

Globalisation and New identities:

A view from the middle

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Edited by
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First published in 2006 by Jacana Media (Pty) Ltd.
10 Orange Street
Sunnyside, 2092
Johannesburg
South Africa

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ISBN 1-77009-239-0
978-1-77009-239-6

Cover design by ????????????????

Printed by ??????????????????
Set in Bembo 11/13

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Acknowledgements

THIS BOOK AROSE out of a project funded by South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF). Indeed, it would not have been possible without the NRF's support, which included bursaries for the students who participated. We are immensely grateful for this assistance.

Research was undertaken by staff and students associated with the Rand Afrikaans University (RAU), which, in 2005, joined another institution to become the University of Johannesburg (UJ). The RAU/UJ provided general administrative support, salaries, bursaries, and some fieldwork expenses. We are much obliged to the university for its backing, and, in particular, to Prof. Derek van der Merwe, the deputy vice-chancellor responsible for research, who provided much encouragement. We are also indebted to colleagues in the Sociology Department and participants in the Sociology seminar for their advice, intellectual stimulation and solidarity. RAU/UJ, and especially our department, has provided a highly congenial environment in which to engage in research.

This has been a large, collective project, in which all participants have benefited greatly from taking part in workshops, seminars, reading groups, lectures, supervision sessions and informal discussions. Some people are still undertaking research, others are completing papers and dissertations and a few have fallen by the wayside. Everyone involved in the project has given something and we would like to thank them all. In addition to those comrades whose work appears in this collection, these are: Prof. Louis Grundlingh, Lungelo Sikakane, Tlou Setumu, Guy Slingsby, Nicolene Mashigo, Cecilia Nkoko, Matodzi Silidi, Richard Plaatjie, Marlize van As, Taryn Hyde, Morris Tlaka, Maria Matee, Iain Milne, Carina Krogh, Keke Motseke.

In the last few stages of editing this book, when time pressures were at their greatest, we called upon a number of people who offered their help without hesitation. Maritha Marneweck compiled the bibliography, and Caroline O'Reilly and Sandra Jane Roberts sacrificed several hours to read through and comment on the proofs. We are sincerely grateful for their enthusiasm and assistance.

We have been fortunate in having had inputs from a number of senior scholars. These include Profs Michael Burawoy, Sujata Patel, Thomas Blom-Hansen and Gillian Hart. Thanks to all of them.

In the course of the project we were deeply saddened by the loss of one of our colleagues in a tragic car accident. This book is dedicated to him, the late Lungelo Sikakane.

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Chapter One

Globalisation and New Social Identities: A Jig-saw Puzzle from Johannesburg

Peter Alexander



South Africa (showing relevant cities, provinces and neighbouring countries)

IN JOHANNESBURG, THERE is a chain of clothes stores called iDENTiTY. Aimed at teens and twenty-somethings, women and men, black and white, it has signs over its changing rooms that read: 'Change Your Identity Here.' Back in 1998, before Thabo Mbeki had become president, he told South Africa's parliament that the country was 'divided . . . into two nations, the one black and the other white.' Here are two pictures of social identity in contemporary South Africa. The first represents something fleeting, youthful and driven by consumer choice (though the store also presents a very conservative view of 'masculine' and 'feminine'). The second symbolises something fixed, related to old identities and underpinned, as Mbeki explained, by divergent levels of poverty and privilege. Which of the two, if either, better captures the dynamics of life in the first decade of the twenty-first century?¹

This juxtaposition is too stark perhaps, but in nuanced forms it is reflected in scholarly debate. Thus, for instance, Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael (2000: 1-21) reject those understandings of South African society – which they regard as dominant – that 'over-determined the political' and exaggerated the significance of identities related to class and, especially, race-based resistance. Advocating the value of cultural studies, they ask us to focus on 'everyday life' and 'transient' forms of culture, and their edited collection contains chapters on topics like soap opera, hip-hop graffiti art and hair styling. By contrast, Abebe

¹ Earlier versions of this paper were presented to the University of Johannesburg and University of Pretoria sociology seminars, the Centre for Civil Society at the University of KwaZulu Natal, and the Wits Institute for Social and Economic Research. I am grateful for all comments received, especially those from Abebe Zegeye and Devan Pillay.

Zegeye's edited collection (2001: especially 1 and 333–45) maintains a primary concern with political identity, providing essays on, for instance, Afrikaner nationalism and the meaning of 'coloured'. Recognising that social identities are fluid, and drawing on South Africa's new constitution, he argues for depoliticisation of ethnicity, and for a democratic nationalism that recognises the benefits of racial, religious and linguistic diversity. If the strength of the first approach is its analysis of popular innovation, and that of the second is its interest in political possibilities, the weakness of both is their inability to converse with each other. We are left with culture that lacks political relevance and a politics that lacks roots in everyday experience.

Our contention is that a broad sociological outlook can assist in overcoming this limitation. In attempting to develop this perspective we have investigated what we termed 'new' identities. Social scientists have sometimes distinguished between nominal identity (its name) and the content of an identity (i.e. what it means in terms of experience) (see Barth 1969 and Jenkins 1996). So, for instance, in early twentieth-century South Africa a 'worker' was always a white man, but by the last quarter of the century the concept implied somebody black (not necessarily male). The nominal identity remained the same, but the content had changed. When we speak of 'new', we are concerned with qualitative changes in content as well as the emergence of novel nominal identities. Our interest in new South African identities is shared by Simon Bekker *et al.* (2000), who highlight the importance of local identifications for South African politics. In this collection the authors roam more widely, focusing on a new AIDS identity, for example, as well as important aspects of class, gender, generation, and some of the cultural concerns raised by Nuttall and Michael.

Our particular sociological approach adds a third dimension of analysis to that of culture and politics. This might be regarded as socio-economic, and comes from the attention we have given to 'globalisation'. During the 1990s, globalisation was conceived as 'time-space compression' (Harvey 1989) and 'intensification of worldwide social relations' (Giddens 1990: 64); the focus was on, in particular, an integrated 'world economy' (Harris 1983) and an 'information technology revolution' (Castells 1997: 1); and controversy divided 'radicals' and 'sceptics' (Giddens 1999, and see Hirst & Thompson). These were all aspects of, as David Renton (2003: 223) put it, the 'horizontal' axis of globalisation. In the new century, debate shifted towards its 'vertical' facet, often termed *neo-liberal* globalisation. For Renton, 'the distinctiveness [of globalisation] is not that it intrudes widely [but] that it intrudes deeply, intensifying work, cutting the welfare state, privatising

space and services, and expanding inequalities. Noam Chomsky (2000: 14) regards this vertical globalisation as Phase Two of post-war capitalism. Dating its onset to the early 1970s, he argues that it was 'designed to unravel . . . [the] social democratic measures [of Phase One]'. In a similar vein, Doreen Massey (1999: 7) describes the phenomenon as 'a project maintained by . . . a discourse of inevitability, which precisely serves to hide the agencies and the interests which are producing it.' Contributors to this volume have been strongly influenced by this second, vertical, understanding of globalisation (see Alexander 2001), but they have not ignored earlier, horizontal perceptions.

This introductory essay proposes that contemporary academic deliberations on identity and on globalisation are reflections of and attempts to grapple with the same phenomenon, sometimes understood as a shift to a post-modern world. The term 'post-modern' is used here to distinguish a condition, not a theory (see Harvey 1989; Giddens 1990: 149–50; Hall 1991a: 32; Burawoy 2000; Lewellen 2002: 19–23). As an approach to theory, post-modernism has been characterised by a rejection of meta-narrative, making it unlikely that it would link an interest in identity to understandings of globalisation. Contrariwise, in focusing on the big picture, analysts of globalisation have generally ignored issues of social identity. I wish to suggest, firstly, that the post-modern condition was an outcome of the massive social conflicts that marked the early-1970s. In South Africa, key features of this broader phenomenon were postponed until after the defeat of apartheid. The second suggestion is that, associated with the rise of an international mass movement against neo-liberal globalisation, we may be witnessing the development of a post post-modern condition. In South Africa, as elsewhere, this is providing fertile ground for the construction of, *pace* Manuel Castells (1997: 8), new 'project identities'.

The metaphor of a jig-saw puzzle has been used to introduce this collection and present my argument. Unfortunately this particular puzzle is like some that I had as a child. The box that it came with has been lost, so there is no picture to guide us, and it is likely that there are missing pieces.

GATHERING THE PIECES

The chapters in this book are all based on research that was conducted as part of a project funded by South Africa's National Research Foundation (NRF). The motivation for our original proposal was partly intellectual curiosity, but it was also partly opportunism. One strength of the NRF system is that bursaries are provided for post-graduate students

who participate in its projects. Since these students are expected to write dissertations on issues related to the larger topic, we wanted a theme that was broad enough to provide scope for students, as well as staff, to conceive and design their own mini-projects. The hope was that each participant would benefit from discussions with a group of people considering similar problems, and that over time some generalisations might evolve. We called the project Globalisation and New Social Identities, GANSI for short, and before long the group had a nominal identity – we were the Gansians!

Altogether there were 31 Gansians (plus twelve junior students who received NRF assistantships as part of the project). There were various cross-cutting identities. Being an academic project, status was important: we included eight staff, two doctoral students and 21 master's students. Five of the chapters that follow were written by academics (Marlize Rabe, Carina van Rooyen, Meera Ichharam, Chris Bolsmann and Marcelle Dawson), none of whom had doctorates, one was by a doctoral student (Ndanduleni Nthambeleni), and six were written by master's students (Kurai Masenyama, Sandra Roberts, Nina Lewin, Zahraa McDonald, Maritha Marneweck and Lucert Nkuna). Using South African government classifications, three contributors to the volume would be regarded as black African (Nthambeleni, Masenyama and Nkuna), two coloured (Dawson and McDonald), one Indian (Ichharam), and the rest white. Three contributors were born outside South Africa (Bolsmann, Masenyama and myself), two are from Limpopo (Nthambeleni and Nkuna), one from KwaZulu Natal (KZN) (Marneweck), one from the Northern Cape (McDonald), and the balance from Gauteng. Four learned Afrikaans as their first language (Rabe, van Rooyen, McDonald and Marneweck), one Sotho (Nthambeleni), one Shona (Masenyama), one Tsonga (Nkuna), and the remainder English. Only four are men (Bolsmann, Masenyama, Nthambeleni and myself). At the time of completing the papers, excluding myself (aged 50), the mean age of the group was only 29 years. All contributors are sociologists (though van Rooyen teaches and researches in Development Studies). These details are given to demonstrate both the wide range of the contributors' social backgrounds and also some potential biases.

Michael Burawoy, and particularly *Global Ethnography*, which included chapters by nine of his of Berkeley doctoral students, had a profound influence. Our intention was to use his extended case method, with researchers first extending themselves into the world of the participant, secondly extending observations over time and space, thirdly extending from micro processes to macro forces, and finally extending

theory (Burawoy 2000: 26–28). But we are a bad advertisement for this approach. Few people, if any, have Burawoy's expertise as an ethnographer or his talent as a supervisor, and we lacked the resources to undertake the kind of detailed fieldwork, with its emphasis on observation, that was employed by his students. Nevertheless, thinking about this method assisted us in a number of ways. First, we did not approach our fieldwork with preconceived notions about looking for particular identities – race, gender or whatever – but, instead, tried to develop interpretations based on lived experience and subjective explanations. Secondly, we were conscious that our cases were neither bounded nor representative, but rather regarded them as vantage points from which to gain a view of complex phenomena. Thirdly, and this was especially important for a study looking at how globalisation shaped identity (and, possibly, was shaped by it), we tried to think about how identities within a particular setting might have changed between a time in the past, T1, and the present, T2. Fourthly, we began to think about linkages between the various mini-projects, and our interpretations were influenced both by this and by reading-group discussions. Fifthly, we worried about the theoretical implications of all this.

However, it was never our intention to be literal followers of *Global Ethnography*. In particular, we felt there was a place for comparative research (as there was for both Burawoy himself and Max Gluckman, the originator of the approach). The chapters by Ichharam and Bolsmann are enriched by fieldwork undertaken in, respectively, India and Germany, as well as South Africa. Moreover, whilst the method is essentially qualitative in character, we could not see why judicious use of quantitative research should be prohibited, and the chapter by Nkuna includes some survey data. In practical terms, researchers chose their own specific questions and sites. This took advantage of existing knowledge, enthusiasms and eccentricities, but has led to some distortion. In particular, partly because of costs, most of the empirical data in this collection comes from Gauteng, the province in which all the researchers were living, though work was also conducted in KZN, the Eastern Cape and North West.² Also, taken as a whole, the chapters give inadequate attention to certain kinds of identity – notably nation and race – and later I make some attempt to address this deficiency. The pieces in our puzzle are not only the ones that come from our recent research.

The project was developed, and our Gansi identity maintained, through a series of workshops. In addition to thinking through problems on our own, we unashamedly twisted the arms of visiting scholars from

² For an insightful and empirically-grounded comparison of identities in Cape Town and Johannesburg, see Bekker & Leildé 2005.

whom we could learn. Burawoy provided inspirational support on two separate occasions and we received invaluable inputs from Gillian Hart, Thomas Hansen and Sujata Patel. We also ran a reading group, which, for me, was one of the most stimulating intellectual experiences ever. Debates were frequently continued, extended and concretised by means of email discussions within the group. The content of GANSI – its original research, sparking of new ideas and committed camaraderie – has been pleasurable and sometimes exciting. This introduction is a product of this collective endeavour.

CLEARING THE TABLE

In order to put together a jig-saw puzzle one needs a flat space, and for me this was usually a table. Before proceeding, we need to clear some theoretical space and provide a level surface upon which to assemble our pieces. One possible starting point for such an exercise would be Frederic Jameson's (1984) attempt to relate late capitalism, specifically multinational capital, to post-modern culture, but his use of economic theory was shaky and his interest was mainly in art rather than identity (see also Callinicos 1989). David Harvey (1989), with his account of the shift from Fordism to flexible-accumulation and the associated crises of the late 1960s and early 1970s, provided a firmer socio-economic foundation, but, for our purposes, his primary focus on urban design and lack of concern with social identity once again limits his utility.

In specifically addressing globalisation and new identities, Stuart Hall (1991a, 1991b) provides a more fertile point of departure. Like Harvey, he too suggested that there was a significant 'break' in the character of world culture during the late 1960s and early 1970s, describing this as a shift from English-dominated national identities to a predominantly-American, global mass culture. Once again, this is associated with the rise of flexible accumulation. Also referring to this economic dimension as *globalisation*, Hall notes such changes as the opening of global commodity and financial markets, international integration of manufacturing output and relocation of much industrial production, both to third world countries and in the form of sub-contracting in the first world. In addition, he proposes that the continuing migration of colonial subjects into former imperial heartlands and increasing international interdependence, especially reduced national sovereignty through participation in supranational institutions such as the European Common Market, played their part in the creation of a new 'global post-modern' era (Hall 1991a: 23-27).

These changes led, Hall argued, to the breaking-up of social

identities. At the top of US and British society there were two voices: that of the old nationalisms and moralisms, and that of the new globalisers (Rupert Murdoch for example). Then there was the fragmentation of work, the mass migrations, and a marketing-led celebration of diversity that played on the emergence of previously marginalised groupings as well as more frequent international travel. But this whole process was highly uneven, with much of humanity – particularly in the poorer countries, but also in those that were richer – marginalised by the global post-modern (Hall 1991a: 30-34). This produced 'a return to the local', a turn to what Hall defines as ethnicity, which could be exclusivist and even dangerous, but could also pave the way for a new 'counter-politics of the local' based on 'an identity that is constructed through things which are different' (Hall 1991a: 33-39, 1991b: 41). One conclusion was that, what he terms the 'great collective social identities' – listed as including class, race, nation, gender, and the west – could not any longer be thought of as homogenous (though they had not disappeared). Another, using the example of 'blackness' – which drew together people who had previously thought of themselves as different – was that new identities are created in the process of struggle against marginalisation (Hall 1991b: 45-57). One can quarrel with aspects of Hall's assessment, and later I want to comment on his periodisation, but it has the considerable merit of getting us to think about identities as dynamic and related to broader societal transformations.

Attempting to conceptualise the newly emerging relationship between various global flows and 'the local', Massey (1993, 1994) proposed a 'global sense of place'. Places should be conceived, she argued, not as bounded areas but as nodes of interactions and as products of historical processes. Thus, a place like London's Kilburn, where she lived, was the sum of the changing relationships between multiple linkages with the rest of the world – foreign newspapers, immigrants, email messages, exotic food etc. – and more local social relations. Because of the different positions of individuals and social groups with regard to the 'overall complexity of social relations', it followed that place and people would both have multiple identities (Massey 1993: 61-68, 1994: 121). Global flows – horizontal globalisation one might say – expanded the number of interactions and thus the multiplicity of identities. Massey (1993: 65) made clear, however, that 'multiple identities can be either, or both, a source of richness or a source of conflict,' the outcome depending upon one's ability to control mobility and connectivity. She concluded (1993: 62): 'The time-space compression of some groups can undermine the power of others.'

Massey echoed some of Hall's approach, but – by showing how, at the level of the local, people might draw on global resources in the forging of new and potentially 'progressive' identities – she added a novel twist.

Arguably, Massey – like Hall perhaps – is 'too British' in her concerns, and writers with a stronger focus on the global South might, for our purposes, provide more useful insights. Arjun Appadurai (1996: 33–36, 47), a cosmopolitan scholar of Indian origin, proposed that we think about globalisation in terms of 'five dimensions of global cultural flows': movement of peoples, new technology, finance capital, electronically distributed information and images, and ideologies. He was particularly interested in the way that mass migration and electronic media, and their interaction, produced new identities through the work of 'imagination' (giving, as an example, the development of new 'imagined communities' – to use Benedict Anderson's term – that draw together particular diasporas) (Appadurai 1996: 3–8). Whilst there are some stimulating ideas here, there are also considerable problems. Comprehensive attention to relationships between the five flows is lacking, so that, whereas for Anderson (1983: 46) the print-capitalism that underpinned his imagined communities was still capitalism, Appadurai's media and its moguls are divorced from the compulsions of competitive accumulation. Moreover, whilst, along with others, Appadurai (1996: 9, 19) sees the 1970s as a moment of significant change, he goes further in suggesting that this period was a complete 'rupture'. This frees him from investigating continuities (unlike Hall), and allows him to conclude that 'the nation-state . . . is on its last legs.' Of course, there have been changes in the character of the nation state, but one is tempted to say to all those preparing themselves for its forthcoming burial: 'Tell it to the Iraqis!'

In contrast to Appadurai's relatively up-beat account, the Africanist scholars James Ferguson (1999) and Birgit Meyer and Peter Geschiere (1999) offered pessimistic scenarios. Ferguson provided an ethnography of mine workers in Zambia, where, with falling copper prices, real per capita income in 1984 was only one third of that ten years before. He reveals the post-modern condition at its most dismal; a picture not of increasing connectedness but of disconnection from the world economy. Here there was a breaking-down of identities based upon distinctions between modern and traditional and urban and rural (which he suggests were never as sharp as generally assumed), and associated with this were changes in family structures, styles of dress and much more (Ferguson 1999: 14, 83–85, 250). Ferguson (1999: 236) calls this 'abjection', a humiliating experience of 'being thrown aside, expelled or discarded.' As an aside, one should add that, even on the Zambian Copperbelt, there is also another story; it is one told by Darlene Miller (2004) about recent

South African investment in the retail sector and about the resistance by shop workers to their new masters. Meyer and Geschiere based their conclusions on a collection of anthropology papers that includes Meyer on Pentecostalism in Ghana, Geschiere on witchcraft in Africa and East Asia, and Appadurai, now in more-gloomy mode, on the dangers of ethnic violence. They argued, very simply, that the homogenising tendencies of global flows were producing heterogeneous cultural closures, specifically at the level of identity. This is the down side of Hall's 'return to the local', but without his imminent counter-politics based upon a unity of difference.

South Africa is an upper middle-income country with the largest economy in Africa, so perhaps it might provide a vantage point from which to develop a perspective that hovers midway between the optimism of some high-flying northern academics and the afro-pessimism associated with the depths of Zambian mines.³ One writer who, in particular, might be expected to construct such a viewpoint is Gillian Hart, a South African now based in California (on the same campus as Castells and Burawoy, and not far from Ferguson). One strand running through Hart's (2002) major work is a critique of what she terms 'impact models' of globalisation. She has in mind the economic determinism of neo-liberal discourse, but also sophisticated variants, as she sees them, advanced by Castells, Harvey and Appadurai (Hart 2002: 12–14, 49–50). In rejecting both the model itself and its obverse – those accounts that see 'the local not as passive recipient but as the key site of resistance' (here she might have cited Hall, but refrained) – she makes use of Massey's notion of 'place' (Hart 2002: 51, 35). The value of this concept, with its emphasis on interaction, is demonstrated by Hart's pursuit of her second strand, a comparison of the neighbouring and, in many respects, similar towns of Newcastle and Ladysmith (both located within KZN). In practice, these two places have contrasting political identities and different experiences of racial and class practices, industrialisation, land dispossession, and urban/rural relations, all of which have been shaped through connections and dealings with other places. This leads to a political conclusion: the rejection of – to paraphrase Burawoy (1985) – both 'the economism that only one thing is possible, and the voluntarism that anything is possible' (Hart 2002: 291). Hart's is certainly a more optimistic assessment – a more South African one perhaps – than those of the afro-pessimists. But, in providing an antidote to those who ignore or obscure human agency, she can be

³ Within South Africa, wealth is distributed very unevenly, both across the population as a whole, as discussed later, and geographically. Gauteng, the province that includes Johannesburg and Pretoria, which provides a home to about 20 percent of the country's population, is responsible for about 40 percent of its gross domestic product (GDP) (this representing about nine percent of the GDP of Africa as a whole) (Gauteng 2005).

criticised for exaggerating the difference between her two locales and for minimising the impact of global forces.

Before moving on, some mention should be made of the two writers who had the greatest influence on our project. The first of these was Castells (1997, 2001). From him we took the simple and, most of us found, very valuable proposition that identity comes from 'shared experience', and that, as he put it: 'identity which is not rooted in experience is fantasy, not identity' (Castells 2001: 115-16). In relating this to globalisation he distinguished between a legitimising identity, a resistance identity and a project identity, adding: 'identities that start as resistance may induce projects, and may also . . . become dominant in the institutions of society, thus becoming legitimizing identities to rationalise their domination.' He argued that, as a consequence of the 'fast disintegration of civil society inherited from the [pre-globalisation] industrial era, and because of the fading away of the nation-state, the main source of legitimacy,' legitimising identities were in crisis. Resistance identities, which included such things as religious fundamentalism, cultural nationalism and those social movements that limit themselves to single issues or survival, were said to be 'as pervasive as the individualistic projects resulting from the dissolution of former legitimizing identities'. Project identities are linked to attempts to transform the structure of society, and are thus, he says, 'potentially able to reconstruct a new civil society of sorts and, eventually, a new state.' Castells suggested that, at the time of his writing, such identities were emerging from resistance identities, particularly new social movements, rather than from 'former identities of the industrial era's civil society', notably the trade unions (which had once, he reminds us, produced socialism as a project identity) (Castells 1997: 8, 11, 66, 356-57).

Whilst Castells's typology can assist us in understanding some of the dynamics in the development of new identities, there is a danger that in its elegant simplicity it also oversimplifies. Burawoy, the second writer who had a considerable influence, 'grounds' appreciations of globalisation in experience, and in the process highlights further dynamics. He (2000: 339) criticises, rightly we felt, Castells's assumption that 'what is "now" is new' (indicting Anthony Giddens's (1999) 'runaway world' on the same charge). His approach is more dialectical (like that of Hall, whose influence he acknowledges), and he concludes: 'the Global Postmodern works with the preexisting capital, state, and identities . . . we speak of *supranational* forces, *transnational* connections, and *postnational* imaginations to underline the repositioning rather than the demise of the nation state' (Burawoy 2000: 348, original emphases). He explains (2000: 29) that 'forces' – which could be economic, cultural or political – are 'felt through mediators that

transmit [them] as their interest or as a subjective internalization of values and beliefs'. By contrast, 'connections' provide a direct experience of 'the global' by means of 'flows of people, information, and ideas, and the stretching of organizations, identities, and families' (Burawoy 2000: 34). There is, here, some overlap with our earlier distinction between vertical and horizontal globalisation. 'Imaginations' draw on the thinking of Appadurai, but, recognising that many of his 'global cultural flows' still have ties to the nation state, Burawoy (2000: 34-35) seems to accord them a more limited meaning, though one which, through an 'imagining' of political and social change, is more radical. My impression is that the imaginations are really extensions of the forces and connections.

Implicitly echoing Massey's 'progressive sense of place' and foreshadowing Hart's critique of impact models, Burawoy (2000: 29) counsels against the danger of what he terms 'objectification', thinking that globalisation is 'inevitable and natural'. We should recognise, instead, he says, that global forces are 'the product of contingent social processes . . . [and can be] resisted, avoided, and negotiated.' As such, they could be 'examined as the product of . . . global connections between sites.' He concludes that global forces and global connections can be 'constituted imaginatively, inspiring social movements to seize control over their immediate but also their more distant worlds, challenging the mythology of an inexorable, runaway world.' Despite a lack of specific discussion, Burawoy's whole analysis is infused with questions of social identity.

What chance is there that our new pieces might bring something of interest to this theoretical table? Is there a possibility that, by building on our own research, we might be able to add some insight to the ideas presented above, and especially to those of Burawoy, the most highly developed? There are two reasons for some hope. The first of these is that all twelve of our studies are focused on South Africa, thus allowing one to think about both the unevenness that exists within one country and the extent to which new identities are influenced by nationally-specific conditions. Secondly, *Global Ethnography* ends with the words: 'Even as I write, unprecedented protest from labour, human rights, and environmental groups has laid siege to the meeting of the World Trade Organization in Seattle. . . . this frontal challenge to a supranational organization on its own terrain . . . beckons the proliferation of transnational social movements, propelled by imaginations of a global dimension' (Burawoy 2000: 350). Six years on, perhaps we can discern ways in which the anti-globalisation movement – i.e. the movement against neo-liberal globalisation – and the subsequent global anti-war movement have shaped, or at least clarified, our understanding of globalisation and new identities.

PARTS OF THE FRAME

Some pieces of our puzzle – as with those in a jig-saw that have straight edges and provide its frame – are relatively easy to place. In detailing some of the most distinctive features of South African society, this section provides background for subsequent discussion.

It is impossible to think about social identities in South Africa without consideration of race and ethnicity, the latter overlapping with language. In common parlance, which is what has generally been used in this book, most South Africans these days distinguish between ‘blacks’, ‘whites’, ‘coloureds’ and ‘Indians’. These are similar to the categories that were used by the Group Areas Act to enforce residential segregation (Omond 1985: 39). Official terminology for ‘blacks’ has changed from ‘kaffirs’, the term generally used until the end of the nineteenth century, to ‘natives’, to ‘bantus’, which was utilised for most of the apartheid era, and then to ‘blacks’, but the 1998 Employment Equity Act used ‘African’ (regarding this as a sub-division of ‘black’) and the 2001 Census uses ‘Black African’. For sake of clarity, this chapter generally distinguishes between ‘black’, taken to mean all non-white South Africans, and ‘black African’, as used in the census. Until 1904, at least in the Cape, censuses used ‘coloured’ to embrace all non-whites, including so-called ‘kaffirs’ (Goldin 1987: 158–59). In 1967, the Population Registration Act, which was used to define identity document categories, was reworked to include three main divisions, with ‘Coloured’ having six sub-divisions, one of which was ‘Indian’. The practical difficulty of defining ‘race’ was reflected in the number of people who were reclassified; in 1986 alone these included 387 ‘Blacks’ and 81 ‘Indians’ who became ‘Cape Coloured’ and 314 ‘Cape Coloureds’ who became ‘white’ (Ebr. Vally 2001: 44–45, and for the absurdities of racial classification see Posel 2001).

Various apartheid laws, including those affecting residential segregation, also distinguished nine sub-divisions of ‘bantu’, each based, though not entirely accurately, on language. Essentially these were the same as nine of today’s eleven official languages. The other two languages, English and Afrikaans, were the only ones used for official purposes under apartheid. These two are the main markers of ethnic division among whites, though Afrikaans is also spoken by a majority of coloureds, and Indians mostly speak English. In terms of numbers, the 2001 Census (Statistics South Africa 2003: 13–14) recorded a total population of 44,819,778, broken down as 79.0 percent Black African, 9.6 percent White, 8.9 percent Coloured, and 2.5 percent Indian. In terms of home language it recorded 23.8 percent isiZulu, 17.6 percent isiXhosa, 13.3 percent Afrikaans, 9.4 percent Sepedi, 8.2 percent English,

8.2 percent Setswana, 7.9 percent Sesotho, 4.4 percent Xitonga, 2.7 percent siSwati, 2.3 percent Tshivenda, and 1.6 percent isiNdebele.

Resistance to segregation and apartheid produced its own ways of understanding ‘race’. The African Political Organisation, formed in 1902, was, in terms of the emerging official discourse, a largely coloured organisation. For black Africans, the creation of the Native National Congress in 1912 was a significant advance, because it united people who had previously thought of themselves as being different – Zulu, Xhosa and so on. Another step forward was taken in 1923, when this organisation rejected official terminology to rename itself the African National Congress (ANC). This is a good example of Hall’s notion of a new identity being forged in the course of struggle against marginalisation. There are others. When the Pan-Africanist Congress was established in 1959 it was with a broader notion of ‘African’, one that included coloured people. And when the Black consciousness movement was formed in the late 1960s, it understood ‘black’ as including all racially oppressed South Africans; that is, black Africans, coloureds and Indians. In the post-apartheid era, there has been a further contestation of ‘African’, with many whites arguing that they too are Africans (indeed, Afrikaners could claim to be the first Africans, since the term was originally used to identify those people of Dutch descent who were born on the continent). A full account of South Africa’s complex history of racial and ethnic identifications has still to be written (but for a helpful introduction see Reddy 2000).

Class identities have played, and continue to play, an important part in the life of South Africa. Class is partly about income difference, and the most recent report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2004: 188–91) shows South Africa as having one of the highest levels of inequality in the world, with only six small countries, all in Africa, having a higher Gini coefficient (the principle measure of income inequality). Disparities have been closely associated with race. So, for example, in 1995, whereas the estimated per capita income for whites was R34,789, for Asians it was R16,793, for coloureds R6,931, and for Africans R4,678 (Terreblanche 2002: 393). Class is also about struggle, with working-class organisations, especially trade unions, playing a key role, arguably *the* key role, in the overthrow of apartheid. The most significant body has been the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), established in 1985.

Gender identities have also been very significant in South African history, with, for instance, the migrant labour system separating men and women, South Africa having one of the highest incidences of rape in the world, and women’s employment, particularly domestic work, being

generally poorly paid. However, although men dominated leadership positions in liberation and labour movements, women were also influential, a fact reflected in ANC policy ensuring a high proportion of females in government structures, and in various pro-women constitutional and legislative provisions (see Hassim 2005).

Churches are, by far, the type of 'grassroots organisation' with the greatest following in South Africa (see below), and people often got involved in anti-apartheid resistance via these and other religious institutions. A recent national random survey showed 76 percent of respondents claiming that they attended a place of worship at least once a month (Everatt & Solanki 2004). The 2001 South African census recorded affiliations as 78.1 percent Christian, 15.1 percent none, 1.5 percent Islam, 1.2 percent Hinduism and 0.2 percent Judaism (Statistics South Africa 2004c: 24).

There are also some distinct generations in South Africa, at least among activists, with the Soweto uprising of 1976 marking one important break. Among our black students, there is a noticeable distinction between those old enough to have had direct experience of 'the struggle', and possibly had their education interrupted as a consequence, and those who are younger. Sarah Nuttall (2004) defines these as, respectively, 'generation X' and the 'Y generation' (the letter 'Y' suggesting a question mark, as well as a progression from 'X'). Electoral registration is much lower among the Y generation, as is participation in organisations, including churches (ANC Gauteng Province 2004: 21-23).

In the years immediately after the 1994 transition there was a very strong sense of national pride. In a 1995 countrywide survey, 60.3 percent said they were 'very proud to be called a South African citizen' (with a further 31.3 percent saying they were 'proud'). There was, though, a contrast between those who identified themselves as 'Africans', 63 percent of whom were very proud, and the figures for those identifying themselves as 'whites', 48 percent, 'Indians', 33 percent, and 'Zulus', 41 percent (Mattes 1999: 280). Between 1997 and 2000, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) conducted annual surveys using similar questions to those asked in this 1995 study. In 1997, 30 percent of 'blacks' 'strongly agreed' with the statement 'being a South African is an important part of how I see myself', and by 2000 the figure had increased to 44 percent. In contrast, for whites and Asians there was a decline from, respectively, 58 percent to 33 percent, and 37 percent to 19 percent; also the 'Zulu population' deviated somewhat from other 'blacks' with figures of 35 percent in 1997 and 36 percent in 2000 (Klandermans, Roefs & Olivier 2001: 101-103).

The HSRC also asked questions on sub-national identities and on participation in civil society. These showed, firstly, that 'race' – the survey uses the term 'ethnicity' – was the most powerful sub-national identity. However, whereas, in 1997, 47 percent of respondents had described themselves in terms of racial categories, by 2000 the figure had fallen to only 12 percent.⁴ In the same period, support for gender and class-related identities also declined, though to a lesser degree, and for religious identities it had increased slightly. 'The real growth', according to the authors, 'was among a whole range of individual, personalised descriptions. Obviously people's self-descriptions reflected a process of personalisation' (Klandermans, Roefs & Olivier 2001: 93, 100). Secondly, whilst, in general, participation in 'grassroots organisations' – which covers everything from churches, through trade unions, to hawkers associations – declined between 1994 and 1996 (1995 for whites, coloureds and Asians), there was generally increasing support from then until 2000 (when the study ended). Thirdly, the category 'burial society or stokvel' had the second highest level of participation after churches (in 2000 the respective figures were 23.6 percent and 43.2 percent). These organisations – which are basically savings clubs, though often with a social dimension – are uncommon outside of black African and, to a lesser extent, coloured communities. Fourthly, the one type of organisation with a significantly reduced degree of participation was political parties, from 20.6 percent in 1994 to 10.5 percent in 2000. This decline was matched by a reduction in the level of political identification and day-to-day discussion of politics (Klandermans, Roefs & Olivier 2001: 98, 115-118; Roefs 2003: 85-87; and, for the ANC, see Barchiesi 2004: 3 and Lodge 2005: 4-13).

In South Africa, the principle context for recent shifts in patterns of identity is what Eddie Webster and Glenn Adler (1999) called a 'double transition'; that is, the overthrow of apartheid combined with neo-liberal globalisation. Many cultural aspects of globalisation affected South Africa before 1994, but because of the high level of struggle, most of its economic attributes were delayed (and increased emigration and immigration fall into the latter category). One might add that, in part, the end of apartheid was determined by the 'post-communist' balance of global forces, and hence by globalisation. Initially, the new government's economic policy was shaped – at least rhetorically – by its election manifesto, the mildly redistributive Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP). However, two years into democracy there was a change of tack marked by the launch of the Growth, Employment and

⁴ Respondents had been asked to describe themselves in no more than three words (Roefs 2003: 117).

Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, the central premise of which was, to quote John Saul's (2002: 39) poetic formulation, 'not what capital can do for South Africa, but what South Africa can do for capital'. Government spending was restricted, inflation was reduced to the minimum, exchange controls relaxed, import tariffs cut or abandoned, primary listing of major companies outside South Africa permitted, and privatisation encouraged. Arguably, as Karl von Holdt (2003: 3) has proposed, because of continuing resistance, compromises, conservatism and general messiness in workplaces, it would be more accurate to speak of a triple transition. Linking this train of thought to Hart's critique of impact models, perhaps we should be thinking in two dimensions, with transition from above and transition from below along one axis, and horizontal globalisation and vertical globalisation along the other (Alexander 2004: 3). However we conceptualise the relation between globalisation and transition, changing social identities cannot be adequately understood on the basis of globalist reductionism.

Since 1994 the South African economy has grown at a rate of about 3.0 percent a year, which, allowing for population growth of roughly 1.8 percent per year, is rather modest by international standards (and especially so in comparison to GEAR's optimistic forecasts) (Statistics South Africa 2004a; UNDP 2003: 12; and see Gelb 2005: 367). Nevertheless, it has grown, and some people are certainly better off. Improvements, however, have been patchy. A major problem has been joblessness. According to the 'narrow' definition of unemployment, there was an increase from 20.0 percent of the economically active population in September 1994 to 30.5 percent in September 2002, followed by a decline to 26.5 percent in March 2005. Using the 'expanded' measure, which includes people who have been 'discouraged' from looking for work, unemployment peaked at 42.0 percent in September 2003, dipping only slightly to 40.5 percent, 8.1 million people, in March 2005 (Altman 2003: 160; Statistics South Africa 2004b, 2005). Rates of unemployment are especially high for black Africans and young people, and higher for women than for men.

Between 1995 and 2001, whilst the number of professional employees increased by 7.0 percent per year, the number of employees in elementary occupations declined by 5.7 percent per year (with the reduction especially sharp in the mining industry, where many of the workers were migrants from outside South Africa). Among skilled and semi-skilled workers, whilst there was a 1.0 percent per year increase in their numbers during this period, the proportion who earned less than R1,000 per month rose from 21 percent to 26 percent - and the real value of R1,000 had declined to R690 (Makgetla & van Meelis 2003: 92, 95). Moreover,

between 1994 and 2002, whilst the share of GDP that went to profits increased by about two percent, the wages share declined by almost the same amount. The net effect of various changes was to increase inequality. The Gini coefficient - which measures income inequality between 0, representing absolute equality, and 1, meaning absolute inequality - showed an increase from 0.596 in 1995 to 0.635 in 2001. The figure for black Africans was considerably higher than for whites (UNDP 2003: 5-6). In sum, then, there has been relatively little economic growth, increased unemployment and redistribution to the wealthy.

The significance of key, socio-political trends can be seen in the outcome of the 2004 general election. The total number of votes cast, 15.9 million, represented about 58.0 percent of the 27.4 million people eligible to register for voting. This turnout is comparable with many 'mature' democracies, but it was down from the 16.3 million who voted in 1999 (despite the population increasing by about a tenth), and very much lower than in 1994. It is estimated that less than half of potential voters under 25 registered to vote, compared to about three-quarters of all potential voters, and it is likely that turnout was particularly low among coloureds and Indians. Some analysts argue that there was also a greater level of abstention among poorer voters. Whilst the New National Party (NNP), the organisation linked to the old regime, saw its vote collapse, the ANC actually boosted its support slightly, to 70.0 percent of the total vote. Nevertheless, because of the increased size of the voting-age population and reduced number of ballots, the ANC won votes from only about 39.6 percent of potential voters (Terreblanche 2004; *Election Synopsis* 2004; Southall & Daniel 2005: 37-40). Support for the governing party is underpinned by its association with the end of apartheid, with most people securing some material improvements since 1994, with the manifest weaknesses of most opposition parties, and with continuing backing from COSATU. However, it is opposed by most whites, coloureds and Indians as well as many Zulus, and there is apathy, if not antipathy, from many poorer and young Africans.

Having sketched some of the more obvious divisions within South African society, we can now probe into the workings of some particular social identities.

ADDING NEW PIECES

We can now add the jig-saw pieces provided by our own research. The first four such bits come in the form of chapters related to workplace settings, but each tells a very different story.

In Chapter 2, Rabe presents an account of fatherhood among black African workers employed on a gold mine south-west of Johannesburg. She distinguishes three types of fatherhood, the first of which, 'traditional African', refers to workers who maintain a rural home and sometimes have more than one wife. Such men are detached from their children's daily experiences and, whilst valuing their formal education, have relatively limited expectations of success. The other types, the 'traditional western' and 'new emerging', relate to urban forms of fatherhood and are practised by workers who live in close proximity to the mine and usually live in nuclear households. Unlike the former of these two groups, the 'new emerging' fathers spend a good deal of time with their children, empathising with their individual needs rather than slotting them into gender-defined roles. All three types of fatherhood involve responses to aspects of globalisation. This affected the mines, firstly, in 1972, with the ending of a fixed price for gold, thus making gold mining more profitable and allowing space for concessions to the militant activism that was then erupting. Secondly, particularly in the post-apartheid era, because of sharper international competition and a move to more capital-intensive production, the workforce was reduced in size. Along the way, and partly because of union pressure, there was a shift from the employment of migrant workers towards the creation of a settled and more-skilled workforce. The 'traditional African' fathers are usually those miners who are most vulnerable to retrenchment, partly because they are the least educated; but they are also often the ones who have retained rural property. The 'new emerging' fathers tend to be the best educated of the three groups, so were able to take advantage of new jobs that opened up as a consequence of skills shortage and successful battles against the colour bar. Because they have a higher income they can usually afford to own a house, and they tend to work normal office hours, so have free time that coincides with that of their families.

