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REAPING THE WHIRLWIND OF CHANGE: EASTERN CAPE WHITE COMMERCIAL FARMERS' DISCOURSES OF DEMOCRACY

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Abstract

This paper deals with an analysis of the discursive accounts of Eastern Cape white commercial farmers on the subject of Democracy. Drawing on the theoretical perspectives of Social Constructionism and Discourse Analysis – which view individuals' accounts of their realities as produced and informed by their particular social and historical context – the paper seeks to provide an analysis of the content of, and rhetorical strategies within the participants' accounts and explanations. Such accounts of the social, historical and political circumstances in which Eastern Cape commercial farmers find themselves are thought to provide valuable insights into the manner in which the process of democratisation has been received by members of the agricultural sector. Data collection was conducted via brief, audio taped, semi-structured interviews. The participants were all white men and women, living in a commercial farming region of the Eastern Cape Province. Responses to the interviews were subjected to the Discourse Analytical procedure advanced by Ian Parker. Analyses reveal that participants are critical of the notion of democracy; utilize specific rhetorical and argumentation strategies; make use of notions and techniques of 'Othering'; and subscribe to a colonial / patriarchal ideology which attempts to idealize pre-democratic South Africa. These findings illustrate what is in many ways still an ongoing political and ideological struggle in the rural regions of the country.

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Introduction

With the first decade of democracy in South Africa drawing to a close, the time is perhaps more than ripe to begin serious and critical evaluations of the extent of the social changes that South Africa has undergone. This endeavour should not only focus on the macro-level of political, historical and economic change, but also needs to pay attention to the micro-level of individuals' perceptions, opinions and actions. The research elaborated upon in this paper is one of a multitude of possible attempts to do just that. This paper describes the results of a discourse analytical study conducted with white commercial farmers in the Eastern Cape province. The study aimed to elicit the farmers' conceptions of, and relationship to, the democratic social transformation that has occurred since 1994. Data was garnered from fifteen male farmers and their spouses in a series of thirteen brief interviews. These interview texts were subject to Ian Parker's Foucaultian-inspired form of discourse analysis in order to identify how this particular strata of agrarian society i) conceptualise the process of change, ii) understand their place as subjects within the new democratic order and finally, iii) what ideological frameworks inform their constructions of self and others. Before discussing the results, it is necessary to provide a brief overview of the methodology employed in this research, in order to clarify both the manner in which the analysis was conducted as well as something of the logic underlying the conclusions that have been drawn.

Methodology

This research draws on a discourse analytic methodology firmly located within a Social Constructionist paradigm. Discourse analysis focuses primarily on texts – arguing that individual accounts of experience, agency and subjectivity are structured by systems of representation, most notably language. In this way, it is argued - somewhat counter-intuitively - that language as a social phenomenon produces and reproduces meaning independently from the intentions of the individual language user (Parker, 1994). As such, our realities and individual subjectivities are constituted and informed by the ways in which we speak them. Or perhaps more accurately, they speak us. It is thus possible to analyse our world and social phenomena as a system of texts (Parker 1994).

The critical question posed by discourse analytical research regards the reproduction of power relations within individual constructions of the social world. Parker (1992: 4-5) states: "Discourses do not simply describe the social world, but categorise it, they bring phenomena into sight". This primacy given to language as a medium through which we construct explanations and understandings of our social realities also means that language becomes that which "constitutes who we are, constructs the positions we occupy, is the medium by which we interact with other people and understand ourselves" (Burman, Kottler, Levett & Parker, 1997: 7). But more than this, discourses – precisely because they are social phenomena – extend beyond subjectivity and individual agency to reproduce existing institutions,

ideologies and power relations through individual accounts (Burman, Kottler, Levett & Parker, 1994). It is this aspect of discourse analysis that Parker so adroitly explicates.

