, Mullany (2002) modified the CofP and redefined it as a synthetic community of practice (SCof P) in order to analyse impoliteness and gender stereotyping in broadcasts of political interviews. She argues that in the political arena, women are still heavily under-represented in the British House of Commons. They therefore appear less frequently than male politicians on broadcast interviews. She argues further that gender is only one of many variables which affect linguistic behaviour, but that it ought to be seen as "a sex-based way of experiencing other social attributes like class, ethnicity and age", as suggested by Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (1992:91). She adds that gender can be viewed also as a sex-based way of experiencing other aspects of identity, such as professional identity, that are enacted in an institutional context.

2. 5 A CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK FOR IMPOLITENESS

¹⁸ I am aware of Mills (2005) work on the relationship between gender and impoliteness in the new *Journal of Politeness Research*. However, I was unable to access this article, as this new journal is not yet available in South African libraries.

As indicated at the outset, my goal in this thesis is to explore and understand impoliteness in a multicultural and multilingual context, and this of necessity shapes the conceptual framework and approach I will be adopting. The limited research into impoliteness has largely approached it as the 'other side' of politeness / complementary to politeness; but in the rather different (multilingual) context under consideration here, such an approach will not be adequate. Indeed, none of the proposed conceptualisations of impoliteness can simply be applied here, and to develop the more encompassing approach which is necessary to cater for the complexity of a multicultural context, I will integrate ideas from a variety of sources.

Brown and Levinson (1987) took a narrowly linguistic approach to the study of politeness; and while they drew on data from three very different contexts, each of these was in itself coherent and monolingual. Hence they were able to focus on and describe the linguistic manifestations of politeness in terms of a single analytical model. Impoliteness, however, is by no means limited to verbal utterances only; my observations, from the outset, pointed to the need to take a broader approach and to include actions and complete interactions. Furthermore, a multicultural context adds considerable complexity to the definition of impoliteness: given that communication is culturally embedded, the same phenomenon (whether it be linguistic or an action) in such a context may be understood variously as polite, neutral, impolite or rude. While a core definition of impoliteness would still seem to be feasible, there will not be agreement as to all its manifestations. To properly understand impoliteness in a multicultural context it is therefore necessary to include all actions or words which any of my respondents perceive to have an impolite effect; and then to explore the nature and the causes of this effect.

Brown and Levinson's (1987) construct of 'face' (as a public self-image) is helpful, in that impoliteness can usefully be understood as doing damage to the face of the recipient. To this extent, therefore, it is appropriate to view impoliteness as complementary to politeness. Politeness has the goal of promoting societal harmony

through maintaining a balance between the face of the speaker and the face of the addressee, which – according to Brown and Levinson – are of necessity linked. Impoliteness, on the other hand, threatens societal harmony by bringing about an imbalance in face – through a face infringement which is clearly experienced by the addressee. One possible focus on impoliteness might then be to ask what strategies interpersonal communication draws on, to deal with and overcome such imbalances, in order to restore societal harmony – for instance by means of an apology; and such an endeavour would then clearly position the study of impoliteness in close proximity to politeness studies. This, however, would leave unaddressed the many instances of impoliteness where such restoration is not undertaken. It is also far less appropriate to the multicultural context under investigation here, where the various languages and cultures of necessity introduce intercultural tensions, many of which remain unresolved and form the background to ongoing communication.

One further weakness of Brown and Levinson's construct of 'face', in any attempted application to a multicultural context, is that it presupposes a 'self' who is clearly conceived of as an individual. Multicultural environments, in contrast, tend to be characterised by group thinking: many participants experience themselves primarily as members of groups, and to a far lesser extent as individuals. Hence it becomes necessary, rather, to conceptualise the 'face' that impoliteness infringes on in terms of a range of group identities. Furthermore, the multicultural environment at UN is not stable and unchanging, but in a state of considerable flux; and many of the young people entering this environment find that their self-understandings – as individuals and/or as members of a group – may undergo considerable change. In this regard, too, Brown and Levinson's concept of 'self' is inadequate to my purposes, in that the underlying 'self' appears static and fixed. The concept of identity, on the other hand, has been theorised as under constant construction and modification and hence can accommodate such ongoing change. Considering impoliteness in terms of identity then raises the question, as to whether, and in what ways, impoliteness plays a role in this ongoing identity maintenance and construction.

At the same time, we cannot consider all instances of impoliteness as infringing on face in the same way. Here, Kasper's distinction between 'motivated' and 'unmotivated' rudeness¹⁹ is important: clearly, some instances of rudeness, or impoliteness, occur inadvertently, others are deliberate. In cases of inadvertent impoliteness the speaker may be completely unaware of a negative impact on the face of the addressee; where impoliteness is deliberate, both speaker and addressee will be aware of this. (Brown and Levinson would, of course, argue that deliberate impoliteness will also impact negatively on the face of the speaker, given that face is a mutual construct; this is of lesser importance for our approach).

Research into intercultural communication has shown that instances of (unintended) pragmatic failure are frequently understood as rudeness. It is only to be expected that, in a multicultural environment where much communication takes place through a lingua franca, such instances of unintended impoliteness will abound. I will refer to such instances as unmotivated impoliteness. Even though there is no intention underpinning such impoliteness, I will nevertheless argue that it has an important and ongoing impact on group identity construction, as being an important source of group stereotypes.

My main focus however, will be on motivated impoliteness, as offering considerably more interpretative challenges: in Kasper's terms, that which "the speaker intends to be heard as rude" (1990: 209). As Kasper and Beebe have argued, impolite discourse strategies are by no means limited to institutional contexts (as suggested by Harris 2001), but are also employed at the level of interpersonal communication. In exploring the nature and effect of such impoliteness, I will argue that it is regularly used, with deliberate intent, to construct, maintain and defend group or individual identities, which in a multicultural context require ongoing attention.

¹⁹ In this section I use impoliteness and rudeness as synonyms; in chapter eight I will return to the question, as to whether a distinction should be made between impoliteness and rudeness.

Within these two categories, I will also differentiate between what I will term defensive and displaced impoliteness. Defensive impoliteness serves purposes of identity-protection: it may be used in anticipation; but it is generally provoked by an act or conversational move which has been perceived as deliberately impolite and hence threatening to face, and (group) identity, and which justifies and, indeed, makes necessary an impolite response. Displaced impoliteness, on the other hand, arises from negative group stereotypes, in terms of which the speaker assumes that the addressee (as a member of a particular group) is 'rude': this is seen as justifying impolite behaviour, which may come as something of a surprise to the addressee.

2.6 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have presented the substantial body of literature which is relevant to the research topic. The chapter shows how I have incorporated the existing work related into this study and how this present research fits into and differs from the established theories. In the next chapter I shall discuss the research design and techniques employed for data collection, and the challenges and the outcomes of each phase of the data elicitation process.

3

RESEARCH METHODS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

The research methods are presented, as emerging from the research questions and allowing these to be adequately addressed. I present and motivate for the combination of qualitative and quantitative research methods employed to elicit data. I further describe each phase of data collection in the chronological sequence in which they were conducted, starting with the pilot study, followed by records of observations, two surveys of students' rating of exchanges, and focus group discussions. I also discuss the way in which the data were organised and analysed, adopting a discourse analysis approach.

3.2 RESEARCH DESIGN

The research design of this empirical study was developed in order to find answers to the research questions presented in chapter one. The study combines qualitative and quantitative approaches which are used to arrive at an understanding of the occurrence and nature of impoliteness amongst students of University of Natal.

Qualitative data consist of empirical information captured through a wide range of techniques, usually involving watching, asking or examining. This information is mostly presented and articulated in a non-numerical format. Quantitative data involve empirical information captured and presented in numerical forms, commonly associated with measurement through number systems, and mostly used for testing hypotheses (Punch 2005). Quantitative and qualitative methods each have their unique characteristics, but a combination of these two methods, through which they complement each other, is generally advantageous. The combination of qualitative and quantitative approaches leads to a multiple method approach. The application of both in a piece of research brings together results ranging from hypothesis testing through to explanatory and inductive

processes. Likewise the combination of the two approaches in a piece of research may capitalise on the strengths of both methods, and at the same time compensate for any deficiencies in each approach (Bryman 1988; Punch 2005).

In this study, the two approaches were combined at three levels, namely, data collection, data analysis and the presentation of findings. The application of this combination (to collection, analysis and findings) is appropriate to the present research. For instance, the qualitative method assisted with the design of the survey; a quantitative method was used to establish occurrences of patterns identified in the qualitative data. In addition, the findings gained through a qualitative approach were further concretised by the findings from the quantitative data. The application of the two approaches at these three levels is a good example of a multi-method approach, as recommended, for example by Cohen (1996) and Wodak (1989) since there is no single method that can completely and satisfactorily assess every occurrence of linguistic behaviour. Certainly, the application of the quantitative and qualitative approaches can enhance a relatively new avenue of research such as the exploration of the complexities of gendered discursive interactions in a multilingual context.

The research focuses on perceptions of impoliteness amongst black students of the University of Natal (now KwaZulu-Natal). As mentioned in chapter one, the University's student population is extremely diverse. There is a strong presence on the campus of students from the different South African language groups, and from different cultural and racial backgrounds. In addition, the University is attracting increasing numbers of students from other parts of Africa, as well as other parts of the world. However, English remains the dominant language as the official language of instruction, and predictably, the western values associated with English also dominate.

Multiple data collection methods were employed to produce the data for this study. At the different stages of data collection, different sets of respondents were selected to participate in the process. The mode of selection of different groupings for each stage was adopted for a number of reasons. Firstly, the study evolved through a series of iterations initially involving a wide range of respondents and languages, and thus

representing the full diversity of the University of Natal campus; it was only once this diversity had been assessed that a somewhat narrower core focus on black African respondents was finally decided. Secondly, this accommodated a participatory process that would allow the subjects of the research to influence the outcomes of the research in terms of definitions and the conceptualization of impoliteness.

3.3 RESEARCH METHODS

In this section, I present the different techniques that were employed to elicit data in the sequential order of their application. The techniques used for data collection in the study include a pilot study, indirect observation, a rating scale (phase one), focus group discussions and a rating scale (phase two). In addition to presenting each research technique, I discuss and motivate for the selection of the respondents involved in that stage of the study. The data gathering process stretched over a period of twelve months, from November 2002 to December 2003.

Selection of Participants

Participants for the present study were in a first phase selected purposefully to allow for representation of the different student groupings that had initially been identified by the researcher. In their discussions, members of these initial groups then referred to others, who were included in turn. The inclusion of these additional groups assisted in ensuring adequate representation of the students on campus.

Each of the data collection techniques mentioned above involved a different set of participants. There were two broad categories in the study: South African students and non-South African students. The several South African groups consisted of black (also subdivided into gender and ethnic categories), white, Indian and Coloured South African students. There are significant differences between these categories in culture and in language usage, and therefore (presumably) in their understanding of politeness and impoliteness. As non-South African students I grouped together black African students from different parts of Africa. This approach was not taken in terms of essentialism; my focus was rather on their status as foreign students, and on characteristics which many

had in common and which appeared to emerge from their status as foreign students. The method of indirect observation (mentioned above) drew in broad terms on the diverse perceptions of impoliteness among South Africans as well as non-South Africans. For the focus group discussions, the focus of the study was narrowed down to black and non-black South African students. The rating scales, on the other hand, sought to review students' perception of impoliteness across the fullest spectrum of race, culture, gender and nationality.

3.3.1 Pilot Study

The investigation began with a pilot study which informed the procedures eventually used for the data collection. This pilot study was intended to offer initial insights into gender issues and the languages used by the multilingual student population at the university, and especially by the African students.

I initiated the pilot study by using my own experience to observe and record instances of impoliteness between students of different cultural groups. The majority of these were male-female exchanges. I myself experienced them as impolite, and there was in some cases evidence that one or both of the participants were offended. I recorded these instances of apparent impoliteness and used them to construct a questionnaire in which student respondents were asked to grade the behaviours in ten incidents on a scale of four - polite, impolite, rude¹ and indifferent. Participants were selected to represent the diversity among South African students on campus; at this stage no foreign black students were included. This was for two reasons: firstly, this was simply an initial attempt to explore the different perceptions of impoliteness amongst speakers of different languages; and secondly, I wished to test the technique and determine how much information could be elicited through questionnaires. Four South African language groups participated in the pilot study: first-language speakers of Zulu, Xhosa, Afrikaans and English. In total, 24 respondents participated, each language grouping consisting of six members, three males and three females.

¹ Part of my purpose was to find out how students understood these terms.

It emerged that most respondents rated the degree of politeness and impoliteness of the ten incidents similarly, which suggested that the instances chosen were too uncontroversial. There followed a process of reflection and reappraisal.

This original survey tool was based on my own perceptions as a researcher of impoliteness. My first observation was that, even though I understand and communicate fluently in English, I lack the intuitive knowledge and the cultural competence of someone whose first language is English. It was easier for me to think of instances of impoliteness from my own African background than it was to create instances in the English language. It became necessary to involve people with different first languages (English, Zulu, Afrikaans, and Xhosa) in the development of the survey. The pilot study nevertheless assisted in crystallising the sort of questions to be asked in the final questionnaire and the issues to be raised in the focus group discussions and the subsequent rating and ranking exercises.

During my review of the pilot exercise I observed two major inadequacies in the data collection plan for the research: first, it was difficult to construct occasions of impoliteness between members of the different groups, without first consulting them on their perceptions of the phenomenon. Second, the pilot study showed the complexities of the study, as I realised that perceptions of impoliteness do vary greatly from group to group, and that implications for the different groups also differ. With regard to simple acts (such as I had selected for the pilot questionnaire), there was a degree of consensus in the perceptions of politeness and impoliteness. For example, most students would agree that to tell a friend or fellow student to “shut up” would be impolite. Students who did not themselves use a cultural practice such as hand shaking were nevertheless likely to understand the custom as polite. Yet even though the university context is ‘westernised’ and has the English language as its official teaching medium, interpretations of impoliteness are not limited to the norms of English culture, and students are likely to be influenced in their behaviour and in their interpretation of others’ behaviour, by their own cultural norms. Students who interpret action initially through

their own language, which in many cases is not English, are likely to find their cultural understanding affected by the norms of that first language.

My pilot study helped to put the data collection procedures in proper perspective, by allowing me to rearrange and decide on the data collection strategies in order of preference, appropriateness and extent of their application, in order to achieve optimum results. From the pilot study it became clear that the involvement of a diverse group at every stage of data collection was essential to the success of research. Prior to the pilot study I had planned to commence the research by simultaneously asking students to rate the degree of impoliteness of an action, and arranging that observers would report on interactions which they considered impolite. Thereafter I would organise focus group discussions. Provision was made for a repeat of any of the methods should the need arise. My analysis of the pilot study caused me to modify the original plan, in order to allow me to gain a better understanding of the core issues of the topic. Four weeks after the pilot study, I recommenced the investigation: this time, first, with observation of interactions. These observations allowed for comparison of perceived impoliteness between members of the diverse groups identified for the study. The examples of impoliteness subsequently served as base material for conceptualising the questions and issues raised in the focus group discussions and the questionnaires that followed.

3.3.2 Indirect Observation

This method was designed to collect naturally occurring data with the assistance of collaborators in the data collection process. Data obtained from observation by non-involved persons of interactions between people who are unaware that their behaviour is being observed generally have a high degree of authenticity and can contribute substantially to a study such as this one (Cohen 1996; Scollon and Scollon 1995).

The participatory nature of this process has the explicit intention of collectively investigating the reality of the society in order to produce greater understanding. Through participation critical consciousness of the groups involved can be developed to improve cross-cultural and cross-gender communication. Broader involvement in the gathering of

this kind of data signals that everybody's view is important in a vast community like the University of Natal. The aim is not simply to describe and interpret social reality, but to also to understand ways of improving intercultural social interaction. Indirect observation has the capacity to capture both production and perception data. For research on language use it is important to capture data on both of these (Cohen 1996). It is well-suited to this study, although the main focus of the study will be on perception, since it allows the investigation of the qualities of authentic conversations, such as the sequential organisation of speech performances, and types of interlocutor responses elicited by specific strategies (Cohen 1996; Kasper and Dahl 1991).

In this study, such observation is tagged as indirect, because the observers were drawn from the diverse cultural groups represented at the University of Natal. In this type of observation the researcher delegates the task of data collection to others, making the label *indirect observation* apt, since the observers substitute in the role of researcher whilst the observation is being conducted. The cultural values and interpretations of the observers will of course influence their perceptions and findings. The underlying goal is to collect authentic data on impoliteness, while keeping intact (as far as possible) its contextual meanings, without excluding any group's viewpoint. At the same time this is a type of participatory observation, because the presence of an observer is likely to affect the shape and interpretation of the interactions that are captured for analysis, even though they only take notes and report on their encounters and experiences of impoliteness².

At this stage, the scope of the investigation was extended to include non-South Africans as well. The subjects of indirect observation included both South African and non-South African students, particularly foreign black African students³. The list of observers, too, included South African and non-South African students. I encouraged these observers to

²For further details on participant observation see Punch 2005; Denzin 1970, 2000).

³Six administrators (departmental secretaries) also participated in the indirect observation process, all of whom were women, primarily because the occupation of secretary is feminised. Observers included black, white and Indian departmental secretaries. They were selected to participate because they themselves differed in cultural background and were regularly in contact with students. Students go to departmental secretaries for a variety of needs, ranging from information to advice. However, I have left out the administrators' reports from this thesis to ensure consistency in my discussion of the students' perceptions of impoliteness.

capture in some detail the situation and circumstances surrounding the perceived impoliteness and its expression, including the reactions and responses to the impolite behaviour. While the effect of the presence of an observer and issues of reliability will need to be taken into consideration, this method will obviously have the potential to yield descriptions of real interactions.

The student observers were carefully selected, on the basis of cultural background and gender. A total of 20 students, 10 male and 10 female, participated in the process. In each case two males and two females represented a particular group. The list of the observers included four black South African students, four white South African students, four Indian South African students, four black foreign students and four white foreign students.

The indirect observation lasted for a period of four months. The indirect observers were given freedom to work at their own pace within this given time. I frequently went round to encourage the participants and chat about their observations. Participants collected and reported perceived impolite incidents that they encountered or observed on the campus on a day to day basis by taking notes. At the end of each week participants gave a written report on their experiences of impoliteness between students. However, the whole exercise was not free of hitches. Participants admitted to occasions where they forget to make note of incidents immediately and therefore might have overlooked some salient element in the conversation. At other times it was only when I visited that participants remembered incidents and related them while I took notes. At the end of the whole process the reports of the observers were collated and documented.

3.3.3 Rating Scales – Phase one

This quantitative method was employed for further validation of data collected from other sources, primarily indirect observation. This method also enabled me easily to identify and convey dominant response patterns. The rating scales (phase one) questionnaire was developed from the indirect observation data. Respondents were asked to rate a list of occurrences and utterances in terms of whether they considered them impolite or not. In

the questionnaire the discrete variables under consideration included gender, language use (home language, main language(s) of communication, and other languages spoken by respondents), cultural groups (African, white, Indians, Coloured and others), and citizenship (South African and non-South African) against a list of instances to be rated as: rude, impolite, polite or indifferent.

The scales were designed to capture the diversity in perceptions of impoliteness on the campus. To explore this diversity, I drew on the language, culture and racial categories still used in post-apartheid South Africa, for instance in Employment Equity legislation and records: these are black, Coloured, Indian and white. For the purposes of the present research, I added another category of black students, in order to accommodate 'foreign' African students, that is to say, African students from African countries outside South Africa. In this way, five groups of respondents were constituted, namely, black South African students (black SA); black non-South African students (black NSA); Coloured South African students (this designates South Africans of mixed racial backgrounds), Indian South African students (descendents of immigrants to South Africa from India during the 19th century), and white South African students. Once I had established these categories, I ensured that no respondent had previously been involved in the study.

The questionnaire first asked respondents to categorise themselves as South African or non-South Africans⁴. Next the students were asked to put down their home language (mother tongue), and list other language(s) of exchange. Respondents were also asked to indicate their gender. Respondents were then asked to look at the list of instances and rate them on the 'four point' scale: rude, impolite, polite, and neutral. (A sample of this questionnaire is presented in Appendix 1). To ensure proper engagement of respondents with the questionnaire, it was administered on a one to one basis. The participants were briefed about every aspect of the survey design and a copy was left with each of them for a week to allow them to fully understand and evaluate every instance before rating.

⁴ 'Non-South African' may seem a large category into which to place people from diverse cultures and countries. The use of this category is motivated below.

The process was not easy. A major challenge of the method was retrieving the questionnaires from participants, as some of the respondents either forgot to complete the survey or lost it. To deal with these cases, I had to carry along extra copies of the survey, sit and work through the questionnaire again with the respondents, and wait while they ticked their selections. One hundred questionnaires were administered to students across cultural/language groupings. In all, 80 questionnaires were properly completed. Sixteen properly completed questionnaires were selected from each group: eight completed by males and eight by females. The 80 selected questionnaires were subsequently coded and then captured on SPSS for analysis.

3.3.4 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

The FGDs took the form of group interviews and discussions with respondents which were captured on audio-tapes. This method was employed to derive more in-depth data on perceptions of impoliteness amongst the identified groups. Focus group discussions allow the researcher to interact directly with research participants, and provide opportunities for clarification of responses, follow-up questioning, and for probing the responses (Stewart and Shamsadani 1990). This method is not new to either mainstream linguistics or to feminist linguistics (Cameron 1997; De Kadt 1994). FDG is a collective effort rather than individual, and this is of great advantage for this study. As Madriz (2000) rightly points out, it brings into the research process a multivocality of participants' perceptions and experiences.

Through this method, personal reactions, specific emotions and opinions with regard to participants' cultural backgrounds, issues of impoliteness/politeness, attitudes toward other cultures, bilingualism, and gender related issues were elicited. The focus group sessions yielded the bulk of the data presented in the thesis. The focus here was narrowed down to the black students who are the core subject of this study. South African and non-South Africans were engaged in the discussions. I am aware that the two categories, 'South African students' and 'Non-South African students', are broad groupings. The category 'non-South African students', in particular, brings together African students from different parts of Africa, and is further divided into male and

female respondents. Despite what is doubtless a huge diversity, at most times remarkably similar opinions were expressed, with national diversity adding its flavour to perceptions and behaviour. Members of this non-South African grouping tended to identify with one another and emphasise a shared identity as foreign African students. Given the salience of gender in my investigation, two subgroups, female and male, were constituted amongst the non-South African respondents. Within the broad South African group (for reasons to be elucidated in chapter five) four subgroups (three male and one female) emerged. The appellations given to these subgroups emanate either from the way in which the members of the subgroup described themselves and preferred to be called, or are based on the ways in which the other students see and refer to them, as will become clear in subsequent chapters.

The focus groups were constituted in terms of home languages spoken and gender. Focus group respondents were drawn from both undergraduate and postgraduate levels. In most cases, I was acquainted with one member of the group who then introduced me to other potential members. Friends and colleagues came to my rescue when the groups were relatively small, by introducing me to someone who subsequently found other members. Twelve group sessions were held in total. A separation by gender was intended to remove any form of overt or covert intimidation, and to facilitate free expression of students' perceptions. The number of respondents varied, as the broader-based subgroups (such as 'foreign African males') were deliberately made larger to accommodate diversity. In total 38 black students participated in this section (see the table below for the break down).

Table 1: List of selected respondents for focus group discussions

Grouping	Number of participants
Zulu males	6
Non-Zulu black South African males	6
Model C males ⁵	4
Zulu females	6
Non-South African black males ⁶	8
Non-South African black females	8
Total	38

I was present and operated the recording equipment at all group discussions; I also began the discussion by posing a question. When the group members had responded as fully as they wished, I would pose another question. Questions posed to the groups were largely derived from the data collected from the indirect observations discussed above. I encouraged participants to talk freely about issues of politeness, impoliteness, gender, language use, cultural difference, diversity, conflict, family and relationship. Samples of questions and issues raised during group discussions are presented in Appendix 3. Each recording session took an average of 50 minutes, and participants chose the venue. The sessions took place, as far as possible, in a relaxed environment: some were held in the Gender Studies seminar room during lunch hour and others in the students' halls of residence in the evenings. It took five months to complete this phase of the data collection. The data captured on audio-tape was afterward transcribed by the researcher.

3.3.5 Rating Scales – Phase two

The result of the first rating scales survey and the issues that emerged from the focus group discussions prompted me to repeat the survey in a slightly different manner. While the discrete variables remained constant, the continuous variables changed to another

⁵ Model C schools were in previously 'white' residential areas and education in them was through the medium of English. The implication is that these Zulu men are experienced users of English.

⁶ The two categories of non-South African black respondents were made larger to accommodate students from different parts of Africa, and included students from Eritrea, Ethiopia, Zimbabwe, Mozambique, Cameroon, Kenya, Uganda, the DRC, Rwanda, and Nigeria.

level. Participants were now asked to rate somewhat different instances of impoliteness on a five-point scale: extremely impolite, very impolite, moderately impolite, mildly impolite and neutral. Respondents were also requested to rank the same instances from 10 to 1, where 10 represented 'most impolite' and 1 'least impolite'. In addition, respondents were requested to indicate the instances they perceived as 'rude' rather than 'impolite'⁷. (See Appendix 2 for the questionnaire.)

With the permission of the lecturer in charge, one hundred questionnaires were also administered to students during a lecture. The process had its own challenges, in that some questionnaires were returned uncompleted by respondents. Subsequently, out of the 100 participants, 80 responses were captured on SPSS for analysis.

For each data collection technique, a different set of respondents was recruited, and I made sure that participants only participated in one of the processes. The purpose of this was that the research should make space for as many respondents as possible to participate in the study, as well as making room for the voices of many participants.

3.3.6 Role of the Researcher

At this point some reflection on my own race, culture and ethnicity, as researcher, is appropriate. I am a non-South African, black African female student from Nigeria. I have been resident in South Africa for seven years. In the course of the seven years, I have made friends with many South Africans, ironically mostly white South Africans, since the postgraduate students in the disciplines of Linguistics and Gender Studies were for the most part white or foreign Africans. Nevertheless, I have a few Zulu friends who are mostly members of the church I attend; others include colleagues and postgraduate students. As a tutor in the Faculty of Human Sciences, I have come into contact with many Zulu students and subsequently have developed a relationship with a few, mostly males. Similarly, as a foreign student, I have been in close contact with foreign students, particularly foreign African students.

⁷ It had emerged in focus group discussions that a significant group of students differentiated between 'rude' and 'impolite' (see chapter six).

This awareness of my own situatedness as researcher was essential, in my attempts to avoid bias and to present an analysis of the participants' own perceptions and interpretations. Although actively involved in student life in terms of my cultural background, I sought in my analysis to detach myself from my status of a foreign African student and to assume the position of a researcher "who does not influence events in the field" (Neuman 1997:357). Nevertheless, some impact of my own perceptions on my findings cannot be discounted.

3.4 TRIANGULATION

The multi-method approach, particularly when it brings together quantitative and qualitative approaches, allows for the findings from one type of study to be checked against the findings derived from the other technique. Each method, when appropriately applied, has the ability to produce valid empirical and theoretical generalizations about society and social life. In this study, for instance, chapters four, five and six present the results of the quantitative investigation, which is used to check the qualitative study and vice versa. The effect of this is to enhance the validity of the findings of this research.

3.5 ETHICAL ISSUES

The study was approved by the Higher Degree, Research Committee of the University of Natal. The consent of participants was solicited at every level of data collection. Each data collection process was explained to the participants and every step of the process was carried out with their approval. For instance, the indirect observation reports were based on personal experiences, accessed with the permission of the observer participants. In the same way, the audio-recording of the group discussions was carried out with full consent of all members of the groups. The rating scale exercise participants had the choice of whether or not to participate in the process; the purpose of the study was explained, as was the reason for involving them in the research.

3.6 METHODS OF DATA MANAGEMENT AND ANALYSIS

The data collected in this project through the different data elicitation techniques were brought together, sorted, categorized, grouped and regrouped for processing. A discourse analysis approach was adopted for the data analysis. This approach was selected because in discourse analysis, meaning is not limited to the sentence meaning of an utterance. Data from the indirect observations were transcribed, word processed and edited. For the analysis and interpretation of the focus group discussions, all audio-taped discussions were transcribed verbatim. I again used a discourse analysis approach to isolate themes and topics for analysis. Data elicited through the quantitative questionnaires were coded, captured and analysed using the SPSS computer software programme. For quantitative analysis, some of the continuous variables were merged in order to achieve meaningful response groups. For example, the variables 'extremely impolite' and 'very impolite' were merged as 'very impolite', and 'moderately impolite' and 'mildly impolite' merged to become 'mildly impolite'. The ranking process was captured under three degrees: 10-7 = extremely impolite, 6-3 = impolite, and 2-1 = mildly impolite. The full body of data were then analysed under the following chapter headings:

- Instances and understandings of impoliteness at the University of Natal
- Group discourses and identities
- Interpretations of and responses to impoliteness
- Gendered discourses

The analysis is presented in chapters four, five, six, seven and eight respectively.

3.7 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have acquainted the reader with the theoretical framework adopted, the research design and the techniques employed for the data collection. The challenges and the outcomes of each phase of the data elicitation process have been presented in their sequential order. The next chapter is the first of the four chapters presenting the analysis of the data collected through the processes described in this chapter.

4

INSTANCES AND UNDERSTANDINGS OF IMPOLITENESS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NATAL

4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter initiates the discussion of my body of data by introducing the types of behaviours that students at the University of Natal consider to be impolite, or rude. This is done in two ways. First, actual instances of perceived impolite behaviour are presented in the form of vignettes, to show typical cultural values, interpretations and what I term the frequent power play of impoliteness experienced at the University of Natal. Secondly, by means of rating and ranking of some typical instances of perceived impoliteness, a tentative attempt will be made to establish and probe the group identities utilised in the subsequent chapters of the thesis.

4.2 VIGNETTES OF IMPOLITENESS

As explained in chapter three, a group of administrative staff and students was asked to note instances of impoliteness that they experienced or observed, and to record these. The administrators and student observers took notes about perceived impolite situations as they occurred. These observers were fully aware that they were taking part in the research project, and they accepted this role. However, no attempt was made to alert them to the possibility of bias in their reporting: rather, their own culture and ethnicity was intended to form part of their reporting, and to be available for analysis. As indicated earlier, this technique was specifically designed to give me access to different perceptions of politeness and impoliteness, of both those reporting and those reported on. The vignettes presented below, selected from these informal observations and transcribed from verbal reports, show that failure to follow accepted norms or behaviours is likely to be perceived as impoliteness, and that such non-adherence to accepted norms may emerge from and function as an assertion of power.

1. Inconsiderate choice of language

(A white female student reports on a perceived impolite incident involving Zulu-speaking students)

We had a group assignment and there were some Zulu students in the group who kept speaking Zulu to themselves and laughing. It was rude because the rest of us didn't understand what they were talking and laughing about.

2. Asking for Advice

(A black female student reports on a perceived impolite incident involving a white male academic staff member)

I was registering for my BA degree so I had to make a choice of subjects and I was interested in teaching, so I took English as a major. I had to see this person to help me to see whether I made good or bad choices before I signed with the dean. Instead of encouragement what I got was that 'you are black, from such and such place and you think you are going to make it with English as a major. This is madness'.

3. Rude behaviour, and lack of apology

(Another black female student reports on a perceived impolite situation involving a white male staff member)

There was this senior person who asked me to do something; he was shouting at first and then what he said afterwards I didn't hear because I was still shaking from the initial reaction. Then I got what he requested from me and he shouted again and demanded that I find what he was looking for and when I did he still shouted, claiming it's not the right one, when only it turned out later that it was the right one. But no apology was made for this, and there was nothing I could do about it.

4. Request and impolite response

(A black female student reports on a perceived impolite incident involving a white female student)

I needed to print out a few pages and there was this lady sitting on the computer reading her mails, so I asked please I need to print and she agreed but her action was like she didn't want to. She wants to read her e-mail despite that it was the only computer that was connected to the printer. She stormed out of the tearoom, you could see that this person was clearly unimpressed by this request that I have made. Despite her knowing that it was the only computer that was used for printing and she wasn't doing something that may be she felt was being disturbed, her academic work or something. Seeing that reaction I went and asked her again, 'Is it OK'? She responded in loud angry voice Noooo it's fine and she left the room.

5. Request and impolite response

(A black male student reports on a perceived impolite incident involving a female Indian student)

Someone walks into a student's room and asks 'Could you tell me where I can find X department'. I answered no and turned away, even though I could have directed her because she was rude. She didn't greet and didn't say please.

6. An unwarranted comment

(A black foreign male student reports on a perceived impolite incident involving a white student)

She asked, 'Where are you from?', and I introduced myself as X from Y and the next thing I hear is, 'Oh, you are from Y country where people are killing themselves, people die everyday from hunger, Aids'. The images they have about that particular place can be rude. It makes you feel so little.

7. An antisocial action

(A black foreign female student reports on a perceived impolite incident involving a Zulu female student)

I have been sharing a fridge with my hall-mates who are Zulus. The problem is this: one of them puts a padlock or changes the padlock and does not tell anybody that she's changed the lock, so when you go in... And she is my next door neighbour so it would have been easy for her to come and tell me you know like, 'Oh you know I had a problem – I have changed the padlock. She is not even bothered at all you know. I find her very offensive, she didn't leave a note there; I had to go knocking on every door to find the keys.

8. Disruptive behaviour

(A black female student reports on a perceived impolite incident involving white students)

There was a particular student in my tutorial class who made a lot of noise whenever the tutor is speaking. He interrupts like whenever.

9. Disrespectful behaviour

(A black female student reports on a perceived impolite incident involving male Indian student)

A student was smoking in my tutorial class. His aim was to be disrespectful to the female black tutor.

10. Asserting oneself in response to mockery

(A black female student reports on a perceived impolite incident involving a female Indian tutor)

There was this Indian tutor who was always asking me stupid questions and always picking on me. You know, always trying to make you the centre of the classroom especially if you don't know what she is talking about. It came to a point where one has to

discipline her, you know. You become rude to her so I come late to her class on purpose and talk in the class.

11. Asserting oneself in response to mockery
(A black male student reports on a perceived impolite incident involving a black female student)

There was this tutor who was trying to make a fool out of me, trying to show that I am poor in English. I know that I am poor in English because it is not my first language and you find those people who like to make fun of those people. She was making fun of my grammar mistakes and she was laughing at me, and shouting those mistakes at me. I got piss off and I can say whatever I want to say to you.

12. An intrusive personal question
(A black female student reports on a perceived impolite incident involving a white male student)

There was this guy in the group; it happened that my tutor split us into groups. She didn't want the class divided by race (whites, Indians and blacks) so she groups us herself and this white guy kept on looking at me you know looking at my face, I know what my face look like and I used to feel shy when I'm in a group of students, because they don't understand my face. [The speaker has tribal marks.] This was the time when this guy asked by making just a sign with his finger on his face trying to make marks on his face with that expression like trying to ask what happened to me and trying to talk to me, saying, 'What is this on your face?' I was upset and felt like there was something wrong he was looking at me with horror. It was very impolite and I couldn't answer him because I was feeling bad.