Rabe's analysis uses globalisation as an explanatory factor, but interweaves this with resistance (itself involving class and racial dynamics), changing forms of work (some to 'fordist' rather than 'post-fordist' production), and domestic arrangements (which sometimes rest, in part, on pre-modern relationships). Chapter 3, van Rooyen's discussion of women employed on two flower-exporting farms in North West, contains certain analytical similarities. Situating her study within the context of a global market for cut flowers (which mostly go to Dutch auction houses and British supermarkets), she demonstrates how a new form of oppression – flower exports really took off in the early 1990s – produces a new identity. All the ordinary workers on the two farms are black Africans and the farm owners are white, but because the team leaders and supervisors are also

black Africans, race is not a prominent part of the workers' everyday experience and consciousness (though clearly it structures their identities). Class and gender are more salient aspects of the women's relationships. They labour under wretched conditions – and, we are told, could probably never afford to decorate their homes with the nice flowers they cut and pack – so exploitation is obvious. Many of the women belong to a union (even though they regard it as ineffective). Nearly all the menial work is undertaken by women, and they are controlled in a more repressive manner than the men, but gender is also about the traditionalism of the women's male-dominated home lives. Whereas, for the miners, work experience once produced a racialised class identity (they were *black* workers), in this instance it has produced a gendered class identity (as *women* workers). Whilst, again, one can discern the firm hand of globalisation and the often brutal arm of patriarchy working together in the shaping of a new identity, here the significance of a specific aspect of mediation – the racial identity of supervision – is also apparent.

Whilst remaining with the theme of women and work, Ichharam, in Chapter 4, moves the focus to 'self-employment'. Her comparative study of garment makers in Durban and Ahmedabad has a compelling connective thread, for the South Africans are all members of the Self-employed Women's Union (SEWU), the formation of which, in 1993, was inspired by the success of the Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA), formed in 1972, an organisation to which the Indians belong. The Ahmedabad women work from home, thus often performing motherly and wifely functions whilst also making garments, and they sell their 'pieces' to the same merchants who provide their material. In contrast, the Durban women, all of whom are black Africans, work from a street stall and they sell their products directly to the consumer. The greater level of autonomy experienced in Durban is explained, in large measure, in terms of cultural difference (i.e. because of pre-globalisation norms). However, the similarities between the two comparators are especially interesting. In both instances, the rise in women's informal sector work is linked to the demise of men's formal sector employment, and the women in question are now the main 'bread winner' in their families. It would seem that, very aware of gender, they have generally become self-confident, 'strong' women. Finally, in both cases, whilst the women are actually self-employed – thus technically petty bourgeois, at least in Marxist terms – they nevertheless regard themselves as 'workers'. This is related to the politics of SEWA's founder, former union organiser Eli Bhatt, but the notion of being a worker also provides a status, and potential material benefits, that the women would otherwise be denied.

Chapter 5 is also concerned with international connections between workers, but this time the spotlight is on an historically powerful section of the working class employed in a highly globalised industry – car workers. Hoping to find evidence of an international working-class consciousness that transcended rhetoric, Bolsmann, the chapter's author, investigated relationships between the two main unions organising workers at Volkswagen's largest plants in Germany and South Africa. IG Metall, the German workers' union first established contact with the forerunner of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa in 1978. From then until the early 1990s, the relationship was marked by opposition to apartheid, with the German union providing South African workers with valuable support. A second phase, which appears to have persisted until the present, has been characterised by formal recognition of the need for solidarity, but an inability to locate a focal point for co-operation and a good deal of scepticism. Two factors, in particular, contributed to the cooling of relations. First, globalisation of production heightened feelings of insecurity among German workers, and concerns were sharpened when, in 1992, the South African plant was contracted to supply vehicles to China. Secondly, with the ending of apartheid, German unionists, especially those elected to the semi-management Works Council, began pushing their South African counterparts to accept German-style co-determination, and this was increasingly interpreted as a form of paternalism. One is reminded here that capitalism encourages both competition and combination among workers; that industrial relations are strongly influenced by nationally-based legislation and national histories of struggle; and that experience and knowledge of oppression can sometimes mobilise workers just as powerfully as economic considerations.

In Chapter 6, Masenyama attempts to shed light on national identity using the South African Broadcasting Corporation's (SABC's) television output as a lens. SABC faces at least two dilemmas. Firstly, it is a public broadcaster charged with promoting a sense of national identity, but also needs revenue from advertising global brands and must show foreign programmes to cut costs and maintain audiences. Secondly, given the massive and multiple divisions within South African society, there is no consensus about what is meant by South African identity. Masenyama is struck both by the vague definitions of national identity held by senior staff, and by the relatively weak form of South African distinctiveness presented on SABC television. Whilst this amorphousness may be a pragmatic response to obvious difficulties, it might also prove the most effective means of encouraging national unity. If social identity is, in effect, 'shared experience', it is important that the SABC is enabling South Africans to

share the same news, weather forecasts and sports events, even if these are watched in different languages. The broadcaster also provides, for example, a common experience of 'soapies', many of which utilise a variety of tongues, though often with sub-titles in English. Moreover, by reflecting the divisions in South African society, SABC is creating a common experience of those divisions, and, even if people are watching Hollywood movies, it is a nationally-shared selection with a common time of viewing.

Roberts's contribution, Chapter 7, explores a new nominal identity, that of being somebody who has publicly disclosed that they are HIV+, a 'Positive Person.' This is a resistance identity associated with rejection of a stigma that is manifested in gossiping, taunting, voyeurism, social exclusion, loss of jobs and homes, and sometimes violence. The author proposes that because globalisation has increased poverty, and because HIV/AIDS is more widespread among the poor, with suffering greater in low-income areas, there is an indirect link between globalisation and the 'Positive' identity (see also Hunter 2002). Disclosure to one's close family and friends is especially important because it has profound implications for quality of life and, eventually, quality of death (see also Makhura 2004). Wider admission can be associated with HIV/AIDS education, support work and campaigning, and can boost pride, foster new friendships and, sometimes, increase material well-being. Roberts's research is based on interviews with members of a 'positive people's' support group. This group, and organisations like the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), are sensitively yet actively encouraging the development of a Positive identity. This, then, is an instance of people creating a new identity as part of a conscious process of mobilising against marginalisation, and, as with Hall's example of blackness, it is based on uniting people who were previously 'different'.

Chapters 8 and 9 are both concerned with religious identities, respectively Islam and Judaism. In the first of these, McDonald's essay on the Tabligh Jama'at (TJ) provides a useful antidote to radical interpretations of globalisation. Although it has attracted little scholarly or media attention, the TJ is probably the single largest movement within Islam, both internationally and in South Africa. Its presence in Johannesburg has two sources, neither of which is related to our notion of globalisation. First, there is a Muslim community that traces its origins back, in the case of coloureds, to 'Malay' slaves and travellers who arrived in the Cape from the late seventeenth century, and, in the case of Indians, to indentured labourers and merchants who landed in Natal from the late nineteenth century. Then, secondly, there is the TJ itself, which originated in India in 1927, and still has its principal centre there, spreading to South Africa in the 1960s. Organising only among

Muslims, the TJ draws its adherents on the basis of being 'good Muslims', people who live their lives according to 'a literal interpretation of Prophetic authority' (Vahed 2000: 5). Whilst some Muslims disagree with this interpretation and others note that the TJ's dress code owes more to India than Arabia, the movement's conformism has allowed it to secure considerable influence within Johannesburg's mosques and, in particular, within its seminaries or *madrasas*. The TJ is apolitical, implicitly it is opposed to globalisation (though many of its supporters have been beneficiaries), and its practices are unchanging. It is possible that this very conservatism has helped it to attract those Muslims – particularly Indians perhaps – threatened by the tumultuous changes that have occurred in South Africa over the past decade and more. Engaging theoretically with Massey and Castells, the thrust of McDonald's argument is that the TJ has succeeded in constructing an identity by creating and sustaining a place of shared experience.

The following chapter, by Lewin and Maria Frahm-Arp, provides an interesting counterpoint. Once again, the paper concerns a movement within a great religion – this time the Tehelim – and yet again the movement is characterised by conservatism. There is, however, a cardinal difference, for Tehelim, unlike the TJ, has consciously embraced the use of new information technology. In the past, Tehelim were just small groups of orthodox Jewish women that recited from the Book of Psalms to obtain healing or relief for sick and distressed Jews (and even today there are groups in Johannesburg that operate in isolation from others). Now, though, Johannesburg has a central co-ordinator who uses email to distribute the names of people for whom prayers are requested, and, internationally, there are internet sites providing a similar service. This networking helps strengthen the Jewish diaspora and support for Israel, and it reinforces orthodox Judaism, which are all reasons why it is tolerated, and sometimes encouraged, by the rabbis. However, against the religion's strongly patriarchal principles and practice, Tehelim is creating a new space for orthodox women, whose lists of people to be prayed for are presented in the form of 'so-and-so' 'son of' or 'daughter of', and then, not the father's name, which is customary, but the mother's. The authors suggest that Tehelim is transforming orthodox women's identities from 'faithful wives to . . . mothers who co-create the world with G-d and fight to change the forces of political power in the world.' At a theoretical level, they are challenging those who regard religious fundamentalism as a defensive rejection of the modern or post-modern world, arguing that, at least in this instance, it involves an engagement with the 'network society' aimed at advancing a conservative identity. Theirs is, then, a position that has more in common with Massey than with Castells.

In Chapter 10, Marneweck provides a detailed description of an internet chatroom, analysing its role in shaping personal as well as social identities. Once again the author finds value in Massey's theorisation, defining chatrooms as 'meeting places'. In her example, some chatters are only interested in virtual relationships, but many are hoping to develop face-to-face friendships. A 'main room' affords space for chatters to share their experiences, opinions and fantasies, and it provides opportunities to invite others into a 'private room'. Channel operators exclude individuals who make offensive remarks or are suspected of not being adults. Because the private room is used to arrange liaisons and the chatters hold social gatherings, there tends not to be a complete separation between on-line and off-line personae (so, for instance, an on-line gay man is likely to be a gay man in his off-line life as well). However, somebody who is very shy in a face-to-face setting might be confident or even obnoxious in his or her on-line world. As Marneweck observes – echoing Sigmund Freud perhaps – the on-line or virtual personality is no less real than the off-line one; they are just two parts of the same reality. In contrast to other writers on the subject, she shows that anonymity was restricted and equality was limited. Whilst identities were shaped by on-line discussion, this occurred within parameters determined off-line. Few people have the financial resources and time to participate in an internet chatroom, and, among those who connect with this particular one, only a minority will find it a congenial meeting place. Also, in addition to off-line statuses becoming known, some chatters had more bandwidth than others, some had a better command of conversational English, and some were quicker typists. In this case, the regulars were mostly well-paid, white Gautengers in their twenties and thirties, and the room provided a club within which the members could develop their personalities and social identity.

Chapters 11 and 12 deal with aspects of youth and student identity. In the first of these, Nkuna explores the Y-generation culture of The Zone, Johannesburg's hippest mall. This relatively small, northern-suburbs centre is aimed at a very specific market: the sons and daughters of the post-apartheid black elite and their white contemporaries. It is a space where a new upper middle-class identity is being forged. Just under six-in-ten of Nkuna's survey respondents were black Africans, but nearly eight-in-ten said they preferred to use English when speaking to friends. The average age of those interviewed was under 20, overwhelmingly they were the products of formerly white schools, and most of their spending money was provided by parents. At first sight, The Zone seems to be calm, friendly and multiracial, but just below the surface there are also differences and tensions. Levis and R&B music are popular with everyone, no matter what

their racial background, but there are labels and hairstyles that only appeal to black Africans, and some that only appeal to whites. Also, whilst there is racial mixing, black Africans are still more likely to socialise with black Africans, whites with whites and so on. Socially, at one end of the spectrum there are the township girls, who are desperate to 'fit in'; at the other end, there are the local celebrities, sometimes DJs from the adjacent and very popular radio station, who are cool, collected and set the trends. Those trends are predominantly American, but there is also another dynamic. The most widely-liked artists are South African, and some of the most prestigious labels are local ones offering a crossover between Western styling and traditional African or township themes. Even the English – often spoken with an American twang – frequently incorporates African words. This, then, is a class culture with global outlines, yet shaded with local tensions and inflections.

One can hear an echo of the highly aspirational culture of The Zone in the next chapter, which is on students. Given that nearly half Nkuna's respondents were at universities and colleges, this is not a coincidence. However, Dawson's account of campus life also presents an image of another kind of student; the one who cannot afford to eat in the cafeteria, feels isolated from the well-dressed majority, is suffering from stress, and who begins to fail. Drawing evidence from two very different institutions, her main interest is in the extent to which political activism among students shapes student identity. The answer, it would seem, is very little, with student 'leaders' detached from their potential followers. Since all the ordinary students she interviewed had voted in the 2004 general election, they cannot be regarded as apolitical. It is more that student politics is removed from their realities. What matters to most students are individualism and religiosity (for which they find expressions off campus), and studying and making friends (which have no need of politics). Despite this, during the past year there were militant student protests at both universities (and at others too). The main issue, financial support to poorer students, only affects a minority, but, because it can determine whether an individual can remain at university, and hence gain access to a middle-class job, it affects these students intensely. So, then, as some of the students suggest – and Dawson agrees – part of the problem lies with the student leaders themselves. The main organisation, the ANC-aligned South African Students' Congress (SASCO), is too tied into old-style politics, careerism and the administration of student councils to relate well to the majority of students, and because it is broadly pro-government it holds back from agitating on behalf of those with financial hardships. Nevertheless, whilst student identities are fragmented – in good measure because of the

polarising impact of post-apartheid globalisation – there is evidence that a new student movement is beginning to emerge.

The story told by Nthambeleni in the final substantive chapter is, in an important respect, similar. His account concerns the South African National Civic Association (SANCO), which, in terms of its ability to mobilise a marginalised sector of society, is, like SASCO, compromised by its close relationship to the governing party. During the late 1970s and early 1980s the rising tide of locality-based resistance was reflected in the formation of civic associations. Most of these civics associated themselves with the United Democratic Front (launched in 1983), which, in turn, was aligned to the ANC, then a banned and exiled organisation. From the mid-1980s, with township struggles leading to open conflict with the police and army, it became increasingly clear that people's local problems could only be resolved through the overthrow of apartheid. The old state was forced to withdraw from aspects of local administration, and some civics began to fill the vacuum that was left. On a mass scale, civics drove a process through which resistance identities were transformed into project identities. In 1993, with the end of apartheid in sight, some 2000 civics supported the formation of SANCO, agreeing to become branches of this national organisation. This seemed like a logical consequence of a growing level of co-ordination, and it could be argued that a national organisation would be better positioned to place pressure on an ANC government and secure international funding for the civics. In practice, SANCO has been a considerable disappointment. Locally and nationally, many of the most effective leaders became ANC politicians; most donor funding was re-directed through government; the organisation suffered from corruption; local councillors could be a more effective channel for local demands; and, when that failed, the close relationship between SANCO and the ANC, especially at regional and national levels, meant that SANCO provided no effective alternative. However, what is now happening, according to Nthambeleni, is a 'return to the local'. Frustrated by the failure of SANCO to respond to problems associated with poverty, civics are re-asserting their autonomy, some within SANCO and some outside its structures. From a legitimising identity, there has, then, been a shift towards a localised identity of resistance. The wheel has turned full circle, but it has also moved onto new terrain.

OUTLINES OF A PICTURE

Already, some outlines of a picture are becoming apparent. First, there is clear evidence of supranational forces: the price of gold, new markets for

flowers, relocation of car production, pricing of TV programmes, marketing of global brands, increasing inequality, and so on. The transnational connections are there too: links between self-employed women, trade union co-operation, AIDS activism, Muslims travelling to holy places, Jews supporting Israel, the ubiquity of the internet, etc. One might also make a case for post-national imaginations – and I would not want to minimise the significance of imagining different futures – but as suggested earlier, these do not exist in isolation from such phenomena as the screening of US movies, religious leadership, cheaper air travel and the rise of the internet. Of course, in many instances, the experiences we have described are not new; thus, Jews have been supporting the state of Israel since 1948, the International Working Men's Association was established in 1864, and Muslims have been making the *hajj* for centuries. Nevertheless, none of our cases are immune from what we have defined as globalisation, and some reflect key aspects of the changes, notably through improved communication and neo-liberal economics.

Secondly, however, in portraying the emergence of new identities, there is evidence of strong local characteristics as well as of powerful global influences. Because of the political transformation of 1994, national dynamics were probably more significant than in most other countries in the recent past, and have affected, for example, expanded trading opportunities, a different notion of 'the nation', and the emergence of a new black middle-class. Yet, even without this change, local mediations would be critically important. The difference between Ahmedabad and Durban garment makers is interesting, as is the friction between German and South African car workers and the popularity of locally produced pop music. Theoretically, many of our authors found Massey's notion of 'place' to be helpful, because it allowed more scope for understanding ordinary people as the subjects as well as the objects of change. In different ways – through adoption, adaptation, avoidance and resistance – South Africans are responding to the forces and connections of globalisation, and those ways are shaped by a distinct physical environment, particular social relations and a specific history.

Whilst these first two outlines reflect concerns previously raised by other writers, the third is rather different. Despite the fact that all the chapters have focused on the novel components of social identities, I am struck by the re-emergence of some old identities, albeit with new content. This is not something we had predicted, nor is it easy to detect by looking at any one of our studies in isolation from the other evidence presented. With class, gender and race, there can be little doubt that globalisation has produced fragmentation (with the transition also playing a part in the process). For instance, on the mines – which have

been, and continue to be, a major factor in South African life – there have been many retrenchments, with those who are directly affected either developing a new experience of what it means to be a worker or falling out of employment altogether. At the same time, there are some workers who have moved into skilled or white-collar jobs – becoming 'new emerging fathers' perhaps – and, slowly, women miners are increasing in numbers, even underground. Similarly, during the 1990s the civics crumpled, with many leaders becoming upwardly mobile in government and business. Meanwhile, the old, overwhelmingly white ruling and upper-middle classes have been fractured by the transition.

However, class is re-emerging as an important component of identity. Rabe's three types of 'fatherhood' were understood largely in class terms; van Rooyen's new farm labourers clearly see themselves as workers, as do, more surprisingly, Ichharam's self-employed women; Roberts's positive people are overwhelmingly working class; a high proportion of McDonald's Tablighi Muslims have business interests; Lewin and Frahm-Arp's Jewish women are, the authors say, overwhelmingly upper middle-class; Marneweck's chatroom and Nkuna's Zone are places where new middle-class cultures are being forged; Dawson's students are divided, in part, by class background; and Nthambeleni's 'return to the local' is a return to a largely working-class activism. Gender, too, is strongly present in the emerging identities. The miners and Bolsmann's car workers are still overwhelmingly men; the farm labourers and garment makers are women; Jewish Tehelim is providing an opportunity for feminine assertion; the Positive identity is associated with women in particular; and the chatroom and the Zone are, in large measure, about establishing sexual relationships. Gender, then, has different facets: family relationships (including fatherhood, the example presented here); a gendered labour market; the persistence, sometimes modified, of male domination (especially through religion); and the search for sexual partners.

In terms of race, however, the trends appear to be different. The most marked development is that almost nobody now talks about an inclusive black identity; black Africans often describe themselves as 'black', but it is rare indeed to hear coloureds and Indians define themselves in this way. Also, whilst there is still a strong association between race and class (with implications for the Positive identity for example), the growth of inequality among black Africans has been rapid, weakening race-based workplace and neighbourhood solidarities. In addition, there is more socialising across the colour line, at least among young people (though there are still very few mixed couples), and the demise of the NNP has weakened the political identity of whiteness. However, we should be cautious about saying too much about race at this stage. In terms of

religion, from the earlier evidence, it is likely that there has been increased support for churches over the past period (possibly in response to increased hardships and uncertainty). Whilst there was no direct evidence that the TJ has grown in this period, Thomas Hansen (2003) has argued that among Indians there has been a shift from an ethnic identification (with other Indians) towards religiously-based associations, and the TJ must have played a part in this process. Certainly the TJ and orthodox Judaism appear to be vibrant. Finally, the old South African nation – which, by implication, was white – has gone, but a new national identity is materialising.

ADDITIONAL AND MISSING PIECES

By adding some further pieces to our jig-saw, and surmising some missing ones, it should be possible to modify and add to these tentative conclusions. I will confine myself to three areas: nation, race and ethnicity, and ‘working class’, a key identity on which my own research for this project has some bearing. Had space permitted, or had this been a book on scenarios and strategies rather than identity, one would have wanted to address, in particular, issues of gender and the distinction between urban and rural identities. The continuing significance of gender was underlined in the preceding section. From research undertaken by some of our undergraduates, it seems possible that increased confidence among women (associated with the 1994 transition as well as the broadening of opportunities for women in employment), coupled with lower self-esteem among some men (associated with job loss), may have led to increases in the incidences of physical abuse and divorce, but this requires further investigation. The existence of an urban/rural divide has been highlighted by recent press reports of conflict between the City of Johannesburg and some residents who wish to rear livestock in their township (Silverman & Charlton: 2004). In general, rural South Africa is much poorer than the urban areas. According to one study, whilst 28.5 percent of urban South Africans are living in poverty, the figure for the rural areas is 70.9 percent (May et al. 1998). Poverty and evictions from commercial farms – which according to one estimate totalled about 940,000 in the decade after 1994 – have been the major push factors in post-apartheid urbanisation (Groenewald 2005).

Nation

At the level of official discourse, there has been a shift from the ‘rainbow nation’ conception that was the leitmotif of Nelson Mandela’s presidency, to the emphasis on African Renaissance associated with

Mbeki. The ‘rainbow nation’ had its iconic moment when, during the Rugby World Cup, Mandela donned a Springbok jersey to tumultuous applause from the mainly white crowd (Fjord 2000). Something of this strand of national identity continues to feature in support for national teams. Whilst rugby and cricket are still predominantly white, and soccer crowds are predominantly black African, passive support for South African teams is pervasive and multiracial (which was not the case before 1994). The role of sport in shaping South African identities – at a local as well as national level – deserves greater attention. Identification with national teams and South African athletes has also been a prominent feature of the rainbow nationalism that still flows through parts of the SABC. Moreover, we should not assume that the transition from Mandela to Mbeki marked a clean break in terms of the discourse. So, for instance, in February 2001, in a speech that was interpreted as an attempt to win back the confidence of minorities and investors, Mbeki told parliament (*Sunday Times Insight* 2001): ‘Outwardly we are a people of many colours, races, cultures, languages and ancient origins. Yet we are tied to one another by a million visible and invisible threads. We share a common destiny from which none of us can escape because together we are human, we are South African, we are African.’

Whilst the multiculturalism implied by ‘rainbow nation’ is transparent, the meaning of ‘African Renaissance’ is opaque. Peter Vale and Siphosiso Maseko (1998, 2002) have suggested that the concept – first mooted by Mbeki in a 1997 speech to parliament – has two distinct meanings; and Tom Lodge (2002: 227–40), upon whom I also draw, presents a similar interpretation. The first connotation is avowedly modernist, as in the proposal for an African ‘information super-highway’. In this form, it has provided an ideological underpinning for another Mbeki initiative, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), which was formally accepted as an off-shoot of the Organisation of African Unity in 2001. NEPAD, sometimes described as ‘GEAR for Africa’, is identified with encouraging neo-liberal globalisation, conflict resolution (where there has been some success), democratisation (a failure), and securing more aid from wealthy countries (with disappointing results) (see Bond 2002; also Adesina 2004). In this form, the African Renaissance has been welcomed by South African businesses, which, in many cases – including the mining, banking, property, retail, beer brewing, electricity supply and telecommunications sectors – have been highly successful in expanding into the rest of Africa. As a consequence of the association with South African economic and political ‘leadership’, there is continent-wide scepticism about African Renaissance and NEPAD. The converse of this

is – ironically perhaps – that this dimension of a pro-*continent* ideology has added to a sense of *national* unity among both whites and blacks within the business and political elites. It may also have contributed to a popular discourse that treats ‘Africa’ as excluding South Africa (a usage that is now common among black as well as white South Africans). Proudly South African – the subject of a forthcoming GANSI master’s dissertation by Iain Milne – also enhances national identity by encouraging local capitalist interests. This campaign, largely aimed at persuading consumers to buy South African goods and services, is strongly backed by COSATU.

However, African Renaissance has a second association, one that might be regarded as ‘Africanist’. This rejects the modernist interpretation and argues for building on specifically African traditions, history and culture. One example is the emphasis placed on *ubuntu* or ‘humanness’, implying that people in need should be given assistance by those around them who are slightly better off (there is a strong argument for believing that this is actually related to survival within poorer societies, thus less distinctively African than sometimes assumed). In this form, African Renaissance is linked with a move to define national identity as something associated with black Africanness, which, whilst, it might be less inclusive of whites, Indians and possibly coloureds, could give a boost to Africans, who, in general, remain more socially marginal. Disquiet among conservative and vulnerable whites has been heightened by legislation and policy in favour of employment equity, which encourages affirmative action in favour of all blacks (though also, at least in theory, white women and the disabled), and by Black Economic Empowerment (BEE), which pushes white-owned businesses to include black shareholders and directors. Whilst these measures have been generally welcomed there is increasing concern that BEE is merely leading to the enrichment of a tiny number of black capitalists. An effect of this Africanist interpretation has been to make some whites, coloureds and Indians feel that they are being excluded from the new national identity.

One response to perceived exclusion has been to emigrate, notably to London, where, according to one estimate, there are now 750,000 South Africans (van Huyssteen 2004). However, there are also significant pull factors at work in this migration. Many Londoners have moved out of the capital because of high property prices, and qualified South Africans can usually earn considerably more there than at home, sometimes doing so with the aim of returning and buying a house with cash. In addition, South Africans who emigrate usually speak good English, a large number take advantage of a special work-permit scheme for young Commonwealth citizens, and many welcome the experience.

Although most of the emigrants are white, a high proportion is black. Whilst some of these whites are racists, an observation made by GANSI members who have spent some time in the UK is that there appears to be an element of bonding between black and white South Africans in the country, especially around sport. So, perhaps ironically again – though in keeping with emigrations elsewhere – this movement out of South Africa is strengthening national identity.

Just as globalisation is implicated in emigration, so, too, it is a factor in immigration, in particular that which is related to increasing poverty and physical conflicts elsewhere on the continent. In addition to roughly half a million legal immigrants (including those present on temporary permits and as migrants on the mines), there are very probably more than a million clandestine immigrants, though a police estimate putting the figure at 5.5 million is far-fetched (Southern African Migration Project 2001). The largest numbers of non-South Africans in the country come from neighbouring territories, particularly Lesotho, Mozambique and now Zimbabwe (Alexander & Shindondola 2002: 38–40; and see Peberdy 1999 for an overview of migration to South Africa). In research undertaken by myself and Hilma Shindondola (2002: 80–84), it was clear that people from these countries had little difficulty entering the country illegally and frequently made use of bribes, usually in small amounts, in order to remain. This immigration from Africa – coupled, no doubt, with the high level of unemployment locally – has contributed to a considerable degree of xenophobia (though this is far from being a universal response) (Southern African Migration Project 2002; Sichone 2002). Other factors that may be linked to the problem are the post-1994 redefinition of the nation, which moved black South Africans from the position of being ‘outsiders’, and the kickbacks that can be obtained by, in particular, immigration officials and police officers. Initially, police usually identify potential foreigners on the basis of pigmentation, which means that South Africans with a dark complexion, similar to that of tropical Africans, also suffer from harassment. This is commonly followed by a simple language test, as a consequence of which people from Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, who normally speak what is considered a South African language, are generally not regarded as *makwerekwere*, the derogatory term applied to African foreigners.

From our research, it seemed that black South Africans showed little hostility to white foreigners (who were thought to be bringing useful skills or foreign currency), and, contrariwise, white South Africans exhibited less hostility towards African foreigners than towards those from, for instance, eastern Europe (perhaps a reflection of the whites’ inability to

make distinctions between local and foreign black Africans). In terms of identity, many foreigners, at least from Africa, have joined organisations associated with their home country or area (sometimes these are also burial societies). In addition, we should list 'Makwerekwere' as a new nominal identity in South Africa; it certainly exists at the level of 'naming', though there are also signs that there may be an element of 'claiming' the identity, at least ironically, though probably not yet as a political statement similar to Hall's notion of 'blackness' (Mate 2004). Anyway, there is clearly strong evidence of a xenophobic nationalism in South Africa, and this extends from significant state officials and some members of the public, to certain politicians (for example, see Michaels 2004).

Perhaps one should speak of South African national identities, rather than identity. The public intellectuals Rhoda Kadalie (Nuttall & Michael 2000: 110) and Neville Alexander (2002: 82) go further, with the former arguing that 'South Africans are schizophrenic about their identity,' and the latter writing of an 'identity crisis in the new South Africa.' It is not just that there are different national identities, it is also that the post-apartheid national project is young and still fragile. Gerhard Maré (1999: 258) has warned against political parties claiming national symbols, such as the flag, as their own, as this would undermine the ability of these emblems to unify people across political, racial, class and other divides. The reality is that after ten years of democracy these divisions are still deep, and in some cases they have become deeper. When Castells (2001: 121-25) came to South Africa in 2000 he spoke about his work with the President of the European Union and the advice he gave on strengthening European identity. The core of his message consisted of proposals for developing more shared experiences: a single labour market, harmonisation of the welfare state and so on. For the most part, these specific things already exist in South Africa, but in other respects there are huge gulfs, between, for example, an income-less, AIDS-stricken family living in rural KZN, and a jet-setting millionaire living in, among other places, a Johannesburg or Cape Town mansion. It is such underlying social divisions that make the development of national identity so immensely problematic. Thus far, the problem has been masked. Inequalities may have been increasing, but a large majority of the population are much freer than ten years ago and it is likely that most are better off in terms of income and social services. There are, however, disaffected minorities – notably among the poor and many whites, coloureds and Indians – and as disaffection expands we can expect to see a growth in the political significance of certain non-national identities.

Race and ethnicity

Racial identity appears to be declining in its relevance for most South Africans. There is evidence to support this suggestion in the HSRC survey already mentioned, in chapters that follow, and in opinion surveys undertaken from 1998 to 2004, that consistently show people saying that 'racial relations' are improving (Markinor 2004; Roefs 2005). Moreover, on the basis of extensive focus-group research conducted in the Western Cape, Simon Bekker and Anne Leildé (2003: 7) concluded: 'race is rarely the primary source of meaning and indeed only becomes primary in specific circumstances Otherwise it persists as one identity among many.' Recent journalism exploring some of the psychological problems experienced by upwardly mobile black Africans has demonstrated the continuing impact of race, but it also highlights the social divisions now associated with blackness (Tshoagong 2004; and see Mageza 2004). Of course, to describe a trend is not to deny that racial identity remains very important in the lives of South Africans, particularly, as Roefs (2005) demonstrates, for black Africans. Apartheid's residential segregation still determines where most people live and, as we have seen, there is a close association between 'race' and key social indices.

Moreover, cutting against the trend, 'race' can still have utility for politicians. In the 1999 general election, the white-led Democratic Alliance (DA) ran a campaign around the theme 'Fight Back', which identified with white fears about 'black crime'. More recently, Mbeki (2004) chose to racialise a debate on rape, possibly to divert attention from the government's failure to reduce the scale of the problem. In the longer term, ANC leaders probably have more to gain than DA politicians from stimulating concerns about race. If played carefully, the 'race card' is a powerful means of re-establishing a connection with poorer voters, particularly at election time. The card works mainly because, despite improvements, there is still segregation (the legacy of the Group Areas Act), only a minority of top jobs are held by black Africans, and nearly all of the country's poorer people are black (see Moleke 2003: 210-20). Nevertheless, so long as the ANC is committed to neo-liberal globalisation there will be constraints on its willingness and ability to engage in racial politicisation.

For opponents of the present government, ethnic politics has limitations. In the ten years prior to the 1994 election, more than 13,000 people lost their lives in violent clashes between supporters of the ANC and those of the Zulu-nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Threats of continuing violence and political instability convinced the ANC to accept a fraudulent IFP victory in KZN, to appoint IFP leaders as government ministers and to allow traditional leaders, especially in

KZN, to maintain a considerable measure of power. However, co-optation and conciliation, coupled with the possibility of coercion, weakened the IFP, and in 2004 it lost control of KZN. In addition, as Shula Marks (2004) has shown, the IFP's hold over Zulu society was undermined by generational, class and gender divisions. If ethnic political mobilisation has failed for the IFP, which has the most numerous language group as its base, it is unlikely to work for others.

Other approaches are discernable. On the basis of their focus groups, Bekker and Leildé (2003: 7) conclude that 'cultural affiliation . . . emerged as particularly meaningful' (contrasting this with racial identity). The Griqua, previously regarded as a coloured grouping, could, on the basis of Khoi ancestry, make a claim to 'first nation' status (and a supranational one to boot). Among some Afrikaners, language provides an important source of meaning, and also contained the potential to transcend racial divisions. Another strong identity was, as in Johannesburg, that of the Muslims (though in this case they were predominantly coloured). In addition to spiritual upliftment, religion provides Muslims with political influence, at least locally, and it supplies local and international networks of solidarity. Whilst these examples come from a corner of South Africa, the Western Cape, which has a very distinct history, culture and politics, one can, I sense, detect a similar pattern elsewhere. My impression is that black Africans are more likely to define themselves in terms of language – or province, which is usually closely related – than was the case ten years ago. And, as we have seen, religious affiliation is very important for most people, and probably more so than in the past.

The implication is that apartheid-defined ethnic identities, generally regarded as four 'races', may be giving way to new ethnic identities based, in particular, on language and religion. These new ethnicities, which are cultural rather than political, are easier to defend in terms of democratic discourse and practice, but they are also more meaningful to people in a context where politics have become less significant. The shift should be understood within the framework of the ending of apartheid, but can also be associated with the new ideologies, linkages and inequalities associated with globalisation. This analysis might lead one to rework the distinction between race and ethnicity. In the future, as in the past, if race is mobilised as an identity it is most likely that this will be done by those who are politically dominant. In contrast, ethnicity represents, as Hall suggested, 'a return to the local' (though, as I hope to show, it is only one form of such a return). With militant Zulu and Afrikaner nationalism now quiescent, ethnicity is primarily cultural and apolitical. This need not remain so. One can certainly envisage the

possibility of economic and/or political crises producing a re-politicisation of ethnicity. Language affinity might, for example, be utilised to advance the claims of particular politicians within the ANC, and there are some signs of this beginning to happen in the power struggle between Mbeki and Jacob Zuma, the former deputy-president of the ANC. Alternatively, opposition politicians from the DA, the IFP, the largely isiXhosa United Democratic Movement, or the mainly Setswana United Christian Democratic Party could find a way of forging a particular understanding of Christianity around which they might unite. There are, then, two key points. Firstly, racial identities may be waning, but they are very far from being obsolete. Secondly, whilst linguistic and religious identities might provide spaces within which people can understand the world, find friendship and secure material support, if politicised, they are likely to take a reactionary direction.

Working class

We have already seen that class identities are re-emerging in new forms, but I wish to probe a little deeper in terms of the working-class. South Africa not only has deep class divisions, it also has strong working-class organisations, and these are likely to remain a pole of attraction for many of those adversely affected by the 'double transition'. The most important of these bodies are the trade unions. South Africa's union density stands at about forty percent (excluding agriculture), which, compared to most other countries, is very high. COSATU, by far the largest of the union federations, has a total affiliated membership of about 1.8 million. This figure has altered little since 1994, but there has been a marked change in the composition. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is still the largest union (though its membership peaked in 1996); but whereas the next three largest unions were all in the manufacturing sector (in the metal, clothing and textile and food industries), now the second and third largest unions are both in the public sector (with schools and hospitals particularly well represented). Two main factors explain this shift. Especially in the public sector, the transition and new legislation provided more protection and increased opportunities for collective bargaining. Against this, unions in the mining, engineering and clothing and textile industries have suffered from retrenchments, most of which have been directly related to the removal of tariff barriers and exchange controls (i.e. to globalisation). Other considerations include the elimination of the main racial dynamic from worker militancy and various internal factors (with, for instance, the food workers' union experiencing debilitating divisions and NUM benefiting from relatively strong organisation) (COSATU 2000 and

2003; see also Buhlungu 2003, and von Holdt 2003).

At a micro-level, Bridget Kenny (2004) investigated class identities among East Rand shop workers, most of whom were members of a COSATU affiliate. By the end of the 1990s the workers had become deeply divided as a consequence of two new categories of workers being introduced by the large supermarket chain for which they worked. In addition to the old-style permanent workers, there were also 'permanent casuals', who had significantly fewer rights, and shelf stackers, who were employed by outside contractors. Different employment relations underpinned three distinct identities, yet, albeit in differing ways and with dissimilar levels of enthusiasm, all three categories looked to the union for support. Kenny concludes that whilst the specific content of 'class' had changed, it still had considerable meaning and relevance for the workers.

Transformation in the character of union membership has also affected non-COSATU unions (even to the extent that academic staff at my own university are now unionised). The core of the union movement still consists of black manual workers, but over the past ten years there has been a decline in the proportion of members who are migrants and a rise in the proportion of white-collar unionists, including a small yet significant number of whites (though the number of white unionists in skilled and other manual occupations has declined). Moreover, there is now far more co-operation between black and white unionists, notably in the mining industry between NUM and Solidarity, the core of which is the former whites-only Mine Workers' Union, and in the public services.

Another development has been, as Sakhela Buhlungu (2003: 189) observes, that union leaderships have become less accountable to their rank and file, with internal democracy generally weakened 'by new forces driven by individualism.' Nevertheless, by a large majority, most COSATU members, about 73 percent prior to the 2004 general election, agree with their leaders' support for the ANC (Cherry & Southall 2006; see also Molele 2004). This backing has not, however, prevented major conflicts between COSATU and the government. The former opposes GEAR, and it has held a number of well-supported general strikes against government economic policies (with the effect that privatisation of state assets has been slowed); in September 2004 some 700,000 government employees, mostly COSATU members, participated in the largest industrial stoppage in the country's history; there have also been well-publicised differences over HIV/AIDS and Zimbabwe; and, at the time of writing, there is a developing political crisis associated with the federation's support for Zuma. In the past, major COSATU unions have voted in favour of the formation of a

workers' party, but it is unlikely that such a party will be formed in the foreseeable future. Given the present level of support for the ANC among COSATU members, if a new party were formed it would lead to most affiliates splitting, and thus to a weakening of the labour movement. It is probably more likely that COSATU will seek to advance by working more closely, and perhaps merging, with the two smaller federations (one associated with the unions of skilled and white-collar workers, many of whom are white, coloured and Indian, the other connected with the black consciousness tradition). So then, working-class identity, as reflected in union membership, remains strong, but the content of that identity has altered in two important ways. First, the composition of the organised working class has changed significantly. Secondly, whereas before 1994 the mainstream of the labour movement was opposed to the government in virtually every respect, it now refrains from forging a separate political identity for workers. These key changes are related to both globalisation and the transition (and, of course, the two cannot be entirely disentangled).

However, we should not equate the working class with organised labour. By focusing on mobilising employed workers, and doing this primarily around the world of work, trade unions have left spaces in which new social movements have been built around issues such as service delivery, access to land, HIV/AIDS and the environment. Some of the more significant of the new movements are the Anti-Privatisation Forum (APF), the Landless People's Movement (LPM) and the TAC. The APF, which operates mainly in southern Gauteng, organises poor people around matters such as electricity cut-offs, the introduction of water meters and evictions. In a survey of virtually all the delegates attending the 2003 annual general meeting of the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (SECC), the largest of the bodies affiliated to the APF, it was found that only one-in-ten were employed, and that none were members of trade unions (Alexander 2003). A similar picture is revealed in studies of the Durban-based Concerned Citizens Forum and the Cape-based Anti-Eviction Campaign (Dwyer 2004; Oldfield & Stokke 2004). According to Zackie Achmat, the principal leader of the TAC, which campaigns on AIDS-related concerns, 80 percent of his organisation is unemployed (Friedman & Mottiar 2004). In urban and peri-urban areas, most of the LPM's support comes, once again, from those without formal jobs, but the organisation also mobilises farm workers, farm tenants and small-scale farmers (see Greenberg 2004). As one might expect, these organisations are overwhelmingly comprised of black Africans (though coloureds, whites and Indians sometimes assist at leadership level). In most cases a majority of activists are women, unlike

the unions, though men figure prominently as leaders (Benjamin 2004).