Heavily indebted to Foucault, Parker's method of discourse analysis goes beyond the discussion of the ways in which subjectivity is constructed, and examines the manner in which different discourses function, in collusion or competition, to reproduce particular power relations and ideological positions for its subjects (Parker, 1992). This in turn opens up the analysis to not only examine the dominant ideologies reproduced in talk, but also to the strategies of resistance and the interplay of power relations. These are explicitly considered in this paper.

With this brief discussion of the methodology in mind, it is perhaps appropriate to turn our attention to a brief description of the research process. The question informing this research revolved around the attitudes towards, opinions about, and perceptions of democracy by white commercial farmers in the Eastern Cape. Three basic questions were posed to the interviewees in order to elicit their ideas concerning democracy. These questions centred on: 1) the individuals' definitions of democracy; 2) the impact that democracy had had on their lives; and 3) whether, and how, they thought that democracy was working or not. White farmers discourses of democracy are of analytic interest because of the manner in which agrarian life and labour, in the largely rural Eastern Cape province, sits at the centre of several intersecting vectors of race, class and historically constituted state-supported privilege. Thirteen interviews were conducted in the Emalahleni area (around the former Indwe / Wodehouse districts) these were audiotaped, transcribed and analysed according to Parker's (1992) method of discourse analysis. While it is important to acknowledge the individual vicissitudes as well as regional and class differences of white commercial farmers, a relatively stable and moderately prosperous community inhabits the area in which the research was conducted. So while discourse analysis avoids claims of generalisability, it is anticipated that the discussion of the main findings that follow will resonate with other similar contexts:

Discussion of the findings

Initial expectations on the part of the researchers were that there would be a high degree of homogeneity and convergence in participant's discursive constructions of democracy. Instead there proved to be a fair amount of diversity in these accounts. Cursory analysis of the gathered interview texts showed it would be possible to divide responses and respondents into two broad sets – those who are broadly optimistic and positive about democracy, and those who are generally negative and pessimistic. However when it comes to the various discursive practices employed these two broad sets of responses are by no means mutually exclusive. Indeed, as will be shown, many of the ideological assumptions informing these accounts are strikingly similar. The difference lies in their tenor, their formulation and the variability of the functions to which the discourses are put (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Furthermore while these differences are heuristically explored between the two poles of optimistic versus pessimistic, it is

anticipated that this type of study could in future be augmented by the inclusion of data from other groupings of research respondents, possibly across age cohorts, race or a rural-urban split. Let us now move on to look at the two broad sets of responses that have been identified, beginning with the negative and pessimistic responses.

Democracy: 'It's a hell of a bugger-up'

During the conceptualisation of this research a factor that was anticipated as potentially significant in influencing the articulated discourses was the age of respondents. It was accordingly decided to draw a distinction between older and younger participants in order to evaluate any possible differences in discursive positioning that may be tied to membership of a particular generation. The distinction between older and younger participants was predetermined, somewhat arbitrarily, at the age of 45 years. This decision would seem to be vindicated by the responses to the interview questions, as members of the older generation (i.e. older than 45 years) tended to have a more negative outlook.

1. Liberalism, rights and freedoms

Respondents' definitions of democracy tend to centre on individual rights and freedoms, evoking what Dixon (1997) has identified as a liberal discourse – one that privileges and protects the ideology of the inviolability of individual liberties and rights. The following two extracts from interview transcripts illustrate this:

Extract 1

> I always had it that democracy is when you've got a free country, free vote, free […] you know? That's the way I saw it.

Extract 2

> I think it's people that, you know, have their own rights and can exercise their rights […] you know, that they can feel free to […] in a controlled atmosphere, to be able to speak their mind and be able to do, and be able to achieve things as well. And to be able to receive.

Both of these extracts, as well as other responses to the interview questions reveal a particular conception of the notion of democracy – that of individual rights and freedoms, encompassed and reinforced by a discourse of liberalism. But it is important to remember that liberalism does not stand "apart from any particular moral and political agenda. Rather it is a very particular moral agenda (privileging the individual over the community, the cognitive over the affective, the abstract over the particular)" (Fish 1994: 137-138).