4.2 DISCUSSION OF THE VIGNETTES

These instances of perceived impoliteness of others and, in response, of self, emerge from the multiracial, multilingual and multicultural interactions at the University of Natal, the research site. (It is one of the contentions of this research that impoliteness is always culturally located; what is perceived as polite or impolite varies from one culture to another (Kasper 1990 and Tannen 1990).

The following discussion is based on the interpretation of the vignette situations offered by the observers themselves.

In a context where numerous different languages are spoken, the choice of a language which others do not understand is regularly considered impolite, as is the case in Vignette 1. My survey of the languages spoken by the entire group of respondents demonstrated the extent of multilingualism in the research site. Respondents reported a total of 29 languages as 'mother tongues and main languages of exchange'. Out of these, 17 were African languages, six were European languages, and the remaining six were languages of Asia. Each of the 17 African languages had the status of mother tongue of the respondent. My respondents included students from outside of South Africa; within South Africa itself at least 50 'mother tongues' are spoken¹. Clearly, in such a context, there will need to be considerable negotiation as to choice of language, with English functioning in the main as lingua franca, and there will be many occasions for perceived impoliteness, should an uncomprehended language be selected².

¹ See Langtag documentation

² Although English is the common language of teaching and learning, and the preferred language of choice outside the classroom, students report that they communicate in many other different languages at the university. The majority of Coloured, Indian and White students use English, but some do draw on Zulu, Afrikaans and (for Indian students) Gujarati. Black South Africans use in the main English and Zulu as languages of exchange. The black non-South African students, however, report a wide range of languages of exchange such as English, French, Swahili, Yoruba, Hausa, Rundi, Creole, Pidgin, Kingarwandi and Setswana. Some of these languages will be used to interact only with students from their own country; others can be used across broader groups – Pidgin, for instance, by people from West African states, Swahili by people from Kenya, Tanzania, Uganda and parts of the Democratic Republic of Congo. Since the closest ally of language is culture, the norms of the language which is commonly used in daily exchanges may at times overturn the inherited norms of the culture of the speaker, as will be argued in the focus group discussions.

In Vignette 1 the students who use a language other than the one understood by all are seen as inconsiderate by others and therefore impolite. They are impolite because their colleagues feel excluded from the group and perceive it as a deliberate disregard for them as members of the group. The proper consideration for others in a group working together has been breached. The use of a language not understood by some other group members places those who understand and those who do not on different levels. As the others are unable to access the full content of the discussion, it is disempowering to them in the group, which is why it is likely to be considered rude.

Many of the following vignettes reflect power differentials between students and members of staff and tutors, in a university where these relationships often still remain rather hierarchical. These power differentials are impacted on and made increasingly complex by real or perceived racial tensions; in almost all cases, a cross-racial encounter is reported. At the University of Natal, the majority of teaching or support staff (including graduate tutors) was white or Indian; given that substantial numbers of students are black Africans, much teaching is done across races, cultures and languages.

The speech act of advising involves giving a directive in the form of an opinion or recommendation, probably from the position of an expert, as to what the hearer should do or how he/she should behave (Searle 1969 and Allan 1986). In Vignette 2, the advice was received by the student as a racist attack instead of recommendation. Because the statement is perceived as devoid of guidance but filled with destructive criticism, it is considered impolite. In terms of power relations, the course advisor is superior to the student and has an obligation to give directions based on experience, as to the choice of study. But the student felt insulted and put down by the advisor on the basis of her skin colour: *'you are black, from such and such place and you think you are going to make it with English as a major'*. She obviously felt that the advisor had breached his contract as an advisor, and she sensed a racial power play.

The word '*madness*' used by the advisor, probably to communicate folly, was received literally by the student to mean lunacy.

Vignette 3 involves a behaviour for which the 'reporter' / student felt that an apology was due, which is compounded by the lack of any apology. The behaviour is perceived by the student as deliberate impoliteness, intended to attack her confidence and make her subservient. When an apology is offered which expresses real regret, it tends to redress the situation and usually the receiver of such an apology accepts it and moves on. The absence of apology in the case above is perceived as impolite, because the speaker feels that she was entitled to expect one, and it was not offered. The student feels belittled by the senior person's behaviour, and especially for his failing to apologise for his mistake, '*But no apology was made for this, and there was nothing I could do about it*'. When an apology is not given where it is expected as in this case, the student (or the offended person) is likely to refer to it as rude. It is perceived as deliberate and power-related.

Vignettes 4 and 5 each present a request and the response to this request. A request is an explicit expression of a speaker's intention that his or her hearer perform an action, and as such is inherently face-threatening (Cohen 1983; Olshtain and Blum-Kulka 1984; Blum-Kulka 1989; Brown and Levinson 1987). This threat to face needs to be carefully negotiated. The ways in which requests tend to be expressed, as well as the perceived weight of specific requests, have been shown to be culturally specific, and hence offer ample opportunity for perceived impoliteness, in terms of both the perception of the request, and the manner of responding. In Vignette 4, which is between equals, the request seems to have been received by the hearer as a demand rather than an appeal to use the computer. In response, the hearer shows her disapproval of the request by attacking the 'face' of the speaker in return through non-verbal and verbal expression and storming out of the room. The request made here by one student to another is one that asserts the greater right of someone who wants to do academic work as compared to someone concerned with purely personal matters, and the receiver may feel powerless to refuse.

In Vignette 5, the reporter acknowledges that he refused to give directions to the student, because there was no formal greeting from the student before the request. This is probably so because greetings are an important act of communication in Zulu culture. It is, for instance, considered unacceptable to walk pass a person without the exchange of greetings (as reported in subsequent chapters five and six; see also de Kadt 1996; Gough 1994; Wood 1992). In this case we see possible cultural differences, in the importance of a greeting to Zulu-speaker, and the English typical polite request '*could you*', which is perhaps not being understood as polite by the Zulu-speaker. The Zulu-speaker seem to have a customary expectation that the person who requires information will show courtesy by greeting the hearer before making the request and then use explicit formulae of politeness, such as 'please' (de Kadt 1996, 1998; Ige 2001)

Many South African students are poorly informed about other African countries, and what information is available may well be limited to negative stereotypes '*Oh, you are from Y country where people are killing themselves, people die everyday from hunger, Aids*'. The speaker in Vignette 6 may be unaware that the hearer feels ridiculed and belittled by the images painted for him/her of her home. Because to this hearer it is belittling, he perceives it as rude. The hearer feels that stereotypical images will always prevent any judgement of him or her which might be based on real merits, and these stereotypes will probably be used to judge his/her performance in class or else where. The immediate reaction of this particular respondent so judged is to refuse the construct and assert his/her preferred identity to ensure fair play.

In Vignette 7, the offended person sees the action as a lack of respect for fellow students living in the residence. The refrigerator could not be used by anyone but the student who fitted the padlock, after she had changed the lock without consulting or at least informing other legitimate users . Access to what is meant to be accessible to all is suddenly under the control of one person. The fact that the person who locked the fridge did not leave a message to inform others about her whereabouts or where the keys were, was taken as a sign of disrespect for hall-mates. The action makes the

offended person feel unimportant, as she wondered if the others had been informed. The thought of being treated as insignificant caused her to react angrily.

Vignettes 8 and 9 involve power differentials among students – students who are being taught, and (senior) students who are teaching. In both cases a racial dimension contributes some complexity. Vignette 8 is very brief, it is not made clear just why the (black) student constantly interrupts the (white) tutor. The student reporting Vignette 9 interprets the action of smoking as a deliberate attempt by a male Indian student to be disrespectful to a black female tutor. A black female tutor (empowered over Indian and white students) is likely to present something of a challenge to persisting racial stereotypes.

Vignettes 10 and 11 continue this same theme, with the respondent in each case admitting that perceived rudeness on behalf of the tutor finally provokes deliberate rudeness by the student.

Finally, Vignette 12 presents what is experienced as intrusive interpersonal behaviour, and finally an intrusive personal question. Possibly this behaviour emerged out of a real interest by the ‘white guy’; but certainly the other student experienced his behaviour as rude and belittling.

4.3 RESPONSES TO INSTANCES OF IMPOLITENESS

The vignettes discussed above present individual perceptions of impolite occurrences. I shall now turn to group perceptions of politeness and impoliteness at the University of Natal. The purpose of this discussion is to probe the extent to which the two major categories of ‘race’ and gender imply distinct(ive) perceptions of impoliteness, and the extent to which perceptions may overlap across these categories. At the same time, the existence of considerable diversity in perceptions on the University campus is confirmed.

I here draw on responses to my questionnaires (one and two), which required respondents to rank and rate some instances of perceived impolite behaviour which

had been frequently mentioned in the focus group interviews and also reported in indirect observation. (As mentioned above, I ensured that respondents to the questionnaire were not the same students who had been the subjects of indirect observations, nor those who had taken part in focus group interviews).

4.3.1 Students' Perceptions of What is Experienced as Polite or Impolite

Diversity of the students' languages of exchange (see Footnote 41 above) is indeed paralleled by considerable diversity in respondents' perceptions and evaluations of impoliteness, as becomes apparent in the following Figures, 4.1, 4.2, 4.3 and 4.4, which present respondents' evaluations of instances of impoliteness. Yet at the same time, there is diversity within groups, and commonalities across groups. We should not expect any simple and constant correlation of group (whether a racial, linguistic or cultural group) and understanding of politeness.

The following data are drawn from Questionnaire 2, where respondents were asked to rank and rate incidents of impolite behaviour, as neutral, impolite, or extremely impolite.

4.1 Rate the instance: You bump into someone along the corridor and you say 'sorry', but the person ignores it

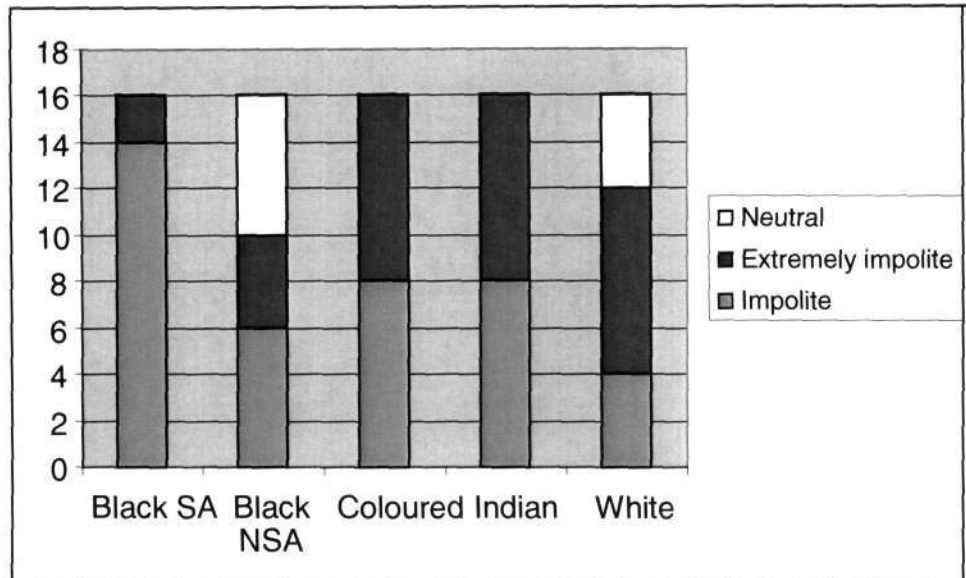


Figure 1: N=16

Figure 4.1 shows that the majority of students from all groups are likely to be offended when their apology goes unacknowledged. Although the black South African, Coloured and Indian groups are more likely to regard it as impolite than black non-South African and white groups, the black South African students are more likely to treat the incident as merely impolite, rather than extremely impolite.

4.2 Rate the instance: You say 'hi' and the person smiles in response, but does not greet you.

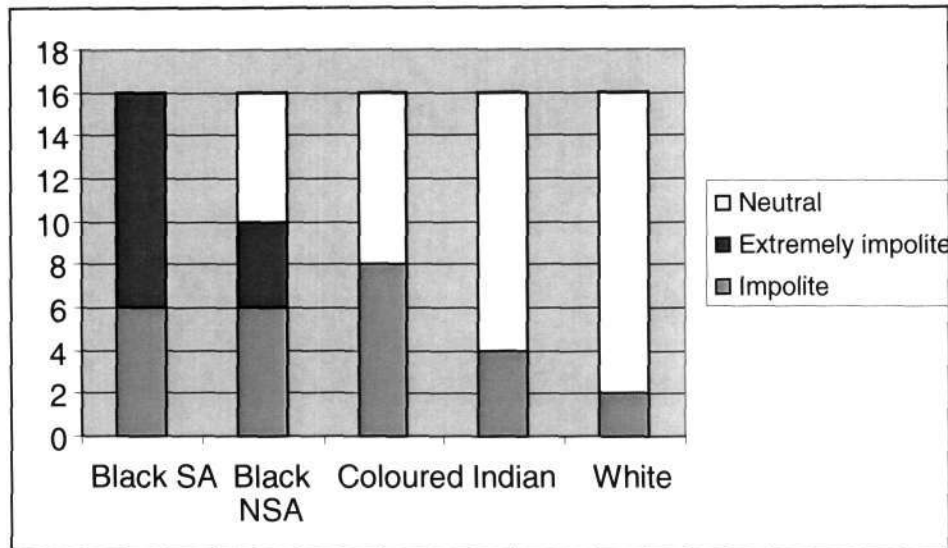


Figure 2: N=16

In this case, all black South African respondents perceive a smile in response to a verbal greeting as impolite; more than half consider it extremely impolite. In contrast, most white and Indian students, and half the Coloured respondents, regard a smile as an appropriate response. Opinions of black non-South African students vary.

4.3 Rate the instance: You smile to acknowledge people around you, but receive no response to your friendly smile.

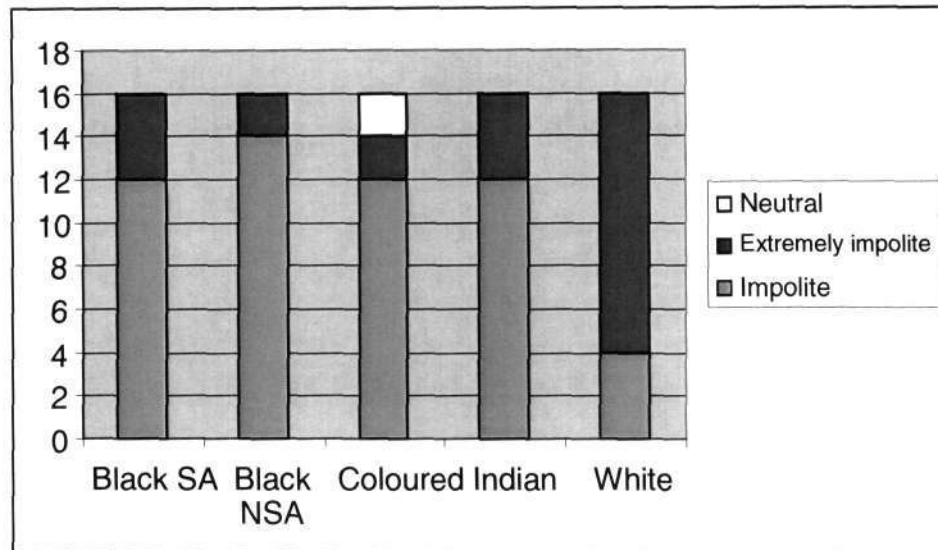


Figure 3: N=16

Almost all respondents, in all groups, consider non-acknowledgment of a smile as impolite, in spite of their differing reactions to a smile as response to a verbal greeting (above). The white students appear to find it particularly offensive.

4.4 Rate the instance: Your cell-phone rings and the person calling asks, 'who is that'?

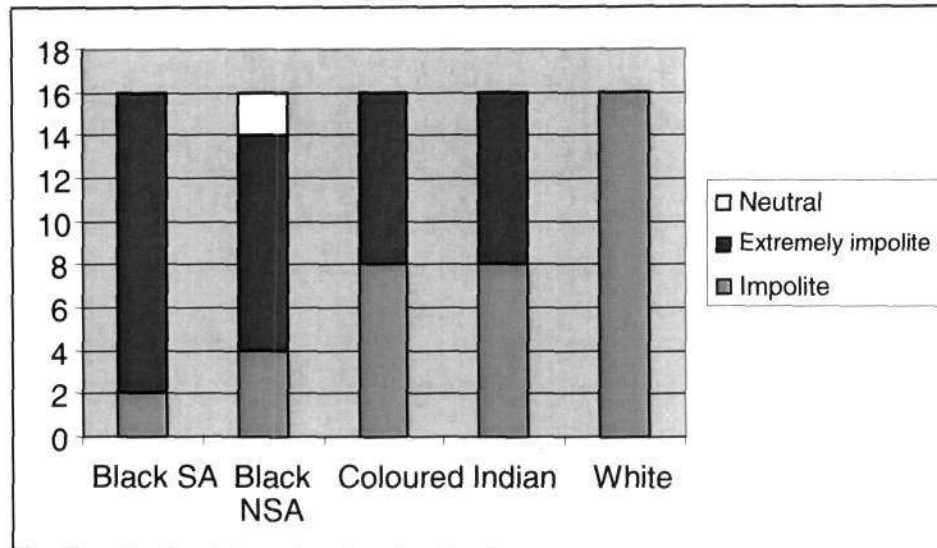


Figure 4: N =16

Here too, almost all respondents perceive this query as impolite, with significant numbers (especially of the black South Africans) finding it extremely impolite. White students, in contrast, find it less offensive.

4.3.3 Gender and the Judgement of Impoliteness

This section unpacks the gender perceptions in the above responses, given that my thesis focuses on impoliteness as gendered. I here further subdivide the above five categories by gender; as this results in very small sub-groups, the findings should be seen as suggestive only. Figures 4.6 and 4.7 present male and female students' responses to the same scenario: a student rebukes you for disturbing the class. In Figure 4.6 this is asked with reference to a female co-student, in Figure 4.7 with reference to a male co-student: respondents were asked to judge first assertive female behaviour, and then assertive male behaviour, in terms of neutral, impolite or polite.

4.5 Participants' reactions to a scenario involving a female student: a female student rebukes you for disturbing the class.

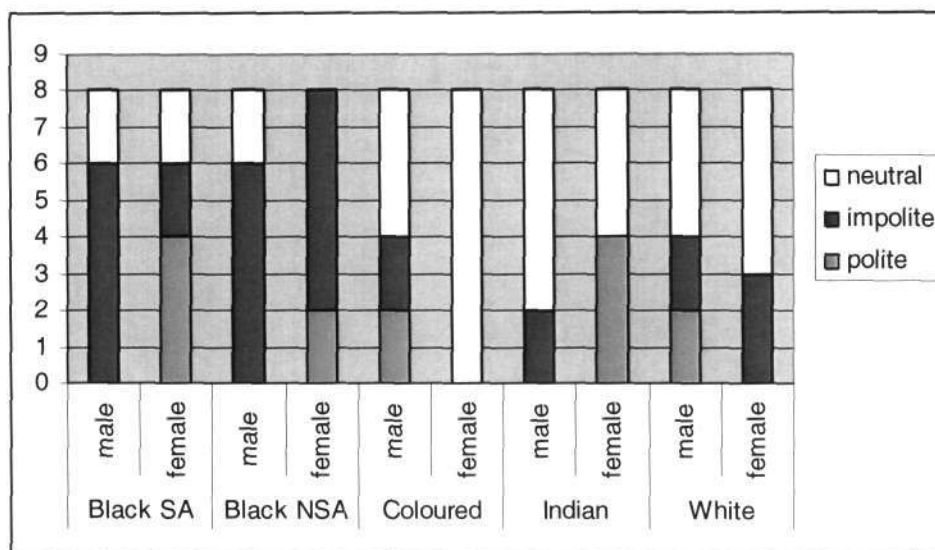


Figure 4.5: N= 8

Figure 4.5 reveal that all South African male students are more likely to find a female challenge impolite than South African female students. In addition, black respondents (both South African and non-South African) are more likely than the others to regard such a challenge as extremely impolite.

4.6 Participants' reactions to a scenario involving a male student: a male student in the same class challenges you for disturbing the class.

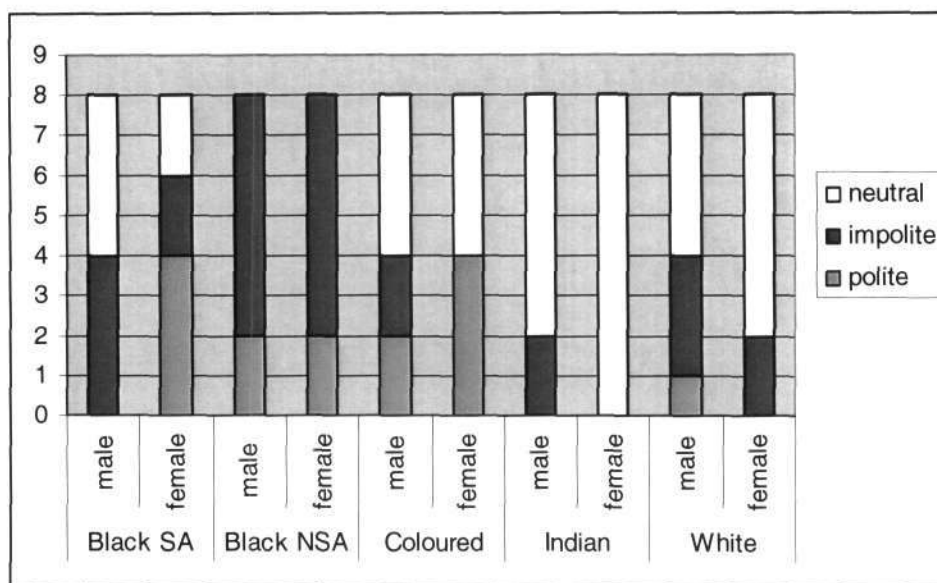


Figure 6: N =8

Comparisons of Figure 4.5 and Figure 4.6 reveal that some gender groups remain consistent in their judgment, irrespective of the gender of the offender. The black South Africa females, black non-South African females, coloured males and Indian males were consistent in their judgement: they did not appear to be biased by gender considerations. The others' judgements did appear to be influenced by the gender of the offender. However, given the size of the groups and the single instance judged, these results cannot certainly be considered in any way conclusive.

4.4 Conclusion

This chapter attempted to show the extent of language diversity of the student population of the university, and the influence of the different languages on students' perceptions of impoliteness. The typical cultural values, interpretations, and the frequent power play of impoliteness experienced by the students are revealed in the Vignettes. Similarly, typical instances of perceived impoliteness and judgements are revealed through the numerous languages of the students when

engaged in interaction. In subsequent chapters I will narrow down the focus to black South African students and the black non-South African students.

5

GROUP DISCOURSES AND IDENTITIES

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter four I introduced the types of behaviours that individuals and groups of students at the University find impolite, and demonstrated that there was both diversity and consistency of perceptions of impoliteness between groups generally acknowledged on campus. Chapter five explores in greater detail the linguistic and cultural diversity on the campus and its possible influence on respondents' perceptions of impoliteness. At this point the core focus of this study shifts to black African students only, to enable an in-depth study of the predominantly multilingual and multicultural student sector at the University of Natal. Hence this chapter and subsequent chapters will present and analyse the focus group discussions of black African students, within the broader context presented in chapter four. Black South African students and black non-South African students were selected as respondents and, for reasons to be made clear below, divided into six groups, four male and two female.

An often neglected function of language is its capacity to symbolise individual and group identity. This is probably its most important feature in multilingual and multicultural societies. Early in life individuals begin to use language to define their personality in relation to each other, and later in life we continue to make use of language to define ourselves, as we play various roles in the community (Clyne 1994; Sterling 2000; Cheng 2003). When people move into a context where the norms and practices are different from their own, it is to be expected that newcomers will learn the norms and values, in order to allow themselves to achieve some degree of integration into the new environment, and to enhance their ability to communicate and interact (Wenger 1998; Eckert and McConnel-Ginet 1992; Mills 2002). This requires changes in perception and in the manner of communication. However, the fear of losing one's identity may produce some resistance to the norms of the new context (Sterling 2000; Ige and

de Kadt 2002; Mills 2004). Some people may work towards integrating their personal beliefs (which are influenced by culture and socialisation) with the new norms to achieve a result which is acceptable both to the individual and to the new group with whom he or she must now interact. They may communicate the beliefs which they acquired earlier where and when necessary, and also draw on their recently acquired customs of communication and relationships. Others may commit themselves completely to the new environment and its customs, especially when it is perceived as empowering and liberating.

Within the multicultural context of University of Natal I will examine issues relating to cultural differences and discuss participants' interpretations of their own experiences of impoliteness. I shall show how group identities become important in situations where cultural norms differ. Where individuals are seen as defying those norms, they risk becoming alienated from their cultural group. Identity here becomes either a dividing or a uniting force. The main thrust of the analysis below will be to show how respondents tend to respond to perceived impoliteness in ways that will maintain and further construct their cultural identities, generally as members of groups. Through which I shall demonstrate that identity protection and defence may result in impoliteness.

5.2 GROUP IDENTIFICATION AND LABELING

In order to explore impoliteness and its intersection with identities in a multilingual and multicultural context, it became essential to differentiate groups of respondents. I began with an initial simple distinction between 'South African' and 'non-South African' students, with the assumption that these two broad categories would then be subdivided in terms of gender. Subsequently, it became clear that the category 'non-South African students' was indeed appropriate to the investigation, but that it was necessary to differentiate the 'South African' grouping further.

These two issues require some comment. I am aware that the category 'non-South African students' is an extremely broad grouping and brings together African students from different parts of Africa. (I do not subscribe to an essentialist understanding of the term 'African'.) Yet in the midst of what is

doubtless a huge diversity, at most times remarkably similar opinions were expressed, with national diversity adding its specific flavour to perceptions and behaviours. Members of this non-South African grouping tended to identify with one another and to emphasise a shared identity as foreign African students. In this way the appropriateness of this broad category was confirmed by the focus group discussions. Hence I simply subdivided these respondents in terms of gender, which yielded two subgroups labelled (in terms of my sense of their self-presentation in the focus group discussions) *diverse males* and *decisive females*. The *diverse males* appeared to construct themselves distinctively as men who come from different parts of Africa with different cultural beliefs. The females on the other hand (also from a range of African countries) presented themselves as decisive foreign students, determined to integrate themselves to their new context, hence the label *decisive females*.

The diversity among the South African respondents was far more salient to the investigation, and over time yielded three male and one female groups. Subdivisions were made in terms of ethnicity, gender and schooling. In this case, respondents' self-perceptions, as represented in their discussions, some explicitly and others implicitly, were the primary source of the labels. Initially I had constituted only one male group for South African respondents, but the early discussion with what became labelled the *Zulu bradas* (students of Zulu ethnicity) led to the further identification of a group of *dilute males*, black South Africans from ethnic groups other than the Zulus, and subsequently to the inclusion of the *Model C guys*, black South Africans who had attended multiracial schools.¹ Interestingly, the initial female group did not appear to require further subdivision, as there appeared no clear distinction between learners schooled in township or Model C schools, perhaps because all are moving away from traditional beliefs towards a hybrid culture.

The term *bradas* (brothers) is the group's own term, as used by Zulu males from townships. The group tends to use the term to show to considerable intimacy, and

¹ The *Zulu bradas*' discussion suggested that the Zulu male students fall two broad groupings, those who schooled in the townships and those who attended multiracial schools in the cities. These two groups of Zulu men consistently construct themselves very differently. (See Ige 2001; Ige and de Kadt 2002 ; de Kadt 2004 on Zulu student identities.)

the term has deep relational value. To a great extent, it is used to construct a strong allegiance towards Zulu culture. In the course of their discussion this group drew primarily on collective terms (such as 'we', 'us' and 'our') to display this closeness and brotherliness. The *dilute males* label was derived from group self-perceptions in a university context in which black ethnicity is clearly dominated by Zulu, and where they referred to themselves as 'confused' and 'dilute' men. Unlike the *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males*, the label *Model C guys* was derived from the usage of other black South African students. I have chosen to call this group by the name of the type of school which they attended, partly because their fellow South African students, *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males*, constantly refer to them in this way, but also because their particular educational experience has produced language preferences and common cultural characteristics.² The female South African students presented and spoke of themselves as 'modernised Zulu women': hence the label *modern Zulu women*. The respondents involved are mostly first language speakers of Zulu who attended township schools.³

5.3 BEHAVIOUR ADAPTATION AND IDENTITY RECONSTRUCTION

The environment of the University of Natal is new to all categories of students. Located in South Africa, in a province where the large majority of people are Zulu, as a university environment it is new even to most South African students, and especially to black students, many of whom are for the first time now interacting on a daily basis with white and Indian students and members of staff. These students enter the university from their own various backgrounds and react differently to their new context. *Zulu bradas* tend to see themselves as culturally and traditionally Zulu, and respond by resisting change; *dilute males* are also traditionally oriented but (as outsiders in KwaZulu-Natal) less resistant to new customs, yet still express some confusion and fear. The *Model C guys*, on the

² In 1993 the South African government converted all formerly segregated 'white' schools to so-called Model C schools in terms of new admission and funding regulations. The Model C schools were characterised by a majority of white pupils, the 'white' ethos of the schools remained intact and the financing of black pupils at these schools was the responsibility of the black parents. Although formally desegregated, the vast majority of black parents were excluded from enrolling their children due to high school fees.

³ I was not able to include female students who had attended Model C schools in this project. My earlier research (Ige 2001, Ige and de Kadt 2002) suggests that such respondents would have been highly likely to conform to the identity presented by the *modern Zulu women*.

other hand, accept the university culture as familiar and appear settled. The *modern Zulu women* embrace the new mode of living and make use of it to change their hitherto disadvantaged position. The *diverse males* and *decisive females* enter the university first as foreigners and second with different cultural beliefs, and adapt in different ways.

5.2.1 Zulu Bradas (ZB)

The *Zulu bradas* are Zulu males who are first language speakers of Zulu. Although members of this group feel strongly about their superiority over other South Africans, they also identify with the broader national group of black South Africans and at the same time interact with *dilute males* and *Model C guys* in different ways. I will illustrate their concern for the Zulu identity which they believe they represent in the university.⁴

My initial question was: how do you present yourself here at the university?

ZB1: In this environment the western culture is very strong and if not careful we will lose sight of who we are.

ZB2: We got to do something about it,

Zb3: We must stop its influence on our people

ZB4: That is why we cling to our culture as Zulus, if you are a man you have to resist others, you have to act like a soldier. You have to resist, otherwise you can become so weak and be tempted by anything that comes around.

ZB2: We look at the case of war, where men fight and resist whatever that is coming that is unknown. It is the responsibilities of the men to check and see whether a thing is good for the society or not.

ZB1: By resisting we are identified as a strong culture, customs, traditional people in the society.

ZB3: And by speaking Zulu we are able to make our point, to show others they will have to learn our language.

⁴ I did not come across Zulu township males who were not 'bradas' in this sense; however, my earlier research on Zulu student politeness did identify a minority who appear less rigid and more flexible towards the university culture and Zulu culture. (See Ige 2001; Ige and de Kadt 2002.)

ZB4: *It just makes us proud as Africans and more in particular as Zulus that used to be at war with apartheid imperialism. Now we have eased a little bit but there is still something we can do as men to fight against cultural imperialism that makes proud that we have not lost our identity.*

Others: *Ja*⁵ (yes)

ZB3: *We don't want to be sucked away by others; we want to retain our identity and be recognized by others as a particular strong group. Not like the girls, I know this concept of multiculturalism, but we have kept our identity separate.*

ZB1: *Because if the way we are now is the way I am made, then the only way I will feel comfortable is by remaining being myself. Immediately I try to take another man's ways of life I wouldn't understand the troubles that may come along that moment. Like for instance us adopting western culture, when troubles come we won't know how to deal with them because we were not made to be living in that way of life.*

ZB2: *So when I'm living the way I'm living now I know because we the Zulus, I want to say that it is true that we the Zulu are more aggressive and like fighting kind of people. But to us the fight is not taken to be personal, like if we have fought we are like enemies, No we don't fight because we are enemies, it's just a pride. And after the fight it is not like O.K. I have fought with you so it's like that No//*

ZB3: *It doesn't mean I hate you because we have fought.*

ZB2: *(Continues) we fight loving each other, we fight as being friends.*

Others: *Ja and we continue to be friends. We might be enemies then fight and become friends.*

All: *It is only as Zulu that we can best express ourselves.*⁶

In their discussion on cultural identity, the *Zulu bradas* begin by recognising a 'western culture' as dominant at the University of Natal, 'western culture', by the virtue of the context and the official language of instruction (English) in the institution. The group declare this 'western culture' to be dominant, and, possibly, over-powering. It must be resisted in order for them to retain their own

⁵ Pronounced (yah) and meaning yes.

⁶ This is a rough transcription in the spoken style of these second language speakers, with punctuation inserted to assist in comprehensibility.

Zulu identity. Western culture is seen as a threat to who they are. *We got to do something about it*, they say, to ensure that their sense of Zuluness remains with them throughout their years of study at the University. To achieve this they declare war on it: *we must stop the influence*, which implies deliberate or conscious resistance by whatever means they feel could counter the influence of this dominant culture over their Zulu identity. Their use of the word 'stop' requires them to come up with strategies which may have positive or negative effects on the situation, but will have the effect of stopping the decline of Zulu culture. This is clearly a trigger for motivated action.

These men see themselves as the custodians of Zulu culture and language in their current study environment: *we cling to our culture and resist others*. Resistance and fighting is constituted by clinging on to one's own group norms. The young men's assumed role as guardians of Zulu culture contradicts other findings on gender in bilingual language situations, which have shown that women are often the custodians of their community language and culture.⁷ Resisting others requires skill on the part of these men, who see themselves as soldiers warring to secure themselves as Zulus and to ensure that other perceived weak members of their beloved culture remain within it. A gendered identity as Zulu male also comes through strongly. They make the point that they are not just Zulus but Zulu men. (A fuller discussion of gender identity occurs in chapter six.) Since soldiers fight to protect territory and defend a community they belong to, these men see themselves as strong men, as strong Zulu people. They see their culture by definition as strong within KwaZulu-Natal Province and one to reckon with. As strong people, they present themselves as men who are not easily influenced by foreign culture; in their own words: *by resisting, we are identified as a strong culture, customs, and traditional people in the society*.