In addition to these formal social movements, recent months have witnessed an upsurge in 'spontaneous' protests in townships and informal settlements around the country. There is need for research on these militant protests, some of them violent, but they clearly reflect disaffection from ANC councillors, mostly around failure to deliver housing and services, and sometimes over corruption.

These new social movements and 'spontaneous' protests are rooted in particular urban and rural neighbourhoods, and they fit a pattern of 'returning to the local'. In their work on the Western Cape, Bekker and Leildé (2003) also noted the strong association between poorer, working-class people and local identity, though in their case these identities were not necessarily linked to resistance. They contrast this with the views of 'the affluent' for whom 'political meaning is derived from national issues and economic concerns are also stated at national level.' However, whilst the social movements are acting locally, they are also thinking – and indeed organising – globally. The TAC receives a considerable amount of financial support from foreign donors, and War on Want, one of the more radical British charities, provides funding for both the APF and the LPM. Key leaders, such as the APF's Trevor Ngwane, are frequently invited to participate in international social-movement gatherings, and Achmat was a candidate for the Nobel Peace Prize. Within the movements, the recognition of experiences that provide a link to people far away is a frequent source of inspiration and also, sometimes, a means of learning lessons about struggle. Steven Robins (2003) presents a similar case in relation to non-governmental organisations, though he is sceptical about the extent to which internationalism extends to the poverty-stricken base of these organisations (see also Dwyer 2004). Significantly, the two largest mobilisations by the new social movements both focused on United Nations gatherings held in South Africa – the 2001 World Conference against Racism (WCAR) held in Durban, and the 2002 World Summit on Sustainable Development (WSSD) in Johannesburg. Thus, globalisation is a significant factor in the development of new social movement identities, both in providing a focus of opposition (e.g. provision of water by French-owned companies) and in terms of emerging global networks. The unions, particularly COSATU, also benefit from participation in international union federations, but they are largely self-reliant financially.

The trade unions and the new movements clearly have different social bases, histories and dynamics, but there are also political differences. Significantly, COSATU and the main social movements held separate

marches outside both the WCAR and the WSSD. However, within the social movements there are different views about how to relate to trade unions. At one end of the spectrum, there is SANCO, which is part of a formal alliance with COSATU, the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP); at the other end there is the APF, the main leaders of which have been expelled by one or other of the alliance partners; and somewhere in the middle there is the TAC, which has a close relationship with COSATU. For some activists on both sides of the union/social movement divide, the political difference is regarded as one of principle – in effect either 'the opponents of the ANC are our enemies' or the 'allies of the ANC are our enemy' – but for most it is one of making tactical assessments around common interests. My impression is that the SACP has, since 2004, been repositioning itself with an identity that is more obviously pro-working class, thus clearly distinguishing itself from the ANC (see SACP 2004). Especially given that most COSATU leaders are SACP members or sympathisers, if this is more than a cosmetic shift it could pave the way for the development of a more cohesive working-class resistance identity. There was a strong suggestion of such a move in March 2005, when COSATU voted to co-operate with the movements (adding, however, that this should be based on 'a common political project') (Robinson 2005a). Significantly, most of the main social movement leaders have at least a theoretical commitment to working-class unity (and there is little of the autonomism that is found in Europe, especially Italy).

This brief consideration of the contours of working-class consciousness in South Africa touches on significant theoretical concerns. First, I find little basis to support the claim, *pace* Burawoy (2003: 242), that 'in the postcommunist era progressive struggles have moved away from distributional politics to focus on identity politics'. In Burawoy's next sentence there is an implicit distinction between 'identity' and 'class', so the former should be understood as meaning gender, ethnicity and so forth. From the evidence presented here, if we take 'progressive struggles' to be those associated with an expansion of democracy and equality, then, in South Africa today, these are principally about the distribution of resources; about who gets electricity, housing, land, anti-retroviral drugs or, indeed, decent pay. One cannot fully appreciate such struggles without an awareness of gender and race, but these are not central. Where ethnicity is a primary identity, as in some of the cases examined earlier, there is a good chance of it playing a reactionary role (though this is not inevitable). Secondly, and this time in response to Castells, it would be premature to assume that communal movements are more likely than trade unions to generate the kind of

resistance that provides a basis for the emergence of a new project identity. Clearly some communal movements – Zulu nationalism for instance – can be highly conservative, but also COSATU has actively supported the TAC, the struggle for land redistribution in South Africa and the democratic rights of Zimbabwean workers, and in each case it has done so against its ANC ally. Whilst there is a danger of confusing the forms of organisation with the content of their practice, it is also possible that Castells exaggerates the differences between trade unions and social movements. Thus, he (1997: 362) tells us that ‘a networking, decentered form of organization and intervention [is] characteristic of the new social movements’. He is doubtless right about some social movements, even in South Africa, but the movements I have mentioned, and they are the most significant ones, have hierarchical structures within which leaders are held accountable to the members (though, as with trade unions, there are also anti-democratic pressures).

I do not regard the notion of ‘working class’ as unproblematic; it is rather that the problem lies elsewhere. As with most writers concerned with this matter, my starting point is provided by Karl Marx. For him, a chain of concepts provided a link between capitalism and a working class that was conscious of itself as a class. Of course, he went further, thinking through the relationship between the working class and socialism, but that is not the issue here. For Marx, the exploitation of workers by capitalists lay at the heart of his understanding of capitalism (it was this that provided the possibility for individual capitalists to accumulate and thus compete successfully with other capitalists). He was aware of other ‘subaltern’ classes – the self-employed, slaves, peasants, and lumpenproletarians – but these were analytically distinct from the workers, the wage labourers, who, along with their families, constituted the socially dominant component of the subaltern masses, the working class (see also van der Linden 2005). Working-class consciousness, effectively a self-ascribed identity, was regarded as a product of the common experience of exploitation and of struggle against that exploitation. Especially in the latter years of apartheid this model provided a rough outline of reality (though, of course, there were no slaves, and the existence of peasants was debated). Now, however, the reality appears more complicated. We have the example of SEWA, which contributed to the development of a worker identity among self-employed women; i.e. among people not previously regarded as workers (and not just by Marxists, but by legislation as well) (see also Webster 2004: 388-90). Moreover, prostitutes generally regard themselves as sex workers (even when they are not employed), and from an undergraduate project completed in 2001 we learnt that local beggars talk about

‘coming to work’ in the mornings. Then there is the example of SECC, which, as we have seen, consists overwhelmingly of people who are unemployed, yet regards itself as being part of the *working*-class.

One possible solution is to develop a concept that either blurs the distinction between the unemployed and self-employed on the one hand and the employed on the other, or incorporates the latter into the former. In essence, this is the approach adopted by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000, 2004) when they speak of the ‘multitude’, and by Ashwin Desai (2002) when he draws on his experience as an activist-intellectual in Durban to write about the ‘poors’. Whilst generally sympathetic to the ‘multitude’ idea, Franco Barchiesi (2004: 8) is uneasy about the way in which, by abstracting a social form from social structure, it can become ‘all-encompassing and self-explanatory’. Hardt himself has recognised that it is ‘a political concept’ and ‘not about what is, but what could be’ (quoted in Callinicos 2003: 83). In my view, ‘multitude’ neither encapsulates popular consciousness nor provides a useful analytical tool.

A second possibility would begin by understanding unemployment using Marx’s notion of the ‘reserve army of labour’. Distinguishing the reserve army from the active army (i.e. those who are presently employed), he argues that the former is a consequence of and condition for the development of capitalism, providing potential recruits for the active army, and placing pressure upon it to work hard for low wages. Marx (1954: 603) also noted that when capitalism no longer requires workers, it throws them ‘from its own shoulders on to those of the working-class and lower middle class.’ Today, given that a) most of the reserve army is seeking employment (at least according to the official definition of ‘unemployed’), and b) dependent on the Unemployment Insurance Fund, or on the wages or pensions of family members, it is understandable that most of its members would regard themselves as working class. But what about the self-employed, such as street vendors (some of whom might, simultaneously, be defined as unemployed)? It would seem that in terms of consciousness, and probably biographies and expectations, there are at least two trajectories. On the one hand, COSATU has announced its intention to organise a new union for ‘self-employed workers’ (drawing on lessons learnt from SEWA); on the other, the National Traders’ Association, which is said to represent several thousand hawkers in Johannesburg, was reported to have responded: ‘we’re business people, not employees’ (Robinson 2005b). Despite the importance of class experience as a basis for mobilisation and identity, we know surprisingly little about the reality of unemployment and self-employment, and there is a definite need for empirical and theoretical work in this area.

In returning to the broader themes of this essay, there are some important additional pieces that need to be imagined or manufactured for the picture in our jig-saw puzzle to fall into place. Crucially, these include national, ethnic and working-class identities. A post-apartheid national identity has begun to take shape, but it is weak and heterogeneous, and likely to fragment in the face of significant economic or political crises. If this happens, contestation based on three identities is likely to come to the fore. First, there is an Africanist identity that the new ruling elite is likely to draw upon to maintain its base of support among the black African masses. Secondly, there are various ethnic identities that opponents of this elite can mobilise. I have suggested that these are more likely to be based on the new ethnicities of religion and language than the old ones based on apartheid ascription. Thirdly, notwithstanding social and political divisions, a new working class identity is also emerging.

USING JIG-SAW THEORY TO FINISH THE PUZZLE

There are no more jig-saw bits lying around and no single-piece spaces for which we can make convincing assumptions. There is a picture of sorts on the table, but not enough context to be confident about the direction and speed of events. We can see a house without a roof, but cannot be certain whether the roof has been blown off or is about to be added. In situations like this, one must make use of similar pictures seen elsewhere to help discern what is most likely.

Two considerations are particularly pertinent. First, several writers – including Neil Smith (1984), Harvey (2000) and Hart (2002) – recognise the importance of uneven development in explaining the temporal and spatial variation of social processes, including identity. Few among them – and Smith (1984) is an exception – acknowledge Leon Trotsky's contribution to the theorisation of uneven development, which he linked, dialectically, to combined development (using this approach to defend the idea of permanent revolution, i.e. the view that, because there was a connection between capitalism in less developed and more developed countries, it was possible for a socialist revolution to spread from the former, where its hold over society might be weaker, to the latter). After Joseph Stalin used his own formulation of the law of uneven development to argue that because China was fundamentally different from elsewhere, it was possible to achieve socialism in that one country, Trotsky (1969: particularly 148) clarified his position. Writing in 1930, he argued: 'But the specific features of national economy, no matter how great, enter as component parts and in increasing measure into the

higher reality which is called world economy'. For half a century, this view may have seemed implausible, but with the collapse of 'socialism' in Eastern Europe, the development of western-style markets in China, the general advance of neo-liberal globalisation, and, significantly for us, the end of apartheid, Trotsky's approach appears justified and even, perhaps, prescient. Clearly there is still considerable unevenness – though in its most obvious aspect, increasing inequality of incomes, this is taking a global form (Arrighi 2004) – but the main thrust of globalisation is towards combined development.

Secondly, whilst I began by clearing the table using contemporary theory, it is important to recognise that there is nothing purely contemporary about reflections on identity. As Geoffrey de Ste. Croix (1983) makes clear, the ancient Greeks had a strong sense of both class (particularly the propertied and poor) and gender, and the word 'ethnicity' is derived from the Greek *ethnos*, meaning 'heathen' (interestingly, though, the Greeks had nothing approximating to our notion of 'race') (see also Alexander 1987; Lewellen 2002: 104). Within the sociological canon, Karl Marx's distinction between a class 'in itself' and a class 'for itself' was a recognition that, with respect to the working class, consciousness of a common identity was a product of what E. P. Thompson (1963: 8) would call 'shared experience' (specifically opposition to exploitation). But Marx was also aware that people had multiple identities; that they could, for instance, be Communists and workers, or both of these and still have a national identity. In 1866, after a meeting of the General Council of the International Working Men's Association, he joked with Friedrich Engels: 'The English laughed very much when I began my speech by saying that our friend Lafargue and others, who had [in their theory] done away with nationalities, had spoken *'French'* to us, i.e. a language which nine-tenths of the audience did not understand' (quoted in Callinicos 1983: 166, original emphasis). Antonio Gramsci's (1971: 333) invaluable concept of 'contradictory consciousness', which dates from his time in one of Benito Mussolini's prisons, is an attempt to comprehend the way people handle, and only sometimes resolve, the conflicting sets of meanings associated with two primary identities (such as Catholicism and communism).

Nor were earlier Marxist writings limited to an interest in class identity. An especially insightful contribution was made by Abram Leon in *The Jewish Question* (1970), a work now largely ignored. This volume, completed two years before the author died in an Auschwitz gas chamber (aged only 26), set out to explain the longevity of Jewish identity. The notion of fluidity is implicit in Leon's thesis, which shows people both ceasing to be, and becoming, Jewish. For Leon, the essential

character of Judaism changed with time and space: moving to a close association with long-distance trade in early-Medieval Europe, surviving through usury once producer-capitalists were out-competing Jews as merchants, and eventually crystallising as resistance to the racialised oppression of 'decaying feudalism' and 'rotting capitalism'. A more influential source has been the work of the Manchester school of social anthropology, a major influence on Burawoy, though not read sufficiently widely among sociologists in South Africa today. My own early intellectual development was shaped by the work of the school's founder Gluckman (e.g. 1963), which, among other innovations, grasped the dynamics of Zulu identity through critical use of Marxist theory, taking cognisance of socio-economic constraints and unravelling a history of internal political conflict; by that of A. L. Epstein (1958) in explaining the material basis of urban ethnicity and class consciousness on the Zambian Copperbelt; and also that of Abner Cohen, my undergraduate tutor, notably on the value of ethnic identity for Hausa traders (Cohen 1969). To this list of key materialist writings on identity, one must clearly add Anderson's (1983) *Imagined Communities*, his treatise on nations and nationalism.

My concern, here, is partly to sound a sceptical note in response to post-modernist pretensions of having discovered identity, or at least having discovered how identity works. Terms like multiplicity, fluidity, hybridity and construction may be new in relation to identity, but the processes they define have long been appreciated by Marxists, who, by consistently relating them to other social phenomena, including agency, have, in my view, generally provided more satisfactory explanations, and, indeed, continue to do so. I am also concerned, however, to point to the long, but changing history of gender, class and ethnicity; nation and race are, arguably and in my view, younger forms of identity, more specific to the development of capitalism. It would be surprising if any of these identities had disappeared as a consequence of what we are calling globalisation. There may be a few writers – and Castells is not among them – who would argue that capitalism is dead, but their case is difficult to sustain and rarely made. The real issue is variation in the character and significance of these identities with time and space, and the periodisation of moments of change; moments when one can discern the appearance of new forms of these identities (even if, as Burawoy insists, these new forms have continuities as well as novelty).

In attempting to understand some of the dynamics involved in our emerging picture of new identities in South Africa, I would like, then, to make two propositions: firstly, we should be contemplating both similarities and differences with patterns found elsewhere in the world

(anticipating an increasing proportion of the former), and, secondly, that we need to be looking for both continuities and breaks in forms and types of identity. Before considering the present situation, it is worth reflecting on the moment in the early 1970s, now widely regarded as marking a turning point in both the development of globalisation and the character of identities, dividing what might be regarded as late modernity and post-modernity.

In my view, the analysis provided by Hall, and summarised above, was broadly correct. I think he exaggerated the character and depth of the changes, but was right about the trend, at least for North America and western Europe (and the trend became more marked from the early 1980s, when, after major defeats for trade union organisation, the full force of neo-liberalism began to be felt). However, it is worth taking a step back to the early 1960s, without which one cannot grasp the significance of the 1970s or the complexity of changes in terms of identity (and here I draw particularly on Harman 1988). In the European heartlands of imperialism, successful struggles for independence, and mass immigration from former colonies, were producing crises in national identity. On the other side of the Atlantic, the trauma of Vietnam and immigration, particularly from Latin America, would have a similar effect. Then, starting in the United States, but spreading outwards, increasingly militant struggles against racial discrimination helped ignite the movement for women's liberation and the gay and student movements. By late 1968, with US ghettos in flames, the Prague uprising, the general strike in Paris (the largest in world history), and much more, black, working-class and women's identities had been reinforced and left-wing politics had been strengthened. From the mid-1960s there were real, if partial, advances for black people (especially in the United States) and women and workers.

This period of struggles culminated in the mid-1970s with proletarian insurgency in Italy, a British miners' strike that forced the resignation of a Tory government, and worker-led defeats of a military dictatorship in Greece and fascist regimes in Portugal and Spain. It ended, however, with major class compromises that would pave the way to the defeats of the 1980s. The overall effect was similar to that described by Hall (even if the analysis is somewhat different): an early and continuing weakening of national identity, an intensification and then decline in working-class identity, and a shift away from black and women's radicalism towards more quiescent forms of racial and gender identification. The change cannot, however, be understood without an assessment of the rise and fall of popular movements, whether these are national or labour or more broadly social. Moreover, introducing agency

and the balance of class forces helps one detect a link to world economy and the rise of globalisation. The movements of the 1960s were partly a response to an emerging crisis in post-war capitalism, which highlighted the fact that, whilst most people had benefited from the long boom, many had not. The 1971 ending of fixed exchange rates – which would have a dramatic impact on financial speculation, and hence the development of both dimensions of globalisation – was a product of the growing economic crisis made worse by political unrest. With the benefit of hindsight, 1971 might be regarded as the pivotal year, but there was a period of transition between what we have characterised as the late and post-modern eras, rather than a sudden rupture.

Four aspects of this model can be extended to South Africa. First, from the late 1960s, there was a new student movement. Part of this, mainly white students, connected with the second aspect, a rising tide of worker militancy, notably at the time of the 1973 Durban strike wave. The 1970s and 1980s were marked by a growing and assertive workers' movement, one of the most powerful in the world, and to a strong worker identity. Another part of the student movement contributed, thirdly, to the development of the black consciousness movement (which fed into the 1976 Soweto uprising), and this received inspiration from Black movements in the United States. Fourthly, anti-imperialist struggles in Angola and Namibia, together with the workers' and black consciousness movements, produced a growing crisis for South African national identity. However, a key facet of South African history was largely, though not entirely, absent from changing identities in western Europe and North America. With the development of township-based struggles in the 1980s, the workers' and black movements tended to converge, both with each other and with the ANC (initially through its internal representatives), creating a new civil society and a reinvigorated project identity based principally on national liberation. At the level of identity, there is, then, evidence of combined and uneven development (though, actually, because of the magnitude and timing of the South African movements, the unevenness was more considerable than implied above).

The scale of political resistance in South Africa, as well as the country's different history of political economy, ensured that the rate of economic growth in the country was much lower during the 1970s than was generally the case in Africa, which received substantial loans from investors disappointed with returns from the industrialised North. Inability to repay these loans was a key factor contributing to structural adjustment (in effect, vertical globalisation in Africa). Partly because of its different economic trajectory and partly as a consequence of the anti-

apartheid struggle, and then attempts to resolve the conflict in the 1990s, the chief aspects of globalisation's impact were postponed as far as South Africa was concerned. That is, differences between South Africa and most of Africa, as well as between South Africa and the major northern countries, are clearly apparent (though it should be noted that in many African countries structural adjustment was fiercely resisted by new working-class movements, and that these movements often took inspiration from South African struggles). The point is, though, that in contrast to our northern and African comparators, strong working class, racial and (anti-apartheid) national identities persisted into the late 1990s. The question is, to what extent have the various effects of 1994 – particularly vertical globalisation – had an impact on the creation of new South African identities? Does our jig-saw puzzle now look more like that of other countries? This is the issue to which, in conclusion, I turn.

CONCLUSION: BEYOND THE GLOBAL POST-MODERN

There is much evidence in this volume highlighting the importance of South African particularities. The obvious example is South African national identity, which, inevitably, is unique, both in terms of its cultural associations and its specific history. As a new national identity – in its essence only eleven years old – it is probably more vibrant than that of nearly all other countries (though emphases on democracy, multi-culturalism and African nationalism have resonances with other parts of the world). We also noted the continuing significance of national variation among garment makers and car workers, and also with regard to pop music preferences. Moreover, a novel factor contributing to unevenness is the level of HIV/AIDS infection, which ranks among the highest in the world. It is important to underline the fact that not all new identities are driven by globalisation, and that, even where they are, they are modified by local conditions. The likely trend, however, is probably towards a weakening and fracturing of South African national identity. This is a consequence of both axes of globalisation: the vertical dimension increasing inequalities and reducing common experience, and the horizontal dimension expanding opportunities for shared understandings with people in other countries. The trend is not an inevitable one, since serious cross-border conflict would probably strengthen national identity, and this is also the likely upshot where international migration is met by animosity. Whatever the outcome of these contradictory pressures, the processes at work are ones that also apply elsewhere.

As in most other countries, there appears to have been some decline in identification with political parties (the 2004 US presidential

election being an exception). This is reflected in party membership, voting figures and survey data. It is sometimes argued by political scientists that a reduction in formal political participation is linked to globalisation, which has diminished the role of the state and frequently reduced the effective differences between major political parties. This logic might also be applied, in some measure, to South Africa, where the former governing party has collapsed into the ANC and where all major parties are committed to non-racialism and neo-liberalism. In South Africa, a decline in political party identities may also be linked to a general reduction in the significance of racial identities. From survey data, case studies and deductive reasoning, it seems that 'race' matters less than eleven years ago. Moreover, given the supreme importance this was accorded under apartheid, South Africa now looks less unlike other countries. Nevertheless, as with national identity, I have cautioned against uncritical projection of trends – there is still a substantial material basis for politicians to rekindle 'race' as a means of securing popular support.

To the extent that there appears to have been some decline in racial identities, this might not only be related to the end of apartheid and reduced levels of political participation. It could also be connected to the rising importance of other identities in people's lives. This appeared to be the implication of the 2000 HSRC finding that there was an increase in the level of 'personalisation'. In the absence of further information, one is left to hypothesise about this process, doing so partly on the basis of casual observations and discussions with students. My impression is that the phenomenon is associated with age, with the Y generation having more interest in consumerism and other aspects of culture than in formal politics and racial identities. This is the trend that Nuttall and Michael have observed, and it is also reflected in this volume's chapters on *The Zone* and students. Some readers might interpret this, doubtless negatively, as young South Africans joining their contemporaries around the world in turning their back on the plight of poorer citizens and endorsing globalised commodity fetishism. This is the ultimate fragmentation of identities, a kind of post-modern nihilism, and one can certainly find evidence for its existence. However, I also detect a more positive side to the phenomenon. This is about students battling to create some space for themselves in a world of high unemployment, of trying to make a difference in circumstances where politics have been devalued, and of questioning the world created by their parents' generation (demonstrating this by dressing and, sometimes, talking differently). Within this culture there can be highly sophisticated discussions of 'soapies', ironic considerations of politicians, and, especially

notable at present, a rise of public poetry that enables men to talk about personal feelings and assists everyone to reflect on the social problems of the day. If there is not yet, in South Africa, the same level of youthful mobilisation around the counter-politics of ecology and anti-imperialism that one finds in many other countries, it would also be wrong to equate personalisation with consumerism. Whilst Politics with a capital P is out, politics as a groping for critique – and, perhaps, eventually, a new identity – is alive and kicking.

As noted already, the old notion of blackness – unifying Africans, coloureds and Indians – has virtually disappeared. Moreover, whilst the job market, the legacy of the Group Areas Act and political suspicions mean that old ethnic identities – such as that of 'coloureds' in the Western Cape – still have purchase, there appears to be some shift in the character of ethnic identity (see also Erasmus 2001). This involves, in particular, drawing upon religion as a basis for ethnicity, though increased support for religious identities also has its own dynamics. The increased importance of ethnic and religious identification has also been observed in other countries, and, as elsewhere, a number of processes appear to be at work. One of these is Meyer and Geschiere's 'cultural closure', a straightforward reaction against globalisation, strengthened, perhaps, by the 'solace', as one of Dawson's interviewees put it, provided by religion. For people suffering the effects of vertical globalisation, or threatened by political change or horizontal globalisation, religion offers an age-old response. It provides explanations and prescriptions, usually some hope of a better existence (though commonly after death), uplifted spirits (sometimes linked to piety), companionship and social activities, and often networking opportunities and/or charity. These can be critical benefits, especially where opportunities for individual advance are lacking and class-based alternatives are remote. There is also, though, another dynamic, the global politicisation of religion that has its epicentre in the United States, and which received powerful expression in George W. Bush's re-election as President. This affects, in particular, Christian, Muslim and Jewish identities, and the international trends have ripples that spread to South Africa. Indeed, it is now clear that one of the advantages of religion is that it can provide international connections and a global identity.

In terms of labour and social movement identities there are also important linkages with other countries: the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and World Social Forum (WSF), to give but two examples. Whilst the ICFTU is a product of earlier eras it has attempted to adapt itself, albeit rather weakly, to new problems associated with globalisation, and, of course, the WSF is a child

of anti-neo-liberal resistance. If anything, despite some fragmentation, working-class identity is probably stronger in South Africa than in most other countries. The unions are not immune to the seepage of membership experienced elsewhere, but the decline has been less than in most places, and the number of people who regard themselves as workers is probably greater than the number of people employed (which is quite unlike the United States, where a large proportion of ordinary employees regard themselves as middle-class). In part, the new social movements can be linked to the post-Seattle phenomenon that has affected countries around the world. However, the issues are somewhat different to those that predominate, at least in Europe and North America; though even within these continents there is considerable variation, and there is a case for treating the United States as an exception (something its sociologists should take seriously when attempting to generalise). Anti-imperialism and environmentalism have made less of an impact in South Africa, and AIDS and poverty (including service delivery and land) have been more significant.

There are a number of conclusions to be drawn. First, there is still considerable variation in patterns of identity, and, indeed, these exist between all countries, not just between South Africa and the rest of the world. As argued elsewhere (Alexander 2001), the timing and form of neo-liberal globalisation has been uneven, and time-space compression is affected by, in particular, pre-existing resources. Moreover, new identities work with old materials, national mediators have strong political reasons for maintaining distinct national identities, and globalisation does produce returns to the local, including new ethnicities and new social movements.

However, secondly, globalisation is having the effect of making South Africa's jig-saw picture of identities look more like those of other countries. The post-modern era may have come later, but it did arrive, encouraging individualism and some fragmentation of old identities (especially race, but also class and gender). Moreover, whilst the spontaneous response to unwelcome effects of globalisation is usually in the form of a 'return to the local', this can lead onto unities and identities of difference. Actually, this dynamic is present in many cultural reactions, such as white and coloured Afrikaners making common cause, as well as in most of those related to class, such as people from different localities forming social movements. As argued earlier, in South Africa the development of new identities involves the re-emergence of old identities, such as class, but in new forms. Now, though, there are greater opportunities – mainly through new information technologies and cheapened air transport – for this process to occur at an international level. Car workers in the Eastern Cape know about conditions in plants in Lower Saxony, the Johannesburg

TJ is in frequent contact with India as well as Durban, young South Africans work alongside young Australians in London, and social movement leaders attend conferences in distant capitals. Of course this process is uneven, with the degree and character of international identifications related to resources, though also to options. Tehelim is now global but flower pickers are not. We should be wary, though, about assuming that wealth is the only issue here, for there is probably a higher proportion of Zimbabweans than South Africans working outside their country. Thus, Castells (1997: 11) surely overstates his case when he asserts: 'the network society is based on the systemic disjunction between the local and global for most individual and social groups.' There is a real sense in which a global recognition of place is emerging, and that sense is at least as strong in South Africa as South Carolina.

This leads me, thirdly, to the view that we are now moving beyond the global post-modern. We are entering a post post-modern era. The critical defining feature of this era – its name – has yet to come into focus, but two of its contours are clear enough. Globalisation is no longer seen as a faceless set of inevitable, and mainly economic, flows and forces. One of the effects of Seattle was to draw attention to the politicians whose decisions impact on poverty around the world. The importance of politics has been further underlined and highlighted by forceful assertion of US domination. For the first time in history we are living in a mono-polar world, and whilst this has been true since the collapse of the USSR its significance was not fully apparent until the twenty-first century. The US government has no qualms about ignoring the internationally-agreed Kyoto protocol on global warming and it brazenly invaded Iraq without United Nations (UN) support. Reactions to this new imperialism come in different shapes and sizes and with various implications for identity. There is still scope for nationalist responses, such as that led by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and anti-occupation resistance in Iraq, but more interesting, perhaps, is the internationalisation of Muslim and social movement organisation. There are now annual gatherings of the WSE, activists routinely cross borders to participate in protest marches, and 15 February 2003 witnessed an unprecedented, internationally-coordinated mobilisation, with about eleven million people joining anti-war demonstrations in more than 600 towns and cities around the world (Indymedia 2003).⁵ Alex Callinicos (2003: 13) makes a related point. Arguing that, whilst postmodernism may not be dead, it is dying, he claims that 'the debate has moved on, less because of some decisive theoretical refutation . . . than because the

⁵ I am grateful to David Renton for this information. Some estimates have suggested that the demonstrations involved as many 25 million people.

worldwide rebellion against capitalist globalization has changed the intellectual agenda.⁷

Finally, in terms of identity, the post post-modern is about a shift from fragmentation towards the emergence of new unities of difference, and increasingly these are evolving on a global scale. This does involve the rise of new identities, but the most powerful, including those related to class, entail a re-visioning of old identities. Whilst South Africa's entry into the post-modern era came late, its involvement in the post post-modern is only a few steps behind those parts of South America and western Europe that are leading the way. At the time of writing, a new working-class opposition is taking shape in the country: organised social movements, widespread community protests, a wave of industrial unrest, growing disenchantment among union leaders, and now, within the ANC, a rank and file rebellion against the perceived injustice of attacks on Zuma. The revolt is, as yet, inchoate, but it is being mounted by those on the wrong side of the growing gulf of inequality, and among their many voices one can often hear the words 'GEAR' and 'Mbeki'. The grievances are different from those raised in Buenos Aires, Berlin, Le Paz or London, but the underlying complaints are about the policies and politicians linked with neo-liberal globalisation. New oppositional identities develop unevenly, but the dynamics of world capitalism push them towards commonalities and combination.

There can be no doubt that new international resistance identities are taking shape, but what of new international project identities? All religions do, of course, have their own projects, but these can hardly be understood as new. There are signs, though, that new left projects are materialising. The global justice movement no longer contents itself with being *anti*-globalisation and *anti*-imperialism, but is increasingly concerned with developing a political alternative. Whilst the outlines of this alternative are contested and different emphases dominate in different countries, its themes include a deepening of democracy, redistribution of wealth, environmentally friendly development, and toleration of minorities. Castells may have been correct in assuming that such new project identities would principally arise out of new social movements rather than trade unions. However, from developments now taking shape in a number of countries – including Britain, Italy, France, Germany and Brazil – it seems that such alternatives are converging from a variety of sources.⁶ These vary according to country, but include important elements of the anti-war movement, left-wing Greens, non-sectarian Trotskyists, fragments of old communist parties, militant trade

unionists, expelled and disillusioned social democrats and, at least in Britain, a good number of Muslims. It remains to be seen how far these project identities will advance, but they should be regarded as further evidence for the development of a new era.

In South Africa, evidence for new project identities is more limited, but does exist within some of the social movements. This essay started with two images: Mbeki and iDENTiTY. They both capture something significant about South Africa today: the former a residue from the old modernism, though one with continuing salience; the latter a good example of the post-modern condition. But there is another side to social identities in South Africa, one that comes into view for those with a wide-angled sociological lens. This is a view that, albeit towards the edge of the frame, reveals signs of the post post-modern era now evolving. Zooming back in, one sees a third critical image. This one, date-stamped 31 August 2002, shows 25,000 supporters of the APF, LPM and many other organisations marching from the poverty of Johannesburg's Alexandra township to the steps of the UN's Summit for Sustainable Development in wealthy Sandton. The world's leaders, safe in air-conditioned luxury, are protected by South African police and troops, and a minister representing the local mediators of globalisation is booed off the demonstrators' stage. Most of the protesters have dark brown skins, but some are lighter in complexion, and some are quite pale. There are men and women, young and old, people who are HIV-negative and others who are Positive, gays and straights, communists, Christians, Muslims, Jews and Hindus. Many languages are spoken, but almost everyone understands the English of the platform speakers. Most of the marchers are poor and unemployed, but among them there are many workers, some of them union members. There are representatives from other countries, and there is even a sprinkling of students and lecturers from local universities. This is a new identity of difference, and with one voice it loudly proclaims: ANOTHER WORLD IS POSSIBLE!

⁶ I am grateful to Leo Zeilig for details supporting this point.

Chapter Two

Black workers, Fatherhood and South Africa's Gold Mines

Marlize Rabe

INTRODUCTION

GLOBAL MARKET TRENDS have always been closely associated with the gold mining industry. The rise and fall of the gold price have a direct impact on the hiring and firing of mine workers. One can even argue that globalisation is not a new phenomenon to the mineshafts of Southern Africa, as international investment played a role in the gold mining industry from the early stages (see also van Onselen 1976: 29; Allen 1992: 138). However, changes in the international market during the past three decades have had major repercussions for the gold mining industry in South Africa (as in other parts of the world as well). James (1992: 18-20) chronicled how the gold price rose dramatically after 1972 when the fixed priced regime, which dictated the price of gold from 1935 to 1972 (with a two-tier pricing system from 1968-1972), was abandoned. Market forces now determined the price of gold per fine ounce, and the price rose sharply in the 1970s. The increases in the gold price provided the possibility of much higher wages for black (i.e. African) migrant workers, more money being made available for research and the development of new technology, and the profitable mining of low-grade ore. The last of these resulted in more jobs being created. With the settlement of more mineworkers on the mines, a greater commitment developed amongst the workers to engage in 'mine-related interests' (James 1992: 82), and this was manifested in the establishment of the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) at the end of 1982 (NUM 2003). In 1987, a mineworkers' strike ensued, which resulted in lay-offs, and thereafter, 'management succeeded in

maintaining production levels with smaller work-forces in a number of telling instances' (James 1992: 22). From then onward, a reduced, albeit more skilled, workforce was employed.

The political and economic restructuring in post-apartheid South Africa created a changed *milieu* for the relationship between globalisation and the gold mining industry. Carmody (2002: 256) argued that '[t]he two sets of actors that have most promoted globalisation from within [South Africa] are the state and the country's major conglomerates', the latter including the big mining companies. From the late 1990s onward, big mining companies, based in South Africa, increased their participation in the global arena (see Carmody 2002: 266; Mabanga in *Mail & Guardian* 9 May 2003: 22; Retief in *Rapport* 1 June 2003: 16). The fact that many mines in South Africa are close to being worked out probably contributes to this occurrence (see Carmody 2002: 263). However, in trying to compete in the global market, the gold industry has to struggle with a past in which mining had become notorious for its exploitation of black mineworkers. This industry is generally seen as one of the pillars on which the apartheid regime was built. The impact of the mining industry and the concomitant migrant labour system on fatherhood, historically, forms the background to the discussion here. The emphasis in this chapter is, however, on black mineworkers as fathers. The concern is specifically centred on gaining an understanding of fatherhood from the vantage point of these mineworkers.

The notion of fatherhood is rather complex on its own, but it also raises the need to understand related concepts such as gender, masculinity and patriarchy. In concert, mineworkers also have to grapple with new understandings of work associated with men and women; for example, women – though still few in number – have now entered the underground workspace of male mineworkers.

The mining industry and its effects on the family lives of black migrant mineworkers will be outlined here within an historical context. This is followed by a short discussion on developments in the gold mining industry in recent times. The issues related to studying fatherhood then follows and three fatherhood patterns from a qualitative study amongst mineworkers are discussed.

In terms of the methodology employed in the fieldwork for this study, in-depth interviews were conducted with 30 black mineworkers at one mineshaft in Randfontein, southwest of Johannesburg. These interviews were undertaken during the second half of 2002, and eleven follow-up interviews were conducted in 2003. The respondents spoke different home languages and the interviews were generally carried out in the first language of the mineworker, with the assistance of

interpreters. However, in some cases, the interviews were conducted in English, if the mineworker felt that he could express himself adequately in this language. In the first round of interviews, an interview schedule was used, although not followed rigidly. Specific aspects of the mineworkers' lives were covered, such as their work history, the families in which they grew up, and their current family and household arrangements. In the follow-up interviews, fuller life histories were obtained. A few additional trips were made to the mine, where certain officials were interviewed to obtain background information on the particular mine. Two informal group interviews and other informal discussions were also held underground, where training for miners takes place. The main reason for deciding to approach the research from the father's point of view only was to ensure that the trust and rapport achieved in the research interviews would not be betrayed. Some of the men discussed delicate issues such as relationships with girlfriends quite openly with me, and in some cases their wives were unaware of these girlfriends. Pseudonyms are used to refer to all interviewees as they were assured anonymity.

MINING, MIGRANCY AND FAMILY LIFE (1886-1971)

It is not certain exactly when mining in southern Africa started, as mining has been part of Africa from prehistoric times (Wilson & Thompson 1982: 146; Davenport & Saunders 2000: 607). However, the main gold reef that was found in 1886 (Wilson 1972: 3), in what is now Johannesburg, changed the face of the South African earth and economy. Other smaller discoveries of gold deposits in the Eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga), Northern Transvaal (now Limpopo) and the Orange Free State (now the Free State) followed, and South Africa became the largest gold producer in the world. Significantly, Crush *et al.* (1991: 1) stated that although South Africa is the largest supplier of gold in the world, it has only low-grade gold-bearing ore. The profitable mining of such low quality of gold deposits was made possible by great numbers of poorly paid, unskilled workers. Without these workers, South Africa would have been no more than a minor supplier of gold.

Although migration is a common phenomenon worldwide, the significance of the oscillating migrant pattern of the workforce on the South African mines is that it stretched over such an extended period of time, and also over a vast geographical area. Mineworkers in South Africa settled into migrancy instead of being given the option to reside with their families near or on the mines. This migrancy pattern stood in contrast to central African countries such as Zambia and Zaire, where

‘there has been a deliberate and successful policy of replacing a system of oscillating migrants with one of labour stabilisation’ (Wilson 1972: 138).¹

The identification of a household in the migrant labour system in general already implicates the effect of the migrant labour system: Spiegel *et al.* (1996: 11–12) referred to ‘stretched’ households if the members do not live together. Spiegel *et al.* also noted that four criteria were traditionally associated with households, namely ‘co-residence, productive co-operation, income sharing and commensality’. In industrialised countries, production usually takes place outside the household, so this criterion is not applicable. It is further argued that in ‘at least the southern African context of labour migrancy’, co-residence and commensality, i.e. eating at the same table, are not applicable either. In order to identify a household, one is therefore left with only one criterion, namely, ‘shared income and its expenditure’. The members of a ‘stretched’ household may therefore not live and eat together on a daily basis, but they have a commitment to contribute to that household on an ongoing basis. One could add that there is an expectation of periodic and future co-residence and commensality. It is evident that many mineworkers have lived in such stretched households over the years, although some such mineworkers had commitments to ‘second families’ closer to the mine as well.

During the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the reasons for young able-bodied men entering into wage labour at the mine were often closely related to family matters, such as helping to sustain the extended family or paying for some important family matter or responsibility (see for example Mayer & Mayer 1974: 91). The expression took hold that they were at the mine ‘on business’, implying that they wanted to obtain the necessary money for a specific task and then return to their rural homestead (see Moodie & Ndatshe 1994: 33, 138). Although rural families thus became part of the cash economy, because they needed cash for specific matters (to pay *lobola* or bride wealth, buy cattle for *lobola*, pay the hut taxes, etc.), they relied mostly on agriculture for their livelihood. The cash that the mineworkers brought was welcomed, but it did not immediately become the main means of families’ livelihoods.

Most of the mineworkers themselves, their families, and the mine owners thus found the oscillating migrant pattern preferable to mineworkers settling on the mines. For the mine owners, migrancy provided a cheap form of labour. The mineworkers’ lives were still mainly oriented towards their families, and the lives of these families

were at the rural homesteads. However, this arrangement resulted in continuous shortages of labour on the mines, and recruitment of mineworkers from other southern African countries was common. In addition, mine management sought the help of the South African government to secure the supply of large numbers of unskilled labourers. The state obliged by imposing taxes on black people, in effect forcing them to seek work in order to pay these taxes. At the same time, the Native Land Act of 1913 restricted black people’s access to land, making it more difficult for them to rely entirely on farming (Lurie 2000: 343; Horwitz 2001: 7). Less and less land was thus available to black people, and dependency on the mineworkers’ wages increased.