Furthermore, this kind of liberal notion of democracy acts to reify the concept – defining it in terms of idealised end products, tangible outcomes and institutions. O'Malley, (1999), in discussing the results of focus group surveys concerning democracy conducted with black South African participants in 1992, notes that respondents' ideas about democracy also took on this form. O'Malley (1999: 123) explains: "Democracy was widely interpreted as the antonym for apartheid. It encapsulated the opposite of apartheid … Participants did not see democracy as a means, but an end; not as a process, but as a set of goals, accomplishments, results."

As such, democracy was constructed not simply as an 'ethic' that would form the moral basis for the New South African society (in contrast to apartheid South Africa) it was understood in terms of the more tangible social norms and practices that would stem from the adoption of this 'ethic' (O'Malley, 1999). Significantly, this conceptualisation finds symmetry and is echoed in the illocutions of white farmers – a class of citizens often more acutely identified with racialised oppression than other white South Africans.

However, the view of democracy as end result (and the very antithesis of apartheid) is seen from a slightly different perspective, as evident in the following extracts wherein the respondents claim the mantel of victim:

Extract 3

> I see democracy as simply a vice versa of what happened in the past. That's how I see it and "baadjies vir boeties" doesn't work. It's not good for the country; it's not good for the people.

Extract 4

> But I do feel that maybe it's just something that's turned around from the past, from the olden days, from, you know, when the whites were in power. They were suppressing - maybe you can call it, to use a hard word - suppressing the blacks in certain ways. I thought that was wrong. And I do feel that we, alternatively now, as whites are being suppressed …

Extract 5

> I want to say I had a part in apartheid during my life, I might still live that way, but my grandchildren that are running around here didn't have anything to do with it. And they are being punished. So apartheid is, the way I see it, is just something that's been turned around.

2. *Democracy as 'apartheid in reverse'*

This democracy as 'reverse apartheid' discourse, is contrasted with the liberal discourse of democracy as individual rights and freedoms, and is used as a basis for the negative and pessimistic articulations concerning democracy in contemporary South Africa. Thus, respondents rhetorically assert that democracy is not being properly implemented by the new state. Such arguments provide ideological

support for lingering racist attitudes, as respondents argue that they are being discriminated against. This in turn reinforces a discourse of difference, an ‘apartheid discourse’ of race, culture, separateness and irreconcilable difference.

Extract 6

> I see democracy as, let’s say, a country with different ethnic groups of people, that has to hold an election – a fair one – to put a government in office to look after everyone’s interests: minority groups as well as majority groups. Not just force things down people’s throats – whether it’s a language that you have to speak or, uh, something that you have to do. In other words, each group is entitled to their own – what do you call it? – culture, or way of living, right?

Extract 7

> I’d like to phone in on these phone-in programmes, because I say that Afrikaans has been given the right to run their own radio, and they can do what they like and they can retain their own culture. We in the English, we are subjected to blacks running the radio stations. They don’t speak clear English like we speak English […] you know, those sorts of things worry me because I feel in time that’s going to break down […] I say if it’s got to be like that, sure, give them their own stations, let them run their own programmes as they are running now. Let us whites also have something that retains our culture.

All of the interviewees frame their responses in rigid terms of ‘us’ (whites and farmers) versus ‘them’ (blacks and government). A quotidian act of racial solidarity with the white male researcher, this is also a classic example of the use of discourses of Other (Riggins, 1997) which are often (if not always) to be found at the basis of prejudice and racism. Again, bearing in mind the age and socio-cultural context of the respondents, these utterances are not too surprising.

3. Things are worse for farmers

Another element of the respondents’ pessimism appears to derive from the fact that farmers draw on a discourse of being systematically disadvantaged and worse off. Interviewees’ arguments make use of concrete illustrations to ‘prove’ just how much worse off they are now, as opposed to the past. At the same time however there is a reticence around how privileged they were in the past. For the history of twentieth century South African commercial agriculture is the history of state intervention and support (cf. Jeeves & Crush: 1997). This attitude reflects what King (2001) refers to as ‘dysconscious racism’. King (2001: 296) argues that “dysconsciousness is an uncritical habit of mind that justifies inequity and exploitation by accepting the existing order of things as a given.” In this way, dysconscious racism “tacitly accepts dominant white norms and privileges,” (King, 2001, p 297). As such, respondents do not view democratic changes as an attempt to redress past inequality, but instead see them as an assault upon

the uncritically accepted 'norms' that were for a long time the cornerstone of landed white South African society.