These *Zulu bradas* draw the courage to resist other cultural influences from inherited memories of historical victories of 'their' past. Consequently, any hint of discrimination or injustice signals to them oppression which must be fought. While it makes them proud and powerful, their strength lies in the sense of

⁷ See Burton et al (1994) and Pavlenko (2001) on women positioned as keepers of culture and language in bilingual settings as discussed in chapter two above.

secured Zulu identity; *It makes [me] proud that we have not lost our identity.* However, it is not just about constructing identity; they also want to be a force to be reckoned with as a group. To be recognised as Zulus, powerful people, courageous people, traditional people, and African people is a position they desire to be identified with, and is the way in which they present themselves. The statement, *we want to retain our identity and be recognized by others as a particular strong group* indicates that the *bradas* do not only seek to project themselves in a particular way, but also want to be accepted and treated as such. In the course of projecting themselves as Zulu, these men may deliberately ignore the norms of communication which prevail in other groups.

The *Zulu bradas* argue that it is through their Zulu identity that they are able to express themselves to the fullest. According to them, what may seem like a hybrid identity will not suffice, because their understanding of rules guarding other cultures which differ from theirs is limited; this in turn would limit their performance in the associated language. They admit that: *for instance us adopting western culture, when troubles come by we won't know how to deal with them because we were not made to be living in that way of life.* Their argument strongly suggests that Zulu culture is inborn, and makes no mention of socialisation as part of identity acquisition. For the *Zulu bradas* identity is inborn and cannot be changed, because *the way we are now is the way we were made and the only way we will feel comfortable is by being ourselves.* In other words identity as perceived by the *bradas* is innate, and therefore a Zulu identity is not a mere construct. Rather, it is natural for them to behave and express themselves as Zulu and not in any other way.

The discussion switches to how they communicate this constructed identity to other fellow students.

ZB1: We know that some other ethnic groups like Xhosa, Sotho, Tswana and others are saying Zulus are rude, saying Zulus are aggressive; we are Zulu and that won't change.

ZB2: Yes that is who we are, and we don't want to change.

ZB4: The Model C guys are not one of us, some cannot even speak Zulu

ZB1: *Those one are not men, they are women when it comes to our culture, they are white in the inside and black outside.*

ZB3: *The foreign African students they have great problems. But with some I have noticed that they are scared of us since we are South Africans you know, like we are going to harm them.*

ZB4: *Another thing is that of English, for instance I can look at Dumisani (a member of the group) and assume that he understands Zulu and I say to him kunjani and he says sorry I don't know Zulu. It makes you feel like a fool, which is rude.*

ZB2: *If you approach him or her in Zulu and if he says that it is like, oh here comes this... He could just say I like to interact with you but I don't understand your language. Can we speak English. That way people make friends.*

ZB1: *I think the problem is that our dreams as South Africans, as Africans, because when you look at others from other African countries they still have the sense of being themselves compared to us, we South Africans have lost the sense of being us –Africans.*

ZB4: *And you know the problem is like when you are with the white South Africans, I think there has been a similar problem with us, we have to be honest, we have an attitude. Now when I was growing up before I realised that I have to keep everything African because, as African, I don't have to be competitive, like adopting other people's way of living, I had that in me that you are a foreigner, 'Kwerekwere', you call them all kinds of names because they do not understand the language we speak. We want to force them to understand and to speak Zulu.*

ZB3: *But on the contrary we can say that all those international African students they differ from us, if we can you go back to the apartheid day, their experience is different from ours. When they went to school you know they got that education you know they can speak English better than us. In that way, that's why I am thinking they always look us down you know because we can't speak as they speak. Some of them as I have noticed can speak like Americans or otherwise, the way they are wearing they quickly adopt style than us, so they then have negative attitudes towards us, like oh these South Africans you know.*

The men acknowledge that other groups see their approach as impolite and aggressive, *We know that some other ethnic groups are saying Zulus are rude, saying Zulus are aggressive, however: we are Zulu and that won't change.* They are aware that they have been stereotyped as 'rude and aggressive', but they show no remorse for this and make no attempts to correct these perceptions. Rather than denying it, they confirm it by maintaining *that is who we are*; they also declare that they do not want to change the way others perceive them. In other words, what others think about them is irrelevant to the status or reputation they are trying to achieve in their own eyes, or those of fellow Zulus. They wish to see themselves as having at least some of the characteristics of a warrior nation.

One way of imposing their 'innate' hegemony over other African groups is through insisting on the use of the Zulu language. They approach every African, even the non-South African Africans, in the Zulu language: *For instance I can look at Dumisani and assume that he understands Zulu and I say to him "kunjani" and he says sorry I don't know Zulu. It makes you feel like a fool, which is rude.* A 'negative' response from their hearer in terms of non-competence in Zulu is perceived as impolite, and the hearer is sometimes seen as failing in an obligation. The hearer is expected to show enthusiasm for the language and not just simply say 'sorry I don't understand'. The Zulu men, as receivers of such formulaic apologies, consider such formulas rude. At the same time, foreign students whose apologies are rejected consider the *Zulu bradas'* attitude as rude.

These *Zulu bradas* consider themselves different and better than the perceived 'weak' Zulu males who, according to them, have been assimilated into western culture, so that their Zulu identity is now secondary. Model C Zulu males are described as women, implying that the men are weak and cannot uphold their culture, and are consequently referred to as white man in black skins. Conservative Zulu men have a tendency to distance themselves from the 'Model C' students. The Zulu brothers also differentiate themselves from other black South African groups and emphasise the distance of these from Zulus. The mark

of identity for the Zulu students has always being their 'Zuluness', and the fact that KwaZulu-Natal as the province under Zulu control is expected to be respected as such. In spite of this distance, they still identify with other black groups as South Africans to a greater extent than they identify with the 'Model C' students.

Although foreign African students are referred to on occasion as 'African brothers and sisters', *Zulu bradas* tend to have mixed feelings about them. According to the *Zulu bradas*, most foreign students appear to be even more 'African' than black South Africans in their appearance, and because the *Zulu bradas* wish to see themselves as strong traditional men, they probably feel the foreign African students expose the *Zulu bradas*' 'un-African-ness': *they still have the sense of being themselves compared to us, we South Africans have lost the sense of being us – Africans..* This may be experienced as a defeat by the Zulu group who suddenly see something in others that ought to be part of themselves but is missing. At the same time they accuse the foreign students of betraying their African-ness by their preference for white friends and by looking down on black South Africans. Even though they acknowledge that the foreign students appear to be frightened by them, they regard these foreigners as rivals and seldom interact with them, at least in part because the foreign students tend to speak English better than they do.

Group identity is very important to the *Zulu bradas*, and any other African subgroup that ignores this communal identity is strictly excluded. Skin colour is an important marker of identity amongst the *Zulu bradas*, in terms of a simple black/white dichotomy.⁸ As a result, they tend to construct relations with white students in terms of racial stereotypes. As they claim:

Whites are always impolite, [another adds], the whites are always rude... Another continues: because they are still not convinced that we are all human beings, and don't interact with us thinking they are superior. We black South

⁸ In my own experience as a Nigerian, this black – white dichotomy is uncharacteristic of countries without large settler populations, where people refer unselfconsciously to differences in skin colour.

Africans have suffered quite a lot because of the white South Africans and it was the black people who fought for liberation and after liberation it was a black person who said, let us reconcile. Till today the whites have not acknowledged and apologised to the blacks.

Zulu bradas appear still to be resentful concerning the wrongs of apartheid and are even more resentful because they are convinced that things have not changed enough in terms of racial discrimination. This probably also underpins their attitudes towards 'Model C' students and foreign African students who choose to be friendly with white South African students. For example one student said, *I remember one time that Dumisani (referring to a member of the group) was talking to a white at the café there, ja, something just told me that this must be a white guy coming from America, I don't know why or how I came to that conclusion. But I found out later on it was the case that that guy was from America because I couldn't imagine that Dumisani will talk to white South African like that...* Another adds: *yes can tell even from a long distance that it must be a foreign white student. You will only find foreign African students and 'Model C' guys like that with white South Africans, Even when we speak with them [white South African students] for whatever reason they are always very brief and disappear as if they are afraid, they are usually uncomfortable, and we are also not comfortable around them.* A considerable level of segregation still exists amongst the diverse cultural groups in South Africa, and this infuses the **Zulu bradas'** detachment from Africans who associate with the groups that they avoid or are hostile towards.

The **Zulu bradas** certainly see the University environment and practices as very different from their home communities. The university is a new environment to the **bradas** in terms of culture and practices. They respond to their new environment by resisting the university culture in an attempt to retain their 'Zuluness': For example, although English is widely spoken at university, they speak Zulu to each other and would like to insist that Zulu women speak Zulu to them. The brothers confront the changing situation with very strong resistance: *we cling to our culture as Zulus.* Through their language choices and other types of behaviour these men express preference for their cultural practices over the

new culture of the learning environment. They are not prepared to adjust to their new situation: *We got to do something about it.* The **bradas** are not willing to compromise their beliefs for those of the new university community. They show their loyalty to their culture over the university culture through their allegiance to the Zulu language: *by speaking Zulu we are able to make our point, to show others they will have to learn our language.* It is important for these Zulu men to live up to their cultural expectations, and to maintain the status quo: *By resisting we are identified as a strong culture, customs, and traditional people in the society.* The **bradas** seek to express their Zulu culture through stable performance of Zulu identity: *we want to retain our identity and be recognized by others as a particular strong group.* The satisfaction with their culture expressed by these men further shows how content the men are with their origin: *it is only as Zulu that we can best express ourselves.* The **bradas'** commitment to with Zulu identity supersedes all others and influences their overall attitude toward other groups. During interaction with other cultural and racial groupings in the university, the **Zulu bradas** strongly act out their Zulu identity, even to the extent of appearing aggressive, through their choice of language and behaviour.

5.3.2 Dilute Males (DLM)

Members of this group of respondents included Xhosa, Sotho and Tswana first language speakers. The group was constituted to give voice to other South African ethnic groups, at a university within a Zulu-dominant province, since the **Zulu bradas** focused mainly on themselves as the Zulus of South Africa. The **dilute males**, like the Zulus, share a similar background in terms of education, since they also attended township racially-segregated schools. The **dilute males** first discussed definitions of impoliteness/rudeness (which I will present in chapter six), and then moved on to discuss identity, clearly basing their perceptions on their situation as minorities in a context where most black students are of Zulu ethnicity. The identity concerns of this group are somewhat different from those of their Zulu counterparts.

This group of South African students focussed more on the identity of others.

DLM1: *I think we find ourselves in an awkward situation, as Luyanda was saying, because we know our culture. Now we realise where we are, what kind of*

people we're with, we don't know which way to pursue and you find that in most cases. But what I want to say is that females are the ones that are quick in capturing new cultural values from other cultures.

DLM2: Ja, but here in the Varsity, I don't consider much of the things as impolite, because I know that, most of us are partly diluted here, so when I see, for example Dumisani (a Zulu friend of the group) sometimes speaks English to me even though I like speaking in Zulu; when I am with him I don't regard such behaviour as impolite in this environment

DLM3: Ja, it's partly because our upbringings are different. Some went to Model C-schools, some went to rural areas schools, township schools, all this kind of stuff, so if I greet you and you respond in those Model C tones, I mean I won't be surprised, because I know that, eh..., we have like different backgrounds first of all, all these kinds of stuff.

DLM4: Ja, I think here on campus, we are different. We group ourselves differently, like you will find white guys alone, you find Indians alone, you find black people alone. In those groups there are ways of respect, there is a way in which we respect each other in those groups like in blacks, for example, because I have not hanged out with Indians and Whites. In Blacks, you know, most of the time people are judgemental you know, they look at you, at the way you dress up, they look at your clothes, they look at the course that you're doing, then they tend to give you more respect, because of what you know.

DLM2: Everybody, you see, if they (other black South African students) look at you as 'the guy' or as this kind of person then I mean, okay, we live in the world of probabilities, but I would say, it's more probably that, if you greet them, they would say, they would greet back with no hassles, but if they look down on you, they will just say, yes, and then pass, you see, I think, you see, but I wouldn't want to comment on why. Is it the case, because they do not associate with us; in as much you would love to associate, you'll just feel you're not part of them, they wouldn't say it, but, I mean, it would, it's there, the gap, even you can, can, I think, a lot still has to be done to bridge the gap between these groups.

DLM3: I think we are in a state of bit confusion. Being part of this campus, there are so many cultures coming together, and it becomes a bit difficult to stick to your culture. For instance, you might want to continue with greetings as you

always do in the community, greeting everyone that you meet. But some people do not respond to it so you slowly lose touch with it.

The *dilute males* begin their discussion on identity with an acknowledgment of the fact that they have all changed over their years as students of the university. Although they accuse their female counterparts of being more open than the males in terms of assimilation of western culture, they admit that in a sense they all have changed and none is exempt. As one of them points out, *I know that most of us are partly diluted here.* The *dilute males* perceive themselves as been 'diluted' in terms of adherence to their cultural beliefs and practices. These men in a regretful tone suggest that they have adapted to some extent to the university culture. Their somewhat hybrid identity has caused them to recognise that students from the same cultural background have different experiences which define them both as individuals and as members of a group.

The *dilute males* focus on 'difference', but this difference appears through racial groups which they say are very obvious from the way students cluster themselves in and outside lecture rooms. *Dilute males* identify with black South Africans and South Africa as a nation, but point out that within each group individual differences exist. The group describes its own group dynamics in relation to class segregation: *in those groups there are ways of respect, there is a way in which we respect each other in those groups like in blacks, for example, (because I have not hanged out with Indians and Whites); in Blacks, you know, most of the time people are judgemental you know, they look at you, at the way you dress up, they look at your clothes.* This statement implies that racial segregation is very strong at the university; at the same time it states that there are individual group dynamics in the different groups (white, black and Indians). For these men, status, which depends on family position and degree of affluence, is a major issue within their group, and it can determine the extent to which one is accepted as a member of a particular black group. Discrimination is not limited to the relationship between in-group and out-group, but also happens within individual groups. The group behaviour here seems to point to the fact that some black students have multiple identities by referring to them as 'confused', in that their

relative importance and compatibility differs depending on circumstance. They are 'confused' in terms of how to position themselves within the black group.

For these men, identity is not limited to ethnicity, but extends to shared values, beliefs and concerns. The *dilute males*, however, feel 'confused' in that it becomes rather difficult to practice their cultural beliefs, hence their need to adapt their behaviours (eg. greeting practices): *we are in a state of confusion*.

The *dilute males* also reflect on behaviours of other racial/cultural groups.

DLM1: Indians are the ones who are highly or very highly impolite. If you're doing similar courses with Indians, you'll find that during group discussion, tutorial group discussions, you're brainstorming, and the only thing they're doing is to laugh, and they will not contribute even when you ask for it. But the day before presentation they would say no, you should have done this, and done that, so that they keep on changing.

DLM2: They are always moving back and forth, they don't have any backbone, they don't have a position, and that is selfish, Indians are the most

The group consider the Indian students as the most impolite not simply because of cultural differences or beliefs, but because of their attitude to group work in tutorials. The claim that they *don't have backbones* suggests that Indians are perceived as weak and unable to declare their own identity, especially where racial identity is at stake. In the *dilute males'* view, they are defined by whom they associate with and how reliable they are in the way they position themselves towards other individuals or groups.

The discussion then focuses on the 'Model C' students.

DLM2: I agree, but there is also that group of Blacks, they are called 'Model C's', they are the. . . they're the ones who betray us. These ones, because you see, they're the victims of identity crises, they are the ones who follow whites, they follow whites and when they're with Whites, I don't know if they think they are Whites. They've got pride, pride out of nothing, with them as non-South Africans, meanwhile, they're Blacks, I think, and that's one thing that cause me pain and it's another form of impoliteness. They are different from us.

DLM3: *I address them as Africans, but from the response I can see that ... they position themselves as non-South Africans. They are very weak like women.*

DLM4: *What you actually see is that they're White souls trapped in Black skins.*

DLM1: *You also find Zulu girls or ladies who come from rural areas, but when they come on campus, they start speaking to you in English and if you continue speaking Zulu...*

There are some similarities in opinion between *dilute males* and *Zulu bradas*.

The *dilute males* also perceive the 'Model C' students as traitors of their black South African identity. The group describe 'Model C' students as a confused group of people who are giving up their black identity for a non-black identity by association; *they're the ones who betray us. These ones, because you see, they're the victims of identity crises.* The 'Model C's' are seen by the group as disengaging from the black South African group identity: *I can see that - they position themselves as non-South Africans.* The *dilute males* find it hard to perceive the 'Model C' students as similar to themselves: *They are different from us.* These men, on mainly linguistic grounds, would exclude 'Model Cs' from the South African population. They speak of a 'Model C' identity crisis and describe them as *white souls trapped in Black skins.* The reference to the *Zulu girls or ladies* confirms that the use of English (as opposed to ethnic languages) is a core marker of 'Model C' students. Perhaps these shared perceptions of 'Model C' students (and Zulu women) reduce friction between the *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males*.

However, on other matters their opinions differ sharply.

DLM1: *With me, I mean with other international African students, here at UND, with especially males, I have not experienced any problems, we're communicating, very well, we're friends, but women they're concerned with security, they're shy, self-centred, they're, they become afraid of South African young men.*

DLM2: *I think non-South African Africans are so far, they're the most polite, I have ever seen.*

DLM3: In my experience, so far I have never encountered any major problems with non-Africans, but, however, there are some, maybe some few groups, well, I am staying in Tower, I do not know about other places, ja, there are few groups of Zimbabweans, ja, those guys, I think they're Zimbabwean, those one who are like American style, I think those guys, think that we as South Africans, actually they have a problem with us, they think we're trying to be ahead of them, all those kinds of stuff and well, for example, during the Cricket World Cup, I think, when our boys, South Africa, was eliminated, you know, I was so shocked, they were so happy, they even sent us condolences, they said Oah! Oah Gosh!, ja, I just couldn't well understand their behaviour at that moment, you know, but that's how, they were very like, very rude because our team represented the whole of Africa.

The foreign African students are perceived as friendly and polite. The *dilute males* seem less territorial than the *Zulu bradas*, perhaps because they are in a Zulu dominant province; possibly if it were their home territory, their attitude might be different. Group bonding between vulnerable men and foreign students is extended here to accommodate the foreign students. At the same time, hostility can arise - here on the basis of sport. The only reason for hostility to the Zimbabweans (and to the men, not the women) is in relation to sport. *During the Cricket World Cup, I think, when 'our boys', South Africans, was eliminated, you know, I was so shocked, they were so happy, even send us condolences.* Studies on sport and national identity have shown that nationalism and sport are often intertwined. Sport in most cases symbolise competition between nations, which often reflects national conflicts (MaClany 1996; Silk et al 2005). On the other hand, I feel the dilute males perhaps see themselves as international allies in recreational entertainment.

The *dilute males* are conscious of the changes around them in terms of the university culture and practices which are different to their home culture. Although the *dilute males* claim awareness of university culture and practices, and sensitivity to the university's diversity, they are confused about how best to position themselves in terms of their own cultural beliefs and how much of the university culture they should absorb. They demonstrate this through active and

passive resistance to the customary language choice and behaviours, particularly the gender relations between the groups, in the university. They speak of themselves as *confused* (a bit) and *dilute*, but they have clear views about 'Model C' students and female students: *You also find Zulu girls or ladies who come from rural areas, but when they come on campus, they start speaking to you in English.* The *dilute males* refer to women as weak, and feel alienated from the 'Model Cs' who have adopted the 'western culture'. At the same time the *dilute males* are beginning to move away from rigid traditional stances and towards a more flexible university culture, which is the result of what they perceive as clashes between the university 'western culture' and their ethnic identities. It is likely that some of the confusion of attitudes which they show comes from their sense of English as the language (and culture) of the coloniser, and some from their understanding that English is nowadays the language of education and advancement: *We find ourselves in a awkward situation, because we know our culture, and now we realise where we are, what kind of people we are with and we do not know which way to pursue.* This confusion is expressed by the hybrid men through their interpretation of the situation as a chaos of identities: *I think we're in a state of bit confusion.* They also speak of their vulnerability as a group of people who have found themselves in a context where the norms of behaviour and communication are largely different from the norms they have lived by until now: *most of us are partly diluted here.* The *dilute males* are beginning to come to terms with the change; this is exhibited by signs of fear and vulnerability as to their group identity, which may be subsumed by the university culture.

5.3.3 Model C Guys (MC)

The *Model C guys* were constituted as a group after the discussions of *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males* groups had each represented students who had attended 'Model C' schools as very different from them. To complete our understanding of male student identities, it became imperative that *Model C guys'* view of themselves also be presented. This group consisted of three Zulu-speaking male students and one Tonga-speaking male student, all of whom had attended multiracial government schools.

MC1: *I describe myself as fun, fair, accommodating, loving, I don't like antagonising people. I am proud of being a South African. At the end I am an individual, I am what God made me to be, an individual.*

MC2: *I recognise who I am and what I am because I think that is what I was created for and that is what I am funny.*

MC3: *I am a person just like every other. I am friendly and charming.*

MC4: *It will be polite to speak back in Zulu but it is not rude to respond in English since we all understand and speak English and because of the context of school.*

MC1: *If someone speaks to me in Zulu – If you are not comfortable in the situation in Zulu, then it will not be impolite.*

MC2: *I learn as many languages as possible, because I believe in it for my own good. Some Zulus want to learn only Zulu and English.*

MC3: *I look forward to when I can speak all eleven official languages and I'll feel good about myself.*

MC4: *Everybody has the right to speak whatever language they choose.*

MC1: *I am from a strong Zulu cultural background and I speak Zulu.*

MC2: *But in school we were taught more on how to be individuals and not depend on other people. Of course I didn't learn anything about my culture at school. What I know about my culture is from my home.*

MC3: *But I am proud of my culture of being a South African.*

The extent to which the **Model C guys** describe themselves as individuals is striking. While referring to themselves as individuals or persons in their own right, they also speak about the different attributes that distinguish them as individuals: for instance, one claims to be *fun and fair*. At the same time they display an ability to be part of a group, but present this in terms of 'I', not 'we', for instance in describing themselves as *accommodating and loving*. Unlike the **Zulu bradas**, **dilute males** and **diverse males** who dwell on their cultural backgrounds in their definition of themselves, the **Model C guys**, focus more on their individual traits and attributes. In contrast to the generally assumed strong sense of community for 'Africans', as indeed demonstrated by **Zulu bradas** and **dilute males**, the **Model C guys** construct themselves very differently from the other male respondents in terms of their relationship to culture and tradition.

Their culture and cultural inclinations are strong, in that they still speak their primary ethnic languages and are proud members of their communities. They are also aware of the fact that their sense of self is born out of a combination of their upbringing and cultural expectations which they learnt at home, and their school education, where they acquired knowledge of westernised cultural norms. Their individualism, they point out, was acquired in school: *in school we were taught more on how to be individuals and not depend on other people*. Thus their attitude to issues relating to language choice is very liberal: *If someone speaks to me in Zulu, if you are not comfortable in situation in Zulu then it will not be impolite*. While they all agreed students have the right to choose to communicate in the most convenient language for them (particularly in English), two of the four respondents also talk of learning other languages to empower and enhance themselves.

MC4: I don't like being called Model C. It is stigma - you are someone who thinks too highly of himself, and I do not want to be seen like that.

MC1: I like to be seen and treated as a normal person and not Model C. I was also influenced by my culture, because I was taught manners at home as well as in school.

MC3: When referred to as Model C, I just calmly ask them not to call me Model C, instead you can say I went to a white school or something like that.

MC4: We are referred to as Model C by some people because they feel insecure about their use of English language and jump quickly to see differences between themselves and Zulus who attend multiracial schools.

MC1: There is a gap, unfortunately; some Model Cs think that they are better than their peers. When people feel that they are better off, they tend to behave different.

MC2: It is true that some present themselves as better off. You find people speaking with their nose.

MC3: Some use it as ego, like, I speak better English than you.

MC2: Parents take their children there to give them the best and not so that they can become Model C.

MC3: We can't all be the same, but we should be friends with people that enjoy common things. You can choose your friends, but can't choose your family.

The *Model C guys* argue that the label 'Model C' is sort of stigma that they carry, especially within the cultural group into which they were born. They point out that the term tends to portray them as arrogant and condescending. It is a stigma from which they want to be disassociated. They desire to be treated as ordinary people by others. Sometimes their high proficiency in English tends to intimidate the *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males*, who use that to differentiate between them and others: *they feel insecure about their use of English language and jump quickly to see difference*. The *Model C guys* admit that some people who went to such schools (obviously not themselves) do represent themselves as better off educationally. While arguing that being stigmatised is unnecessary, the *Model C guys* acknowledge that there are some amongst them who derive pleasure from the gap created by inequalities between schools: *It is true that some present themselves as better off. You find people speaking with their nose*. The *Model C guys* conclude with statements about their families: firstly that parents send their children to where they will receive the best education, and *not so that they can become Model C*. Secondly, they point out that friends can be chosen but not families, and for them race is not an issue when making friends, as all whether black or white, are 'ordinary people'. Unlike the *Zulu bradas* who see ethnicity as inborn, family is crucial here, it is the family that the *Model C guys* are born into that defines them – while the opportunities they are exposed to will subsequently also influence their attitudes and behaviours.

It must be noted that in the discussion included here, the *Model C guys* were markedly individualistic in their approach. Each person spoke of his experiences and encounters, but in the discussion quoted below, they suddenly began to use collective terms such as 'we', which may be because the individuals are aware that there are others that share their concern.

MC1: Zulus are most impolite, probably because they have the sense that this is their place and they will not allow you, from Limpopo province, for example, to invade their own land. Zulu females get along with everybody, irrespective of where they are from and the colour of their skin.

MC2: I have no problem with anybody. We are all here to be educated, Zulus, South Africans and international students, we are all equal.

MC3: I have white friends, people I used to sit with back at school, but things are a little different to that of high school; at school we were much closer, like a family. Here you meet lot of other people and you become friends. Whites are just ordinary people like all the others.

MC4: I have lots of white friends because we were at school together, these are made at school based on values, successes, characteristics; it was not based on the colour of skin.

MCI: I don't have a point to prove to anybody, if you don't want to be my friend, fine. I have no problem with that; then you are not my friend.

The *Model C* group members make their friends across cultural, racial and gender boundaries. As far as they are concerned, as students, all are here to learn and all are equal. All are human: *We are all here to be educated – Zulus, South Africans and international students, we are all equal.* For them friendship is based on shared values and has no basis in any form of discrimination. In other words, their understanding of friendship transcends the barriers of social categories that exist in the university (Gee 1996).

It is nevertheless the case that *Model C* guys enter the university environment a little better prepared than other groups, in the sense that they have been culturally prepared by their schools for the university culture. They seem to understand the university culture from their entry into the university, because it is similar to that of the multiracial schools. As a result these men ease into the system more effortlessly than the others, and construct themselves as conversant with the university culture.

5.3.4 Modern Zulu Women (MZW)

The Zulu female group consists of Zulu female students who had their secondary education in the township. The attitudes of these young women are strikingly different to those of the Zulu men.

MZW1: Modernized Zulu person, I still respect my culture and traditions and I still have the knowledge of westernized ways. I adapt to both, but I am not like white, I may be westernised but I'm still traditional so I'll say I'm a modernized Zulu person.

MZW2: I will say I'm a double person, back at home I tend to live according to my culture although it can be difficult you know, when you are perceived as rude.

MZW3: And there are actually a lot of young people and children who cannot speak their indigenous language, they only speak English. When you speak to them in Zulu they are, like, what is up I don't understand what you are saying.

MZW4: My brother and I are from a typical rural area, when we went back home, I was speaking more English than him. My brother still speaks our language, but I tend to have adapted to English faster than my brother.

MZW5: I don't know what to say, you can even smoke here while it is a taboo for women to smoke in our culture. Even drinking but here you have women drinking more than men.

MZW6:n I'll say I'm black and Zulu and modern. I do something like hair style which by doing I don't think am too westernised. I try to be the same here and at home and not be too much of anything.

The Zulu women refer to themselves as modernized Zulu women, *I'm a modernized Zulu person*, and *I'm black and Zulu and modern*. They explain that they combine two cultures, Zulu culture and the university western culture, and the result is what they refer to as 'modernized Zulu'. In their thinking, to be modern presupposes adopting some aspects of a non-indigenous culture, specifically a western culture. From the above extract, 'modern' seems to mean fashionable and free, in terms of choices. The women stress the fact that they have respect for Zulu culture and traditions. They speak of dual characters and double standards, because they usually feel a different person at home compared who they are at the University: *I will say I'm a double person*. Another comment: *I don't know what to say - you can even smoke here, while it is a taboo for women to smoke in our culture*. The physical distance from home is taken as offering liberty to live the way they cannot when they are with their family

members. From their discussion, being a modernized Zulu seems to come at a price. A major price noted by the group is the sacrifice of their language for English, which can alienate them from members of their family and community: *actually a lot of young people and children ... cannot speak their indigenous language, they only speak English*. The above discussion can be taken as an indication that Zulu female students are using less Zulu language and are speaking and using more English at school and, probably, at home. It is very likely that their behaviour differs too.

The group's description of themselves in a way confirms the fears of the *Zulu bradas* and the *dilute males* about the Zulu women student's attitudes towards the Zulu language and customs, and the female preference for campus 'western culture'. The *modern Zulu women* are not unaware of how their modernized Zulu identity is received, especially by other members of their language community: as one of them puts it, *it can be difficult, you know, when you are perceived as rude*.

Further probing as to other reasons for their choice to be seen and heard as *modern Zulu women* rather than Zulu women, suggested a central role of gender-related issues and these will be presented in detail in chapter seven. However, in this chapter I will analyse this in relation to the construction of identity. In the following extracts the women explain further their reasons for moving into a non-Zulu culture and changing their behaviour.

MZW1: *It is because in our culture the male is always more dominant than the female, so the guys want us to be oppressed by them. A guy always expects you to go under him if he says something, you have to be obedient to everything he says, So now when we are here, in varsity we are all equal here there is no one that is more dominant than the other. So if he is telling me something that I don't like I am going to tell him straight to his face that he must never say something like that, I'll give him a piece of my mind back. So he would interpret that as being rude, while I am trying to express myself by telling him I don't like what you are doing or saying to me.*

MZW2: Ja so when he is telling me things I don't want to hear, you just give him a piece of your mind in English, that way he cannot do anything to you.

ALL: Ja, we must protect ourselves.

Here the participant states that the real reason for drawing on western customs and the English languages especially when interacting with men, is to empower women to stand up to Zulu male hegemony. The group presents western culture as giving them the power required to resist male domination, so that it is possible to achieve equity. The women suggest that at the university they are able to stand up to male oppression and speak out against it without being intimidated. In other words, they are able to resist Zulu male domination when they construct themselves as *modern Zulu women*, which may mean speaking to the men in English. Another participant adds: *like for example in the township it is OK for men when you go past to touch your behind or something, but then here it is very impolite for men to just come and touch you anywhere. They want to be seen as people that are stronger than women by sticking to the past and culture.* The university culture which is perceived as 'western' is used by these women as a shield against male controlling behaviour which displeases these women, who in their own language feel culturally disempowered. A move away from one language into another empowers them, and they feel able to resist men. The women's approach to the choice of language suggests that their men are culturally encouraged to behave in a manner which they do not approve. These women are engaged in a struggle against oppression using language, in this case with English as their weapon.

As a result, the *modern Zulu women* look for new ways of talking to the men: *we have seen how our parents have suffered during their time, we don't want to experience the same thing, that is why we have adapted to the western culture. But then the thing is men have also changed, it's just that some of them will not agree to that...* This group of women see 'western culture' as the embodiment of freedom, power, and the force of change. The women resist male domination through their choice of language in communication in English: *when he is telling me things I don't want to hear, you just give him a piece of your mind in English.* These women are seeking to reconstruct their identities through a new discourse.

Research into gender socialisation and the construction of gender identities has shown that within every culture, gender relations are usually communicated in interaction (West and Zimmerman 2000; Weatherall 2002). The rules, for the most part unstated, are understood and followed by the majority of the members of the communities unconsciously. The *modern Zulu women* are challenging some of the existing gender boundaries through communication. The women argue that to prevent what happened in the past from happening again to them, they have had to change their position from simply Zulu to 'modernized Zulu'. The modern Zulu woman is a Zulu who is empowered to resist male forces of oppression. Consequently, these Zulu women are reconstructing their own identities to specifically put them on a par with their male counterparts. Other identity markers such as race and ethnicity are less stressed in their discussion; not that these markers are unimportant, but their attention focuses mainly on changing the existing gendered power relations, which are seen as most threatening to their womanhood.

MZW1 I think foreign white students are more polite than South African whites. Because especially female ones, I don't know whether it is because they want to learn more from you as a black South African. But you know South African females are not forthcoming like them, like wanting to be friendly with you something like that. They are reserved; they don't really like actually to talk to us. But the international students they talk about most things, maybe you're dressed up they ask you where did you get, from which shop YK everything and they communicate with you, a black South African, more than people that are here with us.

The group finds foreign white students more interested and friendly than South African whites. Because the foreign students show interest in them, skin colour becomes unimportant, and all that matters are the individuals concerned. This holds especially for female students. They raise concerns about their non-acceptance by white South African females. As they subsequently point out: *you hardly find a white exchange student dating white South African students. You find them dating black guys; they want to experience and know more about them.*

They are very nice, they come here to learn more about African culture and associate more with black people than with whites even though they hang out with them. These women show, through their discussion of foreign white students, their understanding that recognition and acceptance can bring people of different colour and backgrounds together. At the same time the lack of recognition and acceptance of a group by another group can lead to estrangement, irrespective of race or gender.

MZW1: The foreign African students associate mostly with the whites.

MZW2: And they also keep to themselves a lot, they don't want to learn from others.

MZW3: I don't know why but they are always around whites.

MZW4: It is easy to identify blacks SA from other blacks of Africans. I have noticed that blacks of a different culture tend to think that they are different and that they are better than us. So I guess that is what makes them stick more to the whites, because the whites is like they want to know more about their country.

MZW1: Also for example when you go to Point Road you find that most North African males living around those areas tend to want to oppress SA blacks. I don't know how that happened but they just don't want to SA blacks to succeed in anything they do, like you'll find that they are the ones involved in drug smuggling or dealing with drugs, using SA women as prostitutes. They don't want us SA blacks to succeed. That is why we tend also not to like them and we call them names like kwerekwere .

Yet foreign African students are seen as associating more with white, presumably because the latter want to know more about the foreign students' country and culture.

It can be deduced that these women had probably expected the foreign African students to behave as do other foreign, but non-African students. They had expected them to show a level of curiosity about South African cultures and possibly make the first move in terms of exchange of friendship, which is what

the women admire most about the non-African foreign students. Their non-acknowledgement by the foreign students then registers as a threat, a threat to their own home. Hence they put up resistance. In this regard these women seem to feel the same way as the Zulu men.