Mining, though, became more sophisticated over the years; consequently, a more stable work force was required. Mineworkers with longer contracts were employed by the industry, as it needed more skilled (and fewer unskilled) mineworkers in order to compete successfully internationally. This meant that migrant labourers at the mines were living away from their families for progressively longer periods at a time. These lengthy periods made direct contact with children (if they had children) and other family members very difficult. Mine managements sometimes debated the advantages of having a stable workforce that lived permanently, with their families, near the mines. Such a stable workforce would cut the cost of training mineworkers, but that did not weigh up against the cost of providing family housing and social services (Crush *et al.* 1991: 76–78).

This process of having less land and depending more heavily on wages escalated, and in the 1970s longer contract periods became common. Mineworkers became less concerned with the ‘farm calendar’ (Crush *et al.* 1991: 152) and they became ‘career miners’ (Crush 2001: 16). Mineworkers became increasingly proletarianised, and by 1970 only ten percent of the income for most rural households came from agriculture (Lurie 2000: 343). It is thus clear that mineworkers and their families became more and more dependant on the cash economy, because they could rely less and less on farming for their survival. This process changed the importance of mining for families. Families saw less of the mineworkers (because of the longer contract periods), yet these absences were associated with economic value because of the money the mineworkers earned (see Dodson 1995: 139–40). Divided families were thus relatively financially sound.

It is therefore apparent that gold mining has been characterised by the migrant labour system and single-sex hostels for the majority of black mineworkers. Because the South African government placed such stringent restrictions on the movement of black people for the greater

¹ Ferguson (1999: 78–79), however, warned that one should not necessarily accept a singular view of migration in the Zambian context because of the complex social circumstances involved in migration.

part of the twentieth century, many children grew up without seeing their fathers on a regular basis. Black mineworkers with children assumed the status of 'nonresident fathers',² since the migrant labour system forced members of many families to live in different places.

GOLD MINING AND CONTEMPORARY MIGRANCY (1972-2003)

From 1972 onward, developments in the gold mining industry – such as market forces determining the price of gold per fine ounce, worker militancy, technological developments and better transport – improved the lives of many mineworkers. In the 1980s the mines also began to recruit workers close to the mines more aggressively, which resulted in mineworkers seeing their families more regularly (Crush 1995: 16). Jeeves & Crush (1995: 11) indicated that the gold mines had become dependent on foreign labour to the extent that in the early 1970s almost 80 percent of the mineworkers came from Malawi, Mozambique, Angola, Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland. However, the percentage of foreign labour employed on the mines dropped significantly from the mid-1970s, and by 1993 only 48 percent of mine labourers were not South African citizens (Davies & Head 1995: 204).

With the abolition of influx control laws in 1986 and the lifting of other restrictions on the mobility of black people later on (see James 1992: 82-83 and Oliver-Evans 1991), the legal aspects pertaining to the housing of black mineworkers were changed. Yet, the single-sex hostels are still in existence in the gold mining industry, and many mineworkers still live in them. The mineworkers that were interviewed put forward a number of reasons for continuing to live in single-sex hostels. The first of these reasons was the ever-present fear of retrenchment. Mineworkers did not want to invest in a house if they were not sure that they would have a job in that area in the future. Secondly, some mineworkers chose to live in hostels because they owned land far from the mine where their families lived. Thirdly, there is a housing shortage in urban areas and, although some mineworkers had moved into informal settlements that had developed next to the mines, not all mineworkers wanted to live under such conditions. Fourthly, the hostels offered cheap accommodation for men who wanted to save money for specific purposes (Simkins 1986: 39; Seidman 1995: 179; Horwitz 2001: 1; Smit 2001: 536). Moreover, many mineworkers preferred for their families to remain in rural areas, as it provided a place for them to return to if they

became economically inactive because of health reasons, retirement or lay-offs. Although legal restrictions on the settling of mineworkers whose families live near the mines have been lifted, practical and other considerations still divide families residentially.

In the 1980s and 1990s different mining houses provided various housing options for their workers, which included 'living out allowances', home-ownership schemes, rent and mortgage subsidies, and the single-sex hostels. Workers' choices between these different options varied from one mining house to the next. James (1992: 83) stated that '[b]ecause of the different responses, a centralised policy, agreed to by all members of the Chamber [of Mines], was not possible'. However, in 2003 the Chamber and the NUM signed an agreement regarding the gold mining sector with specific reference to housing. The agreement generally aims at improving the standard of accommodation for mineworkers. More specific agreements include: '50% of employees should be in a position to exercise accommodation options, including family accommodation, by the end of 2009' and '[t]he parties commit themselves to normalise mining communities and allow accommodation options by the end of 2013'. Within this broad framework, negotiations still take place on a mine to mine basis, and some mines will be in a position to reach these agreements earlier than the stipulated dates (Kebebi's personal documents, NUM-representative for housing).

At the mineshaft where the field research for this study was conducted, roughly 40 percent of the mineworkers lived in single-sex hostels, and a few mineworkers lived in married quarters on the mine. Provision is made for the wives of those living in the single-sex hostels to visit: a mineworker may rent accommodation from the mine for a few weeks by paying a nominal fee. Apart from these arrangements, women are not allowed in the hostels.

The mineworkers who did not live in the hostels received a 'living out allowance'. Some mineworkers moved out of the hostels and opted for rented accommodation. It is important to note that many mineworkers recruited from the communities close to the mine have never lived in the hostels, and stay with their families in rented accommodation. A limited number of them are home-owners.

FATHERHOOD

The term 'fatherhood' should be scrutinised closely, because this term is often used within a specific concept of family structure. Family structures are, however, very diverse, and also change over time. It is thus to be expected that notions of fatherhood are not static. For example, in the 1950s and early 1960s, families were often portrayed in western

²The term 'nonresident' father refers to fathers not living with their families, regardless of the reason for the absence (see Marsiglio 1995: 9).

society as consisting of a husband and wife with their offspring (nuclear family) living in a separate household (neo-local residence). Whilst the husband was expected to be the breadwinner, the mother was the homemaker who also provided emotional support to her family (see Steyn *et al.* 1987: 250; Popenoe 1996: 81; Newman 1999: 209-12). Amongst black South Africans the extended family was often portrayed as the norm, whereas the nuclear family form was described as a stage in a person's life (Nzimande 1987: 31-32). It is for this reason that Ziehl (2002) argued that household and family types should be studied across the life cycle of black families in order to understand their family structures. Household and family structures should be understood as being in flux, and one individual may live in various structures over his or her life cycle. This is especially relevant when studying communities in South Africa that were forced to live in particular settings, such as single-sex hostels, for specific periods in their lives.

Other general findings in South Africa from research on the family lives of black people include a traditional notion that women are responsible for child care (Ramphela 1993: 83; White 1999: 95), while fathers are seen as important role models (Viljoen 1993: 155), heads of households (Walker 1995: 421), and as being responsible for discipline (Campbell 1994: 41). Bruce *et al.* (1995: 55) stated that cultural beliefs may even prevent men from being directly involved in taking care of children. There is, however, a strong belief that men should provide financially for their children (Erasmus 1977: 16-21; Møller 1986: 575; Campbell 1994: 40).

The feminist movement has challenged views that regarded women only as mothers and housewives. Over time, this has resulted in more opportunities for women, and more women have entered the job-market instead of becoming full-time housewives. As mentioned, even in the gold mining industry a few women are now employed as underground mineworkers. At the shaft where this research was conducted, such women have been employed in small numbers since 2000, and at the time of the fieldwork, comprised approximately one percent of the workforce. The changing roles for women, however, also imply changing roles for men. In the past few years, studies on fatherhood in western countries have started to focus on the 'new emerging fatherhood' as a manifestation of changed gender experiences. The emphasis is often on the roles of fathers in the household. Present-day fathers have become more involved in sharing household and child rearing responsibilities, than was the case in previous generations (see Steinmetz *et al.* 1990: 109; Bruce *et al.* 1995: 55; Popenoe 1996: 119-21; Popenoe *et al.* 1998: 257; Coltrane &

Collins 2001: 116). It should, however, be made clear that such portrayals of family life are always associated with a specific socio-economic class, cultural setting and time period. Smit's (2000: 656-7) research indicated that white South African men's roles are changing towards more involvement in household and fathering tasks, thus following a pattern similar to the one found in western society. There are some indications that the same pattern is developing amongst young black male professionals (Morrell 2001: 32). To my knowledge, no such studies have been undertaken exclusively on fatherhood amongst black males in South Africa, although glimpses of fatherhood can be obtained from research concerned with the domestic and family lives of blacks, such as the work of Ramphela (1983). The focus here is on whether 'new' notions regarding gender equality and aspects of the 'new emerging fatherhood' are also found amongst mineworkers.

The aim of this study was not to approach the mineworkers with a ready-made definition of fatherhood, as *their* understanding of fatherhood was a chief concern. The 30 men interviewed for this study are collectively the fathers of 125 children. They are either the biological fathers of these children or they take care of the children within their households i.e. social fatherhood. There was a very strong sense amongst all of them that they should be able to support their children financially. In practice, this means that the children should have enough to eat, be clothed and be educated; in some cases money for special treats was also mentioned. Many of the respondents, however, believed that a father's responsibility does not stop there. Their expectations of fatherhood were often strongly influenced by their experiences of their own fathers.

Two trends have emerged in this regard: some men consciously tried to be different from their fathers, particularly if they experienced beatings or grew up in poverty attributed to a father's lack of financial support, while others saw themselves as following the same path as their fathers. The latter often had very positive images of their own fathers or they accepted paternal authority without question. Men with strong rural ties seemed to exhibit traditional notions of gender, with a clear separation between 'men's work' and 'women's work'. The caring of children was mainly left to women, and in some extreme cases little interaction took place between the father and his children. Some men, however, reported shared household responsibilities and involvement in their children's lives. In other words, traces of the 'new emerging fatherhood' can also be found amongst mineworkers.

There is a tendency amongst researchers to identify two types of mineworkers in the mining industry: those with strong rural ties, and those who are proletarianised, with little or no rural ties. A tendency to

see the latter replacing the former is also detectable (see Moodie & Ndatshe 1994: 11–43; Crush *et al.* 2001: 16). Based on the case studies below, it will be argued that the picture of mineworkers is more complicated than only ‘those with rural ties’ and ‘those without rural ties’. Three fatherhood patterns were identified from the interviews by focusing on recurring themes articulated by clusters of interviewees. These recurring notions or ‘clusters’ were then organised in terms of three patterns:

- those with fairly strong rural ties, who tended to follow African traditions – this pattern is referred to as ‘traditional African fatherhood’;
- men with few or no rural ties, who followed or aspired to a traditional western lifestyle – ‘traditional western fatherhood’;
- men associated with the ‘new emerging fatherhood’.

This should not be taken to imply that all the men can be put neatly in one of these ‘boxes’ of fatherhood patterns, because some men may have characteristics that can be associated with more than one of the three identified patterns. However, these patterns presented themselves strongly enough to be useful as a means of arriving at a deeper understanding of the way in which fatherhood was perceived by the mineworkers themselves. The cases discussed below were selected on the basis that they most clearly illustrated the identified patterns of fatherhood.

TRADITIONAL AFRICAN FATHERHOOD

‘Traditional African fatherhood’ typifies men who unquestioningly uphold the traditions according to which they were raised. These men were also convinced that their children would practice these traditions in the future. They had strong rural ties, and their extended families were often involved in subsistence farming. Many of them accepted gender-specific roles as a way of life. Although they valued formal education for their children, they did not envisage that all of their children would complete Grade Twelve³ or obtain a tertiary qualification. They themselves often had low formal educational levels, and were seldom able to provide any detail on their children’s schooling; for example: ‘I don’t know the subjects, I just know he has passed, but I don’t know the subject’ (Richard, interview).

³ In South Africa children go to school for twelve years. It used to start with Grade 1 and Grade 2, and then continued from Standard 1 up to 10. This system changed in the late 1990s, and now schooling runs from Grade 1 to 12. It has been my experience that mineworkers in South Africa from other Southern African countries automatically ‘translate’ their education systems into the South African system when speaking to a South African like myself.

At the workplace, men in this category were regularly described as ‘good workers’, because they followed orders and did not ‘cause trouble’. They may not necessarily have enjoyed their work on the mine, but they regarded it as an important factor in sustaining their families, and they would, therefore, continue working at the mine until they retired or were retrenched. One of the major reasons for this acceptance of their circumstances is that there are few viable alternatives to working at a mine. In the example below, Jerome’s life illustrates many of the factors associated with ‘traditional African fatherhood’.

Example 1⁴

Jerome was a small-built man with greyish hair. He was neatly dressed, but not stylish, like some of the other interviewees. He was polite, and answered any question without hesitation.

Jerome’s father had three wives, and he was a son of the youngest wife. His mother passed away when he was a baby, and he did not describe his father (who passed away in 1973, when Jerome was 19 years old) as having played a big role in his life. He said in the first interview: ‘My father did nothing good for me because he had a lot of kids’, and in the second interview: ‘my father was a drunkard, we didn’t have anything, we did not have cows, goats or anything’. There were a lot of quarrels between his father’s wives, and he seemed to have a negative view of his father’s polygamous marriage. Yet, Jerome had two wives in Mozambique. He was the same age as his first wife (both were born in 1954), and 15 years older than his second. On asking him why he decided to take a second wife, he replied: ‘My first wife said to me she was suffering, so she gave me permission to take a second wife’. Responding to the same question in the second interview, he replied:

The first wife was complaining that, for example, if she wants to go and visit relatives, the children are all alone at home. So she wanted me to marry another wife, a second wife, so that she can take care of the children at home as well as the things at home in the house.

Jerome described the relationship between his two wives as harmonious and caring. The first wife seemed to be accepted by all as the head wife, and the money for the household was left in her hands. When asked about his feelings toward the possibility of his sons taking second

⁴ Interviews with this mineworker were conducted in Shangaan, with the assistance of two different translators in the first and second interviews.

wives, he said that he had never heard any of them talking about a second wife, and he did not know whether they were thinking about it.

Jerome fathered five sons and four daughters with his first wife, and one son and two daughters with his second wife. His eldest child was born in 1973 and is hence four years younger than Jerome's second wife. Between the two interviews, Jerome's second wife gave birth to twins. At the time of the last interview, he was thus the father of fourteen children. In addition, Jerome had six grandchildren. Two of his sons worked on the mines in South Africa (one at a gold mine and one at a platinum mine). When asked if he had a favourite child, Jerome admitted that he was very proud of his son who was in Grade Twelve and wants to become a teacher. His other children left school at different levels, the highest being Grade Nine. Jerome explained: 'I tried my best to help them to go to school, but you know these days the girls fall pregnant so that is what happened to my children. They fell pregnant when they were in Standard Five or Six'. Jerome himself had completed Grade Four, his first wife never attended school, and his second wife had completed Grade Seven.

Before Jerome started working on the mines in South Africa in 1972 (when he was 18 years old), he had worked on farms in Mozambique for four years. It seemed as though the experience that he gained there was put to good use, as the family had some land where they grew maize, tomatoes and other products very successfully. Members of his extended family worked in the fields (including his daughters-in-law), but he also paid other people to help at certain times. Jerome explained in detail how he built a device that holds enough rainwater to supply them with water for an entire year.

Jerome did not believe that sons and daughters should be raised in the same manner. All his sons went to initiation school.⁵ He had no question in his mind that *lobola* (bride wealth) should be paid. (Two of his daughters got married in traditional style between the two interviews.) Jerome described himself and his family as active members of the Zion Christian Church (ZCC). In the ZCC, traditional African beliefs are integrated into the Christian belief system. It seemed that the latter formed an important part of their lives.

Jerome lived in a hostel at the mine, and he worked as a 'generalist.' This is a title given to someone who has enough experience to perform a broad range of activities underground. He lived in a room with four other Mozambicans (at these hostels the mineworkers were allowed to

⁵ This is a traditional cultural rite where boys are taken away from their homes to be given guidance on how to behave like grown men. The importance and the exact nature of this vary for the different African cultures found in Southern Africa. In addition, urban lifestyles are also affecting the traditional manifestation of this rite. Some African cultures also have initiation rituals for girls.

choose their own roommates), but said that there were no problems working with other ethnic groups underground. Nevertheless, he did not belong to the official trade union, as he believed Xhosa dominate the trade union. He did say, however, that the trade union promised to get the hostels converted into family rooms; a move that he supported. The fact that Jerome welcomed the conversion of the single-sex hostels into family rooms should not be interpreted as giving up his rural homestead. Rather, his response was an indication that he would like his wives to visit him in more pleasant circumstances for longer periods of time (both of them had visited him twice, on separate occasions, during the time that he had been working at the mine). Some of his children also visited him from time to time. Jerome saw himself working at the mine for another few years, provided he was not retrenched.

TRADITIONAL WESTERN FATHERHOOD

I have used the term 'traditional western fatherhood' to refer to mineworkers who followed or aspired to a lifestyle centred on the nuclear family and a gendered division of labour. Their wives, or partners, and children were urban-based, although the mineworkers did not always live with them. The father's ability to provide financially for his family was emphasised, and the children were raised with clear images of what was expected of them as women or men. The children were encouraged to follow careers that were regarded as appropriate for them as men or women. These fathers valued education for their children. They had generally had a few years of schooling and were hence literate. They valued their jobs in the mining industry, but they did not necessarily want their children to work on a mine as well. Mineworkers in this category respected those African traditions that are practiced in urban areas, for example, *lobola*. Some men in this category exhibited a lifestyle that was accompanied with the notion of appearing respectable to outsiders; for example, fidelity within a monogamous relationship was stressed. Other men, however, engaged in relations with more than one woman at the same time. Some of these men felt guilty about such relationships, particularly those who were affiliated to churches that subscribed to conservative western values.

Example 2⁶

Lukas (born 1960) hailed from Lesotho, and he started working in the mine industry as a production assistant in 1978. He came to the mines with a grade seven qualification, which may have been a little below

⁶ This interview was conducted in English.

expectation, given that his mother had been a teacher. He worked underground until 1996, and thereafter, started with clerical work above ground.

Lukas' mother and father passed away in 1998 and 2000 respectively. His grandmother, who raised him while his parents were working, was still alive at the time of the interview, and he visited her at least once a year in Lesotho. He did not seem to have any other ties with Lesotho, his only sibling having also passed away, and he was in the process of obtaining South African citizenship.

Lukas had four sons and one daughter with his wife. They had lived in the married quarters of the mine since 1990. He married his wife in 1980, but during the first ten years of their marriage his wife lived in Lesotho. He maintained that he was faithful to his wife during that time, although he admitted having sexual thoughts about other women.

At the time of the interview, Lukas's wife was running a *spaza*⁷ shop. His eldest son was studying mechanical engineering at a college, and his remaining children were at school. He made it very clear that it was his wife's and daughter's duty to clean the house and do the cooking. Over weekends, he and the boys were responsible for the garden. He maintained this clear allocation of work according to one's sex in other areas as well. For example, responding to a question of women working underground he said:

Not underground, because, *ai*,⁸ it is not safe for the women working underground. A lot of dust underground, the machine is working underground in a small room, you see? And then, *ai*, the women working underground, I don't like it.

Lukas saw himself as a good father. He said:

My children will say that I am a good father, I don't make 'geraas'⁹ with my children. When they make something wrong I sit down with them and say this thing is not good. My daughter is now 15 year[s], so I tell my daughter if you go to the boys you don't get a future, you see?
... Even my sons, I sit with my son, now everything is very

⁷ A common term used in South Africa to refer to a small shop that sells various grocery items. It is often a room attached to a private house, and the shop is usually managed by one or more family members.

⁸ An expression of dismay or resignation, used mainly by Afrikaans speakers.

⁹ An Afrikaans word used by the interviewee to indicate interference in his children's lives in a noisy manner, e.g. scolding them.

fast ... I don't want my children to go to nightclubs, I want them to sit at home and reading their homeworks [sic].

Lukas wanted his daughter to work in a bank after finishing school. He seemed to spend a great deal of time with his children, and he smiled a lot while speaking about them. Lukas's general idea of a good father was someone who was able to support his children financially and who did not drink. He saw his children practicing the custom of *lobola* in the future without problems.

'NEW EMERGING FATHERHOOD'

The term 'new emerging fatherhood' was used in reference to fathers who took care of and spent time with their children from a young age. The mineworkers who exemplified this category saw their children as individuals, with different needs and aspirations. When talking to their children they tried to understand the world from the child's point of view. In other words, they showed empathy for their children. Because these fathers had a better understanding of their children's life-worlds, they did not necessarily expect them to carry on with traditions:

To me, you know, I do not think it is important to pay *lobola*, but our culture has put us there. But to me, you know, if my child has made love to a woman, it is supposed to be a wonderful thing. If she or he want[s] to pay *lobola*, I have no power to push him to do this and this and this (Dean, interview).

These fathers often had great expectations for their children's careers, but these tended to be realistic since they took the child's potential and views into consideration. The fathers in this category valued formal education, and had generally had at least ten years of schooling themselves. Some wanted to improve their own qualifications, or supported the idea of their wives doing so. One of the interviewees, who was divorced from his first wife and living with his second, had this to say:

The first wife, I tried to put her to learn telecommunication and then she had a certificate for that. Now I want to put the second wife to do something that will help her to get a job. But I try to discuss this with all of them and then they say to me that this is a good idea (Dean, interview).

These men were often promoted within the mining industry, or they became shop stewards within the trade union. Some of these men did not foresee a future in the mining industry, and may, in the future, try to secure a job or start a business outside the mining industry. Across the three patterns of fatherhood used in this investigation, the men in the 'new emerging fatherhood' category had the highest formal qualifications and experienced advancement in their careers. Their achievements were generally complemented by those of their partners, who had obtained relatively high formal educational levels, and held qualifications such as teaching or nursing diplomas.

Example 3¹⁰

Steven (born 1956) lived with his wife and four sons in his own house near the mine. Steven and his wife were Swazis, and they both originally came from Paulpietersburg in Mpumalanga. His wife was a nurse. Between the two interviews, Steven's eldest son had become a learner miner¹¹ in the Free State after finishing Grade Twelve the previous year. When I asked him about the importance of education, he responded: 'Education is the key'. He envisaged his son as a manager at the mine in future. Steven did not see his second son (in Grade ten at the time of the interviews) joining the mine, though. He said: 'No, that one is too soft. I don't think he can do anything in the mine industry . . . Maybe he can do something different because he like[s] music, he like[s] other things.' (Steven, interview).

Steven's elderly parents (in their eighties at the time of the interviews) were still living in Paulpietersburg and Steven, his wife and children visited them every few months. Steven was conscious that traditions and cultural practices were changing. For example, when I asked him if his sons would pay *lobola* in future, he answered: 'It is going to depend on that family. I have only boys and I don't think they will use *lobola*. But if they want *lobola*, I will follow . . . the instruction from the family'. He also demonstrated empathy towards his children's questions regarding some of the cultural ceremonies practiced in the rural areas when visiting their grandparents.

¹⁰ This interview was conducted in English.

¹¹ Although the term 'miner' is often used quite loosely, it actually refers to a certified miner who acts as an overseer underground. To work as a certified miner involves high levels of responsibility, such as ensuring that it is safe for a team to enter a workspace. A miner can be (and often is) held legally responsible for accidents that occur underground.

Steven reflected on the fatherhood role by referring to his own father:

Eeh, he was a strict somebody and according to our culture you know the father is like a lion, you understand, he does not think there is a chance to smile and to joke . . . The best thing that I remember from my father is [that he] assist[ed] us with clothes and foods . . . we never suffered like other children . . . the bad thing of our father, he didn't give us that love, the relationship was not so good when we were growing to guiding us . . . because a child really needs guidance from the father sometimes, not only the mother, but the father also. He must guide the child, especially a boy; there are some things he can't discuss with the mother.

Steven described how he consciously tried to be different from his own father by discussing things with his children, and he also joked with them. He still saw it as his responsibility to look after them financially, and he emphasised his ability to give them pocket money. Steven did not regard himself as religious, and did not take part in religious activities. He made sure, however, that I understood that he was not against religion, and that his wife and children, as well as their respective extended families, were active in the ZCC. Steven was an artisan by training, with a Grade ten school qualification. He had worked for various companies, joining the mining industry in 1988. A few years before the interview he had been elected through the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) as a safety officer; a post that paid better than his job as an artisan.

DISCUSSION

The data suggested that there was no homogeneous picture of fatherhood in the mining industry, although overlaps were, to some extent, detected. For instance, both the 'traditional African fatherhood' pattern and the 'traditional western fatherhood' pattern maintained a division of labour according to gender. The difference was that the 'traditional African fatherhood' pattern had an extended family in a rural setting as the focal point, while the 'traditional western fatherhood' pattern had the nuclear family in an urban setting as the focal point. Even beliefs regarding the division of labour according to gender seemed to entail differences. Men associated with 'traditional African fatherhood' accepted changed gender roles as a way of life that is not

threatening. If women were to take over responsibilities such as handling financial matters because of the mineworker's absence, for example, it was regarded as a practical reality of life, rather than as a cause for concern. Two men associated with this pattern even said that they would allow their daughters to work underground, but this appeared to be a minority view. Men associated with 'traditional western fatherhood', however, were quite adamant in maintaining a strict division of labour between the sexes both at home and at work. Overlaps and differences between the 'traditional western fatherhood' pattern and the 'new emerging fatherhood' pattern were also discerned. Both had nuclear families in an urban setting as the focal point, but men associated with the 'new emerging fatherhood' pattern were more likely to take childcare duties and household chores upon themselves, or to share these duties with their partners.

The three patterns of fatherhood were strongly associated with the formal educational levels held by the mineworkers. The findings indicate that the higher a person's formal educational level, the more likely it is that they will exhibit fatherhood patterns found in western societies, i.e. 'traditional western fatherhood' and 'new emerging fatherhood' patterns. Education has, in the past, been linked with mineworker attitudes. In a study amongst Sotho mineworkers in 1976, it was found that education was a determining factor in these mineworkers' attitudes towards mine work (in Moodie & Ndatshe 1994: 35). I would suggest that high formal educational levels are often accompanied by exposure to, or knowledge of, western values. Hence, westernised family values, such as those relating to notions of fatherhood, would be expected amongst those with high levels of education. In the study being reported in this chapter, there were, however, a few exceptions to this rule. Many mineworkers were interrupted in their schooling because of poverty, political influences, and other life circumstances. Some of these men were exposed to western values, and displayed a level of intelligence that belied their low formal educational qualifications. These men exhibited similar values to men with relatively high formal educational levels. The formal educational levels of female partners are also of importance here. Wives or girlfriends often had similar levels of formal education to those of their male partners. Most of the female partners of the men associated with the 'new emerging fatherhood' pattern were teachers, nurses or community workers. The men in this category tended to have closer relationships with their children, which could be attributed to their involvement in child-rearing and household chores; tasks that they saw as their responsibility, and not as the sole duty of their female counterparts.

The identified fatherhood patterns and their relation to patriarchy

are also of interest. The wives and children of the men in this study are only presented from the point of view of the male mineworker, yet it is clear that the majority of men still regard themselves as the heads of the household. They often portrayed themselves as taking the views of wives or girlfriends and children into consideration in the everyday running of the households or when taking decisions, but the ultimate authority seems to be in the hands of the men. I do not want to suggest a singular type of patriarchy here. Bozzoli (1983) argued convincingly against such a simplistic view of patriarchy in other contexts. Bozzoli used the term 'patchwork quilt' of patriarchies, and analysed the relationship between patriarchy and modern capitalism. Similarly, in this study, different patriarchies seemed to exist. The 'traditional African fatherhood' pattern, for instance, can, to a certain degree, be described as a seldom-challenged form of patriarchy. In this category, the father controls the finances and important decisions and other aspects of the family's lives are made by him. However, the mineworkers associated with this pattern of fatherhood were aware that their wives had a certain amount of autonomy in the household because of their own long absences. They seemed to accept this autonomy of their wives. For example, many men gave their money to their wives without any hesitation, because their wives had proven to them in the past that they were able to manage the household successfully and that they did not squander the money. In the words of one mineworker: '... [I]f there is a thing that I want, I will say this is important ... but if not, I give it to them because I can see they don't waste money' (Simon, interview). According to another: 'Yes, she spends the money the way she likes' (Richard, interview). The men associated with the 'traditional western fatherhood' pattern insisted, for example, that their wives did the major part of the housework (although practical arrangements sometimes led to a few exceptions), while they saw themselves as the providers of the family.

In the case of the 'new emerging fatherhood' pattern, the wives and children seemed to be consulted on many issues, but final authority still rested in the hands of the husband or father. Tony (interview), for example, was clearly a 'hands-on' father, and we shared some incidents from our lives on coping with small children in supermarkets. Solly, one of the interpreters, took part in our discussion, and he kept on pushing Tony for answers on household chores. When Tony said that he did some cooking, Solly asked him if he enjoyed it. Both of them laughed, and then Tony replied: 'No, I do it because I want to eat ... but it is woman's work'. Patriarchy may thus appear in other forms or, at times, may even be masked (perhaps for the benefit of a female interviewer such as myself), but it is still an aspect of fatherhood that cannot be ignored.

Although it is not within the scope of this chapter, it is clear that family background and experiences of their own fathers, individual life histories of mineworkers and their wives and/or girlfriends, as well as the quality of the relationship between fathers and mothers, will influence men as fathers.

CONCLUSION

The gold mining industry today holds many opportunities for some, but it is also insecure, because the threat of retrenchments is always present. Global market trends together with government policies had, and continue to have, a huge impact on the daily lives of a gold mineworker. Over the past three decades, these external influences have changed the mining industry in several ways. In this chapter, the influence of these changes on the households and family structures of mineworkers has been discussed, with particular emphasis on the notions of 'fatherhood' espoused by the mineworkers themselves. To simplify the argument, a volatile gold price results in the ever-present threat of retrenchments. Such insecurities prevent many mineworkers from living with their families in one household, as another home-base may be needed in future when jobs are lost. In addition, changed working conditions and policies, such as the inclusion of women as underground mineworkers, convey challenging views of gender to a male-dominated industry. Changed fatherhood patterns can surely also be indirectly linked to influences of urbanisation, proletarianisation and improved technology.

Within these changed circumstances, three dominant fatherhood patterns were identified and discussed with the aid of case studies. Different concepts of gender, for example in relation to patriarchy, can also be distinguished. There seem to be some tentative links between the identified patterns of fatherhood and the working patterns of mineworkers. These links may very well emerge because the same factors seem to influence mineworkers as 'workers' and as 'fathers'. These factors include formal educational levels, family background, and individual life histories of the mineworkers as well as those of their girlfriends and/or wives. One can therefore argue that globalisation is not new to the mineshafts of South Africa. However, because of the complexity of the long-term relationship between globalisation and mining, the effect of globalisation on fatherhood has allowed novel conceptions of the identity of 'father' to emerge amongst South Africa's mineworkers.

Chapter Three

New oppression, new identity: Flowers and female farm workers in north west

Carina van Rooyen

'All our fates are linked within this [global economic] system but our precise position in it depends on a multiplicity of factors such as our gender, class background, colour, ethnicity, caste, whether we live in a rich industrially advanced society or a poor country of the Third World.' (Brah 1991: 168).

INTRODUCTION

CATHERINE HAS BEEN working at Green Fingers Farm for two years.¹ Five days a week, a bus picks her up at 6am to take her to work and then drops her off at the same spot at around 6pm. In summer she still has an hour or so of daylight to complete her duties around the house. In winter it is already dark by this time, and she faces the nerve-wrecking walk to her four-roomed brick house, where the rest of the eight-member household awaits her return. By this time of day, the household's water has usually run out, as there is no access to running water in the house or the yard. Instead, she buys water from neighbours and vendors at a cost of 40 South African cents (seven US cents) per 25-litre bucket.² After a long day's work Catherine cannot even drink a glass of clean water in her own home.

But the cost of water for Catherine is still much cheaper than that for Jane. In the informal settlement of Wonderkop where Jane lives, she

¹ Throughout this paper the anonymity of farm workers is ensured. Pseudonyms are used for the names of farms and of other persons.

² US\$ rate calculated at Rand: Dollar 1:5.9, on 9 March 2005. Conversions are rounded off to the nearest US dollar.

has to pay two rand (34 US cents) to a vendor for the same amount of water. For her, 'pinky-pinky' – illegal water connections – makes life somewhat easier. After just over one year of work on the Rainbow Farm she contemplates what the future holds for her three children who walk several kilometres to the nearest school. And for how long will they have to continue the degrading, unhealthy and unpleasant practice of having to go to the 'bush' to relieve themselves?

Even though they have spent nearly every day of their lives for the last few years producing pretty-looking flowers for consumers in the European market to express their love, appreciation, respect, celebration and commiseration, the chances of either Catherine or Jane ever having colourful flowers displayed in their homes are relatively small. This is despite flower export being regarded as a 'miracle crop' for some developing countries (Holt 2000). This chapter demonstrates that although the flower farms have seen increased prosperity, the situation of workers has not significantly improved. The large mainly foreign-owned farms that grow flowers for export in the south make use of modern technology, much capital, specialised knowledge and sophisticated management. However, the arduous work of planting, spraying, cutting and packaging of the flowers and plant cuttings is still reliant on cheapened labour,³ and the majority of this labour force tends to be women (Fontana, Joeques & Masika 1998: 51; Farné 1999; Palán & Palán 1999; Semboja, Mbelwa & Bonaventura 2000; Dolan & Sutherland 2002). Women workers receive low income for long working hours, experience employment insecurity, harassment and abuse, and develop health problems, partly because of the strenuous nature of their tasks, and also as a result of the intensive use of chemicals without adequate provision of protection and training. Both the increased employment of women and the lower positions they fulfil are part of the feminisation of labour in the context of globalisation. The feminisation or 'housewifisation' of labour (Mies 1998; Sassen 1998; Peterson & Runyan 1999: 142) is occurring in the so-called 'new sectors' of the global economy, especially in the high-technology, information-based, services and light industries (Peterson & Runyan 1999: 142) like electronic components, call centres, clothing and sportswear, and horticulture (UN in Pearson 2000: 12).

Although research has been done on globalisation and women's identities in the context of industries like textiles, garments and micro-electronics (Wichterich 2000; also Ichharam in this book), there is a paucity of scholarly material concerning women's identities as

workers in the agricultural sector, as confirmed by Fontana, Joeques and Masika (1998: 11), Tallontire (1999: 1) and Dolan and Sutherland (2002: 4). In this chapter I investigate the identities and realities of women employed in the floricultural sector in South Africa, especially those employed on farms exporting their flower produce. The discussion shows the people behind the production of colourful flowers and it makes known the unknown and very unromantic lives that bring romance to the lives of others. For these workers there is no sharing in the flowering of globalisation.

I focused my research on two flower-cutting export farms in the Bapong area of North West where mainly women are employed.⁴ By using these two farms as case studies, I attempt to understand these women's identity in the context of globalisation, but from a specific vantage point. While the entry point of my research was the workplace-based collective identity of women, my research was expanded to include their homes (or households) and the place (or community) where they live. The methodology for my research included a survey of Bapong, in-depth interviews with ten women working on two flower farms and questionnaires to the management of these two farms. These different methodologies enabled me to provide a grounded and contextual understanding of global processes in local realities (Nagar *et al.* 2002: 259; also Sassen 2002: 94). A locational analysis was necessary as identity is understood as historical, contextual, constructed, fluid, multiple and relational. The social, economic, political and historical contexts of women's daily realities are central in knowing how their identities shift across time and place (Croucher 2004: 38). I also used the lived experiences of the women and the meaning they give to such experiences to understand their consciousness and identity, an idea taken from Castells' (2001: 115) suggestion that identity is rooted in shared experience. This examination, combined with a contextual analysis, led me to a triadic analysis in which gender, class and race experiences 'are looked at simultaneously as necessary steps for an understanding of social reality' (Beneria & Roldan 1987: 2). Gender, class and race are thus seen as "multiple' bases for oppression rather than as separate types of identity as they normally are treated' (Chow 1996: xxi). This corresponds to Saul's description (in Russell 2004) of gender, race, class, religion, etc. as 'nodes of oppression and resistance'. In such power relations, oppression and exploitation are part of the experiences that shape various identities. In this chapter, 'exploitation' is used in the Marxist sense to refer to the

³ Cynthia Enloe (in Croucher 2004: 168) prefers to use 'cheapened' labour to 'cheap' labour as the politically more accurate expression of the exploitation of such labour.

⁴ I have been involved with research in Bapong since 1998. My initial involvement was via the Community Development section of the former Rand Afrikaans University (RAU) (now the University of Johannesburg) for whom community profiles were compiled (see Department of Development Studies 1998).

extraction of surplus labour from workers, while oppression (which includes exploitation) refers to the systematic mistreatment of people based on social groups.

The chapter first sketches the global commodity chain of flowers before turning to flower production in the Bapong area, where most of the women employed on the two flower farms reside. By highlighting the working conditions on the two farms as well as the women's experiences of male-domination (patriarchy) and race relations, some continuities, changes and especially novelties in the women's collective identities are indicated. The conclusion highlights how the different forms of oppression the women face interact and reinforce one another. My argument underscores the assertion by Kofman and Youngs (1996: 4) that globalisation is leading to new forms of oppression, which are experienced by the women investigated in this research, and my findings further suggest that new experiences of oppression lead to new notions of identity.

THE GLOBAL COMMODITY CHAIN OF FLOWERS

The territorial configuration of the global commodity chain of flowers is that flower trading countries can be categorised into four groups (Van Liemt 1999). The first group, which includes the United States, Japan, India and China, mainly, though not exclusively, produce for their own markets. Germany is an example of the second group of countries that have sizeable markets with imports satisfying most of the demand. Colombia and Kenya are part of the third group, which export most of their production. The last group, exemplified by the Netherlands, has a large home market combined with a large export share. Amongst all of these, the so-called 'established' export-producers are Colombia, Kenya, Ecuador and Zimbabwe, with new competition coming from China, Mexico, Tanzania and South Africa, to name but a few (Van Liemt 1999). Yet the Netherlands remains the main exporter of flower products.⁵ The high level of efficiency achieved by the Netherlands in handling imports – due to its historic role in the flower market – has made it profitable for most foreign producers to continue to sell via the Netherlands (Van Liemt 1999). This is the case for South African growers who export mainly to the Dutch flower auctions at Almeer (South African Flower Export Council (Safec) 2003). For instance, 51 percent of South Africa's flower exports to Europe in 2000 went to the Netherlands (Coleacp 2002).

⁵ Much of the produce for these exports are imported from other countries: 70 percent of all the Netherlands' auctioned imports are re-exported (Protrade in Van Liemt 1999).

Except for new countries exporting flowers, another area of change in the global commodity chain (the chain of production–distribution–consumption that links workers in poor countries with rich consumers in the North) is in retail arrangements (Van Liemt 1999). Traditionally, the chain has been from the producer/exporter – as essentially the final producer of the product – to the auctioneer in the Netherlands, to wholesalers, then to retailers (including traditional florists, garden centres, supermarkets and street vendors), and, finally, to consumers (see route A in Figure 1). Now, the shift is more towards direct sales to supermarkets (Van Liemt 1999; Davies 2000). In such a buyer-driven commodity chain (Gereffi in Dolan & Sutherland 2002: 3) the supermarkets are able to influence what is produced, how, when and at what price. One of the reasons for this change is that for a highly perishable product like floricultural items, timing is crucial. Since supermarkets want a long vase-life for cut flowers, buying directly from known producers through long-term contracts secures the shortest route from grower to retailer (see route C in Figure 1). This also ensures that the product is fresher and cheaper. With fair trade and environmentally friendly production being high on the European consumer's mind, direct buying also provides supermarkets with more certainty about the quality of the flowers and the conditions under which they are produced (Van Liemt 1999). The latter is maintained as a consequence of environmental and ethical guidelines for waste management of chemicals, occupational safety and employment conditions which are increasingly being promoted via international labelling programmes and codes of conduct. Most South African flower exporters, however, have not yet fully developed direct relationships with major European supermarkets (Tregurtha & Vink 2002: 26). Rather, their flower products are still sold through contracts to importers in the Netherlands (see route B in Figure 1).⁶ This is the case with the two flower farms in the Bapong area.

⁶ Though, some South African growers have signed chrysanthemum export-contracts with UK wholesalers in late 2003 (SAFGA 2003).