Rhetorical points raised by these kind of arguments include: the collapse of infrastructure; theft of stock; problems with safety and security; labour laws; affirmative action; lack of subsidies; importing of foreign agricultural produce; increased running costs and decreased demand for produce. This litany of localized concerns do of course on the small scale of subjective reality have a degree of validity to them, as they illustrate some of the failures of government – particularly at provincial level – to maintain infrastructure and basic services. Notwithstanding their factual accuracy, it is less the arguments themselves than the ideological uses to which these arguments are deployed that are of analytic interest here.

Affirmative action and employment equity is seen as being discriminatory – again calling upon the 'reverse apartheid' discourse. Labour laws are similarly viewed as legislation that has been 'forced' upon a sector of the population unable (rather than unwilling) to comply, thereby 'showing up' the government as being undemocratic and prejudicial to white agrarian interests. This has resulted in farmers having to 'thin out' their labour force, increasing unemployment, which in turn increases crime. The respondents articulate a keen sense of the social ecology of their locality wherein crime becomes the eventual by-product of the dismantling of white privilege. Similarly the new wage system for farm workers is described as exacerbating racial tension, precisely due to retrenchments. However possibly the largest and most contentious issue for respondents is that of land restitution.

Extract 8

> The blacks believe it's their right to take back, but I mean, who paid for these farms? We've all worked very hard; we're still working hard just to keep our heads above water. So we've taken nothing from nobody. We paid for what we've got. So I mean, it's not democratic to take another person's life, it's not democratic to want to take another person's place.

Extract 9

> The Land Affairs [department] are interested in buying up the ground and certain pockets of land have gone, uh, for that reason. You know, they are getting their rights […] You know, unfortunately we are in the middle of this whole process and at this stage I can't see that, you know, there's going to be too much positive coming out of it. Because the people that have been given, allocated the land are not equipped to produce to make it viable. And the money that they're getting is money lost.

Land reform threatens their assets and is seen as a waste of money in that the black peasantry are not considered able to farm commercially. Furthermore the reform process is not being done 'efficiently'. This position draws strongly on liberal discourse concerning the sanctity of individual property. It is very

similar to the kind of arguments and exclusionary discursive practices identified by Dixon (1997) in his study of the Hout Bay residents' responses to the emergence of informal settlements in close proximity to their homes. Individuals are accorded the 'inviolable' right to private property by the state, yet the very same state is threatening the sanctity of this property and this right (Dixon, 1997). The historical irony of these illocutions is that a viable class of back farmers were marginalized and proliterianlised by a complex web of legislation and social practice in the early twentieth century expansion of racialised agrarian capitalism (cf. Beinart, Delius and Trapido: 1986; Bundy: 1979).

In order to understand the nature of this discursive dilemma, respondents draw upon the 'democracy as reverse apartheid' discourse, as well as racist ideology to construct these events as unjust, and undemocratic persecution of white farmers. This is further supported by what Van Dijk (1987: 91) characterises as "one of the most stereotypical moves used in prejudiced talk … which usually contains a general denial of (one's own) negative opinions about ethnic groups, followed by a negative opinion." This apparent denial and negation of their racist attitudes serves (at least in the minds of the interviewees) to justify their indignation at their perceived persecution.