The *modern Zulu women* find their new environment empowering and liberating. They embrace the opportunities created for them, as the university culture helps to free them from unwanted traditional cultural expectations. They therefore use this opportunity maximally by constructing new identities for themselves, by embracing new norms while retaining some old ones. The result, according to the women, is a stronger and freer individual. The *modern Zulu women* have new levels of energy and experiment with the new culture: *I am a modernized Zulu person, I still respect my culture and traditions and I still have the knowledge of westernized ways.* Their new identity as *modern Zulu women* has increased their performance and confidence especially in gender-related issues: *A guy always expects you to go under him if he says something ... So now when we are here in varsity we are all equal here; there is no one that is more dominant than the other.* These *modern Zulu women* have integrated their old and new-found cultures to create new identities for themselves, to develop new skills to acquire and articulate their new identity and to use it to protect themselves.

5.3.5 Diverse Males (DM)

Turning now to the non-South African respondents, I consider first the *diverse males*. This group consists of foreign African students from eight different African countries. It is a very diverse group, though it barely begins to represent the enormous diversity in Africa: in addition to the different countries represented here, within each country, too, are people of different cultures and languages yet sharing the same nationality. The students in this group are from Kenya (KENY), Nigeria (NIG), Cameroon (CAM), Rwanda (RWD), Eritrea (ERT), Uganda (UGD), Zimbabwe (ZIM) and Mozambique (MOZ). In spite of the diversity that exists within this group, as mentioned previously it did appear appropriate to place them together under the umbrella of foreign students. The participants identify strongly with each other not only as foreign students, but in

particular as foreign African students. It appears that, in this university environment, a sense of themselves as 'foreign African students' has become a primary identity marker for all the students in this group. As members of the postgraduate student community at the University of Natal, students in this group tend to define themselves largely by what they are not; they are not South African and still more so, not Zulu.

Yet ethnicity⁹ remains an important identity marker for this group, as it is for their South African counterparts, but in a rather different way, and especially so for students from the north, east and west of Africa.

CAM: Before now I was not conscious of my skin colour; until I came here, I never had to talk about myself in terms of my colour.

RWD: In fact it meant very little before, but now I am more conscious of it, although it does not change the way I see people still.

UGD: Because people are people even though where I come from we are all the same colour.

KENY: When there are whites and others the number is small.

MOZ: South Africa is more racial than any other African country.

NG: Here I have to say I am from so and so.

Skin colour was of no great importance, until now, in multiracial South Africa. The students are clearly from less race-conscious contexts. The extent to which race functions as an identity marker is determined by the context in which these *diverse males* find themselves. As one of the speakers puts it: *before now I was not conscious of my skin colour until I came here, never had to talk about myself in terms of my colour.* In their home contexts, the dynamics of diversity differ from those in the university and South Africa more broadly. In Nigeria for instance, with its over 200 languages, race is not salient, but in South Africa, racial consciousness is activated. Things are a little different for students from southern Africa countries. They point out that although members of other racial groups are present in their home country, they are few in number, and it is not the

⁹ See Evaldsson (2005); Billig (2001) and Gotsbachner (2001) on race and ethnicity as identity markers.

diversity that is important in South Africa, it is the awareness of race: *When there are whites and others, the number is small.* The sudden emergence of racial identities as experienced by the *diverse males* does not necessarily become dominant: *it does not change the way I see people still.* This sudden consciousness is brought about by the presence of people, students and staff from different countries of the world with different languages and cultural practices, or possibly through the after-effects of apartheid, the perpetuation of race-thinking, for example through South African equity laws: *people are people even though where I come from we are all the same colour.* This means that being conscious of one's race is not necessarily a bad thing, because it is a mirror through which we see what we look like on the outside. The *diverse males* show that it is quite possible to get along with person of different races, sometimes even more than with people of our own race. This is supported by a recent report on the Nigerian Diaspora in South Africa, where respondents were shown to face identity challenges different from their already constructed identities (de Kadt and Ige 2005; Ige 2003).

RWD: *They (Zulu speaking students) don't make comments or show interest in you and that is frustrating you know. You feel like rejected, but when you are talking to a white person, he goes like oh what is happening now in your country and things like that and that. Such are interesting interlocutors because they are making you to talk about yourself and about your culture and country.*

ERT and KENY: yes [in agreement]

NG: *Automatically you are drawn to the more hospitable group.*

UGD: *We tend to have more white friends ...*

According to this group of foreign students, what tends to matter most is not skin colour but recognition and acceptance, which fosters closeness between the foreign student and his hosts. In the case of foreign respondents, acceptance comes before racial issues. Recognition and acceptance gives them the opportunity to educate their host about their home country: *they are making you talk about yourself and about your culture and country.* Irrespective of race, acknowledgment and acceptance by other students draws them to make friends and probably choose allies in an unfamiliar context, especially when faced by

what they refer to as: *[lack of] interest in you, and that is frustrating you know. You feel like rejected.* The above extracts probably answer the *Zulu bradas'* question as to why the foreign African students tend to socialise with non-black South Africans. The *diverse males* show by their agreement that sometimes a shared black identity can be abandoned where there are no benefits accruing from it. In other words, an identity symbol, even as strong as 'black African', need not unify people into a group. However, this attitude is not welcome and can be perceived as impolite/rude, as already discussed for the *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males*, in the case of *Model C guys*. Non-South African students, in so far as they are unified (and this is probably only the case when they are actually on campus) are unified by difference – by the fact that they are not South African, in a context where the majority of the students are South Africans. In addition to membership of this non-South African group, they may form small subgroups of, for example, Kenyans and Nigerians.

These men discussed the diversity that exists in their respective countries and how this has helped them to cope better in the South African situation.

ERT: In my experience, coming from a very small country with a small number of people, we are just 4 million, even though we don't know very deeply every culture, we do almost know some of the cultures. So in that term the way we behave in my country is quite different from here. Here I don't expect too much as an international student because we are from a different part of Africa so we tend to look at things differently.

MOZ: I think some of the characteristics of African languages are the same which makes us to have the same contextual style for interpreting one another in that country. Coming to South Africa, South Africa is racial more than tribal, here an Indian or Chinese represents Asia, whites represents Europe, west and east, a black represent all blacks in the world. So from those perspectives I can just deduce the expectations.

ZIM: We have a common language or culture which is understandable to people of other cultures, unlike South Africa.

RWD: We have only 2 tribes, those 2 tribes speak similar languages. There is not much diversity, but surprisingly you have heard about the genocide there, people

killing each other because the difference is culture. But the thing is in terms of diversity, it's not really a diverse population, the Rwanda population. How can it make history by simply exemplifying small differences resulting in tragic consequences, like what happened there. So that a lesson that I learnt is simply helping me. For instance to know how to minimize difference and emphasise more the common things we share, and I think peace is profitable, it is what everybody should try to make.

NG: We have so many different languages and cultures in my country, but the people have learned to understand and respect one another's culture and language and not force one's language or culture over another.

The nationalities within the group share their experiences of diversity before coming to South Africa. They draw on the diversity of their different countries and note how it is helping them to cope in their new environment which presents a different form of diversity. The Eritrean draws strength from the understanding that has been gained by not expecting too much, given the different backgrounds of the students, the Nigerian derives strength from the ability to respect others and not impose oneself or one's ideas on others. The Rwandan's story is a very sad one and yet encouraging. Citing the Rwandan civil war that led to genocide, the lesson he learnt is *to know how to minimize difference and emphasis more on the common things we share*. And this is a great lesson for all.

The Zimbabwean and Mozambican, however, did not give examples from their countries. Instead these two men spoke of the similarities between different African languages and cultures and how they all differ from the South African situation. These men, unlike their counterparts who spoke categorically about their own countries, languages and cultures, simply generalized that all African countries other than South Africa have a lot in common. These two students seemed to believe that all Africans are the same, and it is likely that this attitude will influence their expectations of fellow African students who have come from very different cultural backgrounds. In spite of their association with mostly non-black students, the group argues that their cultural identities always filter through in their interaction across cultures. They point out that because one associates

with people outside one's cultural or racial group, this does not necessarily lead to the neglect of one's own customs or language.

ERT: *You see one thing that really strikes me here is about the show of respect to people that are older. In my culture, I learnt to respect people that are older than me no matter what their age, gender and ethnic background, be it white or black or whatever colour. For example, once I was sitting and three people with grey hair came around and couldn't find any seat, so I stood up and offered my chair. They were really surprised and then they asked me where I was from, they were like they knew I couldn't be a South African.*

RWD: *So even if one is standing there and the other there (pointing at two different directions) exchanging greetings or whatever, if there is no other way you ask to pass them to be allowed to pass. So on this occasion I saw two people talking: I couldn't pass because in our culture when two people are standing talking you are not allowed to pass between them, and I simply asked to pass. They were shocked, they looked at me and asked me where are you from, of course you're not a South African.*

NG: *A friend once asked me why I always bend forward when greeting and I told him that in my culture we don't stand straight when greeting older persons and that I find it difficult to stand and greet older people. Also when I come across older people from our place I greet them in the way we greet whether or not other people are around.*

MOZ: *I am surprised you see in South Africa because of my experience with them, and because I know about South African culture, some of these things they do when they are back at home, they change when they are here [at the university]. They know that like you cannot just pass in between two people talking, things like that, but when they come here that is when they become....*

ZIM: *A good example, I am not supposed to wear a hat before elders, but here I always wear one.*

The above examples were cited by the students to show that these *diverse males*, although far away from home, are still very much connected to their roots. They not only know the cultural expectations, but practice them in the diaspora.

Whether the receivers of the polite cultural behaviours cited above understand these as intended, is another matter. Without doubt, such behaviour identifies these respondents as different to South African black students. All nationalities agree that age is greatly respected in their different cultures, irrespective of the colour of the skin, of gender and class. Further examples cited are an unwillingness to pass between people engaged in conversation, and appropriate clothing.

However, the southern African respondents (the Mozambican and the Zimbabwean) thought differently, which suggests that they are more likely to adapt (though of course such a generalisation cannot be made on the basis of these few respondents). These men did not cite examples of how they continue to define themselves as Mozambican or Zimbabwean, rather they discussed South Africa (and not their home country). They discussed when, where and how South African students practice the types of respect mentioned by the other members of the group: *I am surprised you see, in South Africa because of my experience with them, and because I know about South African culture, some of these things they do when they are back at home.* The only example that came from the southern African men was one of non-conformity with what is culturally expected of them: *I am not supposed to wear a hat before elders, but here I always wear one.* Instead of directly admitting that they have not themselves been conforming to cultural norms they turn to South African students and point out perceived cultural deficiencies. While their claim may be true with regard to *modern Zulu women*, and *dilute males* to some extent, this of course is very different from the way the *Zulu bradas* perceive themselves.

The group continued to share their experiences as foreign students at the university in the following manner:

MOZ: Most of instance in this institution, the Indians are very impolite, particularly the way they associate in small classes, in our tutorial classes. You see, let us assume that this group and we are required to discuss a certain question, you will see that there is a racial difference. What they do is, they don't take much notice of black ideas and they only need you when they are stuck,

when they are running out of ideas, that is when they can take you, they can accept what you are saying, they are very rude people.

RWD: In terms of different cultures, it is obvious that you come from somewhere else, but everybody will have a different reaction to you, some have the tendency to just show envy or dislike, they don't make comment or show interest in you and that is frustrating and you feel like rejected. There are some words that are used to us like foreigners, like they say kwerekwere for instance which is very rude.

NG: Yes when they see you they assume you are a brother and speak their language to you, but as soon as you tell them that you don't understand them, they become offended, which is very rude. Should I pretend to understand when I don't?

ERT: Apart from that name calling, there are some other behaviours and actions are rude compared to my culture. Here some people's actions and behaviours appear as if they are not considerate to others. Like kissing especially deep kissing in the public [the others laugh] It is true unless you have know someone like a boy friend for a long time you don't do that and even then not kissing outside, publicly, he can kiss you on the cheek. They are very inconsiderate, and it is very impolite.

ZIM: What about white people, if I enter your office and you are a white man you have to offer me a seat, it is like if they don't offer you a seat and you go ahead and sit down it is taken as rude, by just sitting without being offered a seat. But in my culture it is actually a show of respect by taking a seat, it is disrespectful to enter and just stand.

KENY: We try to adapt as international students, but one has to retain part of our own identity. If you change from time to time you simply become a victim and lose one's identity.

UGD: One must retain one's identity, be unique, be somebody and not just survive. You want to adapt of course, but we must also defend ourselves in terms of being here.

NG: And in terms of our beliefs and behaviours because that is who you are.

The *diverse males* talk about their experiences as foreign students in relation to their new environment. The major issue that confronts them as foreign students is

the attitude of black South African students. Their not being able to speak Zulu in particular puts them at a serious disadvantage with the black South Africans: *There are some words that are used to us like foreigners, like they say kwerekwere*¹⁰. Language certainly creates a gap between them, and they cite the highly offensive label 'kwerekwere' which they encounter. The challenges faced by the students from the North, amongst other things, include behaviours relating to sexual relationships: *Like kissing especially deep kissing in the public*. The two men from southern African approach the issue differently; they point out what they consider impolite behaviour on the part of non-black groups.

The *diverse males* as foreign students recognise and respect the student diversity at the university, and at the same time parade themselves proudly as non-South African. *Diverse males* are proud of their different cultural backgrounds and try, when off-campus, to live by the norms of their home cultures. Being conscious of their cultures and of the diversity in their new environment, they do their utmost to maintain a balance, by observing their cultural practices where necessary and being generous in their interpretation of others' communicative styles and behaviour. They express great satisfaction with their home cultures, and at the same time try to pay attention to the demands of their new environment. These men construct themselves as people who are sensitive to and uphold their home culture, and yet keep their minds on cultural differences before speaking or taking action: *One must retain one's identity, be unique, be somebody and not just survive. You want to adapt of course, but we must also defend ourselves in terms of being here*. This is also visible in their mannerisms: *A friend once asked me why I always bend forward when greeting and I told him that in my culture we don't stand straight when greeting older person*. They also draw on their own national diversity as strength: *We have so many different languages and cultures in my country, but the people have learned to understand and respect one another's culture and language*. These men, in recognition of the new environment, develop new skills and integrate their home norms with those of their temporary home. Differences are seen as normal in their new

¹⁰ The word *kwerekwere*, denoting 'one who cannot speak or understand the speaker's language'. The word 'barbarian' originally had exactly the same meaning – and is and was used in the same derogatory sense.

setting: *Here I don't expect too much as an international student because we are from a different part of Africa so we tend to look at things differently.*

5.3.6 Decisive Females (DF)

This was a group of eight foreign African female students from Kenya (KENY), Uganda (UGD), Nigeria (NIG), Cameroon (CAM), Ethiopia (ETHP), and Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC). In spite of this diversity, these respondents had a large number of common concerns.

NIG: *Here most people tend to associate by race and then by ethnicity, the first thing you observe is the racial division.*

KENY: *The different groups behave to you differently, some can be very rude, others are a little nicer.*

ETHP: *The Indians are ruder in their approach to you. They don't even know you are there, you don't even matter, and they even go to lengths to be rude to you.*

CAM: *I have noticed for example, once in the library looking for books there was this white woman who went looking for the books for us. I had example of an Indian administrator who was very nice to me. But with the students the space is there, they don't even recognize that you exist more.*

KENY: *In fact I was thinking if I were to come down to the campus naked no one will notice [others laugh] because no one looks at you.*

DRC: *If you walk along you see that people are divided along racial groups here, and so when you walk along you are simply treated alongside all the other blacks, whether you exist or don't exist. So you are unconsciously drawn to the blacks.*

UGD: *You are still having problems there too; you are still not accepted there. So you think I'll go to black, I'm black, there are blacks and we are together in this thing. No way it's not that way, you still an outsider just because you are not Zulu.*

Racial and national groups are prevalent in the university, and appear to be one of the first things the *decisive females* notice: For instance, *Indian students are in their own world to one another, they are friends with one another, it is very hard*

to tear somebody from that group, and they are so close together. The women feel pushed away by the Indians. They use strong phrases such as you don't even matter, they don't even recognize that you exist more, and if I were to come down to the campus naked no one will notice, to show how the Indian students seem untouched by their presence or absence, which for them is a very impolite attitude. Consequently, they assume that they are being treated that way because of the colour of their skin (you are simply treated alongside all the other blacks); as a result they feel pushed toward the black South Africans, so you are unconsciously drawn to the blacks. However, their association with black students is also problematic. As explained by one of the foreign sisters, they are not accepted by the blacks either, who treat them like outsiders, because 'you are not Zulu'.

KENY: *Everybody expects you to talk Zulu, and even when you tell them you don't understand they still insist and continue talking especially the older ones. Like where I stay in the residence, there is a cleaner who usually does our corridor and who insist even when you tell her excuse me I don't understand, talk to her in English but still insist and it seems to me that she's upset when ever you tell her you don't understand what she is saying, she just continues responding back in Zulu. And I found out later that she understands and speak English. Well, in Kenya, if you are a foreigner they really embrace you, they want you to feel comfortable, but here you have to find your way around.*

NIG: *They make you lose interest in learning Zulu by their attitudes, it is very rude. Because of their attitude I didn't bother to learn. We don't enforce language on each other where I come from and definitely not on a foreigner.*

ETHP: *Even the little that I had picked up, I deliberately don't speak it, they are very inconsiderate, instead we speak the little we know among ourselves.*

The women feel very strongly about their Zulu counterparts wanting to enforce the Zulu language on them and they put up resistance.

The lack of a common understanding about language between these women and their Zulu counterparts leads them to conclude that their host students are inconsiderate and perhaps not friendly. They compare this with their own

country's hospitality to foreigners. The choice not to speak the language Zulu they have picked up is a strategic way of showing that they have taken offence. By not wanting to learn the language they seem to be saying that they would rather not interact with Zulu-speakers.

***ETHP:** It is interesting; they think that you are here to take advantage somehow.*

***NIG:** I remember a Zulu classmate (female) telling me once that she is very surprised that we have befriended her because most of the foreign students prefer white South Africans. She was very surprised that we are interested in her, so when they see you walking with whites they say definitely you must be a foreigner.*

***KENY:** My friends from other African countries tell me that they have lots of white friends who come to their room and do things together and the South African blacks find it shocking.*

***UGD:** I remember a Zulu classmate telling me that their English is not as good as mine and I said you shouldn't think of it like that we started learning English earlier and had access to resources that you didn't.*

The group noted that they sense that black South Africans see them as wanting to take advantage and respond by being on the defensive and protective of their own interests. On the other hand, there is an appreciable level of interaction between these foreign students and their white hosts. The surprise voiced by the Zulu classmate confirms a Zulu preconception that foreign students definitely do not want to know anything about them, are not interested in them, that they only wish to make friends with white students. This myth which alienates Zulu and foreign African students is perhaps a good example of 'black on black' student stereotypes. The fact that foreign African students tend to speak better English doubtless also contributes to this. Of course this is mere perception (though often true), but it can greatly influence interpretations of the actions of people involved, as in this case. Relationships with other foreign students, on the other hand, appear to be achieved effortlessly. As the group explained, there is a strong connection (as foreign students) between them all, irrespective of the part of world they come from.

KENY: *It's easy to make friends with people from other parts of Africa and even countries you've never heard of before. It's because you are all in together and facing perhaps the same challenges away from home, you are perhaps homesick.*

ETHP: *That is a bonding experience for all international students.*

DRC: *When they know you are foreign and refuse to talk Zulu you turn to another foreigner like you and together you understand the situation.*

The bonding among foreign students is very strong. In spite of the diversity of their languages and sometimes skin colour, their foreign identity brings them closer to one another, especially since the challenges faced are similar, irrespective of the part of Africa they are from and the language spoken. Shared experiences are a bond that ties the students from numerous communities in Africa together. The *decisive females'* experiences as foreign African students in South Africa become a strong identity marker in this context. This shared experience as described by the participants includes the loneliness that they feel at being away from their homes and the circumstances they face at the university, based on their situation as foreign students.

It is part of being a foreign African student that at times they need to accommodate others in their frame of references. Treasured values, if not recognized in the new context, are done away with for the period of stay in South Africa. While these *decisive females* are similar to the *diverse males* in the ways they respond to issues and to people in terms of allowing room for differences, yet they tend to differ from the *diverse males* in ways in which they deal with these issues. These women appear to be more flexible than the *diverse males* in terms of the way they deal with their own cultural practices and beliefs.

NIG: *There is no sense of orderliness or closeness, for instance, I find it so rude for somebody to be tapping my back asking to collect money. It is not my area of business to be collecting money from people, it is accepted here. I had to change ways, I see, most times if I have to enter buses and not feel bad about it. And you enter library and they push you and the way people feel you had done anything wrong passes and I stand and laugh because they will be pushing me along the*

way at least no matter how tight it is, I say sorry and I say sorry and nobody even bothers to hear what I'm saying.

CAM: *The funny thing is most of the time when I am pushed I say sorry at least there should be an acknowledgement that somebody has said sorry. So I have learnt not to bother if they push me, I just wait and give way and no longer go around apologizing.*

These *decisive females* have come to realize that even though all black Africans may look alike, ways of doing things may be rather different, for instance, the manner in which requests are made or when an apology is appropriate. In order to accommodate these differences, the women note that they have had to change their approaches. They are having to redefine themselves in their new environment, to enable themselves to function and interact in daily encounters. And as they redefine themselves, some aspects of their identity are distorted, at least for the period that they are residing at the university: *I just wait and give way and no longer go around apologizing.* When no acknowledgement is received for doing what they term the 'right thing', they assume that the environment does not appreciate such politeness and tend to abandon the practice. The sense of 'right' or 'wrong' behaviours with which they entered the country is gradually being modified towards the majority sense of 'right' and 'wrong'.

The *decisive females* enter their new environment with enthusiasm but soon have to change. They come to the University of Natal with high expectations of their hosts (black, white and Indian). When the expectations are not met, the women change their attitudes. Unlike the *diverse males*, their home culture becomes less of a focus; their concern is more for acceptance by their host. When they sense hostility, they respond by playing along with their host. They present themselves as flexible and determined, in terms of their adjustment to their new environment, and by the ways in which they are ready to change their approach in order to maintain their sense of worth. In this process, the *decisive females* develop new skills which enhance their performance and confidence. These women have come to terms with the new challenge and see change as the way forward: *I had to change the ways I see things most times, even though it is*

making a sacrifice to stop doing what is culturally right: *I have learnt not to bother if they push me. I just wait and give way.* These flexible women have devised ways to cope with their new situation, by not being rigid in their beliefs and opinions; their response is dependent on the situation.

5.4 CONCLUSION

In this chapter, I have presented data from the focus group discussions to show that respondents construct, contextualize and reconstruct their identities on an ongoing basis, through their cultural positioning, and through their choices and use of languages (mother tongue and English) The data in this chapter reveal that participants deliberately utilise the languages which they command to reinforce the identities they wish to adopt. A core finding, which will be further discussed in chapter eight, is that respondents use impoliteness as self-defence, in terms of their resistance/acceptance/conformity to the university culture, and their individual and collective identity construction.



INTERPRETATIONS OF AND RESPONSES TO IMPOLITENESS

6.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter five thematised the ongoing construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of student identities, presenting the various ways in which respondents construct themselves as members of several communities, in terms of ethnic group, life within the university community and chosen associates within the university. These identities, which are constructed primarily through their choice of language(s) and cultural practices, tend to compete for attention and recognition in interactions within the university. In some cases, members of these groups may have to assert themselves, choosing what might normatively be considered over-emphatic language or behaviour, for their presence to be felt. These constructed identities will now be shown in action, through the terms employed by the students to define impoliteness, their understanding of impoliteness, and their reactions and responses to perceived impolite behaviour. The chapter attempts to show how the various identities constructed by the students impact on their understanding of and responses to perceived impolite behaviour. The chapter is presented under the following subheadings: perceptions of impoliteness; and impolite behaviour as identity performance.

6.2 PERCEPTIONS OF IMPOLITENESS

I draw here on the focus group discussions where participants spent some time reflecting on the meaning of the word or concept 'impoliteness'. Their understandings of the concept are presented here, categorised according to the groups to which the speakers were assigned: *Zulu bradas*, *dilute males*, *Model C guys*, *modern Zulu women*, *diverse males* and *decisive females*.

6.2.1 Zulu Bradas

These men, as described in chapter five, are first language Zulu-speakers who pride themselves on what they see as their cultural conservatism. In their definition of impoliteness they draw on their Zulu (often referred to as 'African') cultural understanding of the concept of politeness and define it in relation to their interpretation of what is perceived as impolite. The following are some of the definitions that emerged in response to the question: *What is impoliteness?*

What is Impoliteness?

ZB1: *When you are talking to someone you know and his language choice you are not comfortable with, like using a vulgar language or harsh word. Most of the time impoliteness is not only about speech; it is also the behaviour.*

ZB2: *Firstly I will say it's a subjective concept because what you regard as polite in one culture can be regarded as impolite in other cultures. For instance we Zulus we are not allowed to look at elders in the eyes, to look at them straight in the eyes when talking to them. But to the white community it is acceptable. Universally it is unacceptable, I think in every culture it is unacceptable to just say what ever you want anyhow to someone, for instance, insulting him or something like that.*

All: *Ja, that is true.*

ZB3: *Generally, impoliteness is to respond to someone in a manner that makes them feel uncomfortable, maybe in responding in a harsh manner when somebody is asking for help or greeting in a friendly manner and you respond in a harsh manner.*

ZB4: *It is showing disrespect to people; especially the elders must be respected.*

For the *Zulu bradas*, impoliteness is a type of speech or behaviour that makes the hearer or receiver of the action *uncomfortable* as a result of perceived impolite behaviour. The expression of perceived offensive speech or action hurts the hearer or receiver of the behaviour, even though they admit that what sounds insulting in one language may be inoffensive in another, and what is perceived as cruel in one community may be acceptable in another community (Weedon 1987). The *bradas* confirm research findings that politeness and impoliteness are culturally subjective:

*It's a subjective concept because what you regard as polite in one culture can be regarded as impolite in other cultures. Furthermore, they define politeness and impoliteness in relation to age as a social category. The actor's age determines how his/ her impolite act will be interpreted. While an elder's impoliteness attracts certain concessions, a youth's impolite act cannot be sanctioned. The **bradas** further elucidate the subjectivity of impoliteness by drawing upon Zulu politeness norms guiding interactions with elderly people. There is consensus among the group that in Zulu culture, 'eye-to-eye contact' with an elderly person during interaction is impolite. The same non-verbal behaviour, however, is not offensive to whites: [as] *Zulus we are not allowed to look at elders in the eyes...But to the white community it is acceptable.**

The **bradas** agree that there are universally unacceptable behaviours, such as that it is unacceptable everywhere to hurt people deliberately: *in every culture it is unacceptable to just say whatever you want anyhow to someone, for instance, insulting him or something like that.* It would be unacceptable anywhere to respond in a harsh manner. These assumptions about the generally accepted rules and expectations for interactions would most definitely inform and influence how they respond to perceived offensive behaviour.

Impoliteness and Rudeness

ZB4: *In most cases being rude is the same thing as impolite. You can sometimes not speak but the attitude speaks. When you are rude you know yourself that you are being rude but sometime you are being impolite and you not aware of it. Rudeness focuses on the way you talk, but impoliteness includes gesture and also speech.*

ZB1: *That is true, but just like impoliteness is subjective, rudeness is also subjective. Like I was speaking to one guy, I was speaking loudly to one guy and he told me the whites are going to say that I'm rude because I was loud and I told him that we Africans we don't have a problem with speaking loud. So it depends on the culture you identify yourself with. With us there are too many things that we don't regard as rudeness, but when you are with people from other cultures, Indians or whatever,*

you tend to appear rude. For example, you shout; a non African, he might feel you are rude.

ZB2: *This thing about being rude and impolite is based on how you communicate with people. So by being impolite and rude you communicate verbally and non verbally. I don't understand why these things happen: if you're walking past somebody and he smiles at you and he doesn't greet you – we Zulu people believe in greeting, and asking about how do you do etc. To us it is impolite to open door for the lady to go in first, we believe that a man has to go in first to assess the situation and make sure it is safe for the women.*

ZB3: *We have been giving examples of impoliteness and rudeness. I want to say that it is important that we define or make a difference between being impolite and rudeness. For myself, I think being rude is an extension of impoliteness. I think it's the highest degree of being impolite. But as said earlier we are not allowed in Zulu to look into our elders' eyes; I think that can be regarded as being impolite but if you can insult them then you are being rude, irrespective of gender.*

Impoliteness and rudeness are seen to differ in terms of the degree of offence and the damage to the receiver. The *Zulu bradas* were clear about the similarities between the two: firstly, both are perceived as emerging from communication, and secondly, rudeness, like impoliteness, is subjective. What might be taken to be rude by one group may be considered polite by another. The group cites examples to support their argument, such as the differing perceptions of loudness among different groups on campus. They do not perceive loudness as impolite, but are aware that the white community see it differently: *I was speaking loudly to one guy and he told me the whites are going to say that I'm rude... we Africans we don't have a problem with speaking loud.* Similarly, they argue that a verbal greeting is more polite than a smile: *we Zulu people believe in greeting, and asking about how do you do.* Likewise, perceptions of manners differ, such as opening the door for a woman to go through first; this will be elaborated on in Chapter seven. According to these men, if we judge in terms of how behaviour is perceived in a particular group or culture,

then we are likely to misinterpret the intention of an actor who does not belong to that group.

The group argued that while it is possible to be unintentionally impolite, rude behaviour is usually consciously performed: *when you are rude you know yourself that you are being rude but sometime you are being impolite and you are not aware of it.* In other words, impoliteness is associated with unintentional offensive behaviour, and rudeness is seen as intentional. At the same time, rudeness is defined as culturally dependent, which may appear to contradict the intentionality associated with it. What this means is that there may be situations where the actor is well aware of what is acceptable or how others will view of the situation, and yet he/she performs the act according to his/her specific group norms. The action can then be both intentional and culturally biased. The *Zulu bradas* also argue that at other times it may be assumed that rudeness, like impoliteness, may be unintentional. They attempt to make a clear distinction between 'impolite' and 'rude' and explain that the former is an extension of the latter in terms of the degree of offence. Again all agree that to disregard the convention of eye avoidance in communication with the elders is 'impolite', whereas to insult an elder is outright 'rude'. Impoliteness, as understood by these men, refers to disrespectful acts that for the most part are unintentional, whereas rudeness is intentional.

ZB3: I think with the question of impoliteness that it goes back to cultural imperialism because such, I have seen most of our black sisters and brothers now applying the notion of being impolite from the western perspective, but they do not look at it from the African perspective of the issue of being polite. For example like you'll compliment a lady and then it's like whether you are barbarian. Now people are confused as to what is polite and what is not polite because they are African but they want to put on the western perspective, and at the end of the day they get not knowing what is polite and what is impolite.

ZB4: Like it's only when we speak to elderly people that I apply the African way or perspective of what is polite and impolite. But when I come here having grown up in

the township, because the township has a bit of African value. But when you go to the countryside there the dominant values are African as compared to townships and suburbs.

These men agree that they tend to employ norms of their language when in communication with other group members. *When we speak to elderly people ... I apply the African way or perspective of what is polite and impolite.* This presupposes that the elderly, whether Zulu or not, are addressed (generally, in Zulu) in a way acceptable to Zulu customs. For someone brought up in Zulu customs, an elder must be shown respect, in terms of what is polite, impolite or rude, acceptable or unacceptable to elders. However, the definition and position of social categories such as age, gender and class might differ from culture to culture, leading to different attitudes and approaches towards people in these categories.

It is important to note that the group is aware of the diversity of the university context, and of its impact on their views and their 'African' ideas. The men point out that there is a lot of confusion amongst their 'brothers and sisters' in terms of their understanding of what is right and wrong. According to the *bradas*, the things that are perceived as polite in their culture are treated here at times as impolite and 'barbaric'. These men see some members of the Zulu student community struggling with issues of politeness and impoliteness on campus in their interactions with others. For instance, the *bradas* argue that: *now people are confused as to what is polite and what is not polite because they are African but they want to put on the western perspective, and at the end of the day they get not knowing what is polite and what is impolite.* In other words, it is possible to lose one's sense of wrong or right when norms and values clash. The *bradas* believe that they are not confused because of their strong adherence to Zulu values and norms.

Triggers of deliberate Impoliteness

ZB1: *I think in a situation whereby, for instance where someone is trying to make a fool out of me, trying to show that I am poor in English, I know that I am poor in English because it is not my first language and you find those people who like to make fun of those people, to me it sounds as if you are making a fool out of me that is when I get piss off and I can say whatever I want to say to you.*

ZB2: *I personally become impolite to someone who has been impolite to me.*

Others: *Ja.*

ZB3: *As Africans and previously disadvantaged there are many factors on campus that can cause offence. You might find yourself being impolite to someone who has never been impolite to you. Maybe you are having problems with financial aid people or that you haven't bought books etc, and you are not in the normal situation, then those situations can trigger you to be impolite.*

ZB4: *For instance the most disadvantaged people who come here and face many problems, more than any other race, are black people. So you come here and maybe having problems with the financial aid office, having problems with your course, maybe you don't understand it, and in the state of confusion. When someone who has benefited, like a white guy comes along, you know that he is more advantageous than you so obviously you wouldn't know how to treat this person. If the person comes around telling me things while I am having financial problems it will trigger me to be rude.*

The **Zulu bradas** agree that a perceived deliberate act of belittling will trigger reciprocal impoliteness. Deliberate impoliteness can be used to counter perceived impolite attacks. The **bradas** however add that people can become impolite out of frustration, especially when they feel more vulnerable than the other person involved. Anger may be transferred and people insulted for belonging to the advantaged group.

6.2.2 Dilute Males

The *dilute males*, too, draw on their cultural backgrounds in their interpretation of what is impolite and how they would respond to perceived impoliteness.

What is Impoliteness?

DM1: Impoliteness in terms of African languages is like when maybe Xhosas don't compromise their language when they speak to Swazis, they expect Swazis to understand what they are saying in Xhosa. They're not being polite: in other words, they are not meeting each other halfway, and you see that is my own definition of impoliteness.

DM2: Ja, it's impolite, at least if they can see that I do not understand Xhosa; we should compromise and all speak in English or try something else that we will.

DM3: Ja, I try, but as Africans, we're, I don't know how can I put it but we normally don't approach Africans in English, but you know Zulu, Xhosa and deep siSwati. If they would be polite enough to try and you know accommodate the siSwati speaking, and the Swazi try to accommodate the Xhosas.

DM4: Impoliteness to me is when an indigenous speaker of that particular language tries at all costs to promote, protect, and preserve his language by not letting other languages to be used. When he understands or he might speak a word very well in English and then he chooses or she chooses not to speak, then that is being impolite, because that particular someone is promoting self centeredness.

DM2: When I refuse to compromise my own language, like, let's say, if I meet this guy halfway, you know, okay, like, I just greet him in English. I mean that shows sort of respect. I think being able to compromise my own language and try to communicate, I know that, okay, it is a Zulu province, okay, I know that the majority of the people here are Zulus, so I will try to compromise my own position, it's not like I am not proud of who I am, but to like, to show respect in certain terms.