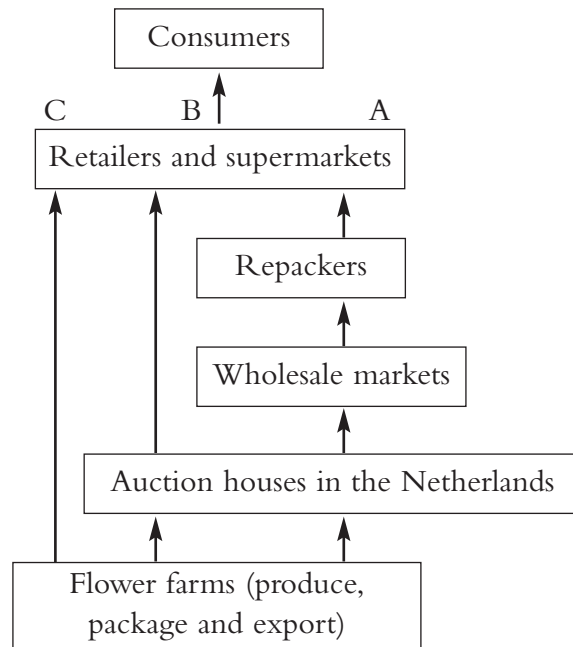


Figure 1: The global commodity chain of flowers

Source: Adapted from Tregurtha & Vink 2002: 12

Another structural change in global flower production and trade is greater product varieties. Although roses and carnations remain the major products traded, their share of total trade has dropped. Chrysanthemums, which are of interest to this study since both farms in the Bapong area export chrysanthemum cuttings, are the third highest flower product traded (Van Liemt 1999). New and 'special' varieties are constantly created as the global market brings higher prices for such assortments. The variance in the prices of chrysanthemums is, for example, between 111 US cents (1995 prices) for Rivalry and Green Wonder, and 50 US cents for May Shoesmith (*Vakblad voor de Bloemisterij* in Van Liemt 1999).

Although floriculture has existed in South Africa for many years, the industry only began to take off in the mid-1990s with the end of apartheid and the re-introduction of the South African economy into global trading. The end of sanctions brought so-called 'honeybees' (foreign firms with technical know-how) to invest in the flower industry (Malter, Reijtenbagh & Jaffee 1999: 47). In 2001, the gross value of flower production was R541.8 million (\$81.27 million), up from R193.5 million (\$29.03 million) in 1991 (National Department

of Agriculture (NDA) 2003). However, South African exports contribute less than half a percent to world exports of cut flowers (Kaiser Associates n.d.: 15; Van Liemt 1999). Although most of South Africa's flower production is export-orientated (Tregurtha & Vink 2002: 27), there is also production for the internal markets, especially around Johannesburg, where a flower auction was established in 1945 (Malter, Reijtenbagh & Jaffee 1999: 47). Flower production is undertaken by approximately 200 growers, of whom a large majority are small-scale, part-time, hobby farmers (Tregurtha & Vink 2002: 26). Export production, though, is dominated by a few large commercial farms, which have diversified their flower products in the last few years (Kaiser Associates n.d.: 5).

Factors making for competitive cultivation of flowers and exports include good physical conditions like high light intensity, abundant water, and a stable and moderate climate. The ideal temperatures for flower growing are day time temperatures of 24–29°C and 15–18°C at night (Asea & Kaija 2000). The Bapong area has such climate nearly year-round. Furthermore, reliable infrastructure, like good roads and air connections, helps to ensure the quickest possible time to the export market. In the case of the Bapong farms, they are situated about 120 kilometres from the Johannesburg International Airport, with reasonably good road links surrounding it. But airfreight expenses are still a significant contributor to overall costs; between 20–25 percent for the two farms. Another factor to consider in flower production is labour cost and skills. Since flower production typically has high volume but low margins, producers are constantly looking to cut costs. It is a highly labour-intensive activity, with few processes that can be mechanised. In the context of cheapened labour in a developing area such as Bapong, cutting wages seems to be the easiest way of minimising costs. And, as in so many of the export-oriented industries in the South, flower farms tend to predominantly employ women (Farné 1999; Palán & Palán 1999; Asea & Kaija 2000; Davies 2000; Semboja *et al.* 2000; Barrientos, Dolan & Tallontire 2001; Dolan & Sutherland 2002). But meeting international quality standards requires a trained labour force, which means that wages cannot be too low. These complexities of flower production, which are evident on the two farms in Bapong, as well as their impact on the lived realities of the women farm workers, are discussed in more detail later in this chapter. First, however, a background on the Bapong area where most of the women working on the two flower farms reside is provided.

THE BAPONG AREA

Bapong is situated approximately 100 kilometres north-west of Johannesburg in the North West province. The villages making up Bapong include those on tribal land that belong to the Bapo ba Mogale and some on trust land which was created in the 1950s and 1960s by the apartheid government. The villages are Number One, Skoolplaas, Legalaopeng, Outstad, Newtown, Segwaelane, Wonderkop, Modderspruit and Majakaneng. The area is rich in minerals, with the Eastern Platinum Mine (part of the Lonmin Platinum Mine group) and Western Chrome Mines (part of Samancor Chrome of BHP Billiton) situated here. These operate on land managed by the Bapong Traditional Authority, which comprises a chief, the headmen of each clan and several elected members. Based on a 1969 agreement for the leasing of the mineral rights, it is reported that by 2003, R100 million (\$16.9 million) had been paid in royalties to the traditional authority by the Eastern Platinum Mine (Kormorant 2004). It is not known what has happened with this money over the years although an investigation is currently underway to uncover the financial mismanagement. However, what is known is that very little has been spent on development and the majority of the people of Bapong remain poor and vulnerable. It is worth mentioning that no women serve on the traditional authority, an indication of the patriarchal values dominant in the area. The male domination in the villages ensures a gender hierarchy in which women are subordinated and excluded.

To contextualise the lived realities of the women who work on the flower farms and live in Bapong, I draw on a household survey of the socio-economic situation in Bapong that was conducted over a period of eight weeks in 2003. The survey covered 771 households.⁷ The remainder of this section reflects on preliminary findings of this survey (see De Wet, van Rooyen & Erasmus 2003). It was found that the population was young, with half being less than 24 years old, and only six per cent over 65. In terms of gender, there were more females (57 percent of the adult population) than males. Half the residents were single (50 percent), while 39 percent were either married or living together. Of the population older than 14 years, almost eight percent had no formal education. Among those who did have a formal education background, the average level of schooling passed was Grade Eight

(indicating eight years of formal schooling), which furthermore, was achieved by more women than men.

Of the economically active population (those between 18 and 60 years of age), 33 percent had no employment. With the average household size for the area being six people, a high dependency ratio could be expected. Whilst the mines provided jobs for many of the formally employed men of Bapong, the flower farms in the area were identified as other major employers. Other surrounding commercial farms employed people mainly as casual labour, and experienced high numbers of retrenchments and resignations as a consequence of unfavourable working conditions such as low wages. In the context of limited alternative employment in Bapong, people were dependent on the job they had. But the experience of job insecurity was widespread. Still in terms of economic activity, more men than women were formally employed, while more women worked in the informal sector or were unemployed (despite being the majority and better educated on average). Such realities were indicative of the patriarchal values dominating employment practices in Bapong.

In addition to formal employment, various other economic pursuits were embarked on to earn a livelihood. Many households kept chickens and grew vegetables in their yards for home consumption. Typically, women performed such tasks. Some women also sold goods that they knitted and sewed in an attempt to make a living. A number of the women were doing these whilst also being formally employed. Typical of rural South Africa, there was a high dependence on state pensions. Among those surveyed, 72 percent belonged to burial societies (also called *stokvels*), which are informal savings associations that operate on the basis of monthly contributions and rotating access to the pool of money.

Most of the households in Bapong owned the land that their houses were on. But ownership of such land was unequal in terms of gender. In terms of cost, for example, in the mid-1990s a site on Bapo land would, on average, cost a married man R150 (\$25), while a divorced woman would have had to pay a fee of R500 (\$85) (Allanic & Piennaar 1998). In terms of basic services, 95 percent of households had electricity, although the electricity supply was very irregular, with many temporary blackouts. Similar to electricity, the water supply was unreliable, and many households complained about not having water during the day. Mainly, water was either piped into the yard, or was accessed via a street standpipe. Others bought water from neighbours or water vendors, and some illegal connections also occurred. Nearly all households included in the survey (over 90 percent), except for those in Wonderkop, had

⁷ The methodology used for the selection of households is explained in De Wet, van Rooyen and Erasmus (2003). Briefly, a sample size of 1.5 percent of households of each village was selected. Then purposeful sampling was used to select which households were to be included in the research. This survey formed part of a larger research project undertaken in collaboration with the School of Social Work of the University of Louisville (UofL), Kentucky on job opportunities in the area.

toilet facilities, which were in the form of pit latrines. In Wonderkop, an informal settlement, there were no sanitation services and people relieved themselves in the nearby bush. With reproductive work in most cases being the responsibility of women, lack of these basic facilities simply meant that women had more difficulty and took longer in doing the household duties.

How does all of this relate to and influence the identity of women working on the two flower export farms in Bapong? Before explaining how the shared experiences of the women farm workers on the two flower farms overlap with and reinforce their lived realities in the Bapong villages, an illustration of the two farms on which the women work follows.

TWO FLOWER EXPORTING FARMS IN BAPONG

The farms used as case studies in this chapter are two of about fifteen that are engaged in flower production around Bapong, and they are among the few that export flower cuttings. They are also two of the bigger farms in the area. Even though there are observable differences between the two farms, this chapter does not attempt a comparison between them. Instead, the approach is to understand workers' experiences. The findings show, that irrespective of the farm that the women worked on, all the workers indicated their unhappiness with their work.

Questionnaires were distributed to farm managers, and interviews were conducted with some of the workers (see next section of this chapter). Green Fingers Farm has been operating in the area for 29 years, and is the South African operation of a Dutch company. The farm mainly grows chrysanthemums in seven hectares of greenhouses. These are produced for exports to a Dutch company and for local markets. The other farm studied was Rainbow Farm, a subsidiary of another Dutch company that was founded as a bulb grower. Rainbow Farm has been in operation since 1993. The majority of the produce of Rainbow Farm, grown in eight hectares of greenhouses (two percent was grown in open fields), is exported to the mother company, situated in Alsmeer near Schiphol airport, and from there, the products are re-exported to the rest of Europe. Rainbow Farm also exports some products to Spain. The rest of the flowers are sold in local markets in Gauteng. Together with 13 other chrysanthemum growers, they are members of the South African Flower Growers Association (SAFGA), reflecting the small and intimate character of flower production in South Africa (SAFGA 2003).

Over the last few years, both farms have shifted their production to greenhouses, away from open fields, as this ensures higher productivity

and better quality, both crucial aspects in remaining internationally competitive. Recently, both farms had also started to diversify their production. Changes in production techniques have led to an increased use of chemicals, especially during cultivation and post-harvesting quality control, and this, it will be shown, has implications for working conditions. Each of the farms made use of planting materials, expertise in growing techniques, and professional management from the Netherlands. In fact, Rainbow Farm had four non-South Africans in management positions.

Producing chrysanthemums and picking cuttings are labour-intensive: both Green Fingers Farm and Rainbow Farm used about 42 workers per hectare. In comparison, in Ecuador for example, 20 workers per hectare are required in the horticultural industry in general, while roses only require ten (Palán & Palán 1999). Green Fingers Farm employed about 300 people in total and Rainbow Farm 326 people. According to the management, Green Fingers Farm had no seasonal or temporary employment, while the women interviewed indicated that temporary workers were occasionally employed. At Rainbow Farm, 3.4 percent of the employees were seasonal workers, all of whom were black women. According to management, the seasonal employment at Rainbow Farm usually increases to nine percent of the total labour force – about 30 additional workers – during times of production backlogs. Labour costs on both farms were a significant part of total production costs; on Rainbow Farm this was 25 percent in 2003.

Employees on flower farms can be categorised into four groups, namely management, skilled labour, general workers and others (especially the consultants engaged in the maintenance of cooling machinery, quality control services and marketing) (Semboja *et al.* 2000). The gender and racial divisions of labour on the farms were clearly reflected in an assessment of who does what job, for what pay and under which conditions. On Green Fingers Farm four people were employed as senior managers, and with the exception of the human resources manager who was a black man, the rest were all white men. Except for a white woman in marketing, the staff (98.7 percent) was black, with 73 percent of the workforce comprising of black women. While six black women served as supervisors, the remainder worked in low-income jobs. Rainbow Farm reported that they employed 19 people in management positions, eight of whom were black women and the remaining eleven, white men. Their human resources manager was a black woman. The other black women in management positions were supervisors, who had very little authority concerning the management of the organisation, and were paid much less than the other managers. As with Green Fingers, most of the staff

(96 percent) at Rainbow farm was black, with 90.8 percent of the workforce being women (nearly all black), and the majority were found in low-income jobs. The two farms mainly employed women, nearly all of whom resided in Bapong. In both cases, the women were employed in harvesting and post-harvesting jobs like picking, packing and quality control, which are highly dexterous, routinised and low-paying, while the men were engaged in pre-harvest activities like preparing the soil, spraying, irrigation, constructing infrastructure, maintenance, providing technical assistance and transport. These tasks usually paid higher salaries (see similarity in findings of Farné 1999; Semboja *et al.* 2000; Dolan & Sutherland 2002: 21). This is despite the fact that the tasks fulfilled by women are of more significance for the quality of the final product (Barrientos, Dolan & Tallontire 2003: 1514). Most tasks on the flower farms were thus clearly feminised, and also racialised, meaning that so-called gender and race traits were used in the workplace.

EMPLOYMENT CONDITIONS ON THE FARMS

To gain a better understanding of the identities of the women workers, I undertook, with the help of a Tswana-speaking research assistant, in-depth interviews with ten women working on the two farms. The women were selected on the basis of a snowballing technique. This section presents the voices of these workers. All the women were employed as general workers and had worked on the farm for more than a year. In addition to data on employment conditions and relations, the interviews with the women also provided information concerning the wider problems they experienced on a daily basis in Bapong, such as lack of health care, education of their children, male drunkenness, and fear of rape. These issues are discussed later in this chapter, when I relate the experiences of working on the farms to living in Bapong.

For the women interviewed, the average length of their employment on the flower farm was seven years. This is longer than the duration of employment in other cases where the labour force is more flexible (Tallontire 1999: 2; Dolan & Sutherland 2002: 18). In Colombia, for example, the average employment on flower farms in 1995/6 was only two to three years (Farné 1999). A reason for the higher levels of permanent staff, and relatively more stable labour force on the farms in Bapong, might have to do with workers' dependency on their jobs, the already low cost of labour in the area, and the use of specific strategies to further reduce labour costs. According to the women interviewed, such tactics included the regular use of suspensions and terminations. During follow-up interviews in August 2004, for example, 13 women working on Rainbow Farm were serving a one-month suspension after

being found guilty of 'challenging authority' and refusing to work compulsory overtime. According to management, the farm had 85 terminations in 2003. This corresponds to the high levels of retrenchments and dismissals reported in the household survey, as indicated earlier. Another strategy was to replace workers at the end of their initial probation period of three months. Multi-tasking, or the practice of shifting workers between packing, grading, etc., was also on the increase. Mapula, a general worker on Green Fingers Farm, complained that in the last two years she was required to do more jobs – plant, cut and pack – while she continued to receive the same wage. This confirms Ewert and Hamman's (1999) finding that 'flexibility' does not translate into higher income for workers. Instead, such flexibilisation of labour makes it possible for management to reduce costs in a very competitive global market. For workers this leads to greater insecurities and vulnerabilities. Such flexibility, or degradation of work in the formal sector, described as the informalisation of formal jobs, is another aspect of the feminisation of labour already referred to. It includes low income, limited job security, few benefits, lack of sufficient protection with regard to health and safety, and no or weak unions.

According to the women workers, the average monthly wages for the general workers were R800 (\$136) on Rainbow Farm⁸ and R980 (\$166) on Green Fingers Farm. Technicians, most of whom were black men, received R1,500 (\$254) per month and supervisors R3,000 (\$508). The mostly white male senior managers received between R7,000 (\$1,186) and R18,000 (\$3,050) per month, excluding additional benefits such as pension and medical aid. Race and gender thus overlapped in that black women filled the lowest-income jobs and white men the highest-income occupation. The women criticised these wages as not being sufficient to meet the basic needs of their families.

Their domestic problems were compounded by long working hours, which meant that women had insufficient time to complete their domestic duties. The length of the work day varied somewhat between the two farms. Work on Green Fingers started at 7am and ended at 5pm, with an hour for lunch break and two tea breaks of 15 minutes each. This meant an eight-and-a-half hour day, five days a week. The working week was thus 42.5 hours long. On Rainbow Farm, the workday was eight hours for six days of the week, meaning a working week of 48 hours. There were two shifts, one starting at 7am and ending at 3:30pm, and the other starting at 8:30am and ending at 5pm. Workers only had half an hour lunch break with no tea breaks. This implies that workers

⁸The management of Rainbow Farm claimed that the wages of general workers were R1,085 (\$184) per month.

at Rainbow worked longer for less pay than those at Green Fingers.

Green Fingers Farm granted general workers three weeks paid annual leave, while on Rainbow Farm, the women received, on average, 15 days annual paid leave. The Rainbow Farm workers, in particular, expressed ambivalence about how leave was calculated. Dorette gave the example of someone who worked for eight months but only qualified for three days of leave. At both farms, women were entitled to four months maternity leave. In the case of Rainbow Farm this was unpaid leave, while at Green Fingers it was supposedly paid leave. However, according to Mapula, only R300 (\$51) per month (less than half the monthly wages) went into one's bank account when on maternity leave. On Green Fingers Farm overtime was voluntary and workers were paid double their salary. According to management, overtime was necessary when production backlogs were experienced. But Thembi of Rainbow Farm felt that overtime was demanded simply to 'get at' workers. She argued that there was not much to do during overtime, as workers had to go back to plants where pickings had already been done, with little more left to gather. Ester, a 44 year old picker and packer, also of Rainbow Farm, said that the overtime rate was supposedly double-pay, but she did not see that reflected in her payslips. According to the management of Rainbow Farm, overtime was never more than ten hours per week. At the time of the fieldwork, overtime was the subject of a case between Rainbow Farm and the union on the farm, which was being heard at the Council for Conciliation, Mediation and Arbitration (CCMA), a statutory body overseeing labour disputes. The workers were taking issue with the fact that they were compelled to work overtime. Dorette said:

We are not requested to do overtime. When you get to work you are told that you must work overtime that day. It might be three consecutive days that you must work overtime . . . If you refuse to work overtime you might be threatened; you get warning forms.

On Rainbow Farm the workers received an annual bonus, which was half of the monthly wage. Interviewees also indicated that they received production bonuses, but only until 2001. They still had three-month targets though, but instead of a team – which was the basis of production – being rewarded for reaching targets, five individuals received between R50 (\$8) and R250 (\$42). Such actions on the part of management led Meisie to ask, 'How can they decide which person was productive?' Furthermore, at Green Fingers Farm the production bonus, also called stack bonus, was for picking 350 cuttings per hour. However, this target

had increased from 200 in 2003 to 350 in 2004, without a corresponding increase in the bonus.

With regard to transport, both farms provided buses to ferry workers between Bapong and the farms. The farms also supplied some protective clothing in the form of t-shirts and overalls to general workers. Ester, reported that it was only during the last three weeks of August 2004 that they were given gumboots. Also, although they received an overall, they were last issued with one two years ago. Green Fingers Farm supplied both uniforms and gloves, but as Catherine pointed out, these were not issued to workers individually; they shared them with other workers when they worked in the greenhouses.

Both farms had on-the-job training for general workers. New employees got an orientation of the production process and were then placed on probation for three months. If they failed to make the picking target of 350 cuttings an hour on Green Fingers, they got a warning form. And, in the words of Ester, 'a few warning forms' meant that one would not be appointed permanently after the probation period. At the same time, Green Fingers Farm was involved with the Primary Agriculture Education and Training Authority (PAETA), which is the sector training authority, and Mapula, one of the employees with a Grade Nine level of education, was admitted into the learnership programme (run by PAETA) in 2003. Although the management of both farms claimed to provide training on health and safety in the workplace, the women interviewed argued that they received no safety training, especially as far as the use of chemicals was concerned. Even though they were in physical contact with chemicals and pesticides, no interviewee could name these. This lack of training holds serious implications for the health of workers.

Occupational health risk factors associated with the floriculture industry are identified as those that relate to the handling of and exposure to toxic substances (for spraying) and its residues, and the risks associated with the strenuous nature of the work required on flower farms (Farné 1999). The health problems reported by the women included backaches, headaches, dizziness, respiratory illness, allergic skin reactions, blurred vision and nausea. While the international standard for re-entry of greenhouses after spraying is 6–24 hours (Barrientos *et al.* 2003), Ester referred to chemicals that were 'left to dry for about an hour, or until judged as dry by supervisors before we have to go back in'. Upon re-entering the greenhouses, she said that one would get headaches and experience dizziness. Mapula also talked about the 'gas' one inhales in the greenhouses when it is sprayed in the morning. 'My throat gets itchy. Once, we stopped working and demanded to see the

doctor.’ Nearly all the women interviewed also complained about backaches from standing bent over the whole day.

Concerning sick leave, general workers on Green Fingers had a right to eight days sick leave a year, but no more than two days sick leave could be taken consecutively. Although they also obtained sick leave at Rainbow Farm, Dorette felt that workers ‘don’t have the right to get sick’. When one was sick at work, the human resources section provided the worker with a letter for the doctor in Brits, some 20 kilometres away. Workers were then expected to pay for their own transport to and from the doctor. In follow-up interviews, the women of Green Fingers indicated that since January 2004, R30 (\$5) was deducted from their wages every time they consulted the doctor, while the full cost of the consultation (R90 or \$15) was deducted from workers’ wages at Rainbow Farm.

Rainbow Farm had no pension or provident fund for general workers, while the other farm did have a provident fund to which workers contributed. Neither of the two farms gave any food to workers. This is in contrast to, for example, Tanzania where a free lunch is provided (Semboja *et al.* 2000). Similarly, in Zimbabwe maize meal is given as an attendance bonus to workers (Davies 2000). Although Green Fingers did provide housing for employees at a cost of R25 (\$4) per month, there was not enough housing for all employees. Green Fingers also had a funeral scheme to which employees contributed monthly. This scheme paid R10,000 (\$1,695) per funeral. If an employee of Rainbow Farm died, the farm would give R30 (\$5) for the funeral. Other workers usually voluntarily contributed R10 (\$2) each, said Jane.

Not one of the women interviewed saw any opportunity for promotion or career advancement. Ester said ‘[n]o matter how much effort you put on your work, there is no prospect of getting a promotion.’ Moreover, despite the majority of workforce being women, the farms failed to consider women’s specific needs. Nearly all those interviewed were younger than 45 years. Just over half (60 percent) were single with children and the same number were members of women-headed households. This meant that a crèche⁹ on the farm, for example, would have made their lives much easier. Workers also felt that they were treated inhumanely. They were, for example, prohibited from talking to one another while in greenhouses. Such realities led all the women interviewed to express little job satisfaction and job security. The women had to work out of economic necessity, and this made them vulnerable. With their families as their first priority, they endured strenuous low-

⁹ A crèche is a kindergarten.

paying work, rather than no work at all. As Ester expressed, ‘I am the only one who sees to it that there is food on the table.’

Why was it that these were the working realities of these women? What were the employment relations on the farms like? And, to what extent were gender and race considered in employment relations by both farm management and farm workers? The next section addresses these questions.

EMPLOYMENT RELATIONS ON THE FARMS

The 1995 Labour Relations Act granted all workers, and for the first time also farm labourers, the right to belong to a union. On Green Fingers Farm, 40 percent of workers belonged to the Commercial Workers Union of South Africa, even though the union did not have a recognition agreement with the farm management. The General Industries’ Workers’ Union of South Africa (GIWUSA), an independent union, had been operating at Rainbow Farm since 2003, with a membership of 52 percent of the employees in 2004.¹⁰ Both unions were described by the women as ineffective, and a waste of time and money. Yet, the suspension case of 13 members of GIWUSA on Rainbow Farm had led to mixed feelings about the union. Ester, one of the suspended members, said that ‘the suspension case is too difficult’, indicating her feeling that management would not be easily beaten. Yet, she still believed that the union had what was necessary to address the problem. She blamed the problems of the union on its members. She argued:

It is the members who let the union down. They talk about the union negatively. They don’t unite . . . Yesterday a union member phoned me to ask if I knew that Sam [a GIWUSA organiser] was kicked out yesterday. Some members are unclear [about what the union is doing]. They have lost confidence in the union and have negative feelings about the union.

Fransina of Green Fingers thought that the problem was that ‘workers never really mobilise together.’ For others, the union itself was the problem. Dorette, another one of the suspended members, felt that ‘what the union is doing about the suspension at the moment is unclear. They don’t talk to us.’ She said this despite the fact that the union had referred the case to the CCMA. Another negative aspect of the unions

¹⁰ The South Africa Agricultural, Plantation and Allied Workers Union (SAAPAWU) operated on the farm from 1996 but had very few members at the time of the fieldwork. According to Ester, SAAPAWU may have had only four members at the time.

was that they did not seem to acknowledge the problems that the women experienced. Even though the overwhelming majority of the union members on the farms were women, the organisers were men. The general trend for unions in South Africa has been historically to tend to reflect male domination (Orr 2003: 139), which seems to be the case for the two unions of the farms as well.

The women, particularly those from Rainbow Farm, also complained that the farm management made the unions' operations difficult. Pauline accused management of confusing union members. 'He tells you that others are resigning from the union and that you should do the same.' It seemed that not only were union members being harassed and intimidated, but this behaviour was inflicted on the union official too. At a disciplinary hearing in mid-2004, a union organiser was refused access to the farm to represent workers at the hearing. When he was asked by the farm management to come to a meeting a day later, he was ordered off the farm, and the police were called after a disagreement with the human resources manager. Ester summarised the feelings of the women by explaining that one feels 'pinpointed' if one attempts to 'start something'.

This fear became clear to me simply in how the women responded to my requests for interviews. During the first round of interviews in 2003, some women from Rainbow Farm were initially reluctant, and even afraid, to agree to an interview. One woman, after initially agreeing to participate, asked not to be interviewed, partly because of anxiety of being identified as a troublemaker. Another expressed nervousness about being seen to be speaking to an 'outsider' and possibly against management. This uneasiness on the part of the Rainbow Farm workers seemed to have dissipated during follow-up interviews in August 2004, when some of the women were on suspension. They were very willing to open up, and talked more freely about problems they experienced on the farm as they felt that they now had nothing to lose.

While the farm management was seemingly antagonistic towards the unions, employment relations on both farms could, to some extent, be regarded as paternalistic, or as Ewert and Hamman (1999: 202) prefer, neo-paternalistic. For them, neo-paternalism refers to a labour regime that is, to some extent, regulated by state legislation, but that remains imbued with the spirit of paternalism. In an explanation for a paternalistic stance to its workers, the management of Rainbow Farm reasoned that the workforce lacked motivation, and must, therefore, be helped. Klerck and Naidoo (2003: 160) explain such a management style as being unilateral and premised on hostility towards 'outside' interference in their business.

Now, the ineffectiveness of the unions meant that the women, in their own capacities, had to deal with their supervisors when they experienced problems at work. Mapula gave the example of complaining to her supervisor about the increased duties she received without a corresponding increase in pay. Her supervisor's response was that Mapula should decide whether she wanted to work or not. Jane who had a black male supervisor, said: 'We are under supervisors who are very, very aggressive, who do not have that tolerance.' She hesitantly mentioned that she knew of a woman who had trouble with sexual harassment from a supervisor. How supervisors came to be selected and the role they fulfilled was another controversial issue that the women reflected on. Meisie explained that 'supervisors are hand-picked because they are related to certain people who occupy a particular influential position'. Johanna agreed that supervisors were, in some cases, friends of one another. For Ester, an appointment as a supervisor depended on how much money you had. If you 'buy presents, like a duvet, for those who make decisions, you will be a [supervisor]'. Supervisors were seen by workers as on the side of management. Johanna said of the supervisors: 'They make themselves the management'.

On Rainbow Farm, the women saw the filling of a human resources management position by a black woman, in 2002, as a worsening of employment relations. Following this appointment, the women reported some of the changes. These included being issued with only one overall instead of two every June, overtime had changed to being compulsory, the payment of production bonuses to teams had been stopped, and negotiations over annual salary increase had become difficult. These sentiments were evidence of the suspicions that the women held of management. They felt that they were being exploited and oppressed by the farm owners – based on their class and gender – just as they are being oppressed in their communities – as black women – and in their households – as women. In the next section, I look at the interaction of these oppressions as experienced by the women and how it relates to their collective identity.

TRIPLE OPPRESSION OF BAPONG WOMEN: GENDER, CLASS AND RACE

Barrientos, McClenaghan and Orton (1999) state that the broader social hierarchies of South Africa are mirrored in farm employment patterns. The labour market thus simply reflects the socially constructed divisions of labour that exist in society (Tallontire 1999: 2; Dolan & Sutherland 2002: 5). Mohanty (1997: 11) argues that capitalist patriarchies and

racialised, class hierarchies 'are a key part of the long history of domination and exploitation of women'. The increased preference for women workers, the jobs in which they are employed, and the wages and benefits they get for it, as indicated above, are based on 'a patriarchal and capitalist ideology that sees women . . . as compliant, dextrous and easily exploited labourers' (Runyan 1996: 239). Gender stereotypes concerning women's docility and 'nimble fingers' (Peterson 1996: 10; Mies 1998: 117) assume that women have certain characteristics that make them suitable for certain jobs (Beneria & Roldan 1987: 44-49). For example, it is believed that they have a better concentration span, more patience, the physical ability to be more immobile for longer, have a lower rate of absenteeism and are less troublesome than men. Especially when it comes to handling flowers, women's 'natural' caring skills with delicate and repetitive tasks makes them ideal workers for management (Tallontire 1999: 1). Women also tend to receive lower wages because their income is seen as supplementary to men's income, and not the main source of livelihoods (Mohanty 1997:16; Peterson & Runyan 1999: 142; Barrientos, Dolan & Tallontire 2001: 8). This clearly ignores the reality of many women on the two farms who are in women-headed households where their income is the main, and in many cases, the only source of income. In particular, single women with children (60 percent of those interviewed were such women) felt oppressed in all spheres of their lives. Joeke (in Safa 1990: 78) explains that such women have greater job commitment because of their need to work. Even though their jobs pay poorly, and employment conditions and relations are unfavourable, the women do not quit their jobs, as they are responsible for their families. They simply cannot afford not to have a job. The women's fear of losing their jobs indicates their vulnerability to exploitation at the workplace.

The established gender division of labour in the household in Bapong was used to put in place a gender division of labour on the farms, and so ensured low labour costs on those farms. Instead of the work situation 'liberating' the women, male domination was reinforced in the workplace (Meer & Skweyiya 1991: 41). The workers interviewed were well aware of their oppression as women in the workplace. Ester felt strongly that by virtue of being women they were monitored constantly. For example, when they went to the toilet, the supervisor checked how much time was spent there. As mentioned earlier, they were also not allowed to talk in the greenhouses. Men working on the farms, however, did not experience the same difficulties as the women. They could smoke and talk freely. 'They are not checked up on,' claimed Ester.

Importantly, the women interviewed had an awareness of their exploitation as workers, and in this regard, the workers were not merely

passive victims, but were, instead, active agents who attempted to challenge and change their work realities. Mainly through informal, indirect actions, the women resisted and protested against their work context, and thus showed some form of class consciousness. Mapula, who related the work stoppage incident when the workers demanded to see a doctor, gave one example of this resistance. Ester also mentioned how the women would gossip about one of the managers and his relationship with a supervisor. Dorette also revealed that, at times, they would act dumb and pretend not to understand instructions given in Afrikaans.

Safa (1979: 443) defines class consciousness as 'a cumulative process by which women (1) recognise that they are exploited and oppressed, (2) recognise the source of their exploitation and oppression, and (3) are willing and able to organise and mobilise in their own class interests.' From the above discussion, I would argue that the majority of the workers interviewed have recognised that they are oppressed and know the source of the oppression. However, in terms of Safa's definition, both willingness and ability to mobilise around such class and gender awareness on the farms were not sufficient on their own to change their realities. The process was also hindered by the fact that union activities were regarded as weak. Some workers felt that management created this impression that the union was not strong enough, thus discouraging membership, while others acknowledged that the union had its own inherent weaknesses. Ester and Fransina further complained about some women undermining the union through gossip and their lack of solidarity. Another reason for the lack of strong class organisation and union action possibly had to do with the household realities of the workers. The majority of the women interviewed were single women with children and they continued to be primarily responsible for domestic work within the household. Thus, the women experienced a triple day: waged work, harder farm work than the men, and reproductive work in the home (Runyan 1996: 245). Rai (2001) defends the lack of class mobilisation by referring to their dependence and vulnerability, as was the case for the majority of the women working on the flower farms, which makes opposition and resistance to oppression difficult.

Having stated earlier that gender oppression in Bapong was used on the farms to ensure class exploitation, it appeared that the converse was also true: the exploitation of poorly-paid women on the flower farms simultaneously reinforced the gender stereotypes and patriarchal practices that already existed in Bapong. In particular, the practice on the farms of employing women in low-income and strenuous jobs (while the few men were employed in higher income jobs) reinforced the views held by

some that this was the 'natural' order. Johanna, for example, commented on why the managers were men, and argued that 'they [men] know best how to decide' and should continue to make decisions. This can be explained as 'women's participation in their own oppression by sharing male-dominant ideology' (Staudt in Robertson & Berger 1986: 19). However, for some of the women employed on the farms, there seemed to have been an increase in conflict within households with men who held 'traditional' values. Dorette mentioned that she and her husband had constant disagreements, which he blamed on her work. A common area of conflict was over the income a woman earned, which gave her a greater voice in the household. This income had led some, like Ester, to become more independent. After years in a violent marriage, Ester indicated that the income she earned enabled her to 'go on my own'.

The women tended to rely on and aid one another. Dorette and Ester, for example, indicated how they borrowed food and money from one another. Nearly all those interviewed also belonged to a burial society, where the women helped one another financially. Over half of the women interviewed also belonged to a religious organisation, which they indicated played an important part in their lives. However, the contradiction was that most of the religious organisations in Bapong held strong patriarchal values that would contribute to the gender oppression of women.

While the women indicated an awareness of their exploitation as workers and their oppression as women, they did not seem to have comparable levels of consciousness of their repression as black people. In fact, they hardly referred to race in the context of their work and home environment. Although none of the women interviewed experienced any direct racism on the farms, it does not mean that race was not a factor in their oppression. The reason for the lack of explicit experiences of racism on the farms lies partly in the fact that the white management did not deal with general workers directly. On both farms this was one of the tasks of the black human resources managers. All supervisors who dealt with the workers were also black. The seeming contradiction on Rainbow Farm, though, was that the black woman in the human resources position was used by the mainly white management against the mainly black women workers. This did not contradict workplace practices blending with a racial culture that Von Holdt (2003: 32) described as white *baasskap*,¹¹ though it did complicate matters.

Another reason for the women's low consciousness about race oppression was that, living in the Brits area, race might have been taken

as a given. The practice of race separateness (keeping to one's 'own'), by both white and black, was very widespread in the area. Many of the women interviewed would have grown up within the context of racial segregation during apartheid, and seemed to continue not to necessarily question it. I was, for example, thanked by some of the interviewees, for taking the time, as a white person, to listen to them, which remained an unusual experience for them. Therefore, they experienced race in terms of structure, but, in terms of consciousness, race was not in the foreground. Women were thus aware of their exploitation in the workplace as workers and as women, and of their oppression in their community and households as women, but they took their oppression as black people as given. Living in a patriarchal society, gender had always consciously been a core aspect of these women's identity. Having grown up and lived in Brits, race would also have been a factor in their lived experiences, though to a lesser extent. A new aspect of their consciousness was that of being workers.

CONCLUSION

The next chapter by Ichharam focuses on women in the informal sector, while this chapter looked at women in the agricultural sector. Both chapters indicate how worker identity is closely tied to gender identity. In this chapter, I have integrated the race dimension of women's realities to the analysis. The employment opportunities for women working on the flower farms came about because of the feminisation of labour, which is a key feature of neo-liberal globalisation (Pearson 2000: 13). This process is changing, and at the same time reinforcing, the gender division of labour. In spite of the increase in women's employment as a result of the feminisation of labour, most women continue to take primary responsibility for reproductive work. Additionally, women's workload has simply increased and local male domination has been strengthened in some cases. This leads Krause (1996: 226) to describe globalisation as based on gender apartheid, and a continuation of the old racism and male domination embedded in the capitalist economic system. Because globalisation is leading to new forms of oppression (Kofman & Youngs 1996: 4), we are seeing new forms of identity emerging.

This chapter has attempted to indicate how globalisation, as it operates in a particular locale, engenders multilayered oppression and resistance, leading to a re-articulation of identities. The social, economic, political and historical contexts of the women's daily realities are central to understanding their identities. The women interviewed received a low

¹¹ White *baasskap* (white overlordship) refers to the paternalistic domination of black people by white people, or in other words 'white power'.

income for long working hours, had few benefits, experienced insecurity of employment, developed health problems, and suffered harassment. It was further indicated that the race and gender hierarchies on the flower farms were a reflection of the structures existing in the Bapong area. But the women workers on the two farms faced a triple oppression as women, as workers and as black people, even though the extent to which they experienced these was not the same. For them '(t)he interlocking of race, class and gender simultaneously forms multiple systems of domination and meaning' (Chow 1996: xxi).

But the women have different levels of consciousness of their own oppression. In Bapong, women had always experienced oppression based on their gender and race, but it was only recently that they had been employed on a number of the flower farms, where exploitation at the workplace was leading to a new awareness as workers. Some identities were thus new for these women – their worker consciousness and identity – and others were old identities that were reinforced. This was true for their awareness of their gender as well as for their understanding of how race structures their identities. In some cases old identities were being reinterpreted or reformed. A few women, because of their work experience, held different gender identities than the more widespread, accepted and traditional notions of gender. Power relations, especially those around gender, class and race, seem to be closely related to how these women defined themselves. For the Bapong women working on the flower farms, their identities appeared to be mostly bounded by relations of exploitation, oppression and dependence. The very ideologies that make flower exports a thriving enterprise for capitalists, are inhibiting the women workers. Unfortunately, it seems like it will still be a while before flowers will bring power to women workers and make them bloom in Bapong.

Chapter Four

A self-employed 'worker' identity: women garment makers in Ahmedabad and Durban

Meera Ichharam

INTRODUCTION

WHAT DOES IT mean to be a worker? A seemingly simple question at first glance, but when we consider participants of the informal sector, class categories are turned on their heads and the concept of a 'worker' becomes more complicated. My research, which was based on informal sector women garment makers in Ahmedabad and Durban, problematises the notion of 'worker'. According to Marxist definitions, workers are non-owners of the means of production, who sell their labour to the ruling classes (Marshall 1994: 570). More popular characterisations of the working class equate worker with employee. In some cases, classical notions would confer upon those in the informal sector the status of petty bourgeois, not worker. However, those in the informal sector regard themselves as 'workers' and thereby, along with the organisations to which they belong, challenge these rather conservative class categories and parochial definitions. Despite not being employed, the women garment makers in my research, I will show, have a salient worker identity. So, what then does it mean to be a worker? How is the worker identity constructed in the informal sector?

In 1971, the Self-employed Women's Association (SEWA) was formed in Ahmedabad, India. The echo of its successes reached South Africa, and in 1993 a similarly named organisation, the Self-employed Women's Union (SEWU) was born in Durban. SEWU and SEWA are women's unions that organise and mobilise 'workers' in informal trades, including, in both cases, garment making. In looking at a select number of the SEWA garment 'workers' and juxtaposing findings with similar

data from Durban, I investigate the social and inextricably linked working lives of the women who are part of the same international movement. Their experiences of their work lives, and the different meanings and identities that are attached to and derived from the complex interplay between their work and social relations are elucidated through such an examination.

The argument that I propose is the following: gendered social relations influence the kind of social reality as well as the nature of the work experience, which is either the home (Ahmedabad) or the street (Durban). For the majority of the women, despite this work being financially unrewarding, being household heads, sole income earners, women, and 'workers' living an experience common to scores of others, lends tenacity and strength to their identities as strong individuals who are part of a collective workforce. Their crosscutting identities are 'renegotiated' through meanings attached to experiences that are derived from participating in the informal sector as well as through their membership of women's organisations. Given that her labour is not exchanged for a wage, by identifying themselves as workers, the informal sector garment maker is defying narrow class categories, in particular, that of worker and owner. Further, through this new 'worker' identity, the women are galvanised with a sense of personal worth and heightened status in their families and communities, earning them respect in these contexts. Finally, the place from which work is conducted, apart from being framed by culture, influences material realities, which are linked to both the experience of work and the 'worker' identity.