Extract 10

> I'm of the old school, so certainly change has been very difficult to accept […] Because you know we've grown up that way. It's unfortunate that we did grow up that way. We were brainwashed too, to a certain extent. To a large degree, you know, the communities that we lived in, the people that we've grown up with, um, it's just been like that. So I don't feel I've got myself to blame for that […] I've never been a hard-liner, I've never been a right-winger or any of that type of thing, but certainly as things are, sometimes I get very anti- … anti-black. And I can tell you that straight because it's, you know, there are certain things that are just not acceptable, and it's always – unfortunately when there are unacceptable things – it revolves around the blacks.

Extract 11

> Look, I have nothing against that guy that's black, or this guy that's white, and this guy that's pink, and that guy that's purple. For me it's about stability.

4. The old days were better

There is a wistful longing for the old days in which things were 'better': a colonial farming lifestyle, with a subservient and cheap workforce, favourable state interventions and the benevolent, patriarchal farmer. This discursive position is argued to be the corollary to Fanon's idea of the oppressed consciousness of the colonised. It is the oppressive consciousness of the coloniser. "The colonisation of the mind is manifested in a manner in which a people's history is denied, and they are made to feel inferior and

incapable of challenging the colonial power," (Ahluwalia, 2001: 41). In the same way, the consciousness of the oppressor must be shaped by the colonial discourse to justify and maintain white privilege and liberty whilst denying black history, rights and humanity. Ahluwalia (2001: 40-41) citing Fanon, argues, "A necessary part of colonialism is that the colonisers problematise the culture and the very being of the colonised, and the latter come to accept the 'supremacy of the white man's values.'" And just as the colonised needs to be liberated from this, so does the coloniser.

However, this liberation of the consciousness of the past oppressor – embodied in this case by the white farmer – does not seem to have happened, thereby giving credence to King's (2001) ideas concerning dysconscious racism. For recourse to a liberal discourse about rights and freedoms, as Dixon (1997) suggests, does not preclude the possibility of collusion with a discourse of racial segregation and superiority. This 'colonial discourse' and nostalgic construction of the past can be clearly discerned in the following extracts:

Extract 12

> Ag, I mean in the olden days – when I was younger – when your people used to come to you, you used to help them, you used to … and you could chat to one another and … but now you can't. They're sort of so demanding […] And of course I believe in the old days, the people, the people on the farms – even if they didn't get much pay – they had a much better life.

Extract 13

> Earlier times, the worker got less as salary, but he got more in the form of food, clothes, shoes, housing, all those things. All those things. If one of my people got sick, I took my vehicle and drove him in […] Through the years you build up a relationship with them. This servant that works here […] she must have come to work here in '86. She's seen my sons grow up. Now, I mean, if there was a bad relationship between us, she wouldn't have stayed.

Extract 14

> I had families here that had a lot of other people living with them, and which had young children. They would come on a Saturday and sweep the yard, at no 'moerse' charge. The children got sweets and cooldrink. And I didn't have to call them to come and do it – they did it because they wanted to, if they could, you know, get cooldrink, or get sweets. Those type of things. Now I'm not allowed to use them.

5. Things are worse for the people, too

A related argument amongst those farmers who view democracy negatively is their argument that 'the people' themselves are also worse off. Respondents argue that many of the 'democratic' reforms have

impacted negatively on the rural poor, who make up their workforce. The same instances used to argue that they, as farmers, are worse off, these are cited as evidence here. Labour laws supposedly make it impossible to provide employment for as many people as used to be possible in the past. The farm wages legislation is blamed as the cause for farmers having to retrench workers, thereby increasing rural unemployment, and crime. The manner of implementation of land reform – over and above the supposed black inability to farm productively – is also said to make it extremely difficult for black farmers to produce anything other than subsistence needs, to the detriment of both the people and the productive capacity of the land.

While critical questions can be posed of the plight of the rural poor in the new political dispensation, the legitimacy of those formulating the question needs to be called into question. It is difficult to conclude that this is not white agrarian self-interest wrapped up as philanthropy. Although possibly motivated by varying degrees of benign concern for the rural subaltern, this argument is used to perform certain functions. It can be asked are the farmers speaking for the marginalized rural poor, or is this merely discursive strategy for articulating and masking their racist critiques of democracy? If the latter, then the argument that the people are worse of is put to the ideological use of 'proving' that the indigenous populace cannot govern, as well as to 'show' the government up as inefficient, uncaring and unresponsive. To do this, use is made of examples of what are perceived to be poor (and unfair) democratic government by blacks.