This subgroup starts off by defining impoliteness in relation to the university context and linking it to their experiences of what they perceive as impolite. These men focus on uncompromising attitudes in terms of language dominance, even when the

speaker perceives that the listener does not understand the language. They refer to such unaccommodating behaviour as most impolite. The group definition of impoliteness is strongly linked to their position as students of the university. The group focuses on impoliteness amongst black Africans, specifically South African blacks. These men argue that when people from different linguistic and cultural backgrounds interact, there is always a middle ground where compromises can be made and a common language used in order to communicate. In a situation where one is a visitor, efforts have to be made to learn and use the local language(s) as a mark of recognition of its status. The *dilute males* see the *Zulu bradas'* uncompromising language choice in the university as being unnecessarily territorial and therefore impolite.

DM1: Ja, also impoliteness is anything that can just trigger my anger, even by mere greeting, when you greet me in a manner that disparages me or sort of like showing that you disrespect me or you address me in a manner that I cannot accept, you can do that by perhaps calling me a boy in a class or lecture room, 'yes, boy', that comes impolite to me.

DM2: It also means disrespectful. If you're not respectful to your elders, well that's one of the terms of impoliteness, in our culture, if you don't show respect to your elders, you're impolite.

DM4: Ja, I think being polite and being impolite, these two concepts are rooted much during communication, that's where you can see much of them in action, like when I maybe, talk or greet a person, 'Hi', if that person doesn't sort of acknowledge my greeting, I treat that as impolite,

These men then develop a more general interpretation of what is perceived as impolite behaviour. They give vivid examples which range from greetings to name-calling. Here impoliteness is regarded as behaviour (verbal and non-verbal) that shows disrespect in a manner that is considered unacceptable: *perhaps calling me a boy in a class or lecture room*. A more traditional issue is added when they refer to

the importance of age in relation to respect and disrespect: *in our culture, if you don't show respect to your elders, you're impolite.*

The *dilute males* argue that impoliteness towards the elderly includes disregarding an elder's opinion and the use of derogatory words in response to correction. It is interesting to note that elders are considered only as potential recipients of impolite acts, whereas the youth are positioned as both potential initiators and recipients of impolite acts.

Similarly, like their Zulu counterparts, the group points out that politeness and impoliteness are strategies of communicating feelings in interaction.

Impoliteness and Rudeness

DM1: *I think rudeness is impoliteness on a higher level, the closer to physical action, ja, somewhere there.*

DM2 & 3: *Ja, it is a climax of impoliteness.*

DM4: *Ja, because if a young man, for example, is being scolded by his father...*

DM1: *For being impolite, in my communal community, any father figure is my father, but then if I am getting punished by that father figure out of my household, then, me not accepting that, to be shown impoliteness or my misconduct, and then I would just disregard him, then maybe, he would just reinforce any punitive measures; for example, for me to sort of ignore that, then I would like, ja, something like that, there has been extreme attention there, even a physical contact is possible, so that would be being rude, talking carelessly with that particular father figure, something like that, it will be considered rude, this is at the top of impoliteness.*

This **DM1** also describes the relationship between impoliteness and rudeness in terms of degree of offence: *I think rudeness is impoliteness on a higher level, the closer to physical action. Rudeness is seen as more offensive than impoliteness, and*

also rates as more physical in behaviour than impoliteness, which tends to be limited to verbal manifestations. At the same time, the group argues that rudeness is the peak of unacceptable behaviour: *ja, it is a climax of impoliteness*, which suggests that there is a continuum, ranging from impoliteness to rudeness. (This is of interest, in that the notion of a continuum forms the basis for researchers' and scholars' efforts to expand the theory of politeness to include impoliteness and possibly rudeness.) The example of a father figure in the community scolding a child for wrongdoing is used by the group to further establish the distinction between impoliteness and rudeness. The refusal of a young person to obey such a father figure is regarded as impolite. A non-responsive attitude to a fatherly figure's disapproval is described as impolite, whereas to exchange abusive words with such figure is at a level higher, and hence: *talking carelessly with that particular father figure... will be considered rude*.

The *dilute males* further stress that both impoliteness and rudeness can occur unintentionally or arise directly from specifics.

DM1: For example when I want to shake my hand with Dumisani, Dumisani doesn't, to me, especially if it is a black, it becomes impolite.

DM2: At first, I will try and find out as to why does he act in that manner, if he does that intentionally, knowing that me in that manner I am expressing this, therefore I can just judge him as impolite.

DM3: You would be more hard on a black person, than you would be on a white person?

DM4: Ja, because I believe that a white person still has more to learn about my culture, than a black man; we have more in common that is not seen in our culture, you see, so we're of the same society.

DM1: So that person is not being rude intentionally, saying that he doesn't understand you, so it is based on a source.

DM2: A person become rude intentionally because there are some forces behind which either to acquire something else, that he or she wants.

DM3: Ja, there is no rudeness without a source, but the source can be because of lack of understanding. Ja.

The *dilute males*, like the *Zulu bradas*, feel very strongly about greetings and associated responses; these include handshaking. Failing to include a handshake in a greeting will be considered impolite, if a black person is involved: *when I want to shake my hand with someone,...especially if it is a black, it becomes impolite*. Such a perception reveals stereotyping, the assumption that all black people greet in the same way or are expected to understand the greetings. Such impolite behaviours by white students can be condoned, on the grounds that the particular act, or omission, although still perceived as impolite, can be regarded as unintentional. When a black student is accused of breaking the rules of a perceived known culture, this is more likely to be understood as intentional impoliteness. Where mistaken judgements can occur, however, is when the black person does not belong to the cultural group (probably Zulu) of his interlocutor, and is unaware that he or she is failing to observe the codes of Zulu politeness.

According to the *dilute males*, both impoliteness and rudeness can be intentional or unintentional. In addition, the group agrees that rudeness is usually goal driven: *there is no rudeness without a source*. The difference is seen to lie between the unintentional disregard of norms, which can be due to ignorance of cultural expectations: *the source can be because of lack of understanding*; or intentional defiance of accepted norms to pursue an agenda: *a person become[s] rude intentionally because there are some forces behind which either to acquire something else, that he or she wants*.

Triggers of deliberate impoliteness

DM1: Apart from the emotions, psychological things that are going on within myself, what will trigger me to call a spade a spade, is that if there is a continuation of impoliteness from that person against me, then I will retaliate with the same impoliteness or even extreme, you see, to end it.

DM2: This, I think comes back to what Luyanda has said: I just look at the frequency, as to how much time do you become impolite to me, therefore out of that I can draw up a boundary, ja, a final boundary.

DM3: Ja, well, what can trigger me most is that somebody who messes up with my family and that's it, (laughs) if someone who mess up with my family, serious guys, I will turn, you know, I will turn around into a ghost, into a mountain ghost (laughs).

DM4: I think I will go with Luyanda and Chris, I will be impolite in response to what a person has done.

DM1: Because the same person or the particular person has to feel the same pain that you felt, you see!

Retaliation for a perceived impolite action or speech is seen as the main trigger for deliberate own impoliteness. Once behaviour is perceived to be intentionally impolite, retaliation may follow: *I just look at the frequency, as to how much time do you become impolite to me, therefore out of that I can draw up a boundary.* Another respondent adds: *I will be impolite in response to what a person has done.* An example of such behaviour is a perceived impoliteness towards the family of a member of the group. Another member of the group speaks of responding impolitely, *because the same person or the particular person has to feel the same pain that you felt, you see.* This suggests that impoliteness can cause the receiver pain, although not physical pain. It can affect a person's psychological well-being, giving him or her emotional pain

6.2.3 Model C Guys

The *Model C* guys, unlike the *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males*, rely on both cultural understanding and what has been learnt at school for their interpretation of impoliteness and responses to perceived impoliteness.

What is Impoliteness?

MC1: Impoliteness I will classify as not courteous. When you are not being respectful, or not being considerate of about other people around you.

MC2: It is going out of your way to make someone feel unimportant.

MC3: Impoliteness in other words is not being polite.

MC1: It has to do with somebody who does not care about others. It is also about being too self-focussed, being harsh or using harsh words.

MC2: From my experience in life it is both from being educated and being born a Zulu, impoliteness would be breaking certain norms in society, you will then be impolite, a behaviour showing lack of manners and respect.

MC3: Yes, at home we are taught manners, how to behave well and share.

MC4: We are also taught by teachers how to behave well. So you like learn at home and school how to behave politely.

MC1: Obviously different people will have like different upbringing, that includes people of the same cultural background.

The *Model C* guys define impoliteness in opposition to politeness: *not being courteous... not being respectful and not being considerate*. 'Not being' signals that the expected and accepted behaviour is absent, either through ignorance or deliberately, and that the opposite is on display. They relate impoliteness to self-centeredness, and to paying no attention to others' needs or concerns, and describe it as harsh. Their understanding of impoliteness as a socially unacceptable phenomenon derives from two sources, from socialisation into their cultural group, and through school education: *from being educated and being born a Zulu*. Through their socialisation at home and school they learn that breaking certain socially acceptable norms would amount to impoliteness. They do not seem to see any contradictions, which is surprising. They associate their understanding of impoliteness with home socialisation, however they are also aware of the influence of the multiracial school they attended on their perceptions and behaviour. *Model C* guys are also the only group to use the term 'lack of manners'; while they acknowledge that people from different backgrounds are socialised differently, they are also aware that people of the same culture may have a different orientation.

A further difference is that this group focussed solely on impoliteness in the university context: on the politeness or impoliteness of peers. They were the only group that did not draw on age as a social category.

Impoliteness and Rudeness

MC1: Being rude is similar to being impolite, but a little different.

MC2: Rudeness is belittling someone, going out of one's way to make someone [feel] small.

MC3: Although neither of them is acceptable, rudeness is worse than being impolite.

MC4: By being harsh one can be impolite, and also rude by being harsh. The two belong to the same family. But rudeness is more offensive.

MC1: To be rude will be a deliberate act, while you can be impolite without realising that you have been impolite.

MC2: Being rude is usually a conscious thing done to ridicule and belittle a person.

MC3: With my family, you actually have no reason to have to be rude or impolite.

MC4: Basically for me is you have no excuse to be rude or impolite.

MC1: Both impoliteness and rudeness are unacceptable.

Like all the other groups, the *Model C* guys saw rudeness as worse than impoliteness. Rudeness is seen as a deliberate act, such as the attempt to belittle or ridicule someone: *going out of one's way to make someone small*. Both impolite and rude behaviours are inconsiderate, *but rudeness is more offensive*. While it is possible to be impolite inadvertently, in most cases being rude is a *conscious* behaviour. In other words, there is a degree of intentionality attached to rudeness, and impoliteness tends towards an unintentional, perhaps negligent, act. However, there is no excuse for behaving either impolitely or rudely: *Both impoliteness and rudeness are unacceptable*.

Triggers of deliberate impoliteness

MC1: It depends on the issue, if it is something sensitive then I will respond most likely in the same manner or worse. But for minor issues, I just walk away to avoid unnecessary conflict.

MC2: It is socially acceptable that if someone is rude to you, you can reciprocate by being impolite or rude too. Otherwise if you are not rude back you might be taken for a doormat.

MC3: I always give people my ultimate respect till I see how they treat me. I suppose you treat others the way you want to be treated.

Like all the other groups, these men argue that a perceived deliberate impoliteness will trigger a similar response, especially if it involves a sensitive issue: *I will respond most likely in the same manner or worse.* They tend to overlook minor issues deliberately, in order to avoid conflict. However, they find it socially permissible to respond impolitely in an impolite situation.

6.2.4 Modern Zulu Women

The *modern Zulu women*, unlike the men, were very brief on this topic. There was a high degree of agreement, either because they found themselves actually in agreement, or because good manners demanded that they affirm the last speaker, or because, unlike the men, they felt no need to intervene on every topic. As a result, when a member makes a point, the other women generally endorse this with *ja* and move on to the next issue.

What is Impoliteness?

MZW: I think it is somebody who is rude, not considering my feelings. When people who don't consider other's feelings they just want to do what they want to do and they don't care how that person will actually react to what they just said or done. So it can be action or spoken.

MZW2: I think it is disrespectful in way, either in the tone of voice or action that they do, like in the Zulu culture when you speaking to elders, you don't look at them

in the eyes. When you look at them in the eyes it's being disrespectful, while in contrast with the whites' culture, because when you speak to them you have to look at them in the eye. When you look down you are like disrespectful and very impolite. If you have that kind of comparison how do you manage such situation?

Others: *Ja.*

MZW3: *Well you kind of adapt to both situations, like when you're speaking to whites you try very hard to look at them in the eyes, in the face. And you know sometimes you forget and look down and they give you that kind of look that you're being very disrespectful. Some of the white people sort of have an idea of this culture, in our culture so they don't mind them much, but you find those who mind.*

MZW4: *So if you grow up knowing that it's a norm to do it every time you are speaking to a black elderly person, then you get used to it, it is only when you have to change with a white person that you get confused.*

Others: *That is true.*

The *modern women* define impoliteness as inconsiderate behaviour: *when people who don't consider others feelings they just want...*, which can be either expressed through words or actions. The women also use the term disrespect, which may occur through tone or action. Like the *Zulu bradas*, they cite the typical example of disrespect in Zulu culture, when a young person maintains eye contact when addressing an older person, whereas the contrary is expected when interacting with white people. The group agrees that it takes extra effort on their part to maintain eye contact when communicating with people from other cultural groups: *you kind of adapt to both situations, like when you are speaking to whites you try very hard to look at them in the eyes in the face.* This is because they have been socialized to avoid eye contact with elders, and to change that requires a relearning process in their new environment. Like the *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males*, the *modern Zulu women* avoid envisaging their elders as potentially impolite.

Impoliteness and Rudeness

MZW1: Rudeness is more like intentional, sometimes you can be impolite without knowing it.

MZW2: Like I know a lot of black students who tend to speak out loud in the environment where a lecture is going on and then maybe a white person then says, can you please keep quiet or keep your voice down, and they feel it is rude shouting like that on top of your voice over their talk, so in that case if it is rude or impolite but you don't know you are not aware of it. So I think you cannot separate the two because it is possible for you to be rude or impolite and not be aware of it. So I think this thing of 'intentional' is not clear, because even if you cannot be aware that you are being rude just like when you are impolite.

MZW3: That is when you like attack a person, when you are impolite. Sometimes you can be impolite without seeing that you are impolite. I know that sometimes impolite is a manner or rudeness is way of getting back on someone.

In very few words the *modern Zulu women* describe the relationship between impoliteness and rudeness as intention-driven: *Rudeness is more like intentional, sometimes you can be impolite without knowing it.* At the same time, it can be difficult to distinguish between impolite or rude behaviour in a multicultural context like University of Natal due to the diversity of cultural expressions of meanings that arise from the environment: it is possible to be unintentionally rude as well as to be impolite without any motivational intention. Intentional and unintentional behaviours are subject to differing cultural interpretations. For example, attitudes towards loudness are culturally conflicting, and loudness is considered unintentional impoliteness on their part.

Triggers of deliberate impoliteness

MZW1: I will say when you offend my family or close friends, anything that has to do with my family or close friends, I'll also be very rude and impolite to the person. I don't care about what has happened. If I hear your own side of the story I will also

listen to what my friends or family have to say and will act very impolite or if I feel you were impolite to them.

Other: Ja.

MZW2: *I usually pile up issues; I pile them up until I burst one day. So when I burst I really do a blonder.*

MZW3: *That is true for most of us, because most times you just keep quiet because you are not allowed to speak like that.*

The *modern Zulu women* are protective of their family and friends. While an offence against their family or friend will trigger deliberate impoliteness (*I'll also be very rude and impolite to the person*), they allow room for dialogue before any counter action. Impolite acts are also triggered by certain abuses (by men) that women are expected not to talk about. For instance, if a man touches a lady's bottom, the impoliteness that follows may be disproportional to the specific event because of pent up anger.

6.2.5 Diverse males

The diversity of this group was reflected in their perceptions of these issues. Every member of the group had something to say, even though in some cases members were simply repeating each other's views.

What is Impoliteness?

ERT: *I think to me, impoliteness is not being considerate to individuals, I mean not knowing what the person likes and dislikes, especially if you are from a different ethnic group, from different background, trying to or expressing in a very rude way is impolite.*

MOZ: *I think it is just misbehaviour but related to how others will receive or see how you behave. If to them you behave badly, then they can term it as being impolite, but also sometimes impolite can be defined as a violation of the usual style of life. If for instance, you violate or do something unusual or indecent, for example*

if you talk to an older person in a manner that you talk to your friends of the same age.

ZIM: *I think it is an interpretation of one's behaviour from the outside.*

RWD: *From my point of view, impoliteness is a misbehaviour of someone to somebody else who does not like that behaviour, for example if I am talking to somebody who is ignoring me I will take it as impoliteness or rude.*

NIG: *I think impoliteness is when people talk or deal with you in a way that is not proper. It has an element of belittling or disregarding or careless talk.*

The student from Eritrea defines impoliteness as behaviour or speech that shows a lack of consideration for the hearer/receiver, possibly based on a lack of what is appropriate. The Mozambican student brings the perception of the hearer or receiver into consideration, and hence: *if to them you behave badly, then they can term it as being impolite*. Finally, the Nigerian and Rwandan agree that impoliteness is improper behaviour by a speaker or actor that may be belittling or disregarding. Together the group highlights the many faces of impoliteness which include lack of consideration for others, perceived misbehaviour, violation of norms, and improper behaviour such as belittling, disregarding and careless talk.

Impoliteness and Rudeness

MOZ: *I think rudeness can be the result of impoliteness, usually between the two people. Yes, between the two of you but there will be one person who will be the starting point of all the contradictions which lead you to explain that part of you and usually it leads to rudeness.*

ERT: *To me I think that impoliteness and rudeness are interrelated, but I think that both of them differ in terms of their degree. While impoliteness seems to be not that much difficult issue, rudeness seems to be a severe part of impoliteness. So in terms of degree rudeness is held much higher and severe and it can lead to quarrels and physical attacks on each other.*

RWD: *Rudeness here - I don't know if it's from a single person, when it is rudeness or impoliteness causing problems from outside. But from both point of views,*

rudeness is being in the process of impoliteness; you can be rude and others can see it as impolite. So it can be a character or just a behaviour, rudeness then that will be interpreted as not impoliteness, but also can also be rude. It depends on the reason you become without being impoliteness or without any consequence of impoliteness.

UGD: *So impoliteness is a misbehaviour that can cause sometimes frustration. You can be impolite and frustrate others and by the way they can become rude towards you. So that then is external, it is not from a single person, but the relation between rudeness and impoliteness, rudeness can be a way of defense, you know, not necessary impoliteness.*

KEN: *Just to add to his idea, in my culture, all impoliteness is rudeness. But if what the society describes as rudeness is impoliteness, so there is difference between the two. In my society rudeness tends to be taught at early state as a child, whenever these rude terms or expressions are spoken there is a punishment that is attached to it, but when it is impoliteness the punishment is milder. But if as I suggest not to do this or express it this way or something like that, they will correct you or teach you in a milder ways.*

NIG: *Rudeness is a deliberate attempt to belittle, disregard a person or carelessly using derogatory words.*

The group sought to distinguish between the two: impoliteness and rudeness. The Zimbabwean respondent described rudeness as the outcome of an impolite incident between two people: a situation in which impoliteness occurs that is not managed properly by the two parties can deteriorate into rudeness. The Eritrean man on the other hand described impoliteness and rudeness as interconnected, and yet the degree of discomfort caused to the receiver is different, and that severity of the offensive usually determines the severity of the response. Rudeness is perceived and defined as causing more severe damage than impoliteness: *in terms of degree, rudeness is held much higher and severe and it can lead to quarrels and physical attack on each other.* The Rwandan notes that behaviour is only judged as rude or impolite by the receiver, which may differ from culture to culture, or individual to individual. He suggests that it is possible to be rude and be understood as impolite

and vice versa: *you can be rude and others can see it as impolite*. The Ugandan adds that impoliteness can result from frustration: impolite behaviour by one person can lead to a rude response, in a situation where rudeness serves as a defence mechanism. The Kenyan distinguishes the two with the example of a child learning about rudeness through punishment measured out for an offence: *In my society rudeness tends to be taught at early state as a child, when ever these rude terms or expressions are spoken there is a punishment that is attached to it, but when it is impoliteness the punishment is milder*. Finally, the Nigerian defines rudeness as mostly deliberate action geared towards hurting the receiver: *rudeness is usually a deliberate attempt to belittle, disregard a person or carelessly using derogatory words*. Their discussion echoes that of other groups: rudeness is an extension of impoliteness, and more severe misbehaviour; what is considered rude by one may be regarded as impolite by the other; rudeness is usually deliberate, unlike impoliteness.

MOZ: *Ja in my country politeness I think it is a concept that is associated with the elders, 'rude' is one of the connotations to children. So politeness is achieved through time in age, as you grow up, you learn it mostly on your own through interaction when you realise that this is decent, this is not.*

ZIM: *Ja, I agree with M, politeness is got to do with respect for age.*

RWD: *You can see impoliteness in term of age, you can say a young person is rude and then all the people can see his rudeness as impolite. Then it is impolite but he's being rude. But also it depends on the people to whom your rudeness is to, like if you're an older person who is being rude towards younger people, and then it can be interpreted as something else though it is impoliteness. For instance, older people can be rude to younger people, sometimes in the process of correcting them, but they are not regarded as impolite. In terms of age then rudeness from older people can not be seen as rude, and it is not impolite. It is aimed to have positive result most of the time, but rudeness from younger people to older people is automatically impolite.*

NIG: *You cannot refer to older people as impolite or rude; because it is rude in itself to say an older person whether male or female is rude or impolite to you.*

UGD: That is why I said in most of the cases, you know, in older people you can get impolite but simply because of the respect that we have towards that older person, even if he becomes impolite, it is not perceived as impolite, because it is simply another way of respecting that older person even though he is impolite, but his impoliteness will sometimes be interpreted simply as not rude.

ERT: I think politeness and rudeness are defined by the elders in the society, even then it does not mean that elders do not behave in impolite ways, there are times and moments where they can also behave in a very childish and rude ways, but the tendency to behave in a very impolite or rude way tends to be greater among children, underage children that are not mature or experienced as compared to the elders who are wise or endowed with wisdom.

CAM: These further show that politeness is associated to elders and rude to be younger, that can be seen in most instances, contemporary, maybe there at school, especially at school. You'll hear a teacher saying a good boy or girl, then to the elder he says that that machine operator is impolite to me or he is polite in his speeches something like that, you see avoiding polite with children and avoiding rude or impolite with the elders.

This discussion explores in some depth some implications of the wide-spread rule that respect, or politeness, must be shown to elders. Members of the group argue that the age of those involved is of great importance in perceptions as to who is impolite or rude. The Mozambican states that young children are marked as impolite members of his society, just as politeness is associated with being elderly, and that politeness is achieved over a period of time through socialisation. The Zimbabwean agrees and adds that politeness is about respect for age. The Rwandan spells out the consequences of this: as a mark of respect for age, the elders cannot be referred to as impolite or rude; rather behaviours are simply interpreted differently from those of young people. *In terms of age then rudeness from older people cannot be seen as rude and it is not impolite.* According to the Ugandan, it is unacceptable for a younger person to refer to older people as impolite or rude, because it is rude in itself to say an older person whether male or female is rude or impolite. The Eritrean

points out that perhaps this is because the rules of polite and impolite behaviour are originally set by the elders of the community: *politeness and rudeness are defined by the elders in the society*. These men show that when it comes to age there is a difference between behaviours and what can be said about behaviour. This may underpin what the other groups say about respect for age: but only this group unpacks this issue explicitly.

Triggers of deliberate impoliteness

MOZ: *There this law of Newton, law of motion or something like that says, when I push this table in a particular direction it will reflect the pressure that I applied, so is it also for triggers. The way a person addresses me will dictate the way I will respond, but usually I add more. If it was rude in terms of what I define as rude, or polite, I am going to try to be more polite if there is any thing as more polite, but I'll try to be more polite than he or she was. But if it was rude add more.*

ZIM: *I usually do the same thing. And some times more like he said, all I want to do is give you back the medicine that you have given me.*

RWD: *We are all human, you can be furious or something, you can be furious and act in a very impolite way. If I were called kwerekwere, but the thing is that me I always try to understand, give a reason for whatever behaviour.*

ERT: *For me, considering why the person behaves that way, whether it is intentional or unintentional. If I feel it was done intentionally to hurt me then I'll apply whatever action is my reaction. If I feel that it was very intentional and hurting then I reply with certain force and harsh. But before I react I try to come up with a reason why he could have behaved that way from my experiences from context and also try to see from his context.*

NIG: *By putting myself in his or her shoes and then if by my calculation it is intentional then I'll react sharply.*

UGD: *I will think that may be I am wrong, maybe I made the wrong moves and I frustrated that person.*

As foreigners, *diverse males* are strongly aware of the possibility of unintentional rudeness. For this group of *diverse males*, a trigger of motivated impoliteness or rudeness would be intentionally impolite behaviour directed at them. An impolite response might respond to perceived politeness. In their own words, members of the group state that: *the way a person addresses me will dictate the way I will respond, but usually I add more*. However, as foreigners these men tend to be more generous in their interpretation of others' communicative styles: *before I react I try to come up with a reason why he could have believed that way from my experiences from context and also try to see from his context*; the Kenyan adds: *I will think that maybe I am wrong, maybe I made the wrong moves and I frustrated that person*. Perhaps this is because these men, as foreign students far away from home, understand the diversity in the university. Consequently, even when they experience extreme impoliteness like being called *kwerekwere*, they are slow to judge: *but the thing is that me I always try to understand, give a reason for whatever behaviour*. The Zimbabwean and Mozambican on the other hand feel closer to home, they are from Southern Africa; and they do not mention first trying to understand.

6.2.6 Decisive Females

Here, too, the responses were brief.

What is Impoliteness?

DRC: *In my country I think impoliteness means disrespect to the older people most; it is behaving in a manner that is not tolerated.*

KEN: *It means to be disrespectful, especially before men and elderly women, especially for women who are supposed to be regarded as mothers; mother in this sense is any woman that is a bit elderly - you meet her on the way you greet her.*

ETH: *My answer is in the same line: it is disrespect for the elders and also not being hospitable, being hospitable is very important like if someone comes to your house to receive them well, otherwise it is impolite.*

NIG: *If you don't offer them some food or anything to drink you are being impolite.*

CAM and UGD: *Yes, one is impolite when you disrespect people around us through the use of offensive words and behaviour.*

ETH: *Impoliteness relates to people's choice of words, tone, and pitch of the voice can indicate impoliteness.*

The *decisive females* immediately associate impoliteness with disrespectful behaviour towards the elderly. Apart from age, disrespect, according to the Cameroonian and Ugandan, can also extend to other members of the society: *one is impolite when you disrespect people around us through the use of offensive words and behaviour.* Lack of hospitality is also perceived as impolite behaviour. Impoliteness is described as a show of disrespect and unfriendliness that is expressed through choice of language which can be offensive, or tone and pitch of voice which can be condescending and hurting.

Impoliteness and Rudeness

NIG: *I think rude is more severe, it is like going out of your way to be that and impoliteness is a bit milder.*

KEN: *It looks like the action is done on purpose; you do it because you just have disrespect. Impoliteness sometimes could be unconsciously done - that is my idea of the differences between them.*

ETH: *Rudeness and impoliteness are intertwined; people can think you are impolite when you are rude or that you are rude when you are only being impolite.*

UGD: *Rudeness is usually more intentional than impoliteness, although it can also be unintentional.*

CAM: *It also depends on the personality of the person that perceives the behaviour.*

All the themes from the previous discussions appear here. Rudeness is seen as more severely disrespectful behaviour. It is also seen as intentionally driven to achieve a set goal; impoliteness on the other hand can be unintended. Nevertheless, rudeness can be unintentional and impoliteness can, as well, be intentional at times. The

interpretation depends on the personality and the background of the receiver or hearer.

Triggers of deliberate impoliteness

ETH: Even us as foreigners we come with our own stereotypical ideas, everybody has stereotypical idea of what a Zulu is or a South African is like. So when you come here you just assume things and then you became rude and impolite.

KEN: But I think we have also been rude and impolite unknowingly or unconsciously just for the simple fact that you don't know.

NIG: The way one behaves here is a big difference from the way you do back home. I used to go in to greet people that are around every morning in the department, and a number of people I see on the way greet; and it is like it's unacceptable or a problem here. So I have decided that when I meet them I just smile and pass, but I find it very difficult, because to me it was sign of being impolite.

The *decisive females* do not consider the deliberate use of impoliteness: rather they focus on ways in which they feel they may have been unintentionally impolite or rude to fellow students around them. First, the stereotypical ideas which they brought with them about their hosts will have been likely to influence their approach and behaviour: *when you come here you just assume things and then you became rude and impolite*. Second, their unfamiliarity with the context and acceptable norms of the different groups will have made them appear unintentionally rude: *I think we have also been rude and impolite unknowingly or unconsciously just for the simple fact that you don't know*. Third, they may modify their behaviour towards campus norms and behave in ways which they themselves (but not their peers) perceive as impolite.

6.2.7 Perceptions of Impoliteness on Campus

There are indeed a number of matters related to politeness and impoliteness which preoccupy most or even all of the students whose behaviour and opinions are reflected in this thesis. At the same time it must be admitted that a university creates

a social context that is structured in very particular ways. To give an example, though students of all groups mentioned the deference due to elders, it was impossible to test their statements against their actual practice, since there is no group of elders (other than the academic staff, whose relationship to younger people is complicated by their position of power) in the university community. Similarly, there are no relatives present, either older or younger, than the individuals whose statements are included. Representatives of institutions such as formal religion, the law and other areas of the state are either absent or invisible.

The effect of this 'absence' of those to whom respect is customarily due is twofold: the polite observances, and the bases for judgements of politeness or impoliteness of many students' past lives become inappropriate; and on most occasions 'politeness' or 'impoliteness' may have to be determined by the individual.

A basis for appropriate behaviour which most male students declare is gender: women should speak and behave in particular ways which conform to the gendered expectations of the societies in which (male) students grew up.

Students are, to very different degrees, aware that some of the 'polite' behaviours which they were taught are in conflict with the norms which may prevail (in certain circles) at university. An obvious example is the avoidance of eye contact by the Zulus. *Zulu bradas* tend to feel that Zulu standards of politeness should at least co-exist with those (westernized) standards. This becomes a difficulty when Zulu women wish to behave in westernised ways, since their abandoning traditional behaviour is resented by their male counterparts. Foreign students (*diverse males* and *decisive females*) are much less likely to feel that standards which had existed in their distant homes should prevail at university; the men however are more likely to speak approvingly of the practices of their homes, and occasionally to observe behavioural traditions. *Decisive females* are appreciably less likely to behave in this way, but enjoy opportunities to speak their own languages.

Language choices apply differently in the different groups: *diverse males* necessarily face the fact that few students would understand or address them in their home tongues, and (in some cases with difficulty) use English as the lingua franca of the university. In small groups of compatriots, they are understandably happy to use their own languages.

The position of the *Zulu bradas* in the survey was different: their expectation is that all fellow-Zulus would address them in this language, and at times they feel that they have a right to expect that students from elsewhere should make efforts to acquire Zulu. It is interesting that this attitude preceded the introduction of the University Language Policy that requires that Zulu become an official language of the university, which has been under discussion from 2005. The dilute males, though less enthusiastic about the rights of Zulu, tend to agree that this is a 'language of right' in Natal. The *diverse males* and *decisive females*, however, feel that *Zulu bradas* are unnecessarily aggressive about this.

The position of *modern Zulu women* deserves further exploration: all the respondents in this group prefer to use English, even when talking to Zulu men (a practice which they realise frequently gives offence). They explain their choice by saying that English allows them to assert themselves, whereas they feel that in Zulu they would be forced into patterns of subordination. They speak of English as being more 'romantic'.

Model C guys feel that they derive their judgements of politeness and impoliteness both from their families and from the behaviour patterns which they have absorbed at school. *Zulu bradas* tend to condemn any departure from what they see as traditional behaviour and are particularly suspicious of *Model C guys*.

6.3 IDENTITY AND EXPERIENCES OF IMPOLITENESS

In this section, the responses of the students to impoliteness are further discussed to show the construction of 'self' as either collective or individual. The instances are analysed in relation to students' reactions and responses to the perceived impolite encounters which they cite.

6.3.1 *Zulu bradas*

1) We are always offended when people do not respond well to our greetings, especially with Africans and Indian. The whites do not normally greet you, they just walk past you.

2) In the course of the *Zulu bradas* group discussion a white female person walked into the room looking for her keys. She looked around for few seconds and left without a word.

Zulu bradas: She is rude.

In Zulu culture it is impolite to walk past people without greeting them or without responding to a greeting. On campus, however, it will depend on the recipient of a greeting, as to whether the lack of response is perceived as impolite or rude: *I will take it as impolite when a white person does not respond to my greeting, but as rude when it is an African*. Non-response to greetings is offensive, irrespective of the hearer's cultural group; however, it is rated more offensive if coming from a member of one's own group. They argue that such disrespectful behaviour would trigger a reciprocal impoliteness: *I become impolite to someone who has been impolite to me*. Especially when the offence is perceived as an attack on their Zulu background, the *bradas* respond impolitely to defend their culture: *Especially people who look down on me or my background, and I will be impolite to them*. In addition, they tend to extend their response to other members belonging to the perceived impolite group, resulting in stereotyping: *when I don't see that person anymore then like in the case of a white person, any white person that cross my way is treated the same way*. There are three different aspects to such response. First the impolite

response is provoked by perceived deliberate disrespect; second, 'self' is at stake when they feel looked down upon – '*me or my background*'; third, the anger or insult felt by the behaviour of one person can be transferred to other persons from the same group.

It should be noted that 'African or Indians' are mentioned here (experience 1). This suggests that the speaker may be inclined to assume that all 'Africans' share his cultural norms, and can be regarded as impolite, if not rude, when they do not observe the rules. This is, of course a massive generalisation.

In the second instance cited above, the *Zulu bradas* barely waited for the woman involved to leave the room before pointing out that she was impolite and rude: *the whites are always impolite; ja, the white are always rude*. Their opinion of her behaviour was extended to other members of her racio-cultural group; all whites were referred to as rude. What they expected was an apology for the intrusion which was not given: *she should have apologised for disturbing us*. This behaviour was perceived by the men as insulting: *it shows that the whites do not have respect for us or for what we are do*. The *bradas* link this single instance to past experience: *it is because the whites, especially white South Africans, are still not convinced that we are all human*.