I begin this chapter with a brief discussion of the approach of this study. Secondly, I turn to an examination of informal sector work, both conceptually, and by illustrating its spread in India and South Africa. Thirdly, I provide a background to SEWA and SEWU before comparing the experiences of women 'workers' in Ahmedabad and Durban. In the final part of this chapter, I provide some explanations, which account for, in particular, the differences between the two comparators.

THE APPROACH

The fieldwork for this study began with a visit to Ahmedabad in April 2003. Centrally located in the Indian state of Gujarat, this busy metropolis is well known for its numerous textile mills. Here, I conducted 18 in-depth interviews and two focus groups with home-based readymade garment producers, who live in the inner city neighbourhoods of Ahmedabad. The areas of Premdarvsa, Dariapur, Danilimra, Saraspur, Bapunagar, Geetamandir and Amraivadi are poor,

overpopulated, polluted, crowded and congested. Participants for the study were identified with the help of a fieldworker who is a member of the SEWA Academy – the organisation's research arm – and *aagevans*, who are leaders within a particular trade, whose task it is to facilitate communication between the organisation and its members. As the researcher is fluent in the local languages, the fieldworker was mainly involved as an intermediary between the researcher and participants. The majority of the 'workers' were fluent in Gujarati, while a few spoke only Hindi. The interviews were conducted in the language of their preference. The women were aged between 18 and 60. Eleven were Muslim and the remaining seven were Hindu. The smallest family size comprised two people, but, on average, it varied between five and seven members. Following Burawoy (2000: 4), an attempt was made to understand the homeworkers' social and working lives in 'their space and time'. Since these interviews were all conducted in the 'workers' homes, this context provided an insight into the way in which working realities intersect with social, and, more specifically, domestic life.

Some months later, through SEWU, research of a similar nature was carried out in Durban. I interviewed twelve women and conducted one focus group. The sites for the research were the Berea and Umlazi stations. The former, located in the hub of the city, is a taxi as well as a train station. Umlazi railway station, also a bus and taxi stop, is 20 kilometres south of the city centre. All the women interviewed were African, Zulu-speaking, and, with two exceptions, were aged between 43 and 47 (the two remaining women were aged 33 and 60). In all but one case, the women were single mothers whose earnings were the primary source of income. The size of the households varied between four and ten people, with one consisting of three members. The sample for this case was selected with the help of SEWU's regional secretary, also an organiser, who, additionally, acted as the translator for interviews, which were all conducted in Zulu.

In both cases, all the women were part of a connected movement and were in the informal, readymade garment trade. There were, however, two critical differences between the two cases. Firstly, while the Indian garment makers were contracted out only to *produce* garments, their South African counterparts were involved in *producing* as well as *selling* clothing. Secondly, the Indian producers worked from the context of their *homes*, while the Durban women were producing and selling garments from the *street*, through small shops (Umlazi Station) or shelters (Berea Station). For the purposes of this comparative analysis, home-based workers are distinguished from a category of 'street-based' workers. This key contrast between the comparators has an important

analytical value as it has a bearing on understanding, especially, the differences in the experiences of the work and hence, identity.

In terms of the data collection, a point needs to be made that is relevant to this study's central theme, identity. Relating to the fieldwork conducted in Ahmedabad, as a South African Indian woman conducting research on identities amongst Indian women in the native languages of Gujarati and Hindi, an interesting dynamic was introduced into the research setting, with the researcher becoming the researched in some instances. The intrigue about my own identity, however, served to build a good rapport rather than undermine the research process. A degree of identification with the researcher on the part of the interviewees may have been useful, as the women sometimes spoke of matters such as their own exclusion from public life and the scrutiny of the community; concerns that may not have been otherwise raised due to their sensitivity. 'Silences' on these issues arise out of cultural restrictions that society and the women place on themselves in terms of relating personal and domestic concerns. The Durban women were less forthcoming on these matters. Language may have been a barrier here, as the interviews were mostly conducted in Zulu, in which the researcher is not versed.

The next section looks at women's involvement in the informal sector through a particular focus on self-employment as a common form of work for women. The discussion demonstrates, firstly, that neo-liberal globalisation can entrench gender divisions by creating insecure and low paying informal work. Secondly, the atomisation that is created by the very nature of this work calls for a specific kind of organising strategy for its workers, and this is evidenced in social movement unions such as SEWA and SEWU.

WOMEN WORKING IN THE INFORMAL SECTOR

One impact of globalisation on the world of work can be understood in the framework of neoliberalism and some of its tenets of privatisation, free market principles, and a declining role of the state. In the drive to be globally competitive, production costs are kept low and a flexible workforce is sought after. While flexible work patterns affect both men and women in the formal as well as informal sectors of the economy, the focus in this study is on arrangements as they affect women, particularly within the informal sphere. The dire outcome of 'change(s) in macroeconomic conditions', Balakrishnan (2002: 2) argues, is 'a significant impact on the conditions of work for women and gender relations in the household.' Upon investigating patterns of increased outsourcing and their relationship to macroeconomic changes in

Pakistan, Thailand, Sri Lanka, the Philippines and India, Balakrishnan & Sayeed (2002: 30) concluded that:

In the wake of liberalization, SAPs [structural adjustment programmes] and the financial crisis, increasing immiserization of the labour force – due to privatization/downsizing and poverty – has intensified the distress sale of women's labor. Moreover, the absence of any regulation of the informal sector in general, and of home-based workers in particular, has provided a further incentive to employers to outsource production activity to unorganized women workers under exploitative working conditions.

As a consequence of her own unemployment, or as an attempt to circumvent the fall in household income due to unemployment of other members, usually males, the woman worker joins the informal sector. Typically, the work arrangements, according to Moghadam (1999: 371, 374) include, part-time, temporary, casual, and home-based work; commonly deregulated, casualised, exploitative and more contingent in character. Standing (1989: 1079) observed that these 'indirect forms of employment' are a consequence of '[t]he global pursuit of flexible low-cost labour.' Flexible work arrangements, in addition to taking advantage of existing socially-based schisms like race, class, ethnicity and gender, entail work that is low paying, insecure, and largely lacking in the provision of social benefits. Gray (1995: 1) aptly uses the term 'flexploitation' to describe flexible work. The widespread occurrence of this precarious work led Ela Bhatt, the founder of SEWA, to remark that, in fact, 'what is becoming 'atypical' is permanent, regular, paid employment' (Bhatt 2001: 7). Chatterjee (2001: 6–20) suggested that the problems faced by informal sector workers relate to a lack of basic social security, a pressing need for greater representation, failure to recognise the contribution of informal-sector workers to the national economy, and the lacuna in policies and laws as they apply to the informal economy on national and international fronts.

In this research, the category of self-employed work was considered. However, before an explication of this type of employment is provided, a predicament that usually rears its ugly head – not only, but especially, in policy debates – relates to conceptual clarification. How does one define the informal sector 'worker'? The very nature of economic activity in this sector has fuelled debates on conceptions of 'work', 'worker', 'employee', and 'self-employed' (SEWA 2000: 6). Jhabvala (n.d.) convincingly argued that definitions of these conceptual categories are

mutually exclusive, and many informal sector workers cannot be consistently regarded as either employees or self-employed. Nor can they be classified within a single trade, as many informal sector workers carry out multiple jobs in various vocations simultaneously. Standing (1989: 1090) proposed that, when considering women's labour activity, categories of 'own-account, employer, unpaid family worker, and wage worker' are limiting. Instead, he called for a focus on 'different forms of control' as an indicator of women's economic participation. He distinguished between seven forms of control. These are control over self (labour power), labour time, means of production, raw materials, output, proceeds of output and labour reproduction (Standing 1989: 1090-). This kind of typology is useful as it, firstly, counters the invisibility of informal work by allowing for the work status of such workers to be classified, which is precluded by the aforementioned restricted forms. Secondly, it facilitates an appreciation of the different kinds of work that women do, and thirdly, allows for a recognition of their varied and complicated dependencies.

A self-employed individual is one who, typically, has no employer, who runs her or his own account, and is in 'control' of the means of production. In this sense, such workers may be regarded as independent as they do not produce for a wage. The form of labour commodity that the self-employed person engages in is what van der Linden (forthcoming: 4) refers to as 'autonomous commodification' where the 'carrier of labour power is also its possessor.' A case in point would be a street-based producer-seller of garments, doing so through the utilisation of her own tools and through the direct purchasing of raw materials. But, as the Indian case will show, many self-employed women produce under a 'middleman' and workers, therefore, do not fall neatly into either an independent self-employed group or a dependent group. Such would be the circumstances, for example, of a homemaker who subcontracts her labour. The homemaker, thus, operates in a chain of subcontracting and is, therefore, a 'dependent producer', unlike the independent self-employed producer and/or seller. Carr, Chen & Tate (2000: 127) distinguished between home-based workers and homeworkers. A home-based worker can be either an own-account worker producing from the home or a 'dependent subcontract' worker, and, in this latter case, is regarded as a homemaker. 'Under this usage homeworkers are a subset of home-based work' (Carr, Chen & Tate 2000: 127). In this research, as far as it relates to the Ahmedabad case, I refer to home-based work, as the respondents fell into both the fully self-employed and dependent-producer groups. It is possible to argue that while the sub-contracted worker lacks independence from the middleman, their status as dependent sub-contracted workers is also

erroneous, since many of the garment homeworkers have no working contracts, are in ownership of their tools, sewing machines, and in control of the place of production; their homes.

Worldwide, the garment industry, and the closely linked textile industry, has changed drastically. Many have documented the macro-economic policy shifts for these industries in India (see [Jhabvala 1995; Krishnamoorthy 1999; Singh 1999; Unni, Bali & Vyas 1999; Jhabvala & Kanbur 2002;] [Balakrishnan & Sayeed 2002;] Unni & Bali 2002). In particular, the closure of textile-producing mills has led to high levels of male unemployment and to growing female employment in the informal sector. Even as far back as 1995, Jhabvala (1995: 7) was able to write: '[m]ore than [100,000] full time workers have been retrenched from the textile mills and the process is continuing. This has placed a heavy burden on the wives and other family members who have to earn a living in the unorganised sector.' Raval (2001: 2) commented that, in India, more than 90 percent of the country's workforce was engaged in the informal sector, approximately 60 percent of whom were women. While the size of the informal sector in South Africa is small compared to that of India, in both cases there are greater proportions of women than men involved in informal economic activity. The gender disparity between men's and women's participation in the informal sector is most evident when a distinction is made between street vending and home-based work in India. As many as 90 percent of street vendors in Ahmedabad are men (Unni, cited in ILO 2002: 52), while home-based activity mostly involves women. According to Unni (cited in ILO 2002: 48), of the total Ahmedabad workforce in 2002 (formal and informal):

- 52 per cent of all women, compared to eight per cent of all men, work at home;
- five per cent of all women, compared to 23 per cent of all men, work on the streets; and
- 22 per cent of all women, compared to 58 per cent of all men, work at factories, offices, or workshops.

The gender division in street trading, which is marked in India as a consequence of cultural restrictions on women's mobility, gives the informal sector a particular shape.

For the home-based worker, apart from having to manage dual responsibilities of domestic chores and homework, the lack of the recognition of the home as the workplace and, related to this, the failure to acknowledge paid labour in the private sphere as work, has the effect of excluding the homemaker from being officially recognised as a

worker. Rose (1995: 131) highlighted a further predicament that applies to the home-based worker. The 'Purdah (cloistering) system' strictly confines Muslim women to the home, and thereby 'imposes serious limitations on their ability to earn a living, as the mobility and skills needed for better paying jobs are simply inaccessible.' Kantor (2002: 287) referred to mobility (as well as occupational segregation and family responsibility) as 'women-exclusive constraints' that 'generally result from norms institutionalized at a macro level that affect women due to their gender.' The cultural norms, such as Purdah, 'constrain' the women worker by confining her work only to the domain of the home, and it also serves to increase the distance – physical and social – between the worker and the market. This latter problem is experienced more acutely when the workers are subcontracted homeworkers, where a middleman is present. Therefore, the additional consequence of homework is that most workers are cut off from markets and related opportunities (Kantor 2002: 289). In terms of this constraint, street-based workers are more favourably placed since they are not excluded from the marketplace.

There is, however, one important factor that counters these negative occurrences. As Bhatt (1992: 3) explained, though invisible and 'crushed under tremendous burdens', the informal sector women worker 'has her economic strength. She is a worker, a producer of goods and services, she has the skill of her occupation. She has the experiences of work.' On another positive note, Balakrishnan (2002: 7) drew from her previous writing to argue that when women engage in subcontracted work, their control in this domain can potentially alter gender relations in the household. Her examination of home-based garment production in India showed that when women have control over wages, easy access to wider communities for assistance, and the mere possibility of subcontracted work to generate income from the home setting, these factors could bring greater equity to gender relations in the household.

In the Indian context, home-based work might be the only productive work available to some women, due to religious and cultural restrictions. Balakrishnan (2002: 31) writes:

In places where women's public mobility was an issue, subcontracted work allowed for women to earn an income while staying at home. Women's ability to work increased their bargaining position in the household, particularly if they were new entrants into the labor market.

Likewise, Unni & Bali (2002: 143) explained that in India, industrial trends do benefit the worker at the lowest end of the industry, i.e. the

home-based worker, by providing work opportunities and employment, as well as increasing decision-making power in the home. However, Khattak found countervailing evidence in a study on Pakistani women workers, arguing that entry into paid work does not 'automatically' translate into gains. According to Khattak (2002: 37):

The ability to earn does not automatically mean the relaxation of patriarchal controls. We find that this is seldom the case, as much more (at both the symbolic and material levels) is tied to empowerment and independence than earnings alone. Age, marital status, and class directly impact a woman's level of assertiveness and autonomy.

Khattak's study was conducted amongst subcontracted women workers in the garment, carpet and plastic industries in three Pakistani cities. In her survey, only twelve percent of the respondents were aware of any organisations working on behalf of subcontracted women workers. Perhaps there are factors that are specific to the family or the wider social and cultural context that do not immediately and obviously 'empower' the women worker. However, could their lack of awareness as well as non-membership to organisations have led Khattak (2002: 53) to draw the conclusion that 'bringing in an income has contributed very little to any radical change in the position and status within the household or for that matter the public context'?

In a 2002 International Labour Office (ILO) publication, statistics clearly demonstrated the unequal distribution of informal employment between the world's developed and developing regions. While in sub-Saharan Africa as much as 72 percent of those engaged in non-agricultural employment were in the informal sector, self-employment, part-time and temporary work made up only 25 percent of total employment in the United States (ILO 2002: 7). The report further demonstrated that it is largely women that were engaged in this sector. If we look at statistics provided for sub-Saharan Africa, the gender disparity in informal sector involvement is evident. In non-agricultural employment, women comprised 84 percent of the informal sector, while men made up 63 per cent (ILO 2002: 8). Table 1 shows the distribution of informal employment in four regions, revealing the unequal involvement of men and women in these activities.

Table 1: Informal employment in non-agricultural employment, by sex 1994/2000²⁹

Region/ country	Informal employment as percentage of non- agricultural employment	Women's informal employment as percentage of women's non- agricultural employment	Men's informal employment as percentage of men's non- agricultural employment
North Africa	48	43	49
Sub-Saharan Africa	72	84	63
South Africa	51	58	44
Latin America	51	58	48
Asia	65	65	65
India	83	86	83

Source: ILO (2002: 19) (selected statistics)

According to the ILO, South Africa, like Mexico, is one of the few countries that has collected statistics on the informal sector. In South Africa, 'the effort to better measure the informal economy was part of a larger effort to develop the post-apartheid national statistical system' (ILO 2002: 15). Apartheid structured the informal sector in South Africa in significant ways. For example, a number of women, more specifically black African women, participate informally through paid domestic work, which makes up eight percent of the country's total employment (ILO 2002: 40, 41). More broadly, informal sector employment in 2000 constituted approximately 34 percent of total employment in South Africa (including domestic as well as agricultural work) (ILO 2002: 40, 41). According to Skinner & Valodia (2001: 77), between 1996 and 1999 employment in this sector grew by more than 90 percent. They raised the possibility of the increase being due to improved data collection methods, but there is a growth in real numbers too. Further, according to Xaba, Horn & Motala (2002: 10), the growth of this sector in South Africa is more rapid in the urban than the rural areas.

Many have commented on South Africa's growing informal sector as a consequence of liberalisation, as well as on its gendered effects. There

are two noticeable effects of market restructuring: firstly, downsizing and outsourcing in the formal sector has led, in particular, to unemployment among male partners, which has resulted in family impoverishment. Secondly, there has been an increase in the participation levels of women in the informal sector, largely through sub-contracting. As Horn explained: 'it is common for women to go out and create informal work for themselves to support their families when . . . men lose their formal jobs' (Agenda 2001: 48).

The restructuring of markets and the simultaneous increase in unemployment and informal sector work can be linked to the reduction in trade and tariff barriers as well as privatisation, mainly, in the public sector. In terms of the latter point, Orr (2001a: 23) argued that privatisation marginalises poor black women in particular, entrenching their poverty through unemployment and precarious outsourced work. In relation to the clothing and textile industries, restructuring has dire consequences as these sectors are, firstly, labour intensive industries, and, secondly, the majority of its workers are women (See Orr 2001b, [Smith 2001,] [Skinner & Valodia 2001]).

Sitas (2001: 13) pointed out that rising unemployment in 'vulnerable' industries like clothing and textile is due, largely, to the local industry being unable to compete with the influx of cheaper imports. The consequence of a reduction in tariffs is confirmed in a study conducted by Smith. In her research on clothing manufacturing in the Western Cape, Smith (2001: 40) found that orders for local produce were diminished or replaced by cheaper imports from Asia and Africa. As many as 85 percent of factory owners in Smith's study attributed job losses to either the 'lack of or cancellation of orders for manufactured garments' (Smith 2001: 40). The effect, she further showed, was either factory closure or outsourcing of production to Cut, Make and Trim factories (CMTs). The latter pattern is growing in the South African context, with most CMTs being characterised by poor working conditions and low-waged labour. Clarke, Godfrey and Theron (2003: 9) also demonstrated that, since 1996, trade liberalisation in the clothing and textile industries has led to a significant growth in homeworking in both Durban and Cape Town. Van der Westhuizen (2004: 348) documented growing home-based work in Cape Town's CMTs production to cut, make and trim factories (CMTs, where cutting is usually separated off from 'make and trims'), which range from 'mini-factories' to 'small survivalist set-ups', and discussed the unfavourable working conditions under which mostly women labour. Likewise, Clarke, Godfrey & Theron (2003: 14-18) illustrate the adverse nature of work in 'make and trim' home-based operations in South Africa.

²⁹ The ILO defines informal employment as 'comprised of both self-employment in informal enterprises (i.e., small and/or unregistered) and wage employment in informal jobs (i.e., without secure contracts, worker benefits, or social protection)' (ILO 2002: 7). The table reflects the 1994 - 2000 period.

Mosoetsa's (2004) study of a segment of the South African footwear industry provides a good example of the impact of trade liberalisation for women workers in a specific industry. Mosoetsa showed that restructuring in the formal sector in the largely feminised footwear industry has dual effects: on the one hand, it has exacerbated working conditions for those who have been able to maintain their jobs by intensifying work and creating longer working hours (Mosoetsa 2004: 329-30). On the other hand, the restructuring has shifted many women into the informal sector where they incur low incomes, no benefits, no protection from legislation and fewer opportunities for unionisation (Mosoetsa 2004: 333-5). The shift into informal sector work after retrenchments is also true for homeworkers in the clothing industry (Clarke, Godfrey & Theron 2003: 26).

The burden of adjustment is clearly falling squarely on the shoulders of women. This is significant to recognise because, in South Africa, the clothing sector, in particular, is skewed in terms of gender composition. For example, Horton showed that in 1999 the clothing industry accounted for 205,000 jobs, of which women comprised 76 percent of the total (Horton 1999: 47). With the continued liberalisation of trade and its resultant growth in the informal sector, organisation of informal workers is necessary and urgent. As Theron (2004) notes, increasing 'externalisation' in the form of sub-contracting and homeworking – growing categories of employment – are not protected by legislation in South Africa.

Von Holdt & Webster (2001), Bennett (2003) and Horn (2003) drew our attention to the difficulties encountered when organising workers in the informal sector, and Clarke, Godfrey & Theron (2003: 10-11) highlighted the problems with homeworkers especially. According to von Holdt & Webster (2001: 19), global competitiveness and the subsequent restructuring of work have 'forced' unions to consider the response to globalisation. They argue that the challenge for labour is to incorporate 'new kinds of worker constituency', which thus calls for a new form of organisation. Sitas (2001: 13) also argued that the growth of the informal sector can potentially undermine organised labour. 'Organised labour is vulnerable because of a mass of people hurting [sic] to get its jobs, individually at the factory gates, collectively through labour brokers and collectively too through communities demanding outsourcing and subcontracting' (Sitas 2001: 16). This opens up yet a further challenge for the approach of unions to workers in the informal sector.

Drawing on the work of Sanyal (1991) (cited in Webster 2004), Webster (2004: 403-4) referred to 'axes of commonality' and 'axes of

discord' that can contribute to the extent to which workers will organise. As far as the axes of commonality are concerned, location and proximity, trade/occupation and sex roles are important. Workers in a common trade will experience similar trade-related problems, and women are likely to organise on the basis of gender. On the other hand, competition, ethnicity, race and religious identities competing with their worker identities, as well as government policies, as axes of discord, can selectively assist some informal sectors, which then serve to cast out other workers. This study demonstrated that for the informal sector woman 'worker' in Durban and Ahmedabad, the axes of commonality strengthen union ties, as well as serve to decrease the social distance between the otherwise atomised workers. Further, membership to an organisation is a significant aspect of how work is experienced and understood. As such, the research findings lend support to women's based organisations in the informal sector.

Responding to a changing global economy that is adversely impacting on women's working lives, the 1990s, according to Rowbotham (2001: 1), saw growing organisation in the informal economy, with women at the forefront, reflecting a 'new kind of internationalism'. She goes on to note that:

Not only do livelihood movements . . . span the divide of work and community and overlap between the formal and informal sectors, they are developing both from autonomous women's groups and women's sections integrated within co-operatives, trade unions or within general movements like environmental justice (Rowbotham 2001: 8).

New forms of social movements, according to Pape (2000: 12), will only be successful if gender '[reaches] the heart of their organisations.' Moghadam (1999: 369) goes further, arguing that 'the singular achievement of globalization is the proliferation of women's movements at the local level, the emergence of transnational feminist networks working at the global level, and the adoption of international conventions.'

Moghadam (1999: 383-4) examines a myriad of transnational feminist networks that deal with a range of issues that affect women. Some of these networks include the Caribbean-based DAWN (Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), WIDE (Network Women in Developmental Europe) in Brussels, Women Working Worldwide in London, and the New York-based WEDO

(Women's Environmental and Development Organization). Similarly, Rowbotham (2001: 6) cites HomeNet and StreetNet as two organisations that are developing at the level of the global, and to this, we can also add WIEGO (Women in Informal Employment: Globalizing and Organizing). WIEGO is a global network that started in 1997 through the joint action of SEWA and HomeNet, bringing together activists, researchers and statisticians. As international organisations, HomeNet and StreetNet unite home-based workers and street vendor associations, respectively. For Africa, Horn (2003: 44) cited a number of well-established unions that also represent informal sector workers. Bhatt (2001:7) suggested that a union that organises informal sector women workers has to change to see itself as a 'social movement'.

In the next section I provide a brief introduction to SEWU and SEWA. This serves as a backdrop to understanding the experiences and identities of the Ahmedabad and Durban garment makers.

SEWA AND SEWU

Rooted in India's biggest textile trade union, the Textile Labour Association (Rose 1995: 19), SEWA organises poor, self-employed women who work in the informal sector. The majority of SEWA's members are illiterate, vulnerable, and live lives that are permeated with risk. Its fundamental goals are to encourage 'full employment' and 'self reliance' (SEWA 2001: 7, 8). In its 33 years of existence, SEWA has been able to organise 74 different trades in the informal sector. These occupations range from kite making, *agarbatti* (incense stick) rolling and readymade garment stitching, all in the home-based category, to fruit, vegetable and flower vending in the street vendors category, and to manual labour, which includes waste-paper collection and construction work (SEWA 2001: 10-11). In 2003, its membership throughout India was 704,166 of which 469,306 (66.6 percent) live in Gujarat, with home-based work comprising 22.5 percent of the Gujarat total (SEWA 2003: 9-10). According to SEWA's 2003 Annual Report, there were about 40,000 readymade garment workers in Ahmedabad, approximately 80 percent of whom were women (SEWA 2003: 18).

The action of the unions and the cooperatives is, crucially, the manner in which its members' bargaining power is advanced. There are a number of service co-operatives; including health care, crèche facilities, and housing and insurance schemes to which its members have access. SEWA's work also involves negotiating on national as well as international levels with governments and NGOs to influence the

direction of policies that address the informal sector. Through these various mechanisms, '[t]he organization believes that by improving the conditions for the women, it can improve the conditions of the entire family, and hence the society' (Rose 1995: 88).

The tenable quality of this movement is largely drawn from, firstly, the magnitude of work that SEWA organises; secondly, the fact that all this work is in the informal sector; and, finally, and importantly, that its membership is entirely women. Since its inception, apart from South Africa, SEWA has also organised in Yemen and Turkey. Broadening its reach is an outcome of SEWA's recognition of the commonality in conditions of work for women in the informal sector, worldwide. Its stance towards globalisation, according to its founder, Bhatt, is one that is 'not for or against it [globalisation]. SEWA is pro poor. When the poor benefit we support globalisation, and when they do not, we try to build their strength and reap the benefits' (SEWA 2002: 3). There are diverse arms to the organisation that, furthermore, add to its impressive character and ability, such as the Mahila SEWA Sahakari Bank, which provides credit and saving facilities. SEWA also provides a range of training options for its members.

Modelled on SEWA, SEWU was formed in 1993 and first began with a membership base of 250 workers. By the end of 2003, SEWU had about 5,000 members, with five branches (in KwaZulu Natal, Free State, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, and Mpumalanga). The bulk of these members worked in the garment trade, with many of them residing in KwaZulu Natal province. Of its 2,300 members recorded in 2002, approximately 52 percent were producing clothing (Bennett 2003: 36). According to SEWU, the criteria for membership include the following: self-employed, an employer with a maximum of three employees, a worker who was non-permanent or doing casual work, or where the work was not covered by another trade union (SEWU 2004). Membership in 2003 was R10 with a monthly subscription of R8. At the local level there are sub-branches that exist under the regional branch. SEWU has trade committees that were formed by trade leaders directly elected by members. Membership provided many direct opportunities as well as benefits. For example, SEWU membership could be used to apply for loans from the Land Bank. This is an important, positive development for those in the informal sector as they normally experience difficulties, not only with obtaining loans, but also with opening bank accounts. Further, through workshops, members could attend classes on tendering, leadership skills, providing home-based care for people living with HIV/AIDS, literacy, and capacity building. These courses were funded and hosted by SEWU. Additionally,

SEWU subsidised courses that the women were interested in attending, such as sewing classes. These possibilities offered direct advantages, as well as many indirect ones, as the next part of the discussion shows.

EXPERIENCES AND IDENTITIES: AHMEDABAD

I begin this section by distinguishing between the ways that garment making operates in the home-based group (Ahmedabad) and the street-based group (Durban), before turning to an examination of identities. In Ahmedabad, the homeworkers receive textiles from a local cloth merchant, who, in most cases, has the cloth cut to various size and style specifications by a cutting master. Homeworkers, then, usually stitch clothes in batches of twelve and, on completion, these are returned to the cloth merchant, who may contract other homeworkers for buttons, embroidery work, and/or ironing, or he makes them available, through another subcontractor, for sale in the local marketplace. The home-based garment 'worker', therefore, operates as a subcontractor in a long subcontracting chain. In the readymade garment trade in Durban, however, production is not separated off from the selling of finished goods. In these cases, the garment stitching takes place at the site from which the products are sold. Further, no middlemen are involved, and the producer-seller is, thus, fully self-employed. In both cases, the women face different challenges. The home-based 'worker' juggles between household responsibilities and her sewing work, while the street-based 'worker' is faced with the dilemma of having to divide her attention between sewing and tending to customers needs (though, as I show further on, these problems should not be equated).

Amongst the Ahmedabad homeworkers, the place of production was, in all but one case, a one or two bedroom rented home that, by day, was the workshop, and by night turned into the family's living quarters. The smallest family size encountered was two people, but most were between five and seven members. The homes were usually lacking in any sanitation structures or running water facilities. Almost all homes, however, had access to electricity.

Of the 18 homeworkers interviewed, eight were stitching *godras* (quilts), which are made from waste material (*chindi*) from the textile mills. The remaining garment makers were sewing *kurtas* (tops for men and women), *chanias* (the underskirt of a *sari*), or *punjabi* suits (a traditional outfit). As Unni, Bali and Vyas (1999: 21) note, the products manufactured in this sector are of low quality and are sold on the local market. All the homeworkers used their own cotton and needles, which are not calculated into the cost of production. In only three of the 18

cases did sewing take place on electrically-powered machines. In the remaining 15 cases, old foot-pedal machines were used. The importance of owning a sewing machine cannot be overstated, and this was usually the only asset that the women had. Without a sewing machine production stops, and an entire household suffers. Even 18-year old Sugufatabanu's five-member family was completely dependent on her income, which ranged between Rs1,500 and Rs2,000 (US\$34.50-US\$50) a month. Shameembanu and Hasumatiben both sustained households of seven members with an average monthly income of Rs1,200 (US\$27,60) and Rs1,000 (US\$23) respectively.

Fifteen of the women interviewed were piece-rate 'workers'. The remaining three were own-account 'workers' who produced garments for personal clients. The piece-rate garment maker gets paid according to work completed by the dozen, on a weekly basis, and this income is contingent on how much is produced. According to Unni, Bali & Vyas (1999: 22, 32), the piece-rate worker may earn as little as two to three per cent of the market value of the garment. The number of garments completed is dependent on the tools of production, as well as other responsibilities within the home, such as childcare and household tasks. Only one of the homeworkers procured anything beyond her income, and this was in the form of steel dishes that the cloth merchant presented, annually, to the homeworkers over the Hindu festival of Diwali. None of the 'workers' received any social benefits, such as medical aid or pension funds from the subcontractor for whom they were sewing. Jubeidabibi commented that when it comes to payment from the contractor for production, one should 'take what you get for your sewing and forget about the rest [benefits]'. Incomes are not only low but also inconsistent, as work is unpredictable. Shameembanu commented on the lack of work that was made available to her. She bemoaned: 'our day doesn't pass because we don't have any sewing work'. For 20-year old Rukshanibanu, her desperate economic circumstances, as well as dependence on the contractor for work, and hence survival, was demonstrated in the following statement: 'If we get it, we will sew it'. Many of the working conditions outlined above confirm findings in other studies (see Jhabvala & Shaikh 1995, Singh 1999, Unni, Bali & Vyas 1999, Jhabvala & Kanbur 2002, Unni & Bali 2002).

Why do women participate in home-based work? In part, the answer lies in wide-scale unemployment, a factor that has affected family revenue and increased the burden of work on women. The closing down of textile mills in the 1980s and 1990s disrupted the economic position of many households in urban Ahmedabad. Rukshanibanu, who has been sewing since the age of ten, sustained her family of five on her Rs800 a

month income (US\$18.40). She lamented: 'If we eat for now, we have to think about the evening, how am I going to run the house in the evening?' Changes taking place at the macro level can, therefore, alter the sexual division of labour at the micro, household level, by making women the sole income earners in their families.

The answer to the question above, in the case of the Indian women 'worker', also lies in the fact that entering into homework, rather than some other kind of work, is framed by a particular milieu of social expectations. Cultural and social restrictions affect women's mobility, which in turn, shape the kind of work that they conduct and restrict their direct access to markets. The constraints were particularly pronounced in interviews with Muslim women. Thirty-year old Jubeidabibi was asked if she would be willing to undergo any training that could enhance her sewing skills, and she stated that, 'if someone comes to teach me at home, I will learn. I will not go outside to learn.' Similarly, Jubeidabibi's younger niece, 18-year old Fehmidabanu, spoke of her many wishes, but recognised the limitations in attaining them. 'I have many dreams about working. I have many dreams about improving my life, but I can't. I even dreamt of becoming a doctor.' The focus group discussion illuminated why her dreams will remain just that. 'If she works at home, she can look after her children, cook for her husband, the in-laws can come and visit, children can get sick, she can do all the work' (Jaidabhen, 50 years old). Fehmidabanu's mother, Jamilabibi added that, '[a]fter she gets married, and if the parents and parents-in-law come and visit and they will find a lock on the door, then there will be a fight.'

Similarly, Naseembanu, who has attended a number of health training sessions conducted by SEWA, will not become a SEWA health employee for the following reason: 'I can go and work for SEWA and earn a salary but my husband doesn't like all that . . . I can't ever leave the house without my *burkha* [veil] . . . They [Muslim men] do not like their wives to go out and work . . . Even my daughter, she is not married but has to wear a *burkha* if she leaves the house.' These examples portray both expectations and restrictions on women's choice in the context of paid labour. Interestingly, the three home-based workers who produced on their own account, i.e. were fully self-employed, were all Hindu. The suggestion from the research is that Muslim women are more constrained in terms of work opportunities. For most women, where the home is the workplace, the home is 'made through power relations which construct the rules which construct the boundaries. These boundaries are both social and spatial – they define who belongs to a place and who may be excluded, as well as the location or site of the

experience' (McDowell 1999: 4). The margin around the home extends to limit women's participation in the market and, thereby, keeps home-based workers dependent on a contractor who appropriates the larger proportion of the surplus from their production, consequently maintaining the cycle of 'flexploitation'. Dependence and low wages are added burdens for the home-based worker who is, usually, balancing dual responsibilities of home-work and housework.

All the Muslim 'workers' reflected on the harsh communal riots that struck Ahmedabad in July 2002. This was expected, as the Muslim areas of Ahmedabad were more adversely affected by the riots than other areas. The garment makers felt the effects of the insurgence most strongly when their sewing machines were looted. Shameembanu is a 24-year old Muslim woman who looks well beyond her age. She lives with her husband, two daughters, two brothers and mother in a small two-roomed house. The remnants of the aftermath of the bloody violence, which continued for more than a month, were still evident nearly ten months later. For Shameembanu, while her own home was near to being destroyed, the true tragedy of the riots was that the family's three sewing machines were stolen. Her family was robbed of its main source of income. Jubeidabanu, a 60-year old Muslim woman living in the same community, spoke between sobs of the harshness of the riots. With great despair, she recounted how years of hard work had finally allowed her to acquire her own sewing machine, clearly an important asset, which was abruptly taken away from her. Jubeidabanu and her daughter turned to stitching *godras* with a hired sewing machine. She found her solace in the survival and safety of her family, and the fact that she still had a roof over her head. While these two stories show that the specific experience of the communal riots has changed the sphere of work as well as the livelihoods of the women, more broadly they indicate the high level of risk involved in the women's social and working lives, which are closely intertwined.

What can an organisation like SEWA accomplish for these workers? Becoming a member of SEWA has led to important changes in the women's lives. Lakshmiben, who has been fortunate enough to access a series of loans from the SEWA Bank, has been able to make significant improvements to her home. Jaitunben, an incense stick roller, said: 'it felt good . . . after I joined SEWA. I got to learn a lot . . . I got an understanding from very big and important people . . . I also got to travel . . . that's the kind of awareness I got.' Learning that there are other workers with the same kind of concerns, working conditions and hardships, can be a liberating experience in itself. As Jasuben reflected: 'I realised that if our sisters are working like this, then I can also do something for myself.'

After joining SEWA, the 'workers' realised that they are, in fact, workers – this identity being largely derived from the organisation itself. Even though there is no employer, nor a traditional workplace, they earn an income by producing commodities that are bought and sold in the marketplace. The identity of being a worker is an important identity for the poor home-based women as it encourages self worth, independence and confidence. This finding begs the question of whether the identification with being a worker takes on a different significance for women than for men. As Bhatt (1992: 9) explained, when a woman 'organise[s] on the basis of work, her self esteem grows', and she realises, in fact, 'that she is a 'worker', a 'producer' an active contributor to the national income, and not only somebody's wife, mother or daughter.' Status in the family and community also improves through work and its recognition. Jamilabibi felt acknowledged in her family and the community, instilling in her a sense of self-respect. Through SEWA, the women realised that their production is a form of valued work, and as such their potential and contributions in the home, society and larger economy are appreciated. 'For these women "Work is Dignity"' (SEWA 2000: 5).

EXPERIENCES AND IDENTITIES: DURBAN

If we consider the living as well as working conditions amongst self-employed women in the Durban sample, we find some important similarities. The women support large extended families on their sole incomes, labour in pitiable physical spaces, face constant work insecurity, and, at the same time, commend their organisation for bringing about positive transformations in many aspects of their lives. The solidarity that they experience with other women workers is integral to how they experience work in the informal sector.

The Durban women are self-employed and, if we consider the 'Typology of Street Vendors' provided by the ILO (2002: 50), they can also be regarded as street vendors. The difference between these readymade garment makers and other categories of street vendors, such as vegetable sellers or cosmetic traders, is that they produce the goods they sell. Lund (1998: 7) referred to 1997 statistics, which revealed that in the Durban metropolitan area, only three percent of the street-traders were selling products produced by themselves. However, Mosoetsa (2004: 332), who investigated the Pietermaritzburg footwear industry, found that it is not unusual, in that city, to find street vending coupled with production in trades such as food, footwear and crafts. Street trading, whether inclusive or exclusive of production, may operate on a continuum from being independent to fully dependent; this being

determined by control over goods, pricing and income (Lund 1998: 21). In this study, apart from lack of control over the pricing of raw materials, the vendors were fully independent producers and sellers.

Forty-five year old Nokuthula's story highlighted the difficult circumstances under which informal sector workers labour. Stitching on a second-hand electric machine, she uses a cramped space in Berea station. The two metre by two metre area that she and other 'workers' created for themselves was set up opposite stalls or shacks that the metro-council rents out. Nokuthula did not pay any rent for her working area. Her expense was the money she paid to one of the neighbouring stalls for overnight storage of her sewing machine, a table and a chair. Nokuthula commented that she finds material prices inconsistent and expensive, which in turn erodes profits. 'If I go today [to buy the material], tomorrow the price is higher.' Further struggles for street-based workers relate to unsatisfactory working conditions. At both the Berea and Umlazi stations, there was little access to water, and when it was available, it was not clean. Electricity was bought through an unreliable meter system. Allocated workplaces were small and crowded with tools, raw materials and finished goods. The street producer-sellers at Berea station only had tables and chairs, and while they were in the shelter of the station's walkways, their work areas were not conducive to effective or efficient production or selling. Lack of storage space is a particular problem for the street-based garment maker. Forty-three year old Themsele, for example, carried her electric powered sewing machine back and forth between her home and the station; approximately a 15 kilometre commute, which included a train trip and a significant amount of walking, and she paid R14 (just over US\$2) a week to a nearby stall owner to keep her goods overnight.

The women work long hours, and frequently work on Sundays too, as many churchgoers, for whom they mainly sew clothes, pass through the station. With the exception of three women who produce goods to order, all the garment makers were sewing school uniforms and church clothes. Forty-six year old Euphenia worked from a workshop in Umlazi station where she has a small space (three metres by two metres), containing a tiny basin, two worktables, an electric sewing machine and an iron. She rents this area for R270 (US\$45.76) a month. Above her ironing table was a small bookshelf holding one book, a bible. Her household comprised eight people (including herself), all of whom were sustained by her income. In addition to her sewing, which she has been engaged since 1983, Euphenia volunteered to provide religious lessons at the local township school. At the time of the interview, she was sewing skirts for young girls. To start work at 6.00 am, Euphenia leaves her

home at 5.15, and then works through the day to finish 50 skirts, if she has such an order. But, she added, 'I am praying, "Oh God, please give me an over-locking machine [a specialised sewing machine]."'

Having joined it in 1998, Euphenia merited SEWU for her many successes, including being able to provide her daughter with opportunities to study at the Durban-based Workers' College. She has also enhanced her own skills through SEWU-funded courses, in which she learned how to cover kombi (mini-bus) seats and make handbags. SEWU also helped her to obtain a diploma in Fashion Design and Tailoring. Euphenia also attended other kinds of workshops offered by SEWU, such as training in business skills. This was especially useful, because 'I know how to manage my business better'. For her, the confidence gained in business skills emerged in other areas of work. She continued, 'If I'm cutting, I'm not afraid to cut, I'm not afraid of the scissors.' Joyce also found that her business improved since she learnt business-specific skills through SEWU, such as better time management. By enhancing their particular sewing skills and learning new ones, the women have been able to improve their incomes.