Extract 15

> I get the impression they want to use legislation to drive a wedge between the farmer and his workers […] the impression I get is that the people aren't happy with these salaries. And you also can't blame the farmer if he has thirty labourers – like this farm of ours – where you get something in, in the summer, but in he winter have to plough it in to the livestock to get them through. Can you work out what it costs that farmer to pay those workers? […] and who's going to suffer? Not just the people – the farmer too. The reason being, if I'm hungry I'm going to steal

Extract 16

> If I could ask the government … I just can't understand how they would want to encourage unemployment.

Extract 17

> If it's not going to go Zimbabwe's way, then it'll always be a democracy. But I mean, hey, Zimbabwe – if we're going to be sympathetic towards Zimbabwe, then we're not democratic. So then I'm afraid … then we're just totally autocratic. And we don't want to be that way, certainly.

Extract 18

> We are having to give up certain things that, I mean, we never used to have to give up and, uh, the blacks that have bought farms, that are also employing labour, are not subjected to the same laws. And to me that's not democracy. And they're not going to force those black guys to comply, I can guarantee you right now they won't […] but they will force us […] certainly they're going to give us a hard time.

Whilst critique of a government that is not delivering is legitimate within a democratic society – these kinds of arguments are used as 'evidence' for specifically black governmental incompetence. This construction is then contrasted with the idealised apartheid era in the same kind of colonial discourse characterised by a 'wistful longing' for a better past.

Extract 19

> We are actually worse off now than what we were […] I think it's like that for everybody.

Democracy: 'It should have happened a hundred years ago'

In contrast to the reactionary pessimism of the first group of respondents, the majority of the younger participants (along with a few older ones) can be characterised as articulating what might appear to be diametrically opposed, forward-thinking optimism. For these farmers, the general outlook is much more positive, although as will be suggested, some of their critiques are based in similar discourse and ideology.

1. ***Democracy is about rights and freedom*.**

Once again, definitions of democracy revolve around individual rights and freedoms, and as previously stated, democracy is positioned by these respondents as an end product of change rather than a means by which it can be achieved (O'Malley, 1999). Therefore, democracy is seen to work in an idealistic sense. There is however the admission of some discrepancy in the manner in which democracy is being implemented (see Extract 23).

Extract 20

> Anyone is free to voice their own opinions, to live their life the way that they wish to, to express themselves the way they wish to, to practice their religion the way they wish to, all within a safe, structured country with a reasonably good government.

Extract 21

> Democracy is freedom to live a person's life within the laws of the country. You know, government for the people by the people. No oppression. In whichever country you live in, which is a democracy, there is no oppression of one group by another. It means equality […] We're all equal; everyone living in a democracy is equal in terms of dignity. It's about human dignity.

Extract 22

> Well I mean a lot of changes have come from the old regime to the new regime. But, uh, it should have happened a hundred years ago, that's what […] If it happened a hundred years ago, we'd be ten times better off now. Because we're at the difficult stage at the moment and I say the word 'apartheid' should have never been there.

Extract 23

> But democracy is not just about rights. It's a word that is supposed to mean freedom, but that freedom doesn't really exist. So it's not just rights, it's more of an attitude, like respect. Respect for people equally – skin colour doesn't matter.

As can be seen from the above extracts, there is a general agreement with the 'principles' of democracy as well as the implicit recognition that Apartheid was morally wrong. With these responses drawing heavily on the idea of rights, equality and freedom, it is easy to see that their illocution make use of a discourse of liberalism as described by Dixon (1997). What is more – and this is what sets this group of responses apart from the former one (see extract 19) – this liberal discourse recognises the need for political and social change to have occurred, and does not make use of the notion of individual rights to argue for the protection of white privilege.