6.3.2 Dilute Males

- 1) I greeted this person 'hi', and he does not acknowledge my greeting.
- 2) It is insulting to be referred to as 'boy' by some administrators and in the lecture room responding to one by saying 'yes boy'

The *dilute males* like the *Zulu bradas*, feel strongly about hearers who do not respond to a greeting. When someone does not respond to a greeting it is perceived as an insult, irrespective of its recipient's cultural background: *I say Hi and that*

*person doesn't acknowledge my greeting, I will treat it as impolite. Hi is Hi even if some cultures you may shake hands or touch one another. However, the expectation is higher when it involves persons of the same race or nationality. But I will feel more offended when for instance a person refuses to shake my hand in greeting because he is African¹. Nevertheless the group agrees that greeting is a convention that should be understood by all, irrespective of cultural background. I think to be an effective citizen of this community whether you are white or not, in this varsity or in any other varsity, that is multicultural when I greet you, in whatsoever style, provided that I am showing that I greet you. . . . if you don't respond by any means that is impolite. When the non-Zulu men receive no response to their greetings they perceive this as impolite behaviour, which would trigger an impolite behaviour in turn: if I see that person again I'll make sure I don't greet him. It may also result in the stereotyping of a group: You stop greeting everybody [whites] you come across, because people here [at the university] do not respond to your greetings.... These *dilute males*, like the *Zulu bradas*, see such an attitude as an attack on their identity, as indicated by phrases such as *that is attacking my culture*. Greeting rituals are one way in which these men tend to express themselves and show off their loyalty to their culture as a mark of identity.*

Given South Africa's fraught history, particular care must be given to language use. Some words have quite simply become unacceptable. *Dilute males* find it very offensive to be referred to as 'boy': *the way you greet me in a manner that disparages me or sort of like showing that you disrespect me or you address me in a manner that I cannot accept, you can do that by perhaps calling me a boy in a class or in a lecture room, 'yes, boy'; it is impolite*. This kind of perceived impoliteness may spark off intentional impolite behaviour in response: *that will trigger my anger; I find it hard to accommodate it*. These men feel belittled by being called 'boy' and link it to their past experience: *that is how they were calling our fathers boys and mothers girls*. This now has to change: *we cannot accept that from anyone*. Being

¹ The *dilute males*, like the *Zulu bradas*, tend to generalize from their culture (Xhosa, Sotho) to Africa.

referred to as 'boy' brings back memories of the colonial era and apartheid: *this can make me to be very rude to them*. As far as these men are concerned, when interacting with people from different backgrounds they do their best to ensure that they use the right words: *when I talk to a person from a different culture I try to do in a manner that finds out where the person is from so that I do it right*. The *dilute males* try to accommodate others' cultural and language, and therefore expect the same in return.

6.3.3 Model C Guys

- 1) Someone walks into the TV room in the residence and goes to change the channel without asking you, even though he met me in the room.
- 2) They say you are a white person trapped in a black body or a coconut.

The *Model C guys* cite examples of common impoliteness which they experience from fellow students, and argue that they tend to treat most cases as minor issues. Such is the case of the student walking into the TV room in the residence and changing the channel without any consideration for those already seated and watching the television.

Other instances, however, involve what *Model C guys* term sensitive issues, for instance when they are called *white persons trapped in black bodies* or *coconuts*. In such a situation the *Model C guys* rise to the challenge and defend themselves from what they perceive as destruction of their sense of self: *You simply have to respond because this is now an attack on your personality and self-esteem*. They argue that such statements or comments are attacks on their self-worth and confidence which cannot be allowed: *they are telling you that you are not like white or black*. They point out that it makes them feel less than a man, and they would therefore respond aggressively: *they want to make you feel you are half of everything and never a whole*. This sometime causes the *Model C guys* to distance themselves from such students, or to respond in an unpleasant way: *if you don't want to be my friend, fine*.

I have no problem with that: then you are not my friend. It is should be noted that the *Model C* guys remain the only group who do not overtly transfer their anger to other members of the offender's group. They tend to personalise individual encounters and to generalise less.

6.3.4 Modern Zulu Women

(1) A man offers the greeting “Wena”

Zulu woman responds: *Hi*.

2) A person walks into a room and goes about her business without greeting the people in the room.

3) Male familiarity:

“*Ngiqabule*” ‘kiss me’

“*Woza ngiqabule mntwana*” ‘come on baby kiss me’.

“*Uyangicasula*” ‘you piss me off’.

The *modern Zulu women* in example (1) perceive the Zulu informal greeting ‘wena’ as impolite: *When you are greeting friends you don’t go “sawubona” ‘hello’, you go “wean” or something like that. It is rude; it is not a polite way of greeting.* These women arrive at this interpretation through a comparison of the Zulu word “wena” with the common student greeting in English ‘hay you’: *It is like if you say “wena” is like saying hay you, you know in English, this is being impolite, you must say how you are.* Because the women perceive the expression as impolite, it may sometime trigger an impolite response from them: *If a guy greets you like that you may just ignore him and not answer or if you choose to be polite, say hi instead.* They are aware that the *Zulu bradas* will perceive this as impolite. These *modern Zulu women* expect a certain formality from men.

Similarly, example (2) reveals the expectations that *modern Zulu women* have of their colleagues from other cultures. *I live in the varsity residence. Sotho people*

*have this thing with greeting people. You (=Zulu people) meet someone in the kitchen, you must greet them, or in the passage, you must greet them even if you don't know them. When visitors fail to acknowledge their presence they are seen as being deliberately impolite. Here the **modern Zulu women** portray some of the Zulu characteristics that they have maintained: If you go into a room and someone is there you must say hi to acknowledge the person, a Sotho person will just walk in, do her business. She won't greet and walk out. As a result, **modern Zulu women** tend to extend their displeasure to other members of the group to which the perceived impolite person belongs. So you, a Zulu person, next time when you meet them somewhere you also start being rude by not greeting them first. Or you pretend as if you don't see them.*

Thirdly, **modern Zulu women** find some Zulu words intentionally impolite: *some words are just difficult to say in Zulu; it is like they sound vulgar when you say them in Zulu. For instance the women argue that the word "ngiqabule" 'kiss me' is not romantic, compared to English²: When a guy says "ngiqabule" which means kiss me, you know it is not sexy. [Others agree: ja]. When you say "ngiqabule" it sounds very old fashioned, rather say, come on kiss me baby, that sounds better than the Zulu word. "Woza ngiqabule mntwana". These **modern Zulu women** explain that the these two phrases, for example, are not necessarily rude, but are out of place for them as modern Zulu women: It is not rude, it is natural in Zulu language, actually they see it as being sexy but because you have seen both sides, the western and the cultural, like Zulu culture side, so when he says that, you measure the two, the western and African ones. They are aware that the men feel it is sexy, but they perceive the use of English for such an expression as more romantic. When said in English it makes sense, it's more feminine, you know, more soft. It is the point is brought across more easily than when you use Zulu words. Because many of them now tend to use English more frequently, Zulu terms may come across as impolite. Some Zulu words when you say them it does not sound like you are saying a polite thing, like you saying something rude or impolite. The women argue that phrases*

² For more on Zulu female students' language preference see de Kadt (2004).

like “uyangicasula” ‘you piss me off’ sounds rude, but that English offers them alternative words or phrase for it that they see as less offensive; *Whenever a guy wants to talk and you don’t feel like it, you say uyangicasula. It sounds very rude and some can actually beat you up for saying that.* It is therefore safer to express it in English using other available phrases that are less offensive: *it is better to say it in English; you won’t say piss off, but there are other words that you can actually use in English, like leave me alone.*

6.3.5 Diverse Males

1) People here don’t greet

When you greet you may only get a smile back.

2) People call me ‘kwerekwere’.

The *diverse males* find greetings and responses to greetings very different from what they are accustomed to back in their own countries. They sometimes understand this failure to greet as signalling surliness: *usually, in my community, when an elder or a younger person meets, you greet each other, but here people do not greet, which I will say is a sign of saying, we are not friendly.* *Diverse males* claim that when they receive a response, it is usually not what they would class as a greeting: *I find greetings here quite different from my culture; you shake hands and say how are you or something like that, but here people just smile and walk past.* This kind of response at most times leaves them wondering what could be wrong, especially when it involves a well known person to them. *In this case, one might interpret the smile as a way of saying, go away or I’m not interested in you today, which then is rude.* These men have developed a coping strategy by recognising that the university is a diverse community where behaviours may be understood differently. *You might take a lot of things into consideration. You might assume that perhaps the person does not have enough time to talk at that time.* Nevertheless it does affect their attitudes: *you can end up by feeling rejected and not necessarily that the person was rejecting you, or that maybe he is unhappy with you and reacts in a negative way.*

The term *kwerekwere* expresses deliberate rudeness and is intended and perceived as derogative. “*Kwerekwere* is derived from an imitation of sounds of foreign African languages – sounds which are uncomprehended by South Africans, and consequently held to be, and then labelled as meaningless gibberish” (de Kadt and Ige 2005). To label someone in this way is perceived as rude, especially given the different cultures and languages on campus. *Everybody will have a different reaction to you; it tells how much they dislike other Africans; that we are not wanted here; it is an expression of hatred.* This can be disturbing for the *diverse males* who are addressed as *kwerekwere*: *it is frustrating and you feel like, rejected; it is very rude.* Comparing this situation to what occurs in their countries, these *diverse males* find it difficult to understand: *we don’t treat foreigners like that where I come from. Our visitors are treated with respect, sometimes better than our own people; we make them feel at home, we don’t give them bad names.* The *diverse males* perceive being called *kwerekwere* as rude and as a result they tend to respond impolitely: *we are all human, you can be furious or something; you can be furious and act in a very impolite way; you can also disrespect them; or disregard them and stay away from them.* As understanding as the unique men can be, there are some cases in which self assertion is a must: *If I were called kwerekwere of course it will trigger my anger, but in most cases I just ignore them.*

6.3.6 Decisive Females

1) You greet them up to five times before they return your greetings.

2) Being jostled in the corridors.

Although the *decisive females* perceive a failure to respond to their greetings as rude, they are determined to adapt to their new environment: *I have changed much; it is just that probably people expect you to greet them more than once a day; You say hi like five times before you get one reply, it is very rude.* Having to search for different ways of expressing themselves is an experience they are adjusting to: *the*

way one behaves here is a big difference from the way you do things back home. When I come into the department, I go in to greet people that are around, and a number of people I see on the way I greet; and it is like it's unacceptable or a problem. They have had to change to what they feel is acceptable: So I stop. Now when I meet them, I just smile and pass. Their ceasing to greet formally is impolite in their own cultural terms: we know it is impolite, even rude to walk past people without any expression of greeting.

The *decisive females* feel strongly that when you brush against another person, an appropriate apology should be made to the person affected, because it is perceived as rude behaviour: *You enter the library and they push you. These women point out that it is not the action that is rude in itself, because it usually accidental. What is rude is not taking responsibility for the act by simply apologising to the person pushed: it is very rude to push people and not say sorry, even though most time it is not deliberate.*

According to these women, this kind of behaviour sends the wrong signal about the general attitude of the students. *I sometime think that it has to be something with their past, because to say sorry when you push some is generally the acceptable way. The women argue that it is not only rude not to apologise in such situations, but that it is equally impolite not to acknowledge someone's apology: they would be pushing me along the way at least, no matter how tight it is, I say sorry and nobody even bothers to hear what I am saying. The funny thing is that when you feel you are in the wrong and you say sorry at least there should be an acknowledgement that somebody has said sorry. These women end up with a dismissive attitude as a result: So I have learnt not to bother if they push me. Whether I'm at fault or not I just go my way.*

6.4 CONCLUSION

This chapter has presented the diversity in perceptions of impoliteness, through an analysis of the respondents' diagnoses of polite/impolite behaviour. The identification of behaviour as polite or impolite may be evidence of the participants' adherence to their own cultural practices when responding to perceived impolite behaviour. Their reactions at times seem to show that they wish to display power in their communicative acts. The chapter demonstrates that consciousness of identity impacts on participants' interpretations and responses to perceived impoliteness. It shows that a preferred identity, which is not necessarily the one constructed by a group's own culture (modern Zulu women, for example, often seem to wish to adopt an identity different from that which has traditionally been imposed on them) is presented and defended during interaction. The chapter reveals a number of issues for further consideration and discussion. These issues include the cultural subjectivity of the concepts, the degree of the offence (whether it is intentional or not); age as a social category; and when and how deliberate impoliteness is expressed. All of these issues will be discussed further in chapter eight of this thesis.

7

GENDER DISCOURSE

7.1 INTRODUCTION

In chapter six, I presented and discussed the understanding of and responses to impoliteness of the different student groups. I explored the respondents' sense of their own identities and illustrated how the various group identities constructed by the students' impact on their interpretations of acts as impolite and also inform their responses to perceived impolite situations. In order to understand fully the pattern of students' responses to perceived impoliteness, in chapter seven I will further explore their interpretation of impoliteness in relation to the gender of their interlocutors, men or women, and to their own gender. This chapter will show, through data from focus group discussions and the results of surveys, that gender plays a crucial role in determining and identifying the sense of a communicative act. The chapter starts by focusing on a core stereotype from politeness research, that women are more polite than men, and expands this theme to explore a variety of other gender issues relating to politeness.

7.2 MALE JUDGEMENTS

In this section, the male group discussions as to the most impolite gender group are presented and analyzed. The male group discussions include the *Zulu bradas*, *dilute males*, *Model C guys* and *diverse males*.

7.2.1. Zulu Bradas

The Zulu brothers usually take a 'traditional' cultural stance and tend to refer to culturally expected gendered behaviour as natural, acceptable and 'African'.

ZB: Generally men used to be impolite outside the university, I have observed more impoliteness from men outside the university.

ZB2: But on campus the women are more impolite than the men.

ZB3: *It is because our women have adapted to a certain culture which is somehow different from African culture; that is why we say they are more impolite than us.*

ZB4: *Most of our black sisters and some brothers like Model C are now applying the notion of being impolite from the western perspective, but they do not look at it from the African perspective of the issue of being polite.*

ZB1: *For example like you'll compliment a lady and then it is like whether you are barbarian. They are now looking at it in a western perspective so from the African perspective it is like those issues are sensitive if they are looking at it from the western perspective.*

ZB2: *Now people are confused as to what is polite and what is not polite because they are African but they want to put on the western perspective, and at the end of the day they get not knowing what is polite and what is impolite.*

The **Zulu bradas** here again extrapolate from Zulu to African, while they categorize women as generally polite outside the university, but find them more impolite on campus. These **bradas** were obviously speaking of male and female students of their own cultural background: *our black sisters and some brothers*. They are voicing their concerns about members of their group. The **Zulu bradas** attribute the 'impolite' behaviour of Zulu women to the women's adoption of 'campus western culture' which they believe affects women's judgement differently from men. The women's failure to meet the **bradas**' expectations of their behaviour is perceived as impolite by the men: *they are now applying the notion of being impolite from the western perspective*. These men feel that the change in the women's perspective causes them to misrepresent men as uncivil and impolite even when they are actually being polite in Zulu terms: *like you'll compliment a lady and then is like whether you are barbarian*. They believe that the women are showing disrespect by adopting a different perspective on Zulu cultural norms.

ZB1: *For example let's say I'm trying to say something and a lady is seated over there, I enjoy speaking so I go over there to that lady just to speak, not to propose or*

say anything but to develop a relationship with the lady. And you greet this lady; from the first time she opens her mouth she is going to tell you off, that is impolite.

ZB2: *Because you are just talking to this person from the same place and the same town and the lady she will respond in a very negative manner – all of them – let me not say all of them, but most of them, they do that.*

ZB3: *They have negative attitudes when it comes to talking to her or asking something; Like the way she will react is like you are stranger or something else.*

ZB4: *Sometimes they refer to us a stranger when we approach them just to have a chat.*

ZB1: *Calling me a stranger, I regard that as rude because if we translate the word stranger from English to Zulu, it says an unknown person. We don't have such as unknown person in our culture. But then due to westernization, to any South African woman if you approach her for the first time, you are just a stranger, it is extremely rude.*

ZB2: *We know that as a man you can always communicate with females and there have never been problems with that, and what is irritating most is that you can see that these people are imitating whites or Indians, that is why it hurts more, because whites have always been like that.*

The **Zulu bradas** consider that the westernized norms adopted by their women have affected the way they see and react to every move men make: *you greet this lady from the first time she opens her mouth she is going to tell you off.* According to these men every attempt to develop friendship with Zulu women students is resisted and they are rebuffed: *Sometimes they refer to us as stranger when we approach them just to have a chat.* The men argue that to be referred to as a stranger is considered rude in Zulu culture: *if we translate the word stranger from English to Zulu it says an unknown person.* The **bradas** stress that the term is unacceptable; *we don't have such as unknown person in our culture.* This suggests that it is an imported idea from a non-Zulu culture. The **bradas** argue that when the women are not 'westernised', men can interact with the women in a free and friendly manner, doubtless because they are able to communicate confidently from their dominant

male position without resistance from the women: *We know that as a man you can always communicate with females and there has never being problems with that....* They describe Zulu female behaviour as typical white behaviour and find it very offensive: *what is irritating most is that you can see that these people are imitating whites or Indians that is why it hurts more, because whites have always been like that.*

They continue reflecting on perceptions of male and female behaviour.

ZB1: *Another thing that is a misconception is that in African culture the issue of politeness and impoliteness is like benefiting males most of the time, which is not the case, because here are things that women can do to men but when men do things to women, they are considered as impolite or rude, but when women do it to men they are not considered as impolite.*

ZB3: *And another is that there is this belief that African males do not have care, do not care much about their women, comparing them with other cultures.*

ZB4: *To us it is impolite to open the door for the lady to go in first, we believe that a man has to go in first to assess the situation and make sure it is safe for the woman.*

ZB1: *It's to see what is inside first in case of danger.*

ZB2: *When a man opens the door and says 'Ladies first', that is impolite.*

ZB3: *The way we interact with women is so different; it is in our culture that when a woman comes by, you say something as a compliment, that does not mean that you are after her or something. But as a man you just say something as a compliment, maybe you will compliment her eyes or body. In this way those who are like westernized will say that you are barbaric or something like that.*

All: *It is a show of recognition, to show that a woman is coming, but when they come here they say you are rude, or barbaric.*

ZB1: *I think ladies are always being more impolite than us, because you see when anytime you are about to ask something from a lady here on campus, they just talk anything impolite.*

Zulu bradas disagree with the interpretation that their culture entitles them to dominate females, which they consider a misconception, and similarly with their portrayal as uncaring. These men argue that on the contrary they are very caring and respect their women. It is just that the ways in which they signal respect, might differ from those of others. They argue, for instance, that it is impolite to let a woman go through a door first without checking out the space and ensuring that it is safe. With this understanding, the *Zulu bradas* find it difficult to comprehend their Zulu female counterparts who tend to interpret them as impolite, and perhaps presumptuous, as becomes clear in their discussion of compliments: *it is in our culture that when a woman comes by, you say something as a compliment. That does not mean that you are after her or something.* Even though it is their way of acknowledging ('recognizing') their women, the women who are expected to appreciate the men's gestures are interpreting such gestures as '*rude and barbaric*'. The men conclude that Zulu female students are generally impolite on campus, and this is because they are constructing themselves differently on campus in relation to Zulu norms, and are tending to interpret and judge Zulu behaviour by English standards.

ZB1: That is what I said about them: they are misusing the concept of gender equality.

ZB2: I agree with that, because there is a misconception of the gender concept.

ZB3: The ladies always behave impolite just because they are thinking of equality; they just think of their own superiority.

ZB4: It a general thing among the ladies here because they have been influenced by western values. When we come here we find the strange things we are not used to especially we who come from the township.

ZB4: We mean there is a conflict of interest when you are talking about equality because there are concepts that didn't exist in African languages like the concept of equality. In practice there were but in theory there were not. This is what I mean by that.

ZB1: *With us the most important thing is responsibility, rather than equality, we believe in nature, we respond to nature.*

ZB2: *Now because of colonization, in higher institutions we have the notion of equality which takes away the notion of responsibility, because when you look at the democratic values, one thing they talk about is the equality and forget about responsibilities.*

ZB3: *For us the concept of equality is like they are putting these genders into competition [All: ja], unlike respecting the person for who she is or the way she is, and understanding your responsibilities and hers. But now it is like a clash, a fight.*

The *bradas* try to reason out the key cause of the female students' attitudes to Zulu norms. They feel it may be political: *they are misusing the concept of gender equality*. The men believe that gender awareness in the university is responsible for the sudden change in the women's attitude towards them. They believe this has given the women the liberty to be intentionally impolite; *the ladies always behave impolite*. What is worse, the men argue, that the women no longer see their behaviour as impolite because they feel empowered: *If they are thinking of equality, they just think of their own superiority*. The men see a power shift taking place, which may be a threat to their hegemony. These men argue that the concept of gender equality is alien to Zulus: *there is a conflict of interests when you are talking about equality because there are concepts that didn't exist in African languages, like the concept of equality*. The envisaged equality has been replaced by a sense of female superiority. They posit the concept of responsibility as missing in these new notions of equality: *with us the most important thing was responsibility rather than equality, we believe in nature, we respond to nature*. These men see a new form of colonization happening at the university where the ideologies of their culture are being replaced by the dominant western ideology: *because of colonization in higher institutions we have the notion of equality which takes away the notion of responsibility*. They compare the trend towards democratic institutions, which are considered western, and find themselves in disagreement with the present ideology of good governance: *when you look at the democratic values, one thing they talk*

about is the equality and forget about responsibilities. The *Zulu bradas* conclude that gender equality has resulted in 'unhealthy' competition between males and females: *equality is like they are putting these genders into competition [all: ja]. Unlike respecting the person for who she is or the way she is, and understanding your responsibilities and hers. But now it is like a clash, a fight.* Their strong claim of female impoliteness is to be understood in this broader context.

7.2.2 Dilute Males

The *dilute males* adopt a similar cultural stance but are less rigid than the *Zulu bradas*' 'traditional' position. They locate change in gender norms within broader societal change.

DM1: Well, now the time is changing, you know, in terms of women respecting men, well, when we were growing up I still remember even now, in the typical rural areas, girls are taught to respect their men, like to take care of them, but now I think, westernization has taken over, we must all respect our spouses, our like, our partners so that things can go well you know, in terms of everything, marriage, whatever, whatever.

DM2: I think it is important to understand that a man is always a provider, and you know when we look up to him as a provider, we have that respect, you know, we had that respect a long time ago. But now our mothers are providers, and so the respect now at the home has become 50-50. This is used to symbolise gender equality, so you see, so now the respect is more mutual than before. Before, we used to respect the father, because all of us looked up to him. The mother used to be like a first-born child, you know, because the father supported from the mother to the lastborn you see. Now the mother can stand up for herself and also support.

DM3: But nowadays, I think during those in the past, and because women didn't look at what a man had in his pocket whatsoever, but these days, just because women want to look at how much does he earn, what does he earn, does he have a car, does her child go to a private school, that's one thing which made some men to be disrespected.

DM4: The women are now more impolite.

The *dilute males* point out that times are changing, that gender relationships are taking a different turn: *time is changing, you know, in terms of women respecting men*. Westernisation has brought about social and economic transformation in the way men and women relate. In the past men were the heads of households and were duly respected: *it is important to understand that a man is always a provider, and you know when we look up to him as a provider, we have that respect*. However, at present women are no longer as dependent on the men as they were in the past, and earn respect because of their independence: *but now our mothers are providers, and so the respect now at the home has become 50-50*. Through economic freedom, women have empowered themselves and they are no longer treated as dependants: *before we used to respect the father, because all of us looked up to him, the mother used to be like a first-born child, you know*. They conclude that the women's newly acquired social and economic status is responsible for what is seen as increased impolite behaviour of women, and appear to be equating 'impoliteness' with 'assertiveness'.

DM1: *The women are now more impolite.*

DM2: *The women have this sense of new independence, that they are trying slowly but surely to accomplish here, so when she or they encounter students who are males, you see, it's like in their presence, us in their presence we are trying to take advantage, make them backward, feel less important, stuff like that or they are afraid of our masculinity.*

DM3: *Ja, they think that each and every male who talks to them, wants to propose them, want love out of them, which is a generalisation.*

DM4: *Ja, they tend to generalise, I mean the thing is that, every man is a dog and all this kind of stuff, even if you like, you approach a woman, without that mind of going to propose you know, they all, they all I mean these days, I don't know why, they all think that men all want one thing, men are very different, I can't, I mean, there are very different types of men.*

DM5: But now they think at all times, we're after them, chasing them, hunting them, they didn't see like that before.

The *dilute males*, like the *Zulu bradas*, confirm that female students (and specifically black female South African students) are more impolite than male students: *the women are more impolite*. Like the *bradas*, the *dilute males* associate the female students' behaviour with the influence of gender equity awareness. As one of the men puts it: *the women have this sense of new independence*. They believe that it is this *new sense of independence* that is responsible for the women's 'impolite' behaviour. According to these men, the judgements of male behaviour that the women make under the influence of their new-found freedom misinterpret men's actions: *they tend to generalise, that every man is a dog and all this kind of stuff*. They argue that the misinterpretation is a new development, because similar male behaviour was acceptable in the past, but now *they think at all times, we're after them, chasing them, hunting them, they didn't see like that before*.

I asked the men whether it was possible that the women's reactions had something to do with the way they were approached, which may have led the women to read the men's actions as described above. The *dilute males* responded to this as follows:

DM1: No, no, the person has got an attitude, doesn't want to see as to, it is not because of the way we approach or any other thing we have done, she has got an attitude towards men, all men.

DM2: You see, it's, it's, okay, I agree with everyone when they say women, they have an attitude to men.

DM3: Ja, for instance Zulu girls or ladies that we know well, but when they come on campus, they start speaking to you in English and if you continue speaking Zulu, they look at you as if you are from a different world.

DM4: Speaking to me in English, when I am trying to communicate in Zulu; that's how rude they can be.

The *dilute males* argue that the female students 'impolite' behaviour has nothing to do with men's insensitivity to the women, but that the women have developed an antagonistic attitude towards men in general: *it is not because of the way we approach or any other thing we have done, she has got an attitude towards men, all men*. As a result, women refuse to speak to them in Zulu: *for instance Zulu, girls or ladies, people that we know well, but when they come on campus, they start speaking to you in English*. The *dilute males* and *Zulu bradas* have a lot in common. First both draw on traditional gender roles to define male-female polite and impolite behaviour. Second both perceive the *modern Zulu women* as more impolite on campus than when off campus. Third, both associate these changed Zulu female attitudes with westernisation and gender equality campaigns.

7.2.3 Model C Guys

The *Model C guys* have a very different perception.

MC1: Males are more aggressive and outspoken; a lot of men fall into the higher regions of rudeness and impoliteness. Females are a lot more courteous and were taught to be polite.

MC2: The Zulu males are following the Shaka Zulu legacy of a warrior. Some of them still behave violently. They want to be seen as strong and traditional.

MC3: Women are generally more polite.

MC4: Zulu females in particular ordinarily are polite compared to the males.

The *Model C guys*, unlike the *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males*, perceive male students as generally more impolite than the female students. *Males are more aggressive and outspoken*. They describe women in general as courteous. They then shift their focus to Zulu students, and argue that Zulu men's cultivation of traditional cultural practices is responsible for some of their aggressive behaviour. They described the Zulu men's behaviour as a quest for traditional hegemony: *They want to be seen as strong and traditional*. The Zulu females, on the other hand, are seen as *polite compared to the males*.

MC1: *As a man you will not allow a Zulu female to speak to you the way the Zulu males will speak to you.*

MC2: *The women differ a lot, especially the Zulu females, in terms of what they wear, the way they speak, the food they eat, the way they speak to men, [all this] can be related to education. With education comes westernisation, and they are standing up for their constitutional rights.*

MC3: *Westernisation is what makes them polite; they are living in the present, but the men are still living in the past and the women are more polite.*

MC4: *Women are careful as to what they get themselves into, knowing that she is at risk, unlike the men who would do things that would get them into trouble.*

MC1: *Women's behaviour does not bother me, because every one has the right to speak any language they choose. But I am concerned because women have greater influence on children as mothers. It is a threat to our language and culture.*

The **Model C** guys point out that Zulu women are very different from the Zulu men. They cited ways in which women have changed such as, among others, their dress, the food they eat and the way they speak, in particular to men. They explain these in terms of education, resulting in westernization. The women are seen as rising up to empower themselves by claiming their rights as given by the constitution. These men applaud the women for living up to the challenges of the present world, unlike the men who have chosen to remain behind: *they are living the present, but the men are still living in the past*. The **Model C** guys, however, express concern that cultural practices are fading amongst the women. They draw on more traditional gender roles in arguing that women are expected to be custodians of the language and the norms that must be passed on to the future generations: *But I am concerned because women have greater influence on children as mothers*. That the women are no longer in touch with culture and with the Zulu language tradition, is a threat to their culture. This statement seems to imply that they are to some extent ambivalent about the emerging westernised behaviour and value systems, since they are presumably expecting their future homes and families to be in some sense Zulu.

7.2.4 Diverse Males

The *diverse males* draw on varying gender expectations, while they also attempt to conform to the university culture.

MOZ: *In terms of males and females, it has much to do with response. When the male addresses, the expectation from the female is that the female is always to be subordinate.*

RWD: *In terms of gender and rudeness in my country, my culture, men always want to impose their superiority and women could not simply apply any rudeness or impoliteness on their husbands, their neighbours who are men, but what happens is that a man is supposed to be rude when he grows up – it is necessary to correct or express unhappiness about what has happened.*

UGD: *This is because rudeness from men and impoliteness is seen as not likely to destroy the harmony of life in the family, but rudeness and impoliteness from a female is dangerous, you know, it explodes, for instance in Uganda if a woman is addressing a man she must be on her knees, even when you are serving him anything, even when you are giving a pen to a man.*

The *diverse males* began by sharing their cultural experiences of women and men with regard to impoliteness. In other African countries, too, women assume a subordinate position in relation to men in society, and the women's subordinate status influences their choice and use of language: *when the male addresses, the expectation from the female is that the female is always to be subordinate*. They point out that it is permissible for a man to be rude to a woman by way of showing off his masculine power: *men always want to impose their superiority*. This appears to equate politeness with subservience. At the same time, it is unacceptable for women to be impolite to men: *women could not simply apply any rudeness or impoliteness on their husbands, their neighbours who are men*. Another member of group explains that while impolite behaviour by men impacts very little on the social equilibrium, *rudeness and impoliteness from females is dangerous, you know, it explodes*; and it may therefore result in a collapse of social harmony within

individual relationships or/and the community at large. It is important that women remain subservient, which can include physical subservience.

From here the *diverse males* move on to discussing the University situation as they perceive it.

ZIM: *I don't think the women are polite.*

MOZ: *Usually, what I know about women is, women are subordinate to men. That I grow up to know; that is how I know the traditional women. But here when you come across them before you say something I don't know she just jumps over you and give you a hug. That is a sign of one of the unacceptable behaviours compared to where I am coming from. The first thing that comes into my mind is, it might not be defined as rude but it's not acceptable.*

CAM: *Female and males of course they don't have the same behaviour towards international students or foreigners as they call it you know, but the thing is, there is this tendency that men are, not that they are ruder but they show off their rudeness more easily than ladies. The other thing is that men and women don't show or express rudeness the same way.*

ERT: *I share the same kind of feelings, you see first with women, to me I find the black women more impolite than other women like whites or Indians. But in general men are more impolite than women. But if you compare women of different racial groups, especially African, South African women can be very impolite in the way they shout very loud. They don't consider whether others are reading. When they are moving around in the corridor they shout as if they are giving a lecture to the whole building, and they laugh out loud – I don't know.*

When they came to consider behaviour in the university environment, these men develop a more nuanced perception of male and female behaviours: polite or impolite. Women at the university are seen as not polite, because the traditional primary and secondary positions of men and women respectively are not respected at the University. The Mozambican participant interprets the female students' free behaviour and the way in which they express themselves without constraint towards

a male student as unacceptable. He claims his culture has taught him that women are expected to be reserved toward men. Interestingly, it appears to be the same women who are seen here as 'forward' and making advances, and who rejected the advances of the *Zulu bradas* and the *dilute males*. The Cameroonian approached the issue from a different angle and argued that although both female and male students can be impolite, male students appear to be more impolite, even though they are not any more impolite than their female counterparts: *the thing is there is this tendency that men are, not that they are more rude but they show off their rudeness more easily than ladies*. In other words, men and women may be different in terms of strategies employed: *the other thing is that men and women don't show or express rudeness the same way*. In support of this claim, the Eritrean categorically states that the black South African women are more impolite than their Indian or white counterparts: *I find the black women more impolite than other women, like whites or Indians*. He explains further: *African women, South Africans can be very impolite in the way they shout very loud, they don't consider whether others are reading*. But at the same time he finds the men even more impolite.

7.3 FEMALE JUDGEMENTS

In this section, I now focus on the women's perceptions, as to whether men or women are more polite.

7.3.1 Modern Zulu women

The *modern Zulu women* addressed the issue briefly but looked beyond cultural interpretations of male and female behaviours.

MZW: Females are more impolite.

MZW: Yes, females, as Africans we shout. You can't speak to a person next to you softly, you have to shout and scream and tap her shoulder and jump up and down. It is like you are very hyper, especially when discussing something you did over the weekend. You even find some African people going like, why is she shouting, but then meanwhile they don't actually realize that they also shout. But when they see someone else doing it, they stop or say like, why is he shouting at everyone else.

ALL: *Ja*

Surprisingly, the *modern Zulu women* agree that women are more impolite than men, primarily in terms of noise levels: *as African we shout*. The *diverse males* had made the same point. These *modern women* point out that even some other African students wonder at them, but add that it is common behaviour amongst Africans: *they don't actually realize that they also shout*.

7.3.2 Decisive Females

The *decisive females* also look beyond cultural expectations to determine impoliteness.

ETH: *Men put women down when speaking, through their funny comments about women, like you are a woman; you cannot do that.*

NIG: *I heard that it happens here [at the university] that they [Zulu males] just grab you. But I know a group of guys who would intentionally say something like women belong in the kitchen, cooking, that's all women can do you know. You should cook for your boyfriend, they say it jokingly when they say things like that, but they say it all the time. And they act in certain ways that you just know that that is how they really feel; they don't hide it.*

KEN: *You know it is just like another foreign student was sharing her experience in her department/office and that some Zulu girls are working there and these Zulu men would come and hold and touch their breasts, and she was mad and said what is this nonsense, and when they saw that she didn't understand it they had to tell her that in their culture it is very normal to do that to a woman, because it tells you that she is a woman and admired by men. That is why they do that.*

UGD: *I think they do all sorts of things and give excuses, like 'my culture'*

AIL: *Yes.*

The *decisive females* focus at the outset on male attitudes, and then specifically the attitude of South African men. The Ethiopian mention degrading (*you are a woman; you cannot do that*) comments made by the men which seem intended to

disempower women, and others also report on unacceptable male actions: *I think they do all sorts of things and give excuses like 'my culture'.*

At the same time, they also considered the women more impolite.