Euphenia concluded that 'SEWU is like my parent.' For Busizwe, the SEWU classes 'taught us about our rights in the home, domestic violence and abuse,' and, according to Nozandile: 'SEWU is a lawyer for women.' In the opinion of Joyce: 'SEWU is better than a normal union . . . they have opened doors. Because you are a member of SEWU, therefore [you] can open a bank account. I tried before but never succeeded. With SEWU it was very easy.' Like the Indian women who spoke very favourably of SEWA, SEWU is held in high regard amongst the African women. Most importantly, the garment producer-sellers acknowledge SEWU in helping them to realise their worker identity. SEWU has encouraged the notion of being workers as part of the broader identification with the working class.

Participation in SEWU has also helped the women to co-operate with each other, despite having to compete with others who are selling the same goods in adjacent stalls. There was a degree of interdependency amongst the women. In particular, because of the similar nature of their work, they could count on each other for assistance with sewing. 'We can help each other', said Busizwe, as well as, according to Rosemary, 'share ideas'. Rosemary believed that 'SEWU women can share the experience of what they know – how do you cut this, make it like this. . . . Because [we] didn't go to school and learn [sewing] . . . sharing is very important.' For Joyce, '[the] first thing that SEWU gave me was to see how other women are doing things', and this led her to think that 'if this woman has survived, why not me?' The women also supported each other as women.

This was captured in the assertion made by Themisile, and reiterated by Thandiwe, that: 'Women need other women!' According to Rosemary, after joining SEWU, 'you know about women's problems . . . [there is] no stress now . . . [I] can share problems with other women now.' This sentiment was echoed by 60-year old Thoko, who said: 'We women are suffering! We can share problems with other women now . . . What kinds of problems? . . . Men!' Not only is there commonality on the basis of work, but the women also experience similar difficulties with regard to husbands and boyfriends, thus reinforcing the gendered self. In this particular context, the gendered identity is a salient one. The benefits of working in close proximity to other women with similar social and work circumstances constitute an important axis of commonality sustaining continued membership of SEWU.

All the women – including Nthombi-Zodwa, the only one living with a partner (her husband in this case) – considered themselves to be household heads. Busisiwe believed that she was the household head 'because everything is my responsibility in that house'. Nokuthula regarded herself as the head of household of six people, as there was 'nobody working, only me.' In Nthombi-Zodwa's case, her husband being unemployed made her the sole income earner and, therefore, in her eyes, the head of her household. The other eleven women, who were unmarried, widowed or had absent partners, also found themselves in positions of being single, female, household heads. In a comparative study of SEWU's street vendors and home-based workers, Lund (1998: 24) found that street vendors 'are more likely to be household heads, to be the main breadwinner, and to have no other earners in the household.' The decline in men's formal sector employment has led to an increase in women's informal sector work, and has put many women in the position of being the 'bread winner' in (usually) large families. The women in question, however, were not unhappy about accepting the responsibilities that this entailed. According to Nozandile, 'I am now confident about myself without my husband. I don't like [to be] married. I like to stay alone . . . Why? . . . Because I don't like problems.' Not only is she able to run a household of six people by herself, she is clearly choosing to do so.

Many of the workers interviewed used to work from home, but have since chosen to work from a separate place. As to why the workers work from outside their home, some of the responses were that, in the semi-rural areas where they reside, there are many gangs; personal security is at risk and theft of tools is common. In contrast, at Umlazi station, shutter doors secure the station buildings at night, and security patrols operate in the day as well as at night (Euphenia). Further, the majority

of workers reported that working outside the home was because of advantages offered by particular work locations. According to Euphenia, 'it is easy to find customer[s] here [at the station], because it is a centre point,' and Joyce added: 'here [at the station], [we are] exposed to various people'. Street-based work offers greater proximity to the market, which is profitable. As Xaba, Horn & Motala (2002: 19) note: 'The informal economy provides accessible and affordable informal shopping outlets to a large number of commuters.' Busisiwe outlined a further advantage, which is that customers buy for cash rather than for credit, as is common in neighbourhood selling. Further, she said that 'in this area, brains are open', contrasting this to 'sit[ting] at your house alone.' The context of the home also introduces impediments to fulfilling sewing demands. For Nthombi-Zodwa, the great number of household chores competes with the hours that are needed to work in order to generate an income. The testimonies of the Indian home-based workers confirmed the burdens of the dual responsibility of maintaining a household and securing money for the family's survival.

Like SEWA, SEWU encourages the women to think of themselves as being part of the working class. The identity of being a worker is established through work experiences and reinforced by SEWU. Webster (2004: 390) offers an interesting view as to why SEWU, and by implication SEWA, regard informal sector 'workers' as workers. He argues that they lack access to productive sources and, importantly, that they are 'not embryonic businesswomen [and thus] they are dependent on their work in order to survive'. For the majority of the Durban workers, even though they work in inadequate conditions, their identities as workers, firstly, and, secondly, as strong women, gives them confidence about their abilities to be able to stand on their own feet. Unemployment of male partners, or their absence in many instances, made the majority of the workers the sole breadwinners in their families. Without the constraints of culture, which may affect their patterns of work, it was possible for the African women to choose street-based work. In so doing, they procured freer access to markets, which, in turn, offered better financial rewards. The Durban self-employed, street-based producers and sellers are, financially at least, better off than the sub-contracted, home-based Ahmedabad garment producers.

ANALYSIS AND CONCLUSION

This comparative study of garment makers in Ahmedabad and Durban shows that there are many similarities in both their experiences of work as well their organisational affiliation. The key differences are cultural

ones. Materially, at least, my research shows that it is better to be a self-employed, producer-seller based away from the home than a sub-contracted, home-based producer. Cultural differences, which shape women's mobility patterns, explain, to a large degree, why the Durban street-based workers experience a greater level of autonomy. It could be argued from this point, that despite the workers not actively realising it, national similarities and differences do shape the kind of work experience. Social relations are powerful in their impact on the social and economic realities of women and they intricately fashion the nature of the experience of work. As astutely noted by Massey (1994: 168), social relations intersect and produce 'spatiality'. It is easy to see how gender shapes the experience of work for a home-based worker. But gender also impacts on street-based workers by not limiting work opportunities. One could argue that it is in these spaces (the home and the street) that meaning is interpreted and identities – of being a woman, a household head, a worker, and a member of an organisation – are assembled. Moreover, identity is contested, renegotiated and reinvented in the realm of changing spaces.

When we turn to the similarities, there are important parallels that can be drawn between the two comparators. In both cases, the women are involved in informal sector work, largely as a consequence of the decline in men's formal sector employment. As main breadwinners in their often large households, they have become self-confident, strong women. Importantly, despite being self-employed, the women regard themselves as workers, thereby challenging the petty bourgeois categorisation of their work status, at least in Marxist terms. Drawing on her examination of the contentious place of home-based workers, Van der Westhuizen (2004: 341) argues that 'new work relations are emerging that confuse traditional class categories.'

Higher levels of unemployment amongst men and women, worldwide, and exacerbating and widespread poverty, may be regarded as evidence of some of the effects of globalisation. One of the consequences of these trends is the resultant swell in informal sector work, especially for women. For those in the informal sector, their own work experiences in this sphere, together with their representative organisations, such as SEWA and SEWU, assist in inculcating a working class identity. The articulation of this working class identity in the informal sector is a new development, as, traditionally, 'workers' in this sector would not be regarded as workers. Globalisation has, therefore, led to the creation of a new identity; a working class identity in the informal sector. When the women speak about their membership to SEWA and SEWU, they reflect on their working class identities, which are created

through the organisations' active encouragement of a common perception of experience. Through this worker identity, developed through the organisations and the experience of solidarity, the workers gain confidence to deal with their problems. The women are familiar with and acknowledge the sense of hardship under which they work and live, in terms of culture, unemployment, communal riots, and rising poverty. But at the same time, the organisations give the women, in both cases, an identity of being a worker, which allows them to rise above these challenges and feel a greater sense of pride, worth and self-respect. The confidence that both sets of women achieve through membership of their respective organisations extends beyond the confines of their work, which, in turn, has a large bearing on other identities of being mothers, wives and/or household heads. Their identities as workers and as strong women are relatively new identities.

Both comparators show that one does not have to be an employee to be a worker. The type of work that they conduct, or the space within which it is carried out, does not preclude those in the informal sphere from seeing themselves as workers. They identify themselves as workers even though they are not working under an employer, earning a wage or selling their labour power. Labour power is not 'commodified', this being a key aspect of Marxist definitions of a worker (van der Linden 2005). It is thus argued that these classifications of work and worker are too narrow, not only because of their policy and legal limitations, but also because, at least in this case, self-employed and dependent producers actually consider themselves to be workers and part of the working class. The notion of the working class' needs to be revisited so that the growing number of people, globally, who are involved in the informal sector as workers are incorporated into our understanding of this concept.

POSTSCRIPT

In June 2004, SEWU was disbanded. The reason for its closure was that SEWU went into liquidation following two legal suits. It is important to note that SEWU did not dissolve because of organisational difficulties or membership struggles. COSATU is in the process of establishing an informal sector union that will incorporate men and women, offering membership to former SEWU members (Pat Horn, StreetNet, personal correspondence, 22 February 2005).

Chapter Five

Solidarity and identity: Volkswagen workers in South Africa and Germany

Chris Bolsmann

INTRODUCTION

THE FOCUS OF this chapter is on worker identity within a trans-national corporation (TNC). This is related to international trade union solidarity, within Volkswagen AG¹ (VWAG). The connections between identity and solidarity are complex and the two ideas cannot be regarded as synonymous; rather they influence each other during two different periods under consideration. The chapter traces the 20 year relationship and solidarity displayed between the two trade unions organising in Germany and South Africa respectively, namely IG Metall² and the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). The first contact was initiated in the late 1970s and the ensuing links have developed over the last two decades. The central claim of this chapter is that two broad overlapping periods of interaction can be identified. The nature of these relations affects the forms of solidarity displayed by participants and the manner in which they relate to and interact with one another in terms of trade union internationalism.

In the first section of this chapter, the analytical framework for understanding solidarity is explored. Solidarity is understood as action that benefits Volkswagen of South Africa (VWSA) employees and trade unionists and broader activity against the apartheid state. This is interpreted against the backdrop of a specific form of trade union internationalism during apartheid. In the second section, specific themes related to the above periods which emerged from semi structured in-

¹ Volkswagen Aktiengesellschaft: Volkswagen Joint Stock Company.

² Industriegewerkschaft: Industrial Union.

depth interviews, will be identified and discussed. The first period of interaction under consideration is the initial contact between the trade union centres and establishment of direct shop floor linkages. The second period considers attempts on the part of the Germans to influence the agenda of contact by pushing the virtues of the German model of co-determination. In addition, this period looks at post-apartheid South Africa and a reunified Germany in which the internationalisation of the company occurs. This is reflected in a relationship that is competitive.

The research sites are primarily located in Uitenhage, South Africa and Wolfsburg, Germany, representing, respectively, the South African subsidiary established in 1951 and the head quarters of the company. Semi structured in-depth interviews ranging from 30 minutes to 2½ hours took place with present and former shop stewards in Cape Town, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Uitenhage, and Works Council members and IG Metall officials and members in Bonn, Frankfurt, Geneva, Kassel, Palma de Mallorca and Wolfsburg. Interviews were conducted in English and German and took place over a period of 17 months from September 2002 to January 2004. In addition, archival research was undertaken in Bonn, Johannesburg, Port Elizabeth and Wolfsburg. This chapter is derived from a broader project on solidarity in the automobile industry (see Bolsmann forthcoming).

SOLIDARITY: CONTEMPORARY PERSPECTIVES

Castells' (1997: 354) suggested that 'the labour movement fades away as a major source of social cohesion and workers' representation'. However, in studying labour movements, Webster and Lipsig-Mummé (2002: 258) challenged this position and argued that a 'recasting [of] labour studies in the new millennium' needs to occur. Their argument is premised on four propositions, namely that labour studies in Europe have universalised particular experiences, there is a need to consider labour movements in the south, and indeed learning from these movements and to consider new forms of internationalism. From this they draw the conclusions that workers are pitted against one another globally, but also that new alliances and formations of worker organisations can emerge.

Solidarity as an act of trade unionism can range from sectional interests through to political motives of class action. Hodson *et al.* (1993) considered worker solidarity against the backdrop of autonomy and participation, while Fantasia (1988: 10) reasoned that 'solidarity is created and expressed by the process of mutual association'. The notion of 'creating' solidarity is in contrast to 'sociology [that] has been generally

blinded to class sentiments expressed in the collective activities of workers'. Fantasia assumed an emergence of consciousness that is spontaneous, rather than one embedded in individual and collective experiences but arising from employment relationships on their own.

While the above authors focus on the dynamics of consciousness and action, others identify different dimensions and dilemmas of solidarity. In this context, Hyman (1997: 521) poses the question of whether an 'eclipse of solidarity' has taken place. Solidarity is under threat due to 'increased internal differentiation', '[the] turning [of] intra-class bargaining . . . into a zero-sum game', and the 'erosion of egalitarian commitments within labour movements'. Solidarity is thus an attempt at bringing together differing interests, irrespective of individual circumstances (Hyman 1997: 521). More ambitiously, Waterman (1998: 236-8) suggested six 'meanings of international solidarity', each with positive and negative aspects or potentials. Firstly, *Identity* refers to solidarity of similarity and commonality, which, in turn, can fall into the trap of exclusivity. The concern with this formulation is that identity and solidarity are synonymous. Secondly, *Substitution* attempts to aid those supposedly incapable of helping themselves, which can become paternal. Thirdly, *Complementarity* embraces exchanging material goods and ideas. The concern, however, is that an unequal relationship of exchange can emerge. Fourthly, *Reciprocity* suggests a relationship of equal exchange and 'could be taken as the new definition of the new global solidarity' (Waterman 1998: 237). Fifthly, *Affinity* refers to an emotive solidarity made up of values. This runs the risk of becoming particularistic. Finally, *Restitution* implies recognition of past inequalities, and an attempt at rectifying this can run the risk of 'buying off guilt'. Waterman's contribution is indeed a valuable one that offers cursory directions of what a *new* international solidarity can entertain.

Trade unions across the world are confronted with enormous obstacles that influence the construction of solidarity and international trade union action. Hyman (1997: 527) identified three challenges to trade unionism. Firstly, trade unionism is expected to bargain in a concessionary way, so as to bow to the pressures of flexible and fluid markets. Secondly, TNC's can play trade union centres off against one another by means of 'mutual competition' (Hyman 1997: 527). Thirdly, the power of trade unions is eroded to the extent that the specific interests of membership become important, representing very narrow spheres, resulting in the rolling back of gained victories. The 'eclipse of egalitarianism', for Hyman (1997: 527-8), has occurred for numerous reasons including the collapse of the Soviet Bloc from 1989 onwards, and the 'exhaustion of western communism'. Moreover, the rolling back

of the Keynesian welfare state by neo-liberalism undermines the project of egalitarianism even further.

In relation to consciousness, Thompson (1968: 9-10) importantly pointed out that 'we can see a logic in the response of similar occupational groups undergoing similar experiences, but we cannot predicate any law. Consciousness of class arises in the same way in different times and places, but never in just the same way'. Fantasia (1988: 4) argued that American sociology attempted to understand working-class consciousness by means of 'workers' conceptions, images, attitudes, and ideational and verbal responses to the social arrangements'. This is tested by means of a 'survey schedule designed to measure worker attitudes on a range of issues: class identification, work satisfaction and dissatisfaction, class animosities, and political preferences' (Fantasia 1988: 4). Thereafter, correlation of attitudes with independent variables, including levels of skill, religion, age, and ethnic orientation occurs. 'Armed with such data sociologists can then assess the degree of "class consciousness" in a given population of workers' (Fantasia 1988: 4). This approach adheres to certain rules as far as validity is concerned. However, it does not do so in terms of reliability, as solidarity is a process and it is created by means of social action. Rather surveys represent 'snap-shots' of a perceived phenomenon. The collective nature of the workplace is important, as solidarity is the process of collective action and, according to Fantasia (1988: 236), 'meanings and interpretations are not revised by individuals alone, but in a social context, intersubjectively'.

Therefore, solidarity may be regarded as evidence of common interests on the part of trade unionist activists. A common interest, in turn, is underpinned by a shared experience and in this case study is equated with working for the same employer. However, there are other experiences such as different national traditions of industrial relations and global competition that militate against solidarity. Importantly, because there may be an absence of solidarity, this does not imply there is a lack of identity, rather other identities at that specific juncture have more prominence. In the following section the initial period of contact and emerging cooperation between IG Metall and NUMSA will be identified and discussed. The first phase of solidarity developed primarily out of a common interest in democratic rights.

INITIAL CONTACT AND COOPERATION

The latter part of the 1970s was an important period for trade union organisation at the Uitenhage plant. The first concrete interventions occurred on the part of the International Metalworkers' Federation

(IMF) in 1977 with recognition being granted to the African union organising within the plant. This was followed by a high ranking IMF and IG Metall visit to South Africa and the Uitenhage plant in 1978. A direct outcome of the visit was the establishment of shop floor connections between the Uitenhage and the Wolfsburg plants that are maintained to the present day.

Werner Thönnessen, the Assistant General Secretary of the IMF, visited South Africa in August 1977. His arrival at the VW plant in Uitenhage had important consequences for later trade union activity and direct shop floor links. Thönnessen and Johnny Mke, the President of the United Automobile, Rubber, and Allied Workers' Union of South Africa (UAW), met with the Managing Director of VWSA and the Manager of Labour Relations, and tabled 1,016 stop orders in an attempt to gain union recognition (Rebhan & Thönnessen 1983: 149; Adler 1994; Tenzer 1998: 104). 'VW management worked through the night in search of faked signatures, before conceding that the forms were genuine' (quoted in Duncan 1997: 96). The UAW was subsequently recognised by VWSA of South Africa. Stop-order facilities deducting union dues from member's wages were put in place. During Mke's visit to Germany in 1977, on an invitation from the Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES), IG Metall's press office released the news to the German public. Additional press items made mention that VWSA was the first German firm to recognise an African trade union in South Africa, and even though specific laws were in place to hinder such a development, it occurred nonetheless. The IMF was important in paving the way for shop floor recognition at the Uitenhage plant. In addition, it placed the plant in the international limelight and became an important focus for later international trade union activity.

In January 1978, IG Metall, jointly with the IMF, sent its first official delegation to South Africa. The visitors included Eugen Loderer, as Chairperson of IG Metall and in his capacity as President of the IMF, the Vice-Chairperson of IG Metall, the General Secretary of the IMF, and Albert Schunk from IG Metall's International Department. The impetus for the visit came from the IMF's Munich Congress of 1977, where the use of violence for the liberation of South Africa was rejected, and the IMF's South African affiliates 'expressed their doubts as to the effectiveness of total economic sanctions' (IMF 1993: 57). Schunk reflected back to that meeting:

Loderer took a stand 'I go down there first, I want to see what really is happening, I am not prepared to make very far reaching decisions without knowing if that is really in

the interest of the people. I recognise there is an exiled organisation, ANC [African National Congress], who has to play it very radical, but do I really know that [is what] the people working on the shop floor want?' As a union exposed very much to public opinion in Germany, you are a big player. As IG Metall you have to answer questions and from the very beginning we got very tough criticism from church groups and others, journalists, leftist journalists, asking us 'what are you really doing?'

Schunk's comments suggest that the IMF, and in turn IG Metall, were cajoled into dealing with South Africa by members of the IMF, particularly the North Americans, rather than freely initiating engagement. Thus, by default, IG Metall, through its activities in the IMF, became a role player in South Africa. Nonetheless, this role soon became a significant one that would, within a decade, assume an important function in the debate on sanctions, disinvestment and, centrally, shop floor representation.

During the visit to the Uitenhage plant, John Gomomo, a VW employee and trade union leader at the time, maintained that management quickly supplied him with a new dustcoat to replace his existing torn one. Yet, this attempt at creating a favourable impression for the visitors did not work, as apartheid legislation was very evident in the plant. For instance, there were separate water fountains and toilet facilities for African, coloured and white workers. Toilets reserved exclusively for whites were depicted with a white figure painted on the door, toilets for Africans were represented by a black figure, and facilities for coloureds were marked with a red one. Gomomo recalled how the delegation took photographs of this.

The outcome of this high ranking IG Metall and IMF visit to South Africa was that direct shop-floor contacts were to be encouraged and established. Siegfried Ehlers, Chairperson of the Central Works Council in Wolfsburg, expressed his solidarity in the struggle for human rights and equal treatment of VW workers. Walter Hiller, as a member of the Works Council and later Chairperson of the body, recalled in an interview VWAG's awareness of South Africa as a future area of concern. Hiller suggested the IMF played an important role in the formation of links between trade union centres, but this was at the national level, rather than the shop floor. On this basis, VW's Supervisory Board, which was responsible for monitoring management as well as approving corporate decisions, was approached on the issue of trade union rights for African and coloured workers in the Uitenhage plant. Crucially,

Hiller argued the Supervisory Board was able to acquire visas for the German delegation's subsequent visits to South Africa. However, this conveyed to him that not everyone who was to visit the Uitenhage plant in the delegation, comprising Works Council members and VWAG management, was actually welcome in South Africa.

While Hiller noted the broader international operations of the company, Hans-Jürgen Uhl as advisor to Hiller argued that South Africa, along with Brazil and Mexico, became areas of concern for VWAG, due to its changing international outlook. VW halted German production of the Beetle in 1974, and replaced it with the Golf. At this stage VWAG was considering opening a plant in the United States for the production of its new model (named the Rabbit in North America), and this occurred in 1978 at the Westmoreland plant in Pennsylvania (see Kiley 2002). Uhl argued that German workers were concerned by this development, as they perceived that jobs would be lost in Germany as production shifted to the new plant. This would result in competition between the new plant and the older ones located in Germany. Moreover, questions were being asked of what VW was actually doing in countries where it had subsidiaries.

Due to the imminent international expansion of VW, along with the supposed threats of competition, the company and the Works Council began to look beyond the confines of the stable German industrial relations environment. Uhl was tasked with arranging the 14-day programme for the South African delegation in 1978 'to show them plants and the [political] climate, how we worked together, the role the union is playing . . . but [also] how the union is playing a role in responsibility' (Uhl, interview). Uhl further referred to an important symbolic manifestation that 'the leading guys in the Works Councils are [wearing] ties and we sometimes looked like the managers.' He continued to explain:

The delegation, they came to the Holiday Inn hotel here in Wolfsburg. We had a dinner with them and we introduced each other. The two blacks and coloured . . . had the same clothes [with] VW signs . . . VW gave them a tie, VW gave them a jacket to have [for] this overseas trip . . . I was the only one on the union side who talked English so this was my chance. I could see Gomomo did not know which knife and which fork to take. You could see he has not been in such a situation, in a normal, good restaurant. In my thinking this is apartheid.

The first contacts and visits occurred with management's permission and direct involvement. In his recollections, Uhl drew out some of the implications of having a programme where discussions were jointly held with management regarding wages and conditions of employment. He noted:

We didn't know how risky things are in that time, who of these other four white guys is working together with the secret service of the apartheid regime [this group comprised of Jerry Viljoen the shop steward for the whites-only South African Iron and Steel and Allied Industries Union (SAISAIU) and three managers from the VWSA]. When Gomomo answered openly, Viljoen interrupted them and he said 'this is a political question. For political questions we have our government, we are not allowed and you are not allowed to talk negative things about our country.

Uhl realised it was important to speak to the African and coloured union delegates separately from management and the white union representative, and he recalled the union delegation was split so he could discuss the issues at hand with Gomomo and the other African and coloured unionists. He stated, 'I came back here and we have been sitting here two [to] three hours, and they told us everything'. Gomomo, too, recalled how he was 'separated' from the rest of the group for further discussions:

The IG Metall guys felt [that] they [wanted] to invite us away from management, so they came to our hotels to pick us up. We went with management to a test drive area, but all of a sudden they called us into one car. [They] took us away, even away from this white shop steward. They interviewed us about exactly what is happening, preparing for the evening dinner. That was good and Walter Hiller, he grilled management South Africa. They became pale about all that was happening.

Uhl and Gomomo went on to become close friends and maintained contact up until today. Uhl stated, 'John and I had had very close contact via telephone or writing letters, or he gave people letters to post when they were in Germany, so for me personally it was very clear how dangerous the situation was.' Jurrie Harris, a former Uitenhage shop

steward, drew out some of the implications of his first visit to Germany in terms of the issues union activists like him developed on their return:

When we went over and came back there was a lot of cases of 'go into the white toilets, use the bloody toilets'. When we came back it was chaos in the plant because the whites don't want the blacks in the white toilets. It was hell for the whites to accept this, but that was a spin off [of] when we were there.

The attempt at understanding the experience of African and coloured shop stewards by IG Metall officials was the beginning of the relationship between the two trade union centres, and reciprocal visits would occur each year. Moreover, this contact helped South African unionists to gauge the standards set by their German counterparts in their own plants. One of the first concrete outcomes of this visit was the establishment of the International Solidarity groups (InterSoli) in Germany. These were concerned with issues surrounding VW's subsidiaries in the south, namely South Africa, Mexico and Brazil. Gomomo stated that initially these were used to inform the Germans of the state of the VW subsidiaries.

The establishment of direct shop floor relationships between Uitenhage and Wolfsburg occurred after the crucial intervention by the IMF in 1977 and the high ranking delegation visit in the following year. Two reasons for this contact can be identified. Firstly, with VWAG's imminent international expansion, the company was aware that some foreign subsidiaries might attract unwelcome attention, especially in the United States, and some form of intervention was deemed necessary. The anti-apartheid struggle was not only a South African struggle, but also popular throughout the world, and VW was weary of attracting negative publicity. Secondly, within the ranks of IG Metall and the Works Council, activists pushed the issue of the subsidiaries onto the agenda of the Supervisory Board of the company. This activity resulted in direct shop-floor contact challenging management in Uitenhage, both on the apartheid legislation in place within the factory as well as on the training of Africans and coloureds (restricted by the apartheid state). Moreover, the engagement was overtly political in nature, with the explicit goal of eradicating apartheid and establishing trade union rights within the plant. The initial period of cooperation and contact can, therefore, be broadly understood in comradeship terms, with emphasis on equality and the eradication of apartheid and the establishment of shop floor rights. Importantly, VWSA became the first employer in South Africa to

permit full-time shop stewards and provide facilities for African unionists in its plant. A common interest emerged in the search for democratic rights, giving rise to the development of solidarity amongst the workers in the two countries, though identification as VW employees determined who the solidarity was with. During this process of building solidarity, a new shared experience developed between union leaders producing a new identity. This identity involved equality, but the solidarity itself was unequal as the focus was on apartheid South Africa. However, this interaction would also result in an attempt at exporting the German industrial relations model of co-determination to the South African subsidiary, altering, in the process, the solidarity that emerged between the two centres.

TOWARDS CO-DETERMINATION AND COMPETITION

Shop-floor contact, initiated in the late 1970s, continued through the 1980s and 1990s. This became more frequent, and through this exchange an attempt at exporting the successful German model of industrial relations occurred. In this model, workers' representation at company and plant level is characterised by Works Councils. As a body, these councils represent all workers in a specific plant, whether trade union members or not. The main aim of the Works Council is to ensure that laws, regulations, and collective agreements are adhered to. In addition, trade union shop stewards are elected to represent the interests of union members, and these act in accordance with statutes and policy decisions of the union, dealing with issues such as employment levels, working hours and pay. Further, companies with more than 2,000 employees are subject to the Co-determination Act of 1976, whereby workers' representatives and shareholders sit on supervisory boards in an attempt to bring 'greater democracy in the economy' (IG Metall 2000: 59). Nonetheless, through the contact made by IG Metall and its South African counterparts, co-determination as a model was pushed, and this characterised the agenda of VW management and the Works Council throughout the 1980s and early 1990s.

In VWSA's European Economic Community (EEC) Code of Conduct report from 1978, a number of assertions were made. Regarding 'Relations within the undertaking', the report stated that '[w]e are also giving serious consideration to forming an informal Works Council, based on the West German system, with equal representation of our White, Coloured and Black employees . . . [and] it is proposed to establish a multi-racial consultative Works Council in our Plant this year. The Industrial Relations Manager of this Plant is visiting VW Brussels

to investigate their system' (VWSA 1978: 3, 5). This suggestion of a form of co-determination would become a central tenet of the industrial relations systems within the VW Uitenhage plant, and indeed within broader workplace debates within South Africa for many years to come. Co-determination is there to ensure 'industrial peace and social security for employees' and is a 'cooperative approach to solving industrial conflict' (Volkswagen n.d.: 4). Reflecting on such developments, Gomomo commented:

[We] went to Belgium [in 1978]. Management was really pushing us to accept that system, but we could not agree until we arrived in Wolfsburg to get to know how does trade unionism work in the mother plant. So we were very much interested in the trade union work of IG Metall, and management wasn't happy. So it was a very tense trip between us and management [of] VWSA.

But, contradictions began to emerge in the German model. Lizo Mthana, a VWSA shop steward, stated:

Those guys from IG Metall [this refers to Works Council members who were also IG Metall members] were also serving at a managerial level. They were trying to bring us on their side in terms of trying to push us to think of the way they think.

Still, the German trade unionists and Works Council members maintained that co-determination as a model of industrial relations was useful within their specific socio-economic context. Uhl argued that it was the struggles against apartheid in South Africa and the dictatorship in Brazil that led German companies to invest in these countries:

One question is solidarity, and on the other side it was our interest as well. When you go more to other countries, when you export you cannot believe that you can only export, you must go to countries to produce there and to come into new markets. You must have a responsibility for the people that are working in German companies and of course, we wanted to change the political system. We wanted to do everything to push away the apartheid regime suppression and [do] the same in Brazil.

Uhl's remark is crucial as he displays an awareness of the injustices of apartheid. He suggests that, when producing in foreign markets, it is not only the product that is important but also the social context. Hiller former Chairperson of the Central Works Council, argued his 'position was always that there is a German model and in different countries the unions need to develop models. One could maybe take elements of the system to South Africa' (interview translated from German). Gerhard Kakalick, the Chairperson of the Works Council at VW's Kassel plant, suggested, 'we want to show them our way of co-determination and from this they should find their own way, but we want to show them how we practice co-determination at VW and they are of course VW too' (interview translated from German).

Zweni referred to the discussions that occurred amongst the shop stewards which concentrated on the potential downfalls of the system of co-determination. He recalled: 'we were so afraid to talk deeper as it might be seen as a method of selling the workers. People that were pushing this were the top brass of the organisation [NUMSA]. We knew that because there [were] these constant visits of our top officials to Germany'. Robert Steiert, formerly of IG Metall's International Department, agreed that there was pressure from VWAG, through the Works Councils, to push the idea of co-determination. 'Of course [there was pressure], but not in the way of a military structure where I command you to do this. Forget it.' Steiert added, however, that 'we also had to make [it] clear to the South Africans where are the limitations of co-determination.'

The changes in South Africa and Germany in the late 1980s and early 1990s undoubtedly altered the relationship between the two union centres. Furthermore, during 1992, VWAG was faced with a serious financial crisis. Yet, at the same time to address this, it awarded its first export agreement to the South African subsidiary, to supply the Chinese market with the Jetta 2 model. In the meanwhile, many of the shop stewards, integral in setting up contacts and maintaining relationships during the 1980s, made way for new younger shop stewards. Gomomo went on to become the vice-president of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) in 1991, and eventually became a member of parliament. This change in the leadership within the plant had implications for the relationship between NUMSA and IG Metall, as did the internationalisation of VWSA into a truly trans-national actor.

By the early 1990s, South Africa was in the process of negotiating a new political dispensation, and in 1994 a Negotiating Committee Agreement was signed between NUMSA, SAISAIU and VWSA. Included in the agreement were concepts such as 'Flexible

Manufacturing', 'Affirmative Action Policy' and 'Performance Based Rewards'. Significantly, provisions were made for 'Joint Union-Management Structures' and 'Co-determination Seminar Proposals'. The proposal on co-determination raises two important points: firstly, to 'develop a more co-operative and less confrontational approach to doing business' and, secondly, to 'negotiate a similar structure to the German Works Council/co-determination system' (Volkswagen of South Africa 1994: 20-21). Thus, soon after the political transition at the national level, co-determination as a strategy to regulate industrial relations was adopted within the VWSA plant.

The Labour Relations Act of 1995 provided for workplace forums, drawing directly from the German experience of Works Councils and co-determination more broadly. Co-determination was central to IG Metall and the Works Council's agenda when dealing with NUMSA. However, there were many reservations around the system. Xolile Festile, a VWSA shop steward, remarked that a veiled threat emerges when 'indirectly there is that pressure that we should change our way of operations . . . and adopt the German style, that way of handling things, where they were openly declaring to us that we should adapt or we will fall away in terms of the direction, globally, that VW is taking'. Eric Stemele, a VWSA steward, said 'what they raised persistently was the issue of co-determination and to an extent that there was a booklet [on] how do we co-determine, what are the issues we need to raise with management. Nationally we have concerns with co-determination'. Immanuel Mondske, a VWSA shop steward, more cynically remarked that 'here at VWSA, management is having their own agenda and they are pushing that agenda, and also within that they want to crush the union. So for us to have co-determination with someone who wants to crush us is very much suicidal'. Xola Blouw, the past Chairperson of the VW Shop Stewards Council, suggested 'whatever is being brought to South Africa is because of them [Works Council]. So, for us, they don't give us a chance to also voice our own opinion. They are big brothers to us. Whatever they think is good for us they will come and say we have to take this'.

From the late 1970s it became clear that VWSA was keen to push the agenda of co-determination. This approach was also to be adopted by the Works Council and IG Metall. Even though NUMSA did agree to broad principals of co-determination in 1994, a number of shop stewards voiced their unease with the approach. As a consequence of the insistence on co-determination, the relationship that emerged in the late 1970s altered to one of scepticism, and even suspicion. With the reunification of Germany, the liberation of South Africa and the opening

of world markets in an era of neo-liberal globalisation, the relationships that were established in 1978 and maintained through the 1980s changed. In many ways South Africa was a unique case, and, more generally, the solidarity displayed with workers was exceptional (Southall 1995). But, what emerged over time were different attitudes and opinions regarding the relationship between NUMSA and IG Metall, affecting in the long run, solidarity amongst the workers.

With the changing nature of the shop steward leadership in the VWSA plant, different issues confronted the union. Festile explained that there was a change in the cadre of shop stewards who were being elected:

Not all the shop stewards are experienced in the culture of trade unions. The kind of members that we have are not the ones that we had before 1994. That revolutionary consciousness is no more there, people are working for their personal, individualistic [needs]. One of the things is that most of them were still young when it [apartheid] was still rife. After 1994, everybody thought things would happen on its own, and that resulted in things not happening in the way that they expected. Some of them are disillusioned by the processes after 1994, and people are no longer interested in politics. They have adopted a wait-and-see attitude, rather than to be active, involved and globalisation is really inculcating individualism amongst people.

Festile raised an additional problem that stands in the way of solidarity, which is that workers view fellow workers within South Africa differently. According to Festile, 'the level of consciousness in terms of solidarity of workers is not as it was. It is very low. The motor strike [in 2001], when the garages were on strike, we called for solidarity, a solidarity strike, but you could find individuals who said that, 'no we must not support those individuals. Those people are just petrol people and we are manufacturing cars''. Festile continued to argue that the relationship with IG Metall has also changed in the era of globalisation:

Before 1994 we really got support, a lot of support from IG Metall, in terms of facilities, skills and financial assistance. The developments were such that when new markets were opened, there are models that they are to introduce. They will cost it and they will call VW subsidiaries. Some form of tender for that project [will be submitted] and they must

come [up] with the cheapest, and the ones that they can make the most profit. So that creates competition between VW subsidiaries. As a union there is competition starting. That element of solidarity is now diminishing so we . . . see each other as taking jobs.

This notion that the trade union solidarity, which existed in the 1980s is being replaced by competition, emerged within other discussions too. Stemele remarked:

If you would look at VW in 1987 and VW currently you would find that there is a vast difference in the work force [numbers]. Management is saying that if you go to Brazil, that plant is manual but its capacity is utilised to the fullest. We have got the same number of employees, yet we are not utilising our capacity to a hundred percent. So for us to become as competitive as the workers in Brazil, Mexico and so forth, that is a kind of competition.

Stemele may not be arguing competition is directly leading towards a loss of jobs. However, the implicit threat on behalf of management is that the South African subsidiary needs to perform in a manner similar to its other subsidiaries. What emerges is the sense that NUMSA's German counterpart embodies this form of competitive globalisation. Festile stated that 'when you are dealing with IG Metall, you can feel that sense of the way unions in South Africa are operating is uncalled for. They have to adapt, they have to change to European standards'. For Mondske, 'IG Metall is trying to be paternalistic, as if we are its affiliates, so they are treating us as their kids'.

Thando Numazonke, a young VWSA shop steward and office bearer in the unions' Uitenhage branch, discussed another challenge facing international solidarity.

I am looking at the era of the Gomomo's and how was the union then, how we were fighting and what support they were giving us. Five years down the line with this concept of globalisation and its strengths . . . if we are talking [about] different approaches of how we are analysing globalisation, how we should approach it, then there won't be that strong solidarity and we have got our own version [of] how we see globalisation and what our reaction should be.

In addition to the difference in approaches that weakens solidarity, there is also the factor of growing competition between workers in the two plants. VWSA no longer only produces automobiles for the decreasing local market, but is firmly placed within VWAG's global strategy, through the award of the export agreement to China in 1992. Even though VWSA represents less than one percent of the entire company's share, the agreement would set the precedent for others, such as the 1998 agreement to supply the Golf to Britain. After the 1992 export agreement and the political changes in the country in 1994, the basis of solidarity was redefined and the relationship remains altered. There was awareness on the part of the NUMSA shop stewards that a redefinition and reconsideration of the relationship should occur. For Numazonke, however, 'as long as there are those strong differences then we do not have a strong room for solidarity'. Yet, Festile was of a different opinion. 'The reality is that [there are] the workers beyond our national borders. We need to unite, [and] that we don't really have to concentrate on our differences, rather to check where is our common ground and, based on that, we must form solidarity.' Stemele continued in this vein:

Surely there is a need of international solidarity when all of us are faced with this globalisation. Issues were raised that affect workers in Africa, in Central America because numbers of people, through restructuring, have lost jobs over the world and it is key that workers would come out globally and voice their frustrations against capitalism.

Blouw cautioned, though, that there needs to be similar understandings of solidarity: 'we need to have a concrete solidarity, not a theoretical solidarity. They can then say we are working for the same company and we should be treated the same. That can be helpful'. Steiert compared the periods under consideration and raised some important concerns:

It is more difficult than before, because everybody had been fighting in the first place against apartheid and that was much easier to agree upon and find a common base. Today it is a little bit more complicated to find common ground. You have to put a lot of efforts and money into training, because [there is] still the old thinking, [and] a lot of old heads. We are competing, [and] we can only compete within the company against another plant if we are cheaper, better and there it is more difficult to find a

common ground, and management to a certain extent is pushing that and feeding that argumentation.

A common interest, such as fighting the system of apartheid that formed the basis of solidarity in the first phase, does not seem to be present for the trade unions in this second stage of development. Stephan Krull (interview translated from German), spokesperson of the InterSoli group for South Africa, referred to the changing nature of trade union activity and offered some optimism for the solidarity to re-emerge:

Trade union solidarity continues and carries on and this we formulated for ourselves relatively quickly. We decided to carry on with contacts to the colleagues and carry on building [sic] them information about the country and people and history. The content has changed but not the task. After 1994, the cooperation between NUMSA, the Shop Stewards Council and IG Metall [continues] on an equal basis. We are brothers and sisters and we advise together how problems can be solved. This is the content of all trade union internationalism and to organise certain subsidiaries so that no competition grows between them.

Yet Krull did concede that the company has a different agenda 'as the leadership of the company do exactly the opposite. The power relations are quite obvious and the economic power stands there and we stand here attempting to minimise the competition.'