Extract 24

> I've always been free and had privileges. The changes in the country have meant having to recognise that all people have the right to these privileges and to equality. Most people now have got access to what I've had all along and have taken for granted. For many, democracy has come too late. But it has meant that I've had to take notice of other people as equals. It also means that I have had to share the privileges I've had.

Extract 25

> Yes, but you see, now, we were spoiled in the past. Because when you walked in as a white, you just expected to get a job, and you got the job. Now things have changed, and we've got to adjust to that, that's all. And make the best of it. If you can't get this job, go look for something else, and that's the way it is.

2. ***Dysfunctional democracy***.

Criticisms of democracy revolve around the collapse of infrastructure, safety and security, and a sort of generalised anxiety concerning the political future of the country. No mention is made in these responses about the worsening plight of farmers or a deliberate reversal of apartheid discrimination. Instead, these criticisms of the government and of the processes of change seem to be premised upon the idea of farmers being able to maintain the standard of life that they have become accustomed to – again drawing upon liberal ideals. As long as this standard of life is not substantively threatened, respondents do not express much disquiet regarding democracy and change. This is coupled with a general sense of optimism – such that the current 'bad' situations are not viewed as an unending downward spiral, but merely as part of an ongoing transitional period, more akin to O'Malley's (1999) conception of democracy as a 'process'.

Extract 26

Well I suppose things must go down before going up.

Extract 27

It's going to take time. Financially, the infrastructure has fallen to pieces, but I think in time it will build up again, because after the Boer war it was the same. There was no infrastructure, and it was built up again. So I see a future in the country. Uh, we're not used to this, as being white, we're not used to it … it's difficult for us to accept it.

Extract 28

In this country? Do you think democracy has been working?

Yes, not one hundred percent. I don't think democracy works one hundred percent anywhere …

Why not?

Well not everyone follows all the rules and, um, I don't think many people even know what are and … But I think it has to a certain extent worked more successfully here than in most places that change from different regimes to democracy. It's been one of the more successful changeovers – has been here.

Extract 29

I think it's definitely working. That's why I say it should have happened a hundred years ago, not now. But it should have happened. Definitely, it had to come […] I mean it's going to improve year by year – it's going to improve.

3. ***'They' just need to adjust***

However, in trying to account for the discrepancies between the ideal of democracy, as constituted by a 'liberal discourse', and the realities of poor governance and service delivery in the province, racialised

discourse are drawn upon to explain the transition, and the problems currently being experienced. However, this racist discourse differs from the 'apartheid' and 'colonial' discourses discussed above in that it does not actively advocate a return to a 'better' past where whites were in control. Instead, it operates on a more subtle level by implicitly reaffirming white superiority in terms of intellect and governmental aptitude. This subtle racism in the discourse indicates the manner in which an ideology of white superiority and black inferiority has adapted to the changes that have occurred in post-apartheid South African society, and still informs white explanations and constructions of the black Other. Whillock & Slayden (1995: xi) argue: "As routine expressions of hate are pushed out of public discourse, they re-emerge in more subtle and less newsworthy ways." What this means is that even though racism has become taboo, racist ideology is still at the root of many seemingly innocuous and well-meaning attempts by whites to account for societal change. An example of this is reflected in the idea that blacks are unable to cope with being in power and are therefore susceptible to corruption, or that they are still learning how to govern and need whites to help them (see Extract 31). Such fundamentally ideological arguments serve to maintain the superiority of whites.

Extract 30

> Yes it works, the ideal of democracy. It has to work. It must work. But it doesn't if people seek their own gain. Maybe democracy can't work in practice if people become corrupt and greedy. It doesn't work when people only use it to look after themselves […] I don't think democracy is working in South Africa. The new regime oppresses others as well. I don't really know why …perhaps it's all the change that has taken place; all the sudden 'muchness' – perhaps they can't handle it.