ETH: *Overall the women are more impolite.*

DRC: *The Zulu women shout loud along the corridor at each other it is so noisy they call out to each other so loudly. Shouting their names and have conversation across the side on the corridor.*

KEN: *Ja, the women most definitely – you have to force your way to befriend them, you have to keep on saying hi to them all the time, at least you say it like five times to them before they can say hi back to you.*

NIG: *The way they look and stare at you.*

CAM: *I find it easy to get along with the guys I have more male friends than I do female friends.*

UGD: *With the Zulus especially, you find men on the road, they greet you, they talk to you, they meet you at the Superbowl, each time they remember. They will greet and talk to you and even open up and tell you they are going for an interview and all sorts, but it is not the same with their women. There was this lady, we used to attend some courses together but when I want to talk, she is like, hi Ben; she says hi and walks away so I decided to withdraw my closeness because it's not welcome like that. But the men are quite polite.*

In agreeing that the women are impolite, the *decisive females* are speaking of women outside their own group, and specifically of Zulu female students. The DRC respondent explains that the Zulu women make a lot of noise: *the Zulu women shout loud along the corridor at each other. It is so noisy they call out to each other so loudly.* In addition they appear to be very unfriendly, and it is a lot easier to make friends with Zulu men than with their women: *I find it easy to get along with the guys I have more male friends than I do female friends.* Although these women have perceived Zulu male students as intentionally disrespectful to their women while hiding behind culture, they themselves have had no such experiences with the **Zulu**

bradas. They conclude that the Zulu women are more impolite, primarily on the basis of their unwillingness to be friendly.

7.4 CONCLUSION

The data presented in this chapter have shown that judgements concerning politeness and impoliteness are influenced by gender. The gender of the perceiver as well as that of the speaker or actor influences the interpretation and assessment of the situation. The data reveal that while it may be a major determinant for the male groups, it may be a minor determinant for the female groups. In seeking to explain these gender differences, a core issue seems to be the divergent claims raised by the *Zulu bradas*: claims of male responsibility for women versus the claim of equality of men and women. This issue will be discussed further in chapter eight

8

DISCUSSION

8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will bring together and discuss key issues identified in chapters four, five, six and seven. These key issues are presented in three sections. The first deals with issues that have been identified as essential for the conceptualising and proper understanding of impoliteness in a multicultural and multilingual context, such as the University of Natal. The second discusses impoliteness as a form of identity defence. Finally, the third section presents issues relating to impoliteness and gender, where the concepts of responsibility and equality are problematized in relation to their impact on face.

8.2 CONCEPTUALIZING IMPOLITENESS IN A MULTILINGUAL AND MULTICULTURAL CONTEXT

In post-apartheid South Africa, at the time when my body of data was collected, the University of Natal (now part of the merged University of KwaZulu-Natal) was evolving and increasingly mutating into a multilingual and multicultural institution. Preceding chapters will have given a sense of the language and cultural diversity at the University of Natal. The main components of this diversity are the following: a student population from different racial, cultural, and gender backgrounds, together with a strong awareness of race and ethnicity; a significant population of black African students (both local and international); the dominance of English and its cultural paraphernalia, as main language of teaching and learning and significant lingua franca; an increasing awareness of other languages and cultures, the chief of which is isiZulu; the impact of urbanisation and modernisation on isiZulu language and culture, which is leading it to fragment and diversify; and lastly, the goal of gender equity, as underpinned by university policy. It should be noted that this context of diversity is by no means stable, and that constant modification is likely to continue over a period of

time. Predictably, this will have an ongoing impact on students' perception of (im)politeness.

This study has focused primarily on the black students (local and foreign) at the University of Natal, among whom there is potential for both inadvertent and deliberate impoliteness. Inadvertent impoliteness is generally received with understanding and excused, even though the recipient may retain some pent-up anger against the actor. Instances of perceived deliberate impoliteness, however, attract serious and aggressive responses. Such deliberate impoliteness tends to receive an equally impolite response. My argument is that such responses can best be understood in terms of individual or cultural identities.

The student groups involved in my study share their time, to different degrees, between contexts shaped by their inherited cultures, related for the most part to their national or ethnic origins, and the English-speaking, gender-equal world of the university. In the case of foreign students, members of particular national groups tend to associate and, if possible, to share accommodation; so that they move between their own linguistic and cultural groups in their domestic and social lives outside the university, and the predominantly English speaking student body.

This situation may be conceptualised as a particular form of postcolonialism, to which the various groupings identified here respond in different ways. The foreign African students may previously have had encounters with, if not prolonged experience of, cultures different from their own. Their awareness of diversity and of the fact they are now in a foreign land must influence their attitudes to what, in other circumstances, they might have regarded as deliberate rudeness.

The position of the South African black students is somewhat different: though they too must previously have been aware that norms of behaviour other than their own exist, through actual or media encounters with, for instance, English-speaking and Afrikaans-speaking groups, many of them have difficulty in believing that all black people do not share the same culture – in some cases,

they may even insist that all black people understand Zulu, though this is unlikely to be the case with people who attend university.

The lack of contact between South Africans and other African peoples in the apartheid period has in fact resulted in a problematic essentialising of African culture, in particular amongst the *Zulu bradas* and the *dilute males*¹. Many seem to believe that since the University of Natal is in a Zulu-speaking province, where Zulus are in the majority, there is an obligation, at least on African students, to conform to Zulu cultural expectations.

The *Model C guys*' experience is of a very different kind: accustomed at school to use the English language and to conform to English-derived behaviour patterns, they have accepted not only the diverse cultures present in South African and other African societies, but the need for them to move between cultures.

The Zulu women students who have played a role in this survey are distinguished by a willingness (much resented by many *Zulu bradas*) to adopt the language of the university, English, and the egalitarian behaviour patterns between men and women which are visible, if not universal, on campus.

To understand why and when students and staff identify certain behaviours as impolite demands an understanding of these different social values, as well as those of the people whose behaviour they are judging, and these values may often relate to deployment of a particular language. In a multicultural and multilingual context, socio-cultural issues may influence understanding of the phenomenon of politeness and impoliteness, especially as the student members of a university community have joined it in the recent past and retain (to the different extents suggested above) the expectations of themselves and others which they were taught elsewhere.

¹ Zulu and non-Zulu South African men typically use the word African (culture, beliefs, language, values) unselfconsciously and interchangeably with 'Zulu' or 'South African'.

In this section, I will highlight issues that have been identified in this study as paramount for our understanding of impoliteness in the University of Natal. These include cultural understandings of impoliteness; the fact that impoliteness may be, and may be seen as, either intentional or inadvertent; and the impact of age on expectations of behaviour. This last is unlikely to be evident in the behaviour of the student respondents, since there is no group of elders amongst them, but it is too important a value for most of them, to be completely omitted from this discussion.

8.2.1 Impoliteness as Culturally Defined

Impoliteness frequently presents itself as conversational moves or behaviours that are culturally or socially disapproved of in a given community. In other words, impoliteness is culturally defined in terms of acceptable and unacceptable norms and also in terms of the different cultural expectations of social categories, such as gender- and age-groups. There are certain general, if not invariable, rules and regulations that govern community members' behaviour, such as the expectation that persons will respond to or acknowledge greetings in a particular way. There are additional expectations imposed on different members of particular social categories: for instance, in many societies, what is expected of gender groups differs. In many communities, female behaviour is expected to be different from that of the male members of the community.

This study has confirmed the considerable significance of this cultural definition of impoliteness in the multicultural and multilingual context outlined above. On the one hand, differing expectations and communicative norms may clash, and if not properly managed, perceived impoliteness may result in communication breakdown. On the other hand, the varying modes and strategies of (im)politeness can function as discoursal resources.

It is generally accepted (Culpeper 1996; Kasper 1990; Tannen 1990) that, while impoliteness may vary from culture to culture, within a culture it tends to be stable in its definition. This may be the case where the culture itself is stable, but in a context where cultural understandings are undergoing rapid change, such as in Zulu culture (at the University of Natal) at present, understandings of both

politeness and impoliteness are also likely to vary. This current study confirms that understandings of (im)politeness may vary between men and women, and even within same gender group, within the same culture. Zulu culture has traditionally laid a strong stress on culture as inherited; it is of interest that some of our respondents have begun to associate it with upbringing rather than inheritance. *Zulu bradas*, *Model C guys* and *modern Zulu women*, responding from the same Zulu cultural inheritance, have different understandings of social behaviour. In the new social environment of the university, students make a decision, consciously or unconsciously, as to their adherence to the inherited cultural norms of childhood, and the extent to which they will conform to the new university patterns. In these circumstances judgments of and responses to impoliteness will differ between individuals from the same cultural group. The *Zulu bradas* argues that their behavioural patterns – and those of Zulu women – should derive only from inherited cultural norms. The *Model Cs guys*, on the other hand, believe that their understanding of (im)politeness comes for the most part from their education at schools where the strongest influence was likely to be western. Like the *Zulu bradas*, the *modern Zulu women* perceive impoliteness as culturally defined; but these women tend to draw more on western norms rather than Zulu.

8.2.2 Campus Cultures and Impoliteness

When people move into a context where the norms and practices are different from their own, it is expected that as newcomers they will learn these norms and values, in order to allow themselves to achieve integration into this new context, and to enhance their ability to communicate and interact (Wenger 1998; Eckert and McConnel-Ginet; Mills 2002). This requires a change in perceptions and judgements and in the manner of communication. The fear of losing one's identity may however produce some resistance to the norms of the new context (Sterling 2000; Ige and de Kadt 2002; Mills 2004). Some people may strive towards integrating their personal beliefs (influenced by culture and socialisation) with the new norms to achieve a result that is acceptable to both the individual and to the new group with whom he or she must now interact. They may communicate, where and when necessary, in terms of the beliefs which they acquired earlier, and yet uphold their recently acquired customs of

communication and relationships. Others may commit themselves completely to the new environment and its customs, especially when it is perceived as empowering and liberating.

The environment of the University of Natal is new, or fairly new, to all categories of students considered in this study, even to the South African students, with the possible exception of the *Model C guys*. There are representatives of many languages and cultures on campus, and all are expected to acquaint themselves with the English language, and to some degree, with the hybrid culture of the university. Some *Zulu bradas* see themselves as culturally and traditionally Zulu, and respond by resisting change as a way of defending their Zulu identity. *Dilute males*, who (in KwaZulu-Natal province) feel less securely based than the *Zulu bradas*, may be less resistant to new customs, but may also make use of impolite strategies to protect themselves from a perceived threat to their ethnic identity. The *Model C guys* construct themselves as cultured and educated men and therefore, unlike the *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males*, have fewer fears of the university culture but rather see it as natural; nevertheless they are defensive of their hybrid identity. The *modern Zulu women*, on the other hand, embrace the new modes of living and use them to change their disadvantaged position. In the process of protecting their preferred identity, they tend to employ strategies that are considered impolite by male members of their group. Non-South African students enter the university as foreigners, and with different cultural beliefs. These students have left their homes and nations for another which is generally unknown, and the cultural practices in South Africa are not the same as those in which they have lived most of their lives. The *diverse males'* reactions to their new environment are informed by the consciousness of their foreign status and the fact that strong indigenous cultures exist in South Africa. Hence they tend to represent themselves as culturally different, but they become defensive and impolite when a situation is perceived as a deliberate attempt to belittle them. The *decisive females'* responses to their new situation are similar to those of the *diverse males*, and yet different. Both are conscious of their foreign status which tends to motivate them to accept the host culture as far as possible. At the same times, *decisive females*, like *modern Zulu women*, seem to embrace more simply than do the *diverse males* the new

environment, although for different reasons. Cultural norms in their case seem to interfere relatively little with their coping strategies.

Together with the cultural and linguistic diversity of the students, the university has its own rules and customs that guide student behaviour, and it is expected that every student of the university will to some extent conform to the university culture while on campus. The present study shows that a high degree of conformity to the university culture may in turn result in students' being rejected by other members of their own (and other) cultural and racial groups (here by the *Zulu bradas* and the *dilute males*), in that they may be seen to be adopting patterns of behaviour which are regarded as foreign and domineering. At the same time, partial conformity to university norms and the acceptance of different norms of behaviour, as was observed (again to differing extents) in the case of the *diverse males* and *decisive females*, represents an awareness and willingness to select behaviours, as appropriate, from the norms of both the home culture and that of the university. Such a combination results in two sets of cultural norms for the interpretation and evaluation of impoliteness: the one derived from the foreign culture of the university and the other derived from the domestic or familial sphere, where this continues to exist, or at least amongst compatriots. There are of course many foreign and private cultures represented at the university, representing the different cultural backgrounds of the diversity of students. The extent to which two divergent sets of norms exist for individuals or groups depends on the degree of adaptation to the university culture. The *Zulu bradas* admit to applying the norms of their home culture in the university context as well. The *dilute males*, on the other hand, while sharing the *Zulu bradas'* views on preservation of their cultural norms, tend to compromise this stance sometimes, in favour of the university norms. The *modern Zulu women* tend to lead two separate lives. On campus they present themselves as westernised and communicate largely in English, however when off campus, for instance in the townships, they adhere most of the time to Zulu norms of communication (for the most part out of fear of being beaten up by the males).

The *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males* feel uneasy with the patterns of 'university' behaviour partly because they see these as a threat to their cultures, and there is

little evidence that they (especially the *Zulu bradas*) wish to adopt these patterns, even temporarily, whilst they are at university. They seem to prefer to interpret and evaluate impoliteness in terms of traditional cultural beliefs. The *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males* also tend to generalise their culturally based expectations of behaviours across all members of their linguistic and cultural groups (i.e. including *Model C guys* and *modern Zulu women*), and at times these expectations are even extended to foreign students, to *diverse males* and *decisive females*. For instance they often ‘essentialise’ (or generalise) their expectations through phrases like ‘*we Africans*’.

These varying approaches to ways of being polite, and to the interpretation and evaluation of impoliteness, result in a diversity of expectations at the university. Foreign and privately practiced cultures, traditional extra-university cultures, and the norms expected on campus may clash, stretch tolerance, and result in frustration or even anger.

The different expectations and evaluations have important implications for inter- or intra-cross-cultural relations:

- they may lead to intra- and inter-cultural communication breakdown;
- they may lead to intra- and inter-cultural conflicts, stereotyping and prejudice.

While it is true that ignorance of the acceptable norms may produce unintentional impoliteness, in all groups variant cultural positions were at times consciously assumed by individuals who were fully aware of the university community’s cultural expectations. Unfulfilled expectations may result in unfavourable interpretations and evaluation of behaviour. At the same time, ignorance of the norms of others could lead to verdicts of impoliteness where this was not intended.

8.2.3 Motivated (intentional) versus Unmotivated (inadvertent) Impoliteness

The issue of intentionality in impoliteness is crucial, as regards the response that follows a perceived impolite act. In most cases the intention as decoded by the

recipient informs and determines the recipient's response. When invited to distinguish between impoliteness and rudeness, each group independently made a distinction between motivated and unmotivated impoliteness, based on what was seen as the intention of the actor or speaker. Is the action to be considered deliberate or not? In determining the intention (or otherwise) of perceived impoliteness, group members also evaluated the degree of the offence. Respondents addressed the issue of intention by distinguishing between impoliteness and rudeness. Impoliteness was uniformly considered to be milder than rudeness, and the latter was regarded as deliberate and hence intended.

In a situation where an action is perceived as unintentional, the respondents tend to associate it with cultural ignorance and are usually willing to overlook it. Not all the groups, however, have this willingness, since some groups generalise and essentialise their notion of 'Africa' more strongly than others. The *Zulu bradas* for instance, often assume that all Africans have one and the same culture, and as a result expect foreign African students to conform to their Zulu expectations. The *diverse males*, on the other hand, are aware that when African students from different countries interact, different cultures and norms also intersect. These *diverse males* therefore tend to categorise many incidents they encounter as inadvertent impoliteness. The *Model C guys* also tend to regard impolite encounters as inadvertent rather frequently, because they are aware that differences can occur between individuals of the same cultural inheritance who have been educated differently, and therefore that expectations and understandings may differ too.

In cases of perceived intentional (motivated) impoliteness, reactions differ. All the groups define motivated impoliteness as a conscious act that is aimed at a goal, and this they all refer to as rudeness. Such an impolite act is perceived and judged as deliberate, and it may well trigger an impolite response from the recipient. Motivated impoliteness is usually perceived, and undertaken in response, as a show of power or control over the other, and in this way impacts on identity.

Degree of offence

The respondents were unanimous that the perception of an act as deliberate or inadvertent determines the degree of the perceived offence. In other words, it is the perceived intention that is used to judge and arrive at the degree or weight of the offence. The situation is evaluated by the hearer or receiver to determine whether the perceived impoliteness is motivated or unmotivated. If the actor is considered to be deliberately and consciously giving offence, the situation will be graded as highly offensive; if the offence is considered unintentional, the situation will be graded as less offensive. All the groups defined rude and deliberate behaviour as highly offensive and impolite, and for the most part unintentional behaviour as less offensive. At the same time, some intentional behaviours can also be experienced as 'mild', and are therefore labelled impolite rather than rude. Although, as I have said, all groups made these distinctions, some groups were more likely than others to accept ignorance of their cultural norms as an excuse, in the case of behaviour which offended them. Most conflicting judgements of behaviour centred on an individual's decision as to whether particular acts are, or could be, deliberately offensive or not; and these decisions were culturally motivated.

Different groups drew on their own cultural standards to interpret the situation and determine the degree of offence. The different (though sometimes overlapping) expectations and norms in the cultures between which students may move, and between which they may in particular instances choose, impact on their evaluation of behaviours. While an action may be rated impolite in one cultural context, it may be considered rude in another. For instance, Zulu women students understand that a behaviour that may not be considered impolite on campus may be regarded as rude off campus, and vice versa. As a result they tend to behave differently when off campus.

At the same time, the grading of perceived impoliteness – or rudeness – varies from one group to another, since it is based on perceived intention, and these perceptions differ among the respondents. Where an incident is regarded as highly offensive, deliberate, and therefore rude, by one group, it may well be regarded as less offensive and treated as unintentional by a respondent from a

different group. For instance, a *Model C guy* may regard a co-student answering a Zulu question in English as acceptable, but a *Zulu brada* would deal with it as a very serious matter. Hence, what is considered by one person deliberate impoliteness may be disregarded by another, and when these two individuals interact, such conflictual grading may impact on their judgement of how they communicate with each other.

8.2.4 Are Behaviours Intrinsically Impolite? The Power of Age

The fact that students included community elders in the discussion of politeness, though obviously none were present on campus (and they made it clear that they did not regard members of staff in this way), raises an important question: can some behaviours be considered intrinsically impolite or not?

Leech (1983) argues that some illocutions such as giving orders, threats and criticisms are inherently impolite, and Brown and Levinson make the more tempered suggestion that such acts “intrinsically threaten face” (Brown and Levinson 1987: 65). While this latter statement may be true, my contention is that this position must be somewhat modified. My findings suggest that many acts may be inherently neither polite or impolite, and that their actual social significance is determined by the actor rather than the act.

The student population under consideration was relatively homogeneous in terms of age, and the only ‘elders’ students tend to interact with on campus are, as I have said, teaching and support staff. However, respondents (with the exception of the *Model C guys*) found it impossible to reflect on politeness and impoliteness without taking age into consideration and emphasising the societal distinction between the young and elders. When speaking about their elders they noted societal expectations and the serious weighting of impoliteness towards older members of their communities. But when discussing the same issue in relation to their peers, they focused on the young as likely to be guilty of impoliteness.

The *Zulu bradas*, *dilute males*, *modern Zulu women* and *decisive females* all stress that *the elders must be respected*. Their discussion of whether or not the

adult members of their communities could be perceived as impolite led to the conclusion that the elders, by definition, are never impolite. The *diverse males*, however, went a step further, and expressed overtly what the others only implied. The *diverse males* argued that because politeness is achieved through years of socialisation, by the time a person attains the status of an elder, he or she would have a full understanding of politeness and impoliteness and over the years would have become the embodiment of politeness. This may be possible, but it may raise some questions about (im)politeness in relation to the elders: *politeness ... is associated with the elders, 'rude' is one of the connotations to children; politeness is achieved through time in age.* It is the elders of the community who decide on what behaviours can be regarded as polite, impolite and sanctionable; their age and accomplishments place them in a position of leadership, above younger members of the community. *Politeness and rudeness are defined by the elders in the society.... politeness is got to do with respect for age.* The *diverse males* acknowledged that the leadership status of the elders, however, does not mean that they cannot be impolite; yet this acknowledgement is carefully hedged. Firstly, because elders are *endowed with wisdom* resulting from years of experience and maturity, they are less likely to be impolite. Secondly, it is socially unacceptable to refer to elders as impolite, even when their behaviour would, in a younger person, be considered impolite: *it is rude in itself to say an older person whether male or female is rude or impolite to you.* The elders can behave in impolite ways, but in practice their behaviour is not responded to as impoliteness: *older people can be rude to younger people, but ... older people can not be seen as rude and it is not impolite.* The impolite act is interpreted differently, and, in most cases, as 'legitimate' behaviour, legitimated by the speaker's social position. In contrast, a disrespectful act by a younger member of the community towards an older person is immediately interpreted and treated as impolite, without any excuse: *rudeness from younger people to older people is automatically impolite.*

If impolite behaviour by community elders is to be considered 'legitimate', this might lead us to assume that students might find it impossible to label older staff members at the university 'impolite'. However, when impoliteness is at issue, students clearly do not equate the university culture with its westernised norms

with their traditional community. It is evident from the group discussions and indirect reports that students complain about staff treating them with disrespect, and that this causes enormous unhappiness. This may sometimes lead to serious confrontations.

It should be asked whether this concept of 'legitimacy' (granted in terms of social status to community elders) might also be applied to impolite behaviour amongst peers, where one group or individual has or claims higher status than another. Might males who come from a patriarchally oriented community into the university with its westernised norms perhaps feel that certain impolite behaviours are legitimated by the higher status which they are used to being accorded? Might it be the case that some *Zulu bradas* consider it 'legitimate' to dictate the language in which an exchange with a Zulu woman takes place, or to exact deference from a woman – behaviours which the Zulu women concerned might well experience as impolite.

8.3 POLITENESS, IMPOLITENESS AND FACE

I have conceptualised impoliteness in terms of communicative strategies that are either perceived as injuring, or designed to injure, an interlocutor's face. My respondents reported that such an affront to face could take the following forms:

- a rebuff
- insulting remarks
- derogatory remarks
- expressions which disregard the status of the interlocutor
- contempt for the opinions of the interlocutor
- pressure on the interlocutor to concede
- efforts to expose the interlocutor's inadequacy.

Any of these affronts may be perceived as either inadvertent or deliberate: in terms of the terminology of the thesis, as unmotivated and motivated impoliteness respectively.

Both types of impoliteness are best interpreted as embedded in interactional sequences, which contribute to the ongoing negotiation of position in a multicultural context. When a particular form of behaviour is judged as unintended, the reaction is generally non-aggressive. Although such unmotivated impoliteness may have threatened face, addressees are likely to treat these situations lightly, given the underlying assumption that the interlocutor's intention was not to damage face. The perceived unmotivated impoliteness is generally ignored, and where a response is made it is usually not aggressive. However, such an incident – and especially a succession of such incidents – is likely to have an impact on the addressee's opinion of the speaker, as an individual and/or as a member of a group. Those involved may become defined in a manner that is different from their own notions of self, and an unfavourable group stereotype may be the outcome. For example, the *Zulu bradas* regard a non-verbal response to their greetings as an indication of arrogance. The *diverse males* and *decisive females*, on the other hand, perceive a lack of response to greetings as an indication of unfriendliness, albeit perhaps unintentional. Such perceptions become the basis of group stereotypes: all these 'others' are then held to be similarly arrogant, or unfriendly.

It is such stereotypes which may lead to instances of what I have termed displaced impoliteness. Displaced impoliteness occurs primarily in terms of negative stereotypes (real or imagined) and persistent perceptions that an entire group is guilty of slighting or negative behaviour. It involves the use of impoliteness towards a person on the basis of his/her being a member of a group about whom a negative stereotype has been formed, and towards whom, therefore, impoliteness is considered appropriate. Displaced impoliteness may initiate an interaction; or it may be in response to an earlier conversational move. All the groups with whom I dealt in the course of my research had a tendency to create and respond to stereotypes in this way, except for the *Model C guys*, who tended to treat individual offenders as individuals rather than as representatives of their group.

On the other hand, motivated impoliteness, that is, impolite acts that are interpreted by the recipient as deliberate, are usually considered serious matters

and provoke an aggressive response. Such response generally takes the form of what I have termed defensive impoliteness – impoliteness which defends and rehabilitates the recipient's face, by attacking the face of the speaker. This has been discussed in detail in Chapter 6, and the findings are summarised under 8.3.1 below.

Can we now be more precise about the relationship between impoliteness and politeness? Sometimes impoliteness can indeed be usefully understood in relationship to politeness, and as the inverse of politeness. In our multicultural context in particular, the many instances of unmotivated impoliteness can be considered as failures of politeness. Either the speaker uses culturally derived politeness strategies which the hearer finds inappropriate and therefore impolite; or the speaker fails (on cultural grounds) to use a politeness strategy when the hearer is anticipating one. In both these cases, the speaker has no intention of acting impolitely and injuring the face of the hearer; indeed, the speaker may have been seeking to be polite, but has not found the appropriate form in which to communicate this.

Motivated impoliteness, however, appears to be more than simply the inverse of politeness. Motivated impoliteness is presented as a deliberate strategy, with the goal of attacking the face of the hearer. My respondents were generally not willing to present themselves as instigating such an attack; but they did indicate that they regularly respond to such an attack with a counter-attack. What is perceived as a deliberate attack on face provokes an equally deliberate counter-attack, by means of which own face is rehabilitated; and this is presented as legitimate.

Brown and Levinson conceptualised politeness as a conversational tool which is fundamental to the smooth functioning of society; politeness tends to be the expected interactional norm, and face is generally maintained. In our multicultural context, where a variety of norms and cultures are rather tensely juxtaposed, face is much more likely to be affronted, and this is something against which hearers need to be constantly on their guard, so that they can

respond appropriately. In cases of unmotivated impoliteness, the normal response may well be no response, although the affront is certainly felt; the long-term consequence may be the emergence of stereotypes and instances of displaced impoliteness. Where the impoliteness is experienced as motivated and severe, an impolite response may well be seen as what is needed to re-establish a somewhat fraught equilibrium.

8.3.1 Impoliteness and Identity

Let us return to one substantial difference between my investigation and Brown and Levinson's approach: given that I was investigating a multicultural and multilingual context, I found it necessary to conceptualise 'face' not as a function of the 'self', but rather in terms of individual and group identities. The notion of 'self' drawn on by Brown and Levinson has connotations of stability and individualism, which are less appropriate to a complex context which is in considerable flux. The notion of 'identity', in contrast, can be conceptualised as constantly emerging from the discourses employed in interactions; and it can be conceptualised in terms of both individuals and groups. Placing impoliteness in juxtaposition with identity / identities allowed me to perceive and analyse a core function of impoliteness in the multicultural context under investigation, a function which has received little attention to date. Impoliteness can be understood as one of the tools used by individuals or groups to define and defend the preferred identities they seek to construct. By focusing on instances of impoliteness, I was able to identify some individual and group identities that are being constructed or reconstructed in this university context. When individuals or groups defend and protect face through the use of impolite communicative strategies, we gain understanding into who they are or profess to be. Because the identities being produced in a multilingual and multicultural context are more complex than those in a monolingual and monocultural situation, the use of strategies of impoliteness as contributory mechanisms will also be complex.

The emerging identities were of two types, individual and group identities, and the damage to face incurred through perceived impoliteness was experienced as damage to individual face and communal face respectively. Interestingly, these

two types were largely gender-based. Members of the two female groups (*Modern Zulu women* and *decisive females*) tended to focus on individual face loss, which they addressed through individual face-saving strategies. The focus was on themselves as individuals, and their defence of individual face was their way of protecting themselves from insult. The male groups, on the other hand, typically constructed and defended collective identities. Damage to face was perceived as injury not only to the individual concerned but to the other members of their cultural group. Responses were therefore generally aimed at saving the face of the group with which they identified. In a variety of ways, they used defensive impoliteness strategies to protect not just themselves, but their clans, cultures and beliefs. (I shall elaborate further on this use of defensive impoliteness by groups in section 8.3.2).

The next section draws together the complex intersections of identities and impoliteness strategies displayed by the respondents.

8.3.2 Impoliteness as Self-Defence

This research has revealed that impoliteness is generally perceived and treated as negative behaviour in the university community, and no member of the student community wants to be labelled impolite. Impoliteness is understood as destructive to social harmony. Presumably for this reason, instances of own impolite behaviour described by respondents were almost always claimed to be in response to previous motivated impoliteness. Respondents were generally unwilling to admit to being impolite without any cause, and presented their use of impoliteness as a legitimate response to an abusive remark or insult. The *Zulu bradas*, *dilute males*, *Model C guys*, *diverse males*, *modern Zulu women* and *decisive females* in this study all defend themselves against any charge of antisocial behaviour by claiming that they are responding to the impoliteness of others – but are then quite willing to admit that they do, in such circumstances, behave impolitely. The *modern Zulu women*, surprisingly, also admit to being impolite by being noisy, but add that they are not being deliberately provocative. Respondents are in agreement in asserting that they are impolite only when responding to perceived motivated impoliteness. Each discussion centred on the unacceptable behaviour of others as the starting point of a sequence, followed by

the response of the insulted person, which is thereby shown to be justified. The respondents all acknowledge that the behaviour of members of their groups may be offensive to others, but present this as a justified response to abusive situations. There is no admission that they at times may deliberately initiate any situation of impoliteness, though this is of course likely to be the case, given that someone has to initiate these sequences.

8.3.3 Impolite Situations Demanding Self-Defense

I now discuss core issues that lead each group to the deployment of impoliteness in self-defence. Through the specific instances of defensive impoliteness the envisaged identities of the various groups become clearer. Generally the male groups react strongly to perceived impoliteness that relates to their group identities - ethnic, racial, hybrid or foreign respectively. The core issues of women are different to those of the males, and also different from one another. The *modern Zulu women's* main concern is centred on gender: they appear determined to move away from traditional constraints on their behaviour and to protect themselves from the gender identities proposed in encounters with the *Zulu bradas*. The *decisive females* simply want to be accepted by their hosts.

Zulu bradas and Ethnicity

Zulu bradas cherish their ethnic identity and are committed to protecting it from any perceived local or foreign invasion. It is important to them to defend the (hegemonic) Zulu culture which they see as superior to others, particularly in KwaZulu-Natal, which is their home. When faced with a situation they perceive as a direct and deliberate attack on their inherited culture (that is, an act which they then categorise as rude), the *Zulu bradas* respond with impoliteness: *Especially [to] people who look down on my background or culture, I will be impolite to them*. The *Zulu bradas* tend to understand impoliteness to 'me' as contempt for 'my background' or 'culture', which represents the totality of their sense of who they are. When they feel provoked in this way, they move into defensive mode. The adjective *especially* suggests that it might be possible to ignore or overlook perceived impoliteness clearly directed at a particular individual, but that whatever is seen as directed at the *Zulu bradas'* group identity will always be dealt with aggressively. Their focus is no longer on

themselves as individuals but on *Zulu bradas* in general, and their response is aimed at protecting the Zulu identity they believe in so strongly. Hence they present their defensive impoliteness not as an act against an individual but as defence of 'our' culture; it is a collective matter. Here, too, a long-lasting stereotype may emerge, leading to the use of displaced impoliteness: *when I don't see that person any more then like in the case of a white person, any white person that cross my way is treated the same way.*

Dilute males and Racism

The *dilute males*, non-Zulu South Africans from other provinces, focus less on ethnicity and instead on the broader category of race. Encounters where the *dilute males* suspect that their dignity as adult male members of their race group is in jeopardy are perceived as deliberate provocation, and they react with aggression: *it is worst when you address me in a manner that I cannot accept . . . calling me a boy.* The term 'boy' has strongly denigratory meaning for the *dilute males*. They see it as directed beyond themselves at their entire group, awakening memories of apartheid humiliations. *That is how they were calling our fathers, boys and mothers, girls.* Such belittling terms, *dilute males* say, *will trigger my anger; I find it hard to accommodate it; I cannot, we cannot accept that from anyone; this will make me to be very rude to them.* At this point all other members of the offender's group are likely to become targets of the defence strategy of rudeness: the individual offender is replaced by 'them'. The reference to the apartheid past signals that as the offenders are likely to have been of the white race group, the emerging stereotype will be racially constructed, putting further strains on communication across races.

Model C guys and Cultural Disloyalty

The Model C guys are generally more individualistic in their approach, though when their cultural loyalty is questioned they tend to speak as a group. The *Model C guys* are quick to resent insulting words that attack their self-image and portray them as racially confused. For instance, calling them *white persons trapped in black bodies* or *coconuts* will trigger defensive impoliteness. They switch to a defensive mode to protect themselves from what they perceive as destructive of their sense of self. Such statements are seen as a direct attack on

their self-worth and confidence which cannot be allowed: *they are telling you that you are not like white or black*. Because they perceive such comment as deliberately undermining and belittling, and as compromising their human dignity, they respond aggressively: *they want to make you feel you are half of everything and never a whole*. This may cause the **Model C guys** to distance themselves from students who treat them in this way: *if you don't want to be my friend, fine. I have no problem with that: then you are not my friend*. However, there appears to be no carry-over of anger to other members of the offender's group; a stereotype does not appear to be the outcome, and **Model C guys** do not appear to employ displaced impoliteness.

Diverse males and Foreignness

Although the **diverse males**, as foreigners, are generally slow to judge situations as deliberate rudeness, nevertheless there are situations where they may not be as generous in their approach. In a situation where a **diverse male** is referred to (usually by a Zulu) as *ikwerekwere*, a derogatory term used to label foreigners, he may react strongly. In this case, collective identity does become an issue for the **diverse males**. *It tells how much they dislike other Africans; that we are not wanted here; it is an expression of hatred*. The **diverse males** in this case feel they have to resist and defend themselves from xenophobia, and show that they have identities they are proud of: *especially because we don't treat foreigners like that where I come from. Our visitors are treated with respect, sometimes better than our own people; we make them feel at home, we don't give them bad names*. In this situation, the **diverse males** report responding with defensive impoliteness: *we are all human, you can be furious or something; you can be furious and act in a very impolite way; you can also disrespect them; or disregard them and stay away from them*. The use of 'them' in this statement indicates that, as a longer-term consequence, their anger may be transferred to other members of the offending group, leading to the use of displaced impoliteness – or possibly a complete lack of interaction.