Extract 31

> Sometimes I think they don't really know how to handle the situation, quite at the moment. They must still adjust to it. And that's the excuse that you give them. They've got a long way to go […] And if more whites just want to help them to adjust it would go better. But some are still against democracy, so they're not willing to help and, you know, tell them "look, we think if you do this" … or "we think if you do that" … They want to tell them "look, you *must* do that" still, and then they must do that. And you know they were so far behind in the past, now they're standing up to it, I think. And then they just think "well, we're going to do it our way".

4. *The future looks bright*.

Significantly, respondents are very sanguine about the future of the next generation, feeling that children growing up in the democratic society will be more tolerant and accepting of each other. This is contrasted with respondents' own upbringing and relative difficulty in dealing with change. It is interesting to note that this notion might even be vindicated simply by looking at the age characteristics of the two different

sets of respondents – the older respondents generally being more negative about democracy and finding it harder to cope, ideologically, with change than the younger ones.

Extract 32

> I'm quite excited for my children's future, for their school career, because it will be radically different from my own, for various reasons. And I can already see the change in my own children from the way I grew up, or was brought up.

Extract 33

> For us, I mean, it's difficult to cope with what's going on. But for the little ones, for the kids – they're growing up with it now, so for them it's going to be easier.

Conclusions:

To conclude, let us conduct a brief review of the findings of the research. Responses to the interview questions were divided into two broad categories, each making distinctive use of different discourses to construct the subjects in a particular way and each subtly promoting a particular ideological stance towards democracy.

The first of these two categories used the negative or pessimistic group of discursive practices. Responses falling under this category tend to adopt a static and liberal discourse when defining the concept of democracy, seeing it primarily as an issue of sovereign individual rights and privileges, and arguing for the maintenance of these rights. This discourse forms the basis for constructing a negative and racist account of democracy in South Africa. The idea of individual rights and freedoms is used to highlight the 'skewed' manner in which respondents feel democracy has been implemented, providing them with a justification for feeling aggrieved at the erosion of their former political and, to a lesser extent, economic status. As such it is used to construct an account of democracy as 'reverse apartheid' in which the subjects (i.e. white farmers) are positioned as the victims. Stereotypical strategies of prejudicial talk (Van Dijk, 1987) are utilised in an attempt to disavow the subjects' racism and to construct their 'plight' as unjust and unwarranted.

Together with this liberal notion of democracy, and the idea that South African democracy is 'reverse apartheid', respondents in this category draw upon an 'apartheid' discourse of racial and cultural distinctiveness and separateness to construct a notion of how they would like democracy to function. This idealised notion of separateness, together with the attempted disavowal of their own racism contributes toward a discourse of 'dysconscious racism' (King, 2001) characterises what this paper posits as a corollary of Fanon's 'consciousness of the colonised' – the consciousness of the coloniser: a discursive and ideological 'relic' of the old structure of South African society that is still being circulated. This

discursive practice is played out in talk that expresses a wistful longing for a genteel colonial past in the rural areas.

Standing in contrast to this is the second category, which encapsulates the positive or optimistic group of discursive practices. Responses in this category tend to adopt a more flexible version of the liberal discourse of democracy, seeing it as both an end product of individual rights and privileges, as well as a 'process' of achieving those ends. In this way, liberal discourse is not used to argue for the maintenance of the privileged position of a particular group. Instead, there is recognition of the rights of all to these privileges.

Criticisms of the implementation of democracy do not call up images of past colonial or apartheid 'glory', but instead make use of a more subtle racist discourse based on the idea of competence and ability. Blacks are not seen as able to govern properly and competently without the aid of whites, and are constructed as easily corruptible by power. The way in which it is articulated, and the manner in which it positions its white speakers is far more nuanced than the openly racist discourses of the former category. In this way, its speakers are able to ideologically maintain their superiority without blatantly (or even consciously) arguing for a return to political and economic privilege.

This, in turn, enables respondents within this second group of discourses to adopt a more optimistic and forward-looking discourse about democracy and change in South Africa, and the future political and economic development of the country, in which respondents construct themselves as individuals committed to sharing the country and political power according to the ideals of democracy.

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