Modern Zulu women and Gender

The **modern Zulu women's** consciousness of the university environment is used strategically to improve their social status as individuals in terms of gender

equity. Impoliteness is the means they use to protect their womanhood from expressions and behaviours they perceive as derogatory and disempowering to them as Zulu women. Hence, the *Zulu bradas* and sometimes the *dilute males* are the women's main opponents. The *Zulu bradas* regularly address Zulu women in what they claim are Zulu 'cultural' terms, which the women regard as abusive and impolite. The (impolite) strategy of responding in English, for example, is one which the women use to control the men's behaviour towards them. In the process of empowering themselves, *modern Zulu women* are condemned by both *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males* as rude and as traitors to Zulu culture – attitudes of which the *modern Zulu women* are well aware.

Decisive females and Acceptance

The *decisive females'* concerns centre on their hopes of being accepted by their hosts. When they find these hopes being disappointed by campus interactional patterns (for instance, the lack of response to their greetings), they put up defences to protect themselves from what they perceive as deliberate insults by modifying their expectations and their behaviours: *I have changed much; the way one behaves here is a big difference from the way you do things back home*. They change their approaches, cease to try to placate the person who has hurt them, and adopt interactional patterns similar to those being used around them. It must be noted that these modified behaviours are not intended to attack others and hence will not be experienced by others as impolite; the impoliteness involved here is the *decisive females'* own sense of being impolite, in terms of their cultural norms: *we know it is impolite, even rude to walk past people without any expression of greeting*. As far as the *decisive females* are concerned, the issue at stake is their own feelings or emotions; they are concerned to protect themselves, not their group. This more individualistic pattern is similar to that of the *modern Zulu women*. However, like all the others discussed above, the *decisive females* also have the tendency to transfer their responses beyond the particular person who was impolite to them to all members of the group of the offender; but as they adapt their behaviours to the cultural norms, they are unlikely subsequently to use displaced

8.4 IMPOLITENESS AND GENDER

My study has revealed that gender has a substantial impact on perceptions and judgements of impoliteness in the multicultural context under investigation. In this regard, too, impoliteness is culturally defined. Gender is salient on a university campus which brings into juxtaposition Zulu culture with its strongly patriarchal orientation, and a westernized university culture seeking to promote gender equity. Expectations as to the behaviours appropriate to the male and female students on campus vary considerably; with the gender of the respondent in most cases (but not always) predicting the expectations held. Behaviours of men and women then tend to be judged as impolite – by men and women varyingly – to the extent that they fail to conform to these expectations.

The majority of male respondents draw strongly on earlier, culturally formed gender expectations in their assessment of instances of impoliteness. The *Zulu bradas*, *dilute males* and *diverse males* fall into this majority male category, with *dilute males* and *diverse males* being less rigid in their approach than the *Zulu bradas*. *Model C guys* have a rather different perception, and tend to adopt a political rather than cultural approach to gender expectations. The female groups, the *modern Zulu women* and *decisive females*, on the other hand, judge perceived impoliteness by focussing on and considering the issue rather than the gender of the person. This suggests that they have moved away, or are in the process of moving away, from male-favouring codes of politeness and impoliteness, even if these were formerly current in their upbringing. In these ways, my data have revealed that men and women are responding rather differently to the gender stereotypes they have grown up with.

8.4.1 Responsibility and Equality Discourses

In this section, judgements of impoliteness are discussed in relation to traditional gender stereotypes, or the absence of such. The terms ‘responsibility’ and ‘equality’ are taken from the *Zulu bradas*’ group discussion, and are used to present findings which focus on the influence of gender in judgements of impoliteness. As mentioned above, the male groups (*Zulu bradas*, *dilute males* and *diverse males*), in their different ways, judge perceived impoliteness from a basis of culturally formed gender expectations. They hold men and women

responsible for conforming to these expectations, which will ensure that traditional gender roles and relations are sustained, even in the non-traditional society of the university. However, in the multilingual, multicultural society of the university, expectations of gender roles differ, both between male and female groups, and amongst the male groups, and intersections of these different expectations result in considerable perceived impoliteness. Men especially, who in many cases have been brought up to expect deference based on male privilege, may wish to preserve in their own behaviour, and in the behaviour of women towards them, the ways of the past.

8.4.1.1 Discourses of Responsibility

When the *Zulu bradas* used the term ‘responsibility’; they actually mean the acknowledgement of an obligation to traditional gender-related norms, in this case male dominance over females. Female impoliteness, as they understand it, becomes manifest in a desire for equality with males. The majority male perspective derives an understanding of male politeness from a stance of male responsibility towards females. Males present themselves as taking on responsibility for females, to ensure their safety. In other words, adherence to traditional gender norms is understood by these men as promoting social harmony and enhancing face. The female desire for gender equality, on the other hand, is seen as untraditional and as attempting to change existing gender roles and behaviours. Aspirations towards equality are looked upon as threats that can damage individuals as well as the community. The equality approach to gender may result in face-threatening situations and increased conflicts. To these males (and especially the *Zulu bradas*), claims of equality are face-threatening and also threaten the general harmony of society. ‘Responsibility’ as they define it (playing by the traditional gender rules) promotes harmony between men and women, and the society at large. I now discuss in some more detail the various male perspectives on responsibility and equality, and associated impoliteness.

Socially constructed gender roles have a significant influence on *Zulu bradas’* interpretation of impoliteness. The *bradas* unanimously agreed that female students are more impolite than male students. They focussed especially on the

Zulu female students, and differentiated between their behaviour on and off campus. They concluded that off campus women are relatively polite, but once on campus they become impolite, particularly towards men. This is because on campus, Zulu women are perceived as breaking cultural rules. They cease to conform to the behaviour expected of women: *a lady here on campus, they just talk anyhow*. The **Zulu bradas** claim that women are willing (or feel obliged) to tolerate greater degrees of familiarity off campus, and in the township for example speak and respond in Zulu. As students, however, modern Zulu women are portrayed as ready to abandon traditional Zulu feminine roles and to embrace 'western' feminine behaviour instead: *The ladies here ... have been influenced by western values*.

This change in behaviour is regarded by these men as threatening and destructive of Zulu culture. The **Zulu bradas** hold gender equality campaigns responsible for these changes in behaviour, particularly on the university campuses: *the ladies always behave impolitely; just because they are thinking of equality, they just think of their own superiority*. The **Zulu bradas** disagree with the concept of equality which they argue is foreign to 'African culture'. They argue that taking on responsibility (for women) in terms of cultural expectations is much more important and powerful than equality: *With us the most important thing is responsibility, rather than equality, we believe in nature, we respond to nature*. They advocate the assumption and acceptance of 'responsibility' (in these terms), which would result in what they consider polite behaviour. Female rejection of male demands for 'responsibility' in favour of demands for 'equality' are, they believe, at the root of female impolite behaviour. In this way, norms of what is considered impolite clash on gender lines: a Zulu man does not consider it impolite to treat a woman in a way which registers her inferiority; but the westernised norms which the woman prefers may lead her to regard his behaviour as deliberately impolite.

Although the **dilute males** acknowledge that changes are taking place in gender relations in their immediate environment, they continue to judge perceived impolite behaviour on the basis of cultural expectations of gender. The **dilute males** agree that female students are more impolite than their male counterparts.

In the past, they argue, women were polite, because they were dependent on men as providers: *before we use to respect the father, because all of us looked up to him, the mother used to be like a first-born child, you know, because the father supported from the mother to the last-born.* However, as women became empowered economically, their behaviour began to change, and their 'traditional' gender roles were abandoned; men nevertheless retain these as the norm from which female behaviour is judged. Nonconformity to gender expectations is interpreted as either impolite or rude, depending on the gravity of the offence.

The *diverse males* differed in their approach, as their discussion centred on South African students' impoliteness towards them. The *diverse males* themselves, from many different nations, are also diverse in culture and language and to some extent in gender expectations. They began by foregrounding their somewhat different cultural perspectives, Nevertheless they agreed that traditionally men are considered '*superior*' to women, and that women assume subordinate roles in societies. They noted that impolite behaviour by women may result in greater social disharmony than when men are impolite, and that women, by conforming to the expected norms, are burdened with the responsibility for ensuring that societal harmony is not jeopardised. In these societies, too, female impoliteness is equated with lack of conformity to societal norms. Moving into the university context, the *diverse males*, using a variety of rhetoric, agreed that the South African female students are more impolite than men, primarily on the basis of their lack of conformity to cultural expectations. At the same time, some were willing to admit that the South African male students are impolite too, and that they can at times be even more impolite than the women.

8.4.1.2 Discourses of Equality

The female groups (*modern Zulu women* and *decisive females*) and to some extent the *Model C males* share a perspective on 'responsibility' and 'equality'² that differs from that of the other three males groups discussed above. Broadly speaking, they are moving away from traditional perspectives of male

² My female respondents themselves did not use the term 'equality'; this term therefore represents a male focus on female goals.

dominance. Associated with this is their tendency to base their judgement of perceived impolite behaviour on the actions and not the gender of the persons involved. In other words, what determines whether an incident is impolite no longer derives from the gender roles attached to the individuals, but depends primarily on the actions under consideration. They are aware that an attempt to assert 'equality' may be seen as impolite when a speaker abandons the norms expected of her because she feels herself insulted by her interlocutor.

These respondents have moved beyond the majority male perception which suggests that '*responsibility*' equates *politeness*. Since gender roles and gender behaviours are no longer seen as determinants of politeness or impoliteness, impoliteness is perceived and judged on the basis of the action performed and not the gender of the performer. Contrary to the majority male perspective, male defined '*responsibility*' has now become a threat to face.

It is noteworthy that the *modern Zulu women* approached this topic without any preliminary orientation towards culturally or socially prescribed gender roles and expectations. Instead they openly acknowledged that female students are more impolite than their male counterparts: *Females are more impolite*. In contrast to the men these women focussed on perceived impolite behaviour rather than the gender of the performer, and therefore did not spare themselves. They were the only group willing to admit that they themselves were impolite without provocation, in terms of being noisy, and by admitting it, they also took some responsibility for their behaviour: *Yes, females, as Africans we shout. You can't speak to a person next to you softly*. They acknowledge that their noisy behaviour is disturbing to others. But, importantly, they do not perceive their noisiness as unfeminine, as suggested by the *diverse males*. Though they did not justify this behaviour, it is possible that they saw it as a further example of necessary self-assertion, given that other impolite behaviour they admit arises from the need to rebut male dominance.

The *decisive females* register their awareness of male and female gender roles and expectations, and note that male students seek to capitalise on traditional

gender roles. They discuss the male students' general attitudes towards female students and point out that during conversations some male students deliberately over-emphasise gender roles: *I know a group of guys who would intentionally say something like, women belong in the kitchen ... and they act in certain ways that you just know that that is how they really feel.* Some extreme examples were given of how some male students take advantage of female students under the guise of 'culture'. These women conclude that many male students hide behind culture to perpetuate skewed gender roles and relations: *they do all sorts of things and give excuse like 'my culture'.* In spite of these insights, the **decisive females**, too, regard South African female students as generally more impolite: *Overall the women are more impolite.* Yet this judgement is not made on the basis of female attempts to reject the 'responsibility' claims of men, but rather on the way South African females they behave towards 'outsiders': *you have to keep on saying hi to them all the time, that at least you say hi to them five times before they can say hi back to you.* Similar standards are then used by the women to judge the men as polite.

Model C guys, unlike the other male groups, focus far less on culture and concentrate instead on perceived impolite behaviours and their implications for the receiver, irrespective of gender. These men, like the women, evaluate the situation and not the gender of the person involved. In addition, the **Model C guys** believe in equality between all students, and they applaud **modern Zulu women** students for embracing this concept. They judge impoliteness on the basis of the action and not the persons involved. Nevertheless, the **Model C guys**, slightly paradoxically, still reflect conservative masculine tendencies by expressing fears for the future of their culture in the hands of women influenced by 'western' ideas, even though they appear (on the basis of their school education) to be presently more 'westernised' than the **modern Zulu women**.

Ultimately, judgements concerning impoliteness are, and especially in the case of **Zulu bradas**, based on cultural understandings of what is polite and impolite; and these include gender expectations. In the case of the **diverse males** and **decisive females**, such judgements, though influenced by culturally formed expectations of others, also allow for the different practices of members of other communities.

Culture, however, is dynamic and not static, and especially so in the early 21st century in a rapidly urbanising and modernising country; and as culture develops and changes, so do behaviours. The interaction of cultures and languages may result in changes; the members of the community may manifest these changes in their behaviour and judgements. In the project data, it is particularly the *Model C guys* and the *modern Zulu women* who represent these changing behaviours and perceptions of what is impolite.

8.5 CONCLUSION

In this chapter I have drawn together and discussed the findings of the research on which this thesis is built. The study has shown that the negotiation and construction of identities not only differs between men and women students, but also amongst male students. These preferred identities are guarded jealously, form a basis on which judgements of impoliteness are made, and at times are held to justify impolite behaviours. Much impoliteness occurs inadvertently, as students negotiate the different cultures on campus. However, impoliteness may also be used with deliberate intent, to assert individual or group identity, and to prevent domination. Judgement and management of impoliteness is strongly influenced by the cultures and identities on campus.

9

CONCLUSION

9.1 INTRODUCTION

This project has recorded and analysed a series of investigations into impoliteness (and, at times, politeness) in the multilingual and multicultural student community at the former University of Natal. Its starting point was the paucity of study of impoliteness compared to politeness (Culpeper 1995, 2005; Mills 2002; Eelen 2003). In addition, research into gender and multilingualism is sparse in comparison to studies of gender and monolingual language situations (Piller and Pavlenko 2001; Burton *et al* 1994).

The present study is intended to help to fill these gaps, by exploring the many issues that relate to language and cultural diversity, and the ways in which these shape and influence language choice, behaviour and interpretation of the behaviour of others, amongst multilingual students in a complex and changing university society. By adopting a gendered perspective on impoliteness in a university environment, the study investigates factors that produce impoliteness, or what is perceived as such, in multilingual, multicultural and multiracial contexts, with special focus on the gendered nature of verdicts on impoliteness. In this way the study provides information that will be useful for gender and diversity analysis, and for the development of diversity-sensitive and diversity-specific interventions needed for the enhancement of inter- and intra-group relations at the University.

It is however, the specific setting of my study which makes it unique among studies of (im)politeness: its setting is postcolonial, and the impoliteness, intended or perceived, which is analysed, occurred in a multilingual, multicultural and multiracial environment, which emerged from a colonial situation. In this, of necessity, it differs from the multiplicity of studies focusing

on specifically western societies. The study investigates the understanding of and responses to the perceived impoliteness of male and female students, in the main of African origins, at the University of Natal.

The argument developed in this thesis allows the following conclusions: First, impoliteness is not simply the reverse of politeness, but also an instrumental tool used to communicate the state of mind of an interlocutor; secondly, identity construction or defence of an identity which is perceived as being under attack may, in a multilingual and multicultural situation, trigger impoliteness; thirdly, the judgment and employment of impoliteness is gendered. Overall, this study shows that the choice and style of language as a means of communication, in its intersections with gender, remains of considerable significance in an age of globalisation. Not only does the analysis of language use help uncover the principles underlying gender and social interactions, but it also enables us to gain access to ways of thinking, belief systems, self views and world-views of people from different cultural backgrounds and upbringing. Such understanding may foster dialogue and reduce conflicting interpretations of perceived impoliteness. It may at the same time make the retention, or at least the persistence of belief systems, self and world-views which belong to earlier phases of the individual's life appear inappropriate. A common language of exchange may mask great cultural differences, or may conceal the fact that one speaker or actor has moved away from his/her early social beliefs, whilst his/her interlocutor still retains them. As a result some individuals who feel their beliefs and sense of self are threatened by the use of language may become defensive and impolite. Language expresses ways in which individuals situate themselves in relation to others, the way people group themselves, the power they claim for themselves. Language is also used to show allegiances, to create and maintain gender role relationships, and to resist and reconstruct roles and relationships. The investigation of social conventions and of ways in which central concepts such as impoliteness/politeness are gendered differently across cultures can give us insights into ways in which language can be used to empower some and disempower others.

9.2 SUMMARY OF FINDINGS

The data presented in chapter six and the findings discussed in chapter eight demonstrate that impoliteness is not always the simple inverse of politeness, and neither does it always result from a pragmatic failure of politeness. As revealed in chapters five, six, seven and eight, impoliteness can also be an instrument employed to gain power and express negative feelings. As Beebe (1995) pointed out, deliberate (or motivated) impoliteness is usually employed to serve two functions, “to obtain power and to vent negative feelings” (1995: 154). The two types of motivated impoliteness identified in this study, defensive and displaced impoliteness, support and confirm Beebe’s claim. The data presented in this study show that the impolite behaviour under analysis is perhaps not intentional in terms of being consciously planned, but it is intentional in terms of fulfilling a strategic goal. Different groups of respondents agreed that impoliteness could be intentional or goal driven. Data on respondents’ experiences and responses to impoliteness strongly support these claims. Their experience and responses, from focus group discussions, records of observation and surveys, show that impoliteness can indeed be employed strategically to make a concrete statement or achieve a purpose in social interaction.

While it is true that all the groups, male or female, distinguish between motivated and unmotivated impoliteness, there are some differences in the strategies employed. This relates to the types of identity being protected, which in the context under investigation differed markedly between men and women. The male groups, *Zulu bradas*, *dilute male*, and *diverse males* displayed a shared and collective identity, whereas the women, *modern Zulu women* and *decisive females*, as well as the *Model C guys*, were constructing and displaying more individually oriented identities. In other words, the men were focused on a collective identity, an ‘us’ which is culturally created, whilst the women were focused on an individual identity, an ‘I’ which was primarily based on concern for their personal situation. This shows that while it may at times appear that men and women employ the same interactional strategies (including impoliteness), their reasons for doing so are not necessarily always the same. This implies, too, that (im)politeness will not be judged in the same way by men and women, and

hence their responses are not likely to be same, especially when they respond with defensive impoliteness.

Men tend to draw strength from a communal cultural identity, and a perceived (impolite) attack on this will most likely result in an aggressive response, in terms of defensive impoliteness. Women's strength on the other hand lies in a non-communal but individual identity which is proof against assailants, but which nevertheless may also require the response of defensive impoliteness.

The findings reveal that the protection of identity is a core motive for impolite behaviour, at least in multicultural societies, though it may also be the case elsewhere. The defensive nature of such impoliteness has been overlooked in previous studies. 'Difference' and therefore defensiveness might elsewhere be based on class, or consciousness of origins, and of course, gender differences are always a fruitful source of assertions of difference. In a context characterised by issues of superiority and inferiority, or of foreignness and indigeneity, identity is an issue that can well result in conflict. Identity is constantly portrayed by respondents as a powerful source of motivation. Students from different backgrounds feel a strong allegiance to their preferred identities, which are not necessary cultural identities, but ones which they may be constructing for themselves in terms of their experience rather than tradition. The *modern Zulu women*, for example, appear to be in the process of constructing an identity which differs from the traditional. They sometimes employ deliberate and drastic, impolite communicative acts to assert themselves and to establish and protect this preferred identity. Students' preferred identities constantly manifest in their interpretations and judgments of perceived impoliteness.

The study further reveals that a range of identities are being constructed and reconstructed in the new (to the students) environment of the university, to assert the self and win respect. In the process of asserting these preferred identities, impolite strategies may be employed. When people become members of a community that is new to them, reactions to the cultural practices of the new community will differ from group to group and individual to individual, usually as a result of cultural ties, loyalty and aspirations. Some people may put up

strong resistance if they see the new culture as a major threat to the existence of their own cultural beliefs, especially when their culture can assert some sort of advantage or right. This is the case of the *Zulu bradas*, who persistently express their preference for Zulu culture in the University, not least because it is in their geographic province. As they point out, it is the only way they can fully express themselves without fear of incompetence, even though being Zulu in the university context may mean rejecting some accepted norms and thereby being impolite. In other words, being Zulu implies a strong identity for them, because through it they are able to connect with the sense of self.

Other students who appear similarly defensive may not be as rigid, but may nevertheless wish to resist the culture of the University, and this is often the case of the *dilute males*. As South Africans, they feel vulnerable to the new cultural practices which surround them and may stage passive resistance to exhibit support for their own culture, which may at times involve deliberate impoliteness. In order to assert themselves, they too may object about the constant use of English; they may complain about apparently assimilated groups like the '*Model C*' *guys* and *modern Zulu women* who prefer to speak English, and refer to them as impolite. Other newcomers may seek to combine the culture in which they were raised with the university culture. The *diverse males*, for instance, seek to conform as much as possible, but nevertheless maintain strong ties with their home cultures, and also employ defensive impoliteness when they perceive a threat. It is also possible to conform simply in order to be able to assert oneself in terms of the cultural norms of the university, as do some *decisive females*. The *decisive females*' conformity is tied strongly to personal liberation. Finally, where the new cultural practices are perceived to be advantageous in terms of social status, some people may appear to embrace the new cultural ideology while still retaining their own, at least off-campus. The *modern Zulu women* are an example of this category and describe the university culture as empowering and liberating. Yet their approach is perceived as impolite by *Zulu bradas* and *dilute males*.

In addition, my findings on identity and the associated defensive impoliteness reveal that most male respondents (*Zulu bradas*, *dilute males* and *diverse males*)

displayed strong ties and loyalty to their own cultures because they draw strongly on these cultures in interpreting themselves and in legitimising the power which they feel they should exercise. The *Model C guys* on the other hand, construct a hybrid identity which they seek to defend. The two female groups, *modern Zulu women* and *decisive females* respectively, distance themselves from their own culture, but draw their strength from within their individual self and exhibit this as powerful. Thus the two genders were distinctively constructed, with the exception of the *Model C guys* who tend to construct themselves first as individual and only subsequently in terms of other forms of identity, such as cultural identity. However different these identities are, all see themselves as possessing some power. Identity is powerful, irrespective of what it means to others, because it is influential over the way we wish to be addressed and respected. An apparently belittling expression may trigger a deliberate impoliteness as a means of protect self from abuse.

The data presented also show how gender impacts on people's perceptions of impoliteness and responses to it. Gender plays a crucial role in male judgement of impoliteness. Male judgements were based on their socio-cultural and gendered expectations of the situation. Females, on the other hand, judged the instances on the basis of the offence and not of the gender of the offender. The *Zulu bradas*, in their judgement of the *modern Zulu women* as very impolite, equated nonconformity to Zulu cultural expectations of women with impolite behaviour. They accused the women of not living up to Zulu standards governing the performance of gender roles. In a similar way, the *dilute males* claimed that female students are more impolite on the university campus than elsewhere. The reason, they argued, is that the women on campus abandon their own cultural beliefs for those of another cultural system. The *diverse males*, although they appear to conform to the customs which prevail in the university community concerning gender relations, were often nostalgic for the different cultural expectations of gender with which they had grown up.

The women, *modern Zulu women* and *decisive females*, as well as *Model C guys* differ greatly in their views, but their judgement of perceived impoliteness in relation to gender is similar in that they do not allow gender conditioning to

influence them. The *modern Zulu women*'s discussion of the most impolite gender group focussed on the incidents and not the gender of the persons. As a result they were happy to agree with the verdict that they themselves were impolite on the basis of their habitually loud voices. The *decisive females*, similarly, judged Zulu women specifically as most impolite, based on what they had experienced.

It is difficult to avoid speculating that the male groups (*Zulu bradas*, *dilute males* and *diverse males*), with their gender bias in their judgements of impolite behaviour and their varying degrees of nostalgia for a more 'traditional' culture (however unrealistic this may be for men who have cellphones in their pockets) are desiring a return to a past where their primacy as males was uncontested. Similarly, the women's refusal to alter their behaviour, even while admitting that self-assertion, for example by means of their loud voices, is impolite, suggests that they are determined to live in terms of a socio-cultural milieu which allows them greater liberty than in the past.

9.3 CONTRIBUTIONS OF THE STUDY

This study has made significant contributions to the study of intercultural communication by investigating and comparing the discourse of people of different African cultural and linguistic backgrounds, interacting in a lingua franca which is not culturally neutral (were such a language to be possible) and which at the same time is associated with colonisation. My research has brought an African perspective to an area of gender and inter-cultural study that has been little investigated. It has also made a significant contribution to the study of gender and language, specifically gender and impoliteness, and has responded to the need for international discussion on this topic. My work is one of the first studies to investigate impoliteness in a multilingual and multicultural African context, and has identified both judgements and usages of impoliteness, for speakers of different African languages, when using English as means of communication.

In terms of theory, this study has attempted to expand politeness/impoliteness theory to accommodate identity as a major factor that impacts on impoliteness in

multilingual and multicultural situations. In a multicultural and multilingual context, people become more conscious of their individual and group identities. When a threat to these identities is suspected, motivated impoliteness may be employed strategically to protect and prevent subordination. Impoliteness may contribute to the construction and reconstruction of identities, in attempts to prevent subordination and to sustain hegemony where it exists, or where, as in the case of the *Zulu bradas*, it is believed justified. Impoliteness can be used as a communicative tool to achieve a set goal. When people feel their identity is threatened, they become territorial and tend to be aggressive. Such aggression, though it is likely to be perceived as impolite, is not necessarily a deliberate refusal to be polite, but has a more specific purpose of self-assertion.

Identities, according to Louis (2003), are constructed on the basis of various conditions of the self, such as race, nationality, age group, gender, as well as experiences. Many of those characteristics are open to different interpretations. Race, for example, is an important marker of identity in many societies, but in others it is of minimal importance. In the identities constructed here, the above conditions of the self were variously salient. In the case of collective identities, as in the case of *Zulu bradas*, *dilute males* and *diverse males*, members of these groups were shown to place a high priority on being treated with respect and to have difficulty in making allowances for the customs of others, or respecting other groups. Similarly, because identities do change over time, some self-conceptions relating to ideas of independence, confidence, and legitimacy, as occur in the cases of *modern Zulu women* and *decisive females*, may constitute barriers to successful communication with non-members of their group. Such senses of identity and conceptions of others may underpin the deliberate use of aggressive language, or impoliteness.

Social inequalities such as race, gender and class may serve as positive or negative forces in the learning process. The present study has shown that second language users may decide not to prioritise and use the language which it is in their interests to learn as a way of negotiating their preferred identity¹. But under

¹ The findings of this study also support McKay and Wong (1996) and Peirce (1995) in their suggestion that theorists of Second Language Acquisition should consider the identity, in the sense of the preferred image, of language learners for a better understanding of learners'

particular circumstances, others such as the *modern Zulu women* may choose a second language over their first language, believing that the identity for which they aspire is more available to them in through this second language.

9.4 SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH

The data for the present study was collected amongst students of the then University of Natal in 2002. From 2003, major structural changes took place at the university: the institution was merged with the University of Durban Westville and has since been renamed the University of KwaZulu-Natal. The merger brought students and staff from two distinct universities with different academic, administrative and cultural practices together as the new University of KwaZulu-Natal. The diversity and cultural practices of the university have since changed and have probably become more complex. Follow-up research would be useful in the light of these changes. In particular, students and staff of Indian origin have been omitted from my research here, and I should like to suggest that this grouping, which is in itself diverse, would require investigation.

In addition, the Zulu language has since become an official language of the university. Staff and students of the new university will be more likely in the future to speak and to learn Zulu. This new development needs to be investigated in terms of its impact on the diversity that already exists in the university. Given the *diverse males'* and *decisive females'* responses to Zulu in the former University of Natal and the diversity in the student and staff population of the new university, language and communication research should continue to look into ways of improving inter-cultural, cross-cultural and gender communication. The new university without doubt continues to attract more students from a even wider variety of backgrounds, which in turn may exacerbate the already existing tensions inherent in cross- and inter-cultural communication, as described in this thesis. Attempts should be made to investigate the key culture and language related issues involved, in order to ensure that entrants gain a level of awareness concerning appropriate strategies of communication across cultures and across genders, which will help to accommodate students from other cultural

relationship to the social world. As Pierce points out, a learner's ability to speak is also affected by relations of power between speakers.

groups within South Africa, as well as foreign students. I recommend the continuation and extension, for staff as well as students, of existing diversity awareness programmes at the university and in the workplace.

Research into gender issues might move away from purely linguistic perspectives, and might profitably explore gender and diversity in the new University. As I have demonstrated in this study, gender and diversity analysis will provide a greater understanding of how social patterns affect an individual's ability to participate in and contribute to university life. Gender and diversity strongly affect each other: hence the importance of giving consideration to the one in relation to the other for more effective programmes, services, a safer learning environment and enhanced social cohesion.

This thesis gives insights into the current language situation and associated language issues and problems encountered in South African society, particularly in a learning environment as workplace. The diversity of the community at the University of Natal is a microcosm of the larger society. The current move by the South African Government to accelerate skills development in South Africa is encouraging an influx of expatriates from different parts of the world which further increases diversity in the workplace. The current situation in South African workplaces requires study in order to identify the intercultural communication issues which arise, and to help integrate people who differ linguistically, culturally and in terms of gender in the workplace. I should like recommend further studies into diversity in broader South African society, and especially in corporate settings, which may help to bring about a better understanding of the changing dynamics of the workplace in the new South Africa.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX I

Survey of Intercultural Perceptions of Impoliteness

Please complete the following information by putting the appropriate letters in the boxes.

GENDER

M = Male

F = Female

CULTURAL GROUP

A = Black African

C= Coloured

I = Indian

W = White

PLACE OF BIRTH (town and country).....

CITIZENSHIP

SA = South African

NSA = Non-South African

If you are not a South African then for how long have you been living in South Africa?.....

What is your home (mother tongue) language?

What is or what are your main language(s) of communication?.....

What other language or languages do you speak?.....

AGE:..... Years (Please put your age on the dotted line).

Perceptions of Impoliteness

Indicate your response to each of the following situation by an "X" in the columns of your choice. You may choose more than one response where appropriate.

Situations	Rude	Impolite	Polite	Neutral
You are seeking information from somebody who you think should know, but the person responds in the following manner "how should I know Don't you read the notice board?"				
A female student challenges you for disturbing the class.				
A male student in the same class challenges you for disturbing the class.				
A female insists that you allow her to go through the door first.				
You said thank you to person for handing you the stuff you had paid for but received no response such as 'you are welcome, or thank you, or pleasure! etc.				
You are engaged in a conversation with a friend/co student, another friend walks pass without saying hello even though your eyes meet.				
A co- student arrives to a lecture/group discussion late and sits down without apologising				
A student who has not been attending tutorials falsely claims full attendance in order to meet DP requirements				
During a group discussion, some members of the group suddenly begin to speak a language that you don't understand even though they are aware of the fact that not every member of the group understands or speaks the language.				
You ask a person standing in the way to move, the person moves but does not apologize, like saying 'sorry or I'm sorry' etc				
You are busy discussing with a person along the passage when a friend who is passing by sees and interrupts you just to say hello				
You call a department for some information and the person on the other end puts the phone down				

on you				
You are in a lecture/tutorial and the two friends sitting next to you are busy chatting about things outside the lecture/tutorial				
Someone bumps into you and does not apologize				
You ask for direction and before you can finish the person looks away and claims not to know				
In a lecture/group discussion you are whispering something to the person next to you and a co-student in the class ask you to shut up				
You meet someone you know in the passage (lecturer, student or administrator etc) and you want to say 'hello' but the person just smiles and walks pass				
You were required to carry out certain duties, and you made some mistakes and the person in charge shouts at you				
A department owes you some money, when you go for the money you are told "not now you are late for your lecture".				
A fellow student you know well walks pass you without saying hi				

APPENDIX II

Survey of Intercultural Perceptions of Impoliteness

Please complete the following information by putting the appropriate letters in the boxes.

GENDER

M = Male

F = Female

CULTURAL GROUP

A = Black African

C = Coloured

I = Indian

W = White

PLACE OF BIRTH (town and country).....

CITIZENSHIP

SA = South African

NSA = Non-South African

If you are not a South African then for how long have you been living in South Africa?.....

What is your home(mother tongue) language?

What is or what are your main language(s) of communication?.....

What other language or languages do you speak?.....

AGE:*Years*

Please put your age on the dotted line

Perceptions of Impoliteness

How impolite do you find these various instances?

Please respond using the following scale; cross or tick the appropriate box.

4= extremely impolite; 3=very impolite; 2= moderately impolite; 1= mildly impolite; 0= not impolite at all.

Instance	4	3	2	1	0
A. Your cell-phone rings and on the other end the person asks 'who is that'?					
B. You agreed in a group to meet in the library at 8 am but many of the members did not turn up and made no excuse for their absence.					
C. You go up to a classmate to chat and he/she acts as if you're a stranger.					
D. You introduce yourself as from a certain country, and your listener responds by saying things like 'oh that place where people die of HIV/AIDS daily', or 'where women and children are raped daily', or 'where people are dying of hunger' etc.					
E. You are walking along the corridor and you pass two people who are talking loudly to each other.					
F. A friend makes jokes which clearly those around do not like, and yet he/she keeps on doing it.					
G. You always smile at people in the corridor whether you know them or not.....					
H. Most people you smile at don't acknowledge or respond to you.....					
I. So you stop greeting people in this way.					
J. You bump into someone along the corridor and you say 'sorry' but the person ignores you.					

Below you will find 10 examples of behaviour listed. Please rank these from 10 (**most impolite**) through to 1 (**least impolite**), use each number (**10-1**) **once only**, and write it in the box next to the specific example.

There are no correct or incorrect answers; your answers will remain anonymous. I am simply asking to know what you think

Instance	Number
A. Your cell-phone rings and on the other end the person asks 'who is that'?	
B. You agreed in a group to meet in the library at 8 am but many of the members did not turn up and made no excuse for their absence.	
C. You go up to a classmate to chat and he/she acts as if you're a stranger..	
D. You introduce yourself as from a certain country, and your listener responds by saying things like 'oh that place where people die of HIV/AIDS daily', or 'where women and children are raped daily', 'or where people are dying of hunger' etc.	
E. You are walking along the corridor and you pass two people who are talking loudly to each other	
F. A friend makes jokes which clearly those around do not like, and yet he/she keeps on doing it.	
G. You always smile at people in the corridor whether you know them or not.....	
H. Most people you smile at don't acknowledge or respond to you.....	
I. So you stop greeting people in this way.	
J. You bump into someone along the corridor and you say 'sorry' but the person ignores you.	

Check through the instances above once more. Do you find any of these instances to be *rude*, rather than *impolite*? If yes please indicate by ticking the relevant box below. (You may choose as many or as few as you wish)

A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J

APPENDIX III

Focus Group Interview Schedule

1. What is impoliteness?
2. How are students impolite?
3. Are there differences in the way that see students' impolite behaviours?
4. Are there similarities in the way different students are impolite?
5. Are there differences in the ways male and females students are impolite?
6. Are there similarities in the ways male and female students' exhibit impoliteness?
7. How is impoliteness expressed?
8. What are differences between impoliteness and rudeness (follow up question)
9. How do you determine whether an incident is impolite or not?
10. When are you usually impolite?
11. Have you ever been intentionally impolite?
12. What will trigger you to be impolite?
13. How do you see yourself here on campus?
14. How do you want others to see you?
15. Why is it important that others see you that way?