The above quotes highlight the altered nature of the relationship between trade unionists in the Uitenhage and German plants of VW. The new generation of shop stewards are sceptical and view their German counterparts in a different manner to their predecessors. They are aware of the importance of the relationships that emerged in the late 1970s, but argue that the issues confronting the Uitenhage plant are now quite different. Elements of paternalism and dependence are evident on the part of the present shop stewards with regard to their German counterparts. The latter have been referred to as the 'big brother', rather than individuals treated on an equal basis, as was the hallmark of the first period of contact. Moreover, the issue of competition comes to the forefront. The Germans, in turn, also acknowledge the changed nature of the relationship, but there seems to be a continued commitment to South Africa. The problem, however, is that the goals and aims of such commitment and contact are not as clear cut as they were during the

apartheid era. Therefore, the second period under consideration is characterised by less solidarity, hence less equality in relations between leaders. However, the irony now exists that the workers' experiences have become more similar. Neither is experiencing apartheid and both are threatened by globalisation.

CONCLUSION

From the first contacts that were made in 1978, through subsequent visits and exchanges to Germany, distinct common interests emerged amongst South African workers in relation to their German counterparts. This laid the basis for shared experiences to develop and hence, identities. The first broad identity is one that viewed IG Metall as an important component in the struggle against apartheid, from the abolishing of petty legislation within the factory, through to substantive concerns regarding industrial relations. Importantly, the relationships were perceived as ones of equality and mutual respect, with the attempt to achieve shop-floor gains, intersected with a common vision for the liberation of South Africa. The second identity emerging is one that is influenced by the post-apartheid dispensation of the LRA of 1995, inculcating variants of co-determination. Moreover, this is augmented by the need for VWSA to compete with other subsidiaries in an attempt to maintain production levels and competitiveness. Thus a relationship previously characterised in comradely terms is now couched in competition and suspicion, adversely affecting levels of solidarity.

Distinct trade union identities can be traced over the periods under consideration. Broadly speaking, the first period was characterised by a common commitment to the eradication of apartheid and the establishment of trade union rights on the shop floor. Importantly, this was not only restricted to VW's South African subsidiary but through the InterSoli group, the Works Council was encouraged in Brazil and Mexico too. A trade union identity of equality and camaraderie became apparent and fantasia notion of 'creating solidarity' is evident during the period leading up to the early 1990s. This identity is, however, compromised to an extent during the second period, with the insistence on the part of the Germans that the model of co-determination be transferred to the Uitenhage plant. The South Africans acknowledged certain benefits of the system and indeed parts were negotiated and agreed upon by 1994. However, deep-rooted scepticism remains apparent, and this even on the part of certain German trade unionists. By 1992, the international terrain of trade union solidarity was quite different. Hyman's description of 'mutual competition' remains succinct

and applicable during this period. With the collapse of the Soviet Bloc, the liberation of South Africa and the internationalisation of the VW group, identities of competition begin to emerge. The South Africans now vocalise experiences of inferiority and inequality with their German counterparts. The experience of solidarity that characterised the 1970s and 1980s does not currently exist. Nonetheless, there remains the commitment on the part of the Germans to the Uitenhage plant and a need on the part of the South Africans to renegotiate the relationship. This represents an important awareness and a possible channel for renewed trade union internationalism within the company, in the manner that Webster and Lipsig-Mummé suggest.

This chapter has shown how worker identity has changed over the distinct periods. Internationalism and trade union solidarity has varied considerably over the last 20 years, and this has been due to the following reasons. Firstly, the anti-apartheid struggle was not only a people's struggle in South Africa, but also a popular struggle around the world. The initiative from IG Metall was not mainly from within, over worker issues, but from the outside, and related to political questions in opposition to apartheid, and for this reason was partially tolerated by VW. Secondly, the role of particular individuals was significant, not only in initiating solidarity but also in cementing and shaping relationships. Thirdly, in Germany, employers established stable relationship with workers, especially via co-determination, and supported German unionists in attempting to win support for this model as a means of countering the more insurgent unionism developing in South Africa. Finally, in an era of globalisation the relationship can be understood as one of competition, whereby South African trade unionists view their German counterparts with caution. The first phase of solidarity was born, primarily, out of a common interest in democracy. In the latter phase, there is less solidarity, even though there is a common experience amongst the workers of the threats of globalisation. Nonetheless, whilst forging links and solidarity is more difficult than before, an overriding sense of commitment to internationalism and solidarity does, indeed, prevail.

Chapter Six

The South African broadcasting corporation and dilemmas of national identity

Kurai Masenyama

INTRODUCTION

THE PROJECT OF nation-building and national identity creation in South Africa during the late 1990s and 2000s has been undertaken in the wider context of internationalisation. This refers to the growing influence of globalisation, a process that has resulted in a more rapid and expansive movement of goods, services, peoples and cultures across national borders. The country's media, particularly the public service broadcaster, is expected to play a crucial role in nation-building. Post-apartheid South Africa provides one example of a context in which an attempt has been made to shape collective stability, political order and national identity through the use of public broadcasting systems (Le Pere & Lambrechts 1999: 76). As the nation's public service broadcaster, the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) plays an important role in developing national identity. This process takes place against the background of the apartheid legacy as well as the current context in which the SABC is faced with commercial constraints that encourage the use of foreign products. Given the tools available, notably local content regulations, the research reported in this article investigated the opinions of key media players with regard to the role of the SABC in the nation-building project. Focus was restricted to the supposed role of SABC television in the creation of a South African national identity in the post-apartheid period.

The findings presented in this chapter are based on interviews and a review of relevant literature. Qualitative research methods were used to collect data from three categories of respondents during the period

October 2003 to April 2004. The first category of respondents consisted of representatives of the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA), the body that guides media policy in South Africa. The second category of respondents comprised representatives of SABC television management, while the final category included representatives of commissioning editors drawn from the various channels of SABC television. While most television studies focus on audiences and their reactions to television programmes, this study suggests that any analysis of the products in the field of television cannot be carried out exclusively based on the studies of audiences, and that it is essential to know the process that has created these products.

CONCEPTUALISING NATIONAL IDENTITY IN SOUTH AFRICA

The definition of national identity during the apartheid era was very limited, as it did not represent the diversity of the South African society. Greenberg (1995: 7) noted that it was 'a partial state informed by a limited and rigid conception of nation that had little to say to groups that fell outside the ascendant minority'. Moreover, the type of nationalism that dominated the forty years of apartheid was mainly 'Afrikaner Christian' nationalism (O'Meara 1996: 40). The media, particularly the SABC TV, played a major role in the perpetuation of this parochial conception of national identity. Currie and Markovitz (1993: 92) observed that the television station 'embodied the principles of apartheid in its structures of control and management, and its programmes were filled with apartheid imagination'. Apartheid divisions were mirrored in the structure of SABC television. For example, television was divided into TV1 (primarily aimed at English and Afrikaans speakers), TV2 (for Zulu-speaking blacks) and TV3 (for Sotho-speaking blacks) (Currie & Markovitz 1993: 30). Thus, at the dawn of popular democracy in South Africa in 1994, South Africans had to fashion an identity out of narrowly prescribed communal memberships and the detritus of apartheid. Bekker (1999: 2) observes that in the period leading up to the national constitutional negotiations and the subsequent general election in 1994, the core political objective for South Africa was defined by the African National Congress (ANC), a black-led mass liberation movement. The party became the new political hegemony in the new dispensation, and pronounced its major goal as the creation of a 'non-racial democratic nation state, to be promoted by a process of cultural homogenisation' (Bekker 1999: 3).

Conditions prevailing before and after the 1994 elections, where political violence fanned along ethnic lines was the order of the day,

resulted in a great deal of uncertainty and fear of a civil war. South Africa had to search for a way to reconcile peacefully the many identities that had formed over the years and which could give rise to tension and conflict. Therefore, the unfolding events needed something to buttress a unified form of identification. Smith (1993: 17) put forward a number of prescriptions for the conditions necessary for the creation of a national identity. He argued: 'The need to create a new form of the nation arises most profoundly in periods of distinct social stress, when new developments within, or pressures from outside, undermine a sense of continuity.' The immediate post-1994 period fits nicely into this category, as there was uncertainty due to changes in the political landscape. The study being discussed here investigated how the SABC television navigated this terrain. In the current post-apartheid era, Zegeye and Harris (2002: 251) have noted that whilst the subgroup identities encouraged by the apartheid regime continue to exist they are now shared with a strong overarching national identity. This observation is confirmed by a survey done by the Human Science Research Council (HSRC) in 1999, where 84 percent of respondents indicated that 'being South African is an important part of how I see myself.' This research also indicated that subgroup identities are interlinked and that they provide a basis for building societal cohesion. Moreover, the study pointed out that class or socio-economic status is related to the extent to which South Africans have a strong sense of national identity. In 1997, national identity was weakest among people at the lower end of the socio-economic scale and strongest among those at the higher end. By 1999, however, South Africans in the middle of the socio-economic scale exhibited the strongest sense of national identity (HSRC 1999: 1).

Closely related to the above observations are the post-apartheid government's efforts to define a national identity inclusive of all South Africans. Mistry (2001: 8) noted that, as the hegemonic power in the post-apartheid era, the ANC has sought to ensure that all factions of the population can identify with a new sense of liberation coupled with ideologies of solidarity, nation formation and nation building. Mistry (2001: 8) observed that the cultural imperatives of the post-apartheid period embodied two opposing agendas. The first emphasised the cultural diversity of South African society and worked through the 'Rainbow Nation' campaign during Mandela's reign (1994-98). At the heart of Mandela's campaign was the prospect that a rainbow, even though separated by its several and distinct colours, is a unified band of light. Mistry (2001: 8) added that by acknowledging the injustices of the apartheid regime, Mandela's administration used the Truth and

Reconciliation Commission (TRC) as a symbol of developing a nationalism which spoke of embracing differences. The SABC celebrated the idea of unity by promoting its programming with the jingle *Simunye*¹. This ideological ethos was evident throughout Mandela's reign with symbolic displays of this concept at sports events and arts and cultural occasions. In the final analysis, the 'Rainbow Nation' campaign reinforced the coexistence of collective and individual identities and cultures with a shared South African-ness. On the other hand, Mbeki's reign (1999-present) reflects what he refers to as the 'African Renaissance'. The objective of this campaign is to privilege previously disadvantaged African groups and languages. The campaign is not confined to the borders of South Africa but it attempts to embrace the rest of the continent. On another front, business organisations, trade unions, celebrities and government departments have joined hands to promote the 'Proudly South African' campaign, which encourages South Africans to identify with and purchase local goods. This campaign also seeks to build a single South African national identity.

SABC TELEVISION IN PROFILE

The vision of the SABC is 'to be the Pulse of Africa's Creative Spirit' and the mission is 'to deliver distinctive and compelling programming through sound business practices' (*SABC Today* 2003). As far as television is concerned, SABC has five television channels: three free-to-air and two satellite pay channels. The focus of this study is on the free-to-air channels, which are divided into a public broadcasting service, comprising SABC 1 and SABC 2, and a public commercial broadcasting service, namely SABC 3. SABC 1 is a full-spectrum channel aimed at younger viewers. It broadcasts in English, isiZulu, isiXhosa, isiNdebele and siSwati. SABC 2 is also a full-spectrum channel, but is aimed at the whole family. It broadcasts in English, Afrikaans, Sesotho, Setswana, Sepedi, Xitsonga and Tshivenda. SABC 3 broadcasts in English only. It offers entertainment and information for cosmopolitan viewers (*SABC Today* 2003: 7).

In the consultative process that took place during the transformation of the SABC, the advisory body emphasised the role of the corporation in building national and provincial identities. They argued that the public broadcaster has a particular responsibility to 'promote national culture and create a sense of identity that reflects common experiences.' They stated that it should do so by providing shared experiences simultaneously to large numbers of people, defining, exhibiting and

explaining national events and trends. The advisory body thus stressed that the SABC should forge the development of a South African national identity by providing a wide range of programming that reflects South African ideas, attitudes, values, spirituality and artistic creativity. The perceived role of the SABC, television in particular, in creating a national identity is further emphasised by Currie & Markovitz (1993: 105), when they point out that national television has an important role to play in the reconstruction of South Africa after apartheid. This expectation is to be met through the building of 'national reconciliation', adding that this involves 'explaining the full implications of a new national identity to all South Africans and building a new national picture.'

SABC policy is guided by the regulations enforced by ICASA. The broadcasting division of ICASA prescribes local content regulations, the main aim of which is 'to develop, protect and promote a national and provincial identity, culture and character'. Another aim is 'to create vibrant, dynamic, creative and economically productive local industries' (ICASA 2004: 4). Media products qualify as local content when they are produced and, in most cases, funded by a South African body or individual. In complying with ICASA's obligations in terms of the regulations a public licensee must ensure that at least 20 percent of its drama programmes, 80 percent of its current affairs, 50 percent of the documentary programming, 50 percent of informal knowledge-building programming, 60 percent of educational programming and 50 percent of its children's programming are South African produced.

PERCEPTIONS OF NATIONAL IDENTITY: THE SABC AND ICASA

The first major finding of the study is that almost all the interviewed respondents appear to have conceptions of identity that are not consistent with what is found in the literature, but agree on the need to create and promote it. Whilst almost all the respondents agreed that there was a need to create and promote 'national identity', they found this concept difficult to define. Most concurred that it had to do with issues of 'nationhood' and a 'sense of unity'. Edna,² a manager at ICASA, stated that national identity has something to do with 'who we are', 'our cultural heritage', and should be 'an echo of our way of living'. Zeb, a commissioning editor at SABC said: 'Because of our brutal past it is very implicit for the nation to be seen as moving towards recovery. All belong to one nation regardless of differences. Out of that you get national pride.'

¹ Simunye is Zulu for 'we are one'.

² Names of respondents have been changed to retain their anonymity.

Izabella, a commissioning editor at SABC television, believed that national identity was receiving renewed attention because of the potential impact of globalisation in eroding national borders. She said:

At a time when boundaries are diminishing more and more, nations are faced with the threat of cultural uniformity. The creation of a new South African identity, besides providing a psychological home and a unifying mission, should allow us to generate for ourselves a space that is big enough to tell our own stories.

Respondents were further asked about the possible existence of a typical South African national identity. When asked whether it was possible to portray a single South African national identity, Evelyne, a commissioning editor at SABC 2, argued that it was almost impossible to do that with eleven languages and different cultures. However, she attempted to define a probable typical South African when she said:

I suppose the closest one you could get as a figurehead is Madiba [Nelson Mandela], but you cannot look at Madiba and say 'that is a typical South African.' But, feelings of togetherness as South Africans just arise, especially when you are traveling. We come together because we are not as dastard as the Europeans; we are not as bombastic as the Americans; and we seem to have a humbleness of our own, though we are forever talking.

Asked to sum up her view of a typical South African, Izabella describes him or her as: 'One who wants forever to stay here, who thinks South Africa is the best place, somebody who thinks the best opportunities are here, and this is where the roots are.'

As intimated earlier, most respondents have rather vague understandings of national identity. The failure by ICASA and SABC staff to comprehend what national identity is, is not peculiar to the two organisations. Sociological literature on the subject has shown that identity can be a very slippery and rapidly changing concept. Thus, the task of identifying what a South African identity entails is a tall order. Whilst many sociological theories have discussed the origins of the nation and nationalism, these notions are not synonymous with a national identity, which is quite elusive. Even though nationalism plays a crucial role in the genesis of a national identity, the latter is less directly political and more fluid. National identity involves a process of

identifying oneself and others as a member of the nation, whilst nationalism is an ideology, which, in the Third World, was spread mainly through liberation struggles. The legacy of apartheid made the process of shaping an all-inclusive South African national identity even more challenging.

SABC TELEVISION POLICY AND NATIONAL IDENTITY CREATION

Having ascertained that most respondents agreed on the need to promote a South African national identity, the study went on to ask whether SABC policy was advancing this goal. The major finding in this regard was that SABC commissioning editors believed that the organisation was achieving this goal mainly through its local content policy. This belief was echoed by ICASA councillors who are responsible for enforcing the local content regulations. On the other side of the debate are SABC managers who believed that local programmes did not necessarily advance notions of national identity. Whilst the SABC management was not fully responsive to the projected aims of the local content regulations, their commissioning editors believed that the regulations are assisting the creation of national identity in South Africa. They agreed with ICASA that more local programmes would arouse interests in the notion of the 'nation'. Ignatiana, a commissioning editor at SABC 3, had this to say: 'A [public] broadcaster reflects the nation itself. It is a pillar around which national identity is tied. Regardless of it being entertainment, drama, music, etc., every local programme we broadcast fosters a national identity.' Noma, also a commissioning editor for SABC 1, advances the same argument, noting that South African viewers would identify more strongly with characters in a story about South Africans, than with people from other countries.

Ignatiana was more forthright on the relationship between the local content regulations and national identity, observing:

South African viewers get to know each other through local programming. I think there is a lot of correlation between the local content regulations and national identity because you quickly realise when a programme is not successful that people do not like it. It has to fit with local identities and what people identify with and what their interests are.

When asked about any example of local programmes that she had commissioned that advanced notions of national identity, Izabella pointed to the following:

At the moment I am preparing a documentary series called *Strands*, whose main aim is to get all South Africans to know each other. Not just because we have done politics, the politics are being put forward all the time, but it's the little pockets of our communities, but the story has never been told because it's not political. I want to tell South African stories so that people get to know each other and what we have in our country.

In addition to the above-mentioned series, Izabella mentioned that she had commissioned a project called 'Our Nation in Colour', a documentary series portraying the South African way of life, including homelessness, disease, entertainment and sport.

ICASA managers and councillors have a great deal of faith in the local content regulations and firmly believe that they assist in the creation or of a national identity. They argue that the public broadcaster should play a role in preserving the 'unique image' of South Africa. According to them, this has become more relevant in the era of globalisation, because people have more access to cultures from different parts of the world. It is, therefore, important for a public service broadcaster to promote local cultures. For ICASA, the cultural objective of the regulations is more important than building local industries.

Jabu and Thabiso, both ICASA managers, emphasised that the regulations were important because they had resulted in changes that 'reflect South Africa's realities'. Jabu buttressed this point when he said:

The local content regulations have boosted the capacity of our people, especially black South Africans, to make programmes that reflect our real lives. For example, in the past we were used to dramas written by other people about us, carrying negative stories about witchcraft, poverty and violence. Now, our writers can portray what is on the ground and the real South African culture.

Kizza, a member of the ICASA council, believed that local programming was 'a key driving factor in developing a national identity'. She said it was important to prescribe quotas for the SABC because 'they are the custodians of our culture as they shape what we are and who we

are.' Helen, another ICASA councillor, further argued that encouraging the SABC to make local programmes will make the nation 'reclaim its past'. She gave the example of the SABC showing documentaries of unsung heroes of the past, bringing them into the limelight. In so doing, viewers could identify with them and feelings of 'national identity' could be aroused.

In contrast, representatives of SABC management were sceptical about the necessity of the local content regulations and their capacity to drive a project as big as the creation of national identity. It was the contention of SABC managers that, whilst it might be possible that seeing local products on the screen could assist in nation building, this was not necessarily the case. Pat, a television station manager, observed that whilst many local programmes reflect local concerns, these might have nothing to do with national identity. He noted, rather ironically, that the local content regulations are not concerned with the issue of content. The regulations put particular emphasis on *who* makes a programme and *where* it is made. They stipulate that a product has to be made in South Africa, but does not have to be about South Africa. He gave an example of South Africans locally producing a documentary about Russia. In this case, South African national identity was not advanced. Pat underlined his scepticism about the impact of the regulations when he said: 'I don't think it will be fit for national identity to be driven by local content policing alone. I think it is too dangerous to expect too much from the regulations, because they are very narrow in that they target broadcasters and set quotas.' Pat felt that, rather than relying on quotas to drive the development of national identity, the government should pour more resources into boosting the local media industries. With the passage of time, national symbols, myths, cultures and history would be automatically reflected in the television programmes. Feelings of nationhood would then, according to Pat, develop naturally amongst the people. Pat concluded his views by arguing that people should also not depend on television alone in this grand project. He believed that other institutions, like religious organisations, sporting bodies, schools and families should all play a part in the promotion of national identity.

In assessing the responses above, it is puzzling that SABC commissioning editors are in agreement with ICASA councillors on the utility of the local content policy in creating a national identity, whilst they differ with their immediate superiors, the SABC managers. This may be due to the fact that the managers are worried about the financial implications of creating local programmes. On the other hand, ICASA councillors felt that the SABC had to satisfy local

content quotas and should use other channels to raise funds, and the editors might be a bit divorced from the financial aspects of their operations. Another noteworthy point is that both ICASA and SABC members may be erroneously equating national identity with local identities. This is evident in the references to SABC's local content promoting 'pockets of our communities', as is the case in *Strands*. For example, the local documentary, 'Our Nation in Colour', referred to by one of the editors, as a possible stimulus for the articulation of national identity may actually be doing otherwise by reflecting on local problems such as poverty, homelessness and disease, which are not experiences that are shared by all South Africans. Therefore, it must be borne in mind that local identities do not necessarily always reflect national identity as a whole.

LANGUAGE AND NATIONAL IDENTITY

During the interviews it emerged that some respondents believed that the use of a single language would increase the chances of creating a uniform national identity for South Africans, whilst other respondents thought that packaging the same programmes, especially news and current affairs, in local languages would more likely achieve the same result. For example, Tim, a commissioning editor from SABC 3, argued that the use of local languages in news bulletins increases identity awareness, as all groups of people feel included in the broader South African framework. He said:

We broadcast news about South Africa in all official languages, but it is basically the same. It actually delights people from various ethnic groups to find out that news about the wider nation and the world has been repackaged into their local languages. In that case they can readily identify themselves as proudly South African because of the inclusive nature of our identity creation.

While multilingualism has been celebrated by some as an indication of the 'unity in diversity' of South African society, other commissioning editors argued that this has a negative impact in trying to create a single national identity. They suggested that if a single language was used, the creation of a uniform identity would be easier. Advocates of this view charged that South Africa's diversity can be a drawback in trying to create a single national identity. For example, in contrast to Tim's views, Noma believed that the use of numerous languages was a hindrance:

You can't compare the SABC to the BBC [British Broadcasting Corporation], in terms of national identity creation and language use. For the BBC, the language is the same and the people have the same culture, so it's easier to make programmes for everybody. Actually, e-tv [a privately-owned channel] is better placed than us to create a national identity because they use English throughout.

Noma thus believed that the use of English as the only broadcasting language would enhance the capacity of the SABC to create a South African national identity. Mary, a manager at SABC television, echoed these sentiments, arguing that because of its diversity, a single language, like English, could help unite the country. She said:

Our South African identity is one which has changed through imperialism, and it is one that has changed through apartheid, and it is one which will continue changing. In order to progress, therefore, a national language, such as English, can become a part of this ever changing South African identity. A national language will not change the identities of South Africans but it will enhance it. People will still speak their different languages. However, when we are together, we will have a common form of communication.

The issue of language came up strongly as something that plays an important part in the creation of identities. Divided opinions among respondents in terms of which language is more likely to advance the notion of a national identity might, however, reflect the preferences of the respondents. Individuals could be biased towards their first languages.

SPORT, RELIGION AND SYMBOLISM

This section looks at three elements normally associated with identity creation in various circumstances namely sport, religion and symbolism. Respondents were asked their opinion on whether or not these things were likely to play any role in the creation of a national identity in South Africa. Findings indicated that, whilst these factors could be decisive in other countries, the impact of religion, in particular, in South Africa has been limited. Sport and symbolism have, however, been used to advance national identity in certain instances. The idea that sport can galvanise

feelings of national identity has been well documented and when questioned about the relationship between sporting events and national identity, SABC staff cited events such as the 1995 Rugby World Cup, the 1996 African Cup of Nations Soccer Finals, the 2000 All-Africa Games and the 2003 Cricket World Cup (all hosted in South Africa) as events that strongly united South Africans. They believed that, by airing national sporting events, the SABC was in a position to advance notions of national identity, because people would be more likely to rally behind their nation than against the 'other' foreign nation.

Turning now to religion, many nations base their national identity on religion. This is usually reflected in their names, for example the Islamic Republic of Iran. In light of these observations and some references to religion by the respondents, the researcher enquired about the role of religion in the creation of a South African national identity and the position of SABC TV in this project. Josephine, a manager at SABC, mentioned that on television, religious programmes are allocated about 2 percent of the broadcasting schedule time across all three channels (this excludes programmes of other genres, such as music, dramas and documentaries, which may have religious elements). She further pointed out that, even though Christianity is allocated the most time (close to 70 percent), it is not regarded as the national religion and no attempt is made to link it to the building of a national identity. Therefore, in South Africa's public service broadcasting, religion does not appear to be playing a significant role in the creation of a national identity. However, as noted earlier, the apartheid regime tried to associate their brand of national identity with Christianity.

With regard to imagery and symbolism, SABC staff echoed the view of Bashiri (2003: 4) that symbols play an important part in the articulation of national identity. For example, Ignatiana suggested that a concerted effort was being made by the SABC to reflect a specifically South African identity in all its programmes. This was done, in particular, by making use of the national anthem and the flag in a number of programmes. Ignatiana mentioned that 'recently we have also incorporated the Proudly South African logo to accompany all local programmes. In addition to inanimate symbols, individuals, such as Nelson Mandela and Desmond Tutu have been used to arouse feelings of national identity.

GLOBALISATION, IDENTITY AND SABC TELEVISION

Globalisation discourse has featured prominently in the discussion of the role of the media in identity creation. At the outset of this chapter it was suggested that changes at SABC can be partly explained by the influence

of global factors. Moreover, the subsequent opening up of the media market has resulted in more competition for public broadcasters, with the introduction of private stations that are geared specifically towards the market. However, according to the SABC staff, this does not have an impact on the local content policy and national identity creation. They acknowledged, however, that access to newer forms of media, like the internet, give people more opportunities to articulate their identity. Moreover, since the dawn of democracy in 1994, South Africa has received large numbers of immigrants from other African countries and other continents. This has made the country a melting pot for various cultures and forms of organisation. Rex (1996: 4) noted that in the face of increasing immigration, the local population tends to look to their media to advance their identity. Some ICASA members and SABC staff agreed with this assessment. For example, Kizza, an ICASA councillor, argued that '[t]he local content regulations are more important now with the large numbers of people coming to permanently stay in our country. We have to make sure that our identity is not washed away in this melting pot of various languages and cultures.'

As a result of globalisation, the traditional role of public service broadcasters has shifted, and the SABC is no exception. It no longer has a monopoly over television broadcasting in the country and must operate on a semi-commercial basis. To secure adequate funds, SABC TV has to vie for advertising revenue, and to do this successfully it must compete for viewers. These pressures lead to a partial negation of some of the broadcaster's traditional roles, including that of promoting national identity, which, at the level of management decisions, no longer carries the same weight as in the past. Currently, the SABC generally functions as a hybrid model of broadcasting, combining tenets of both public service broadcasting and commercial broadcasting.

A further look at the responses above shows that, as a result of its metamorphosis, SABC television is in a position to promote multiple identities in South Africa. The reconfiguration of the channels to make them focus on particular languages and ethnic groups promotes diversity instead of harmonising South Africans under a single national identity. In this respect, South Africa stands in sharp contrast to other African countries, where single, state-controlled television channels are easily manipulated to advance issues of national identity. In neighbouring Zimbabwe, for example, the government has absolute control of the state broadcaster, using the single television channel to promote its own brand of national identity. This is a 'hard', unitary notion of identity, which, because of its close association with the government, may be less inclusive than the SABC's softer version.

CONCLUSION

The research presented here reflects the complexity and contradictions surrounding the concept of the nation. While the majority of the media players interviewed for this study believed that it is their duty to create a new national identity, there was no clear indication of what they meant by national identity. How is it then possible for the SABC editors to promote something of which they do not have a clear understanding? In attempting to provide an answer to this perplexing question, it is suggested in this chapter that the different and indistinct ideas on national and South African identity, as put forward by respondents, are indeed a reflection of South African society itself: a diverse society that is still in the process of transformation. By reflecting diversity in its programming, the SABC, is in fact, promoting a certain sense of national unity that mirrors the hybrid nature of South African society today.

Chapter Seven

Countering stigma: Collectively counselling an, AIDS identity

Sandra Jane Roberts

INTRODUCTION

STIGMA INCREASES THE suffering of people living with HIV/AIDS (PLHAs). By worsening stress and weakening immune systems, it also boosts the number of deaths associated with AIDS. Finding support and coping with stigma are critical to the longer survival of those who are HIV+. This chapter, which is based on research conducted at a Johannesburg hospital, demonstrates that some PLHAs can and do resist the stigma. It describes and reflects upon the journey that some take from a stigmatised to a resistance identity. At diagnosis, the stigmatised identity is born, violently overthrowing cherished perceptions of oneself. Various strategies can be employed in an attempt to normalise a stigmatised identity. Some PLHAs go further however; challenging the norms underpinning stigmatisation; some take the route of resistance, becoming what is sometimes termed a 'Positive Person'. Whilst it is valuable, analytically, to distinguish between 'normalisation' and 'resistance', in the world of lived experience these approaches constitute two ends of a continuum rather than a simple dichotomy.

Research was undertaken at an HIV clinic that forms part of a public hospital in Johannesburg. The hospital is located in a formerly white neighbourhood, not far from several large coloured communities. It also serves a substantial black population, but this mostly comes from townships situated further away. The clinic's attendees are nearly all black and mostly female. Because of their poverty, and the cost incurred in travelling to the clinic, many find it difficult to attend regularly. It is worth mentioning that the research was conducted at a time when there

was talk of 'rolling out' anti-retrovirals (ARVs) – that is, providing them at public hospitals and clinics – but this had not yet begun. Consequently, only two of the respondents were on ARVs, and, as far as other respondents were concerned, there was little knowledge about them. Subsequent to the research, however, the clinic came to be used as a pilot site for the roll-out programme.

The clinic has been widely praised. Its nurses' competency and commitment are highly regarded and it is able to draw on a broad range of expertise. The leadership of the clinic has developed relationships with various stakeholders, and its manager commented that 'without the network of organisations we would never be able to get anything done.' She is a member of the Treatment Action Campaign (TAC), sits on the executive committee of the AIDS Consortium (the umbrella organisation for AIDS organisations in South Africa), and has a long-standing relationship with the AIDS research unit at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits). A representative of the AIDS Law Project, also based at Wits, visits once a month to provide patients with legal advice. The clinic also runs a bi-weekly wellness course that newly diagnosed patients attend, learning how to care for themselves, emotionally and physically. Volunteerism was practiced before it became government policy; helpers come from Community Aids Response (CARE), and reflexology, massage therapy and other therapeutic treatments are now regular features of the clinic. In addition, some of the respondents were involved with one or more HIV/AIDS organisations outside the clinic. These, and the clinic itself, enabled them to gain access to income, to get involved with educating people about HIV/AIDS, to counsel people, and to become involved in AIDS activism. Barnett & Whiteside's (2002: 91) observation is apposite: 'in a highly socially cohesive society or sub-group, individuals find some insurance for the future and are able to mobilise resources in pursuit of joint goals to avoid or control risk.'

Research was based mainly on interviews with members of an HIV/AIDS support group, which met weekly. In all, 47 members of the group participated; 39 took part in focus groups, eight of which were convened, and eight one-on-one in-depth interviews were conducted. Of the 47 interviewees, 42 were women and only five were men. This gender skew reflected the fact that, when the clinic's database was checked on 12 March 2004, it was found that about 70 percent of the regular patients were female. Of the 47 respondents, 46 were black African, and one was coloured. The respondents' ages varied from 18 to 56 years, a range that might be compared to that for the database as a whole, which extended from 13 to 72 with a median of 33 years. A total of 38 respondents were unemployed, and only two were professionals.

Respondents had been aware of their status for differing lengths of time, from one week to 15 years. Interviews were conducted in English, with a multi-lingual research assistant translating when necessary.

The hospital psychologist, who conducts the support group, and the manager of the HIV clinic were also interviewed. In addition, preliminary interviews were conducted with people from HIV/AIDS organisations. Informed consent was obtained before interviews were undertaken, and, due to the sensitive nature of the subject, names of all respondents have been concealed. Counsellors were available to discuss any possible negative effects from the research. Results were presented to interested respondents and to the hospital psychologist. This was done mainly out of a concern that the respondents should be enriched and empowered by the research, but the discussion of findings also served as a means of evaluating the study.

STIGMA AND SOCIAL STRUCTURE

How does stigma affect the lives of PLHAs? Nyblade, Pande & Mathur (2003) conducted research in Tanzania, Zambia and Ethiopia, finding that stigma was commonly manifested in differential treatment, including the separation of eating utensils and sleeping quarters. On a community level, PLHAs were often excluded from community events and isolated on public transport and in churches, bars and shops (Nyblade, Pande & Mathur 2003: 28, 29). Gossip was a major problem, in that it had negative economic consequences for women who were dependent on local networks. There were also complaints about voyeurism: people visited bed-ridden PLHAs and then reported back to other members of the community. PLHAs also frequently lost power within their households; family members considered them incapable of activities such as housework or receiving visitors, and effectively treated them like children (Nyblade, Pande & Mathur 2003: 31). In addition, once their positive status is known, women are sometimes the victim of violence from partners (Fox 2003: 15).

Parker & Aggleton (2003: 14) argue that stigma is more than an emotional reaction to difference in that it serves to emphasise and maintain structural inequalities. That is, stigmatisation of those with HIV/AIDS is, fundamentally, a sociological phenomenon; it is about unequal distribution of resources and power. PLHAs are stigmatised because they are regarded as weak, physically and morally. There is also, however, a relationship between AIDS and material inequality, such that most PLHAs are associated with poverty. The practical problems of living with AIDS are much greater for those who are impoverished, not only

in a financial sense, but also in terms of physical, educational, social and other resources. It is more difficult for poor people to conceal their infection, and they tend to experience the impact of stigmatisation at an earlier stage. The structural disparity that underpins stigma is, then, directly related to illness and indirectly linked to poverty. As Parker & Aggleton (2003: 19) further explain, global factors aggravate HIV/AIDS-related stigma. The epidemic is occurring in an era of increasing inequality, and this exacerbates various types of exclusion, including informational segregation. Polarisation also tends to reinforce all forms of discrimination, including that based on 'race', ethnicity and religion, but also HIV status.

The same global dynamics also heighten the stigma experienced by women PLHAs in particular. From research conducted in five of South Africa's nine provinces, Fox (2003: 15) concluded that 'the stigma attached to HIV/AIDS affects women in particularly adverse ways. Fear of violence, stigmatisation, exclusion and destitution dominates the lives of many women with HIV/AIDS in South Africa.' Rates of HIV infection are significantly higher among women than among men. The explanation for this is partly physical – related to the way the virus is transmitted – but largely social; a consequence of gender inequality (Lawson 1999: 393). Research among black women has highlighted the impact of economic reliance on men, generally lower levels of education, lack of sexual decision making power, pressure to have sex at an early age, and the formation of relationships marked by violence and a lack of trust (Bujra 2000: 8; Becker 2001: 1; LeClerc-Madlala 2001: 40; Walker & Gilbert 2001: 9). Investigations by LeClerc-Madlala (2001: 43) and Haram (2001: 54) have shown that women tend to be blamed for HIV/AIDS, with their sexuality and promiscuity 'demonised' as its cause. Men escape much of this stigma and are portrayed as innocent victims. Both studies took place in rural communities, and the position in the urban metropolis of Johannesburg is probably not quite so bad (Haram 2001: 51).

The ultimate effect of stigma is that the stigmatised are denied life chances that they would otherwise experience (Goffman 1963). As we have seen, however, stigmatisation is rooted in the social structure of society, and is made worse by globalisation. This doubtless helps to explain why remedies located at the level of individuals have had minimal success (Parker & Aggleton 2003: 13, 14; see also Grundlingh 1999: 61). In keeping with other forms of discrimination, stigmatisation of PLHAs generates reactions and resistance, and the focus of my study has been on these types of responses by those who are affected. I begin by exploring the importance of the support group and experiences of stigmatisation, and then proceed to normalisation strategies and

resistance. The various responses have an impact on the identities of the PLHAs, with resistance, which creates the possibility of challenging the structural determinants of stigmatisation, producing 'Positive People'.

PREPARATION FOR DISCLOSURE

A PLHA may pass through a number of stages following diagnosis. The trajectory proposed here is an ideal type, but it explains the experiences of most of the respondents in this study. In contrast to existing literature, it suggests that, for the stigmatised, their own reactions are highly significant, indicating that it is possible – by creating a secure environment and 'positive' alternative culture – to adjust or even resist societal stigma. The stigmatised identity forms when a person's social identity is first affected by HIV/AIDS, at the moment of crisis when HIV/AIDS-related stigma intrudes into the sanctity of a person's established identity. The initial impact may come from personal fears about possible infection or it may be a result of other people's suspicions. By disclosing to significant others, PLHAs expose themselves to stigma in the hope of receiving support. In fact, PLHAs can experience encouragement and stigma, simultaneously, from different, and even the same people. Respondents commonly employed several strategies to ensure that the reaction from others was sympathetic rather than stigmatising. These approaches allow the PLHA to counteract some of the stigma of HIV/AIDS, retaining key aspects of their existing identity. Finally, it is possible for some people to form a new identity that rejects and resists the stigmatisation of the broader community.

In his theory of stigmatised identity, Goffman (1963) distinguished between a 'discredited' and a 'discreditable' social identity. Someone who manifestly deviates from the ideal human, notably through a visible impediment, possesses a discredited social identity. The discreditable identity is associated with a person who possesses a stigma which they can, and do, conceal. In this form, the stigmatised make use of a 'normal' identity to hide their 'stigmatised' identity, at least when they are around those who are not similarly stigmatised (those who Goffman refers to as 'normals') (Goffman 1963: 15, 57). In the case of HIV/AIDS, as symptoms become more obvious, the PLHA's identity is increasingly in danger of being discredited. When this happens, the PLHA faces the risk of 'enacted' stigma. Avoiding enacted stigma is critical because, as Parker & Aggleton (2003: 16) note:

Precisely because they [PLHAs] are subjected to an overwhelmingly powerful symbolic apparatus whose

function is to legitimise inequalities of power based upon differential understandings of value and worth, the ability of oppressed, marginalized and stigmatized individuals or groups to resist the forces that discriminate against them is limited.

Having become aware that one is probably HIV+, crucial decisions must be made. These include whether to have a test, and to whom, if anybody, one should disclose one's status. An HIV+ diagnosis can be a personally shattering. It can mean that one's partner has been unfaithful, or that one has engaged in sexually risky behaviour. It has implications for the lives of your children, or children you plan to have, and is also an untimely reminder of your own mortality. Importantly, it challenges previously constructed identities, including life goals and perceptions surrounding the nature of an individual's life. The social identity is already stigmatised, not only because the PLHA fears enacted stigma, but also because stigma is internalised (Alonzo & Reynolds 1995: 304). With options for resistance limited, PLHAs experience 'self-hatred, self-isolation and shame' (Nyblade, Pande & Mathur 2003: 32). In this phase, vulnerability to enacted stigma fluctuates with the presence and type of symptoms, but normal social situations are experienced as risky (Green & Sobo 2002: 40-43). This can be an especially daunting experience for women who rely on sexual relations and/or broader community and family support for their livelihoods (Walker & Gilbert 2001: 12). An HIV+ diagnosis can be profoundly isolating. This is made much worse if the individual does not have the basic information about how to live with HIV/AIDS. This is not supposed to happen, as the person should be counselled, but counselling does not always follow diagnosis. Isolation is illustrated in the following excerpt by one of the male respondents:

I didn't disclose to anybody else. I keep it to myself for approximately 5 to 6 years. And that was, like, stressing me; I couldn't cope with the situation . . . I even wanted to commit suicide . . . You know, most of the HIV sufferers, they don't want to be seen or to talk to people. They keep, always, closed doors, and they don't have information, they don't attend any support groups. You'll find that person is sitting at home at times in the day, thinking about this virus.

Participation in support groups is normally recommended in post-test counselling. Because the participants in this research were drawn from a

support group, they were all able to reflect on the experience. Due to financial constraints and other commitments, including work, most respondents did not attend regularly, though some also attended other groups. Most, however, stated that they would come more frequently if they could. A support group provides a secure environment where stigma is minimised, offering opportunities for a sharing of experiences, information and advice about disclosure strategy. In this case, the group did not permit people who were not positive to attend, and this even applied to spouses and relatives. There was tacit agreement among members that they would not inform outsiders about another member's participation and secrets. Knowledge about disability grants, the legal aid clinic, nutrition and lifestyle was swapped. In general, support groups also encourage PLHAs to 'live positively', a concept that is sometimes debated, but includes accepting the virus, disclosing to loved ones and respecting the body's needs. Through interaction with other PLHAs identities are increasingly secured. The benefit of participation is illustrated below in quotes from two of the female respondents:

The support group helps a lot. I learn many things here in the support group. I've got my friends here in [the] support group. I think that a friend who is HIV positive is better. When I was sitting with the HIV positive people, I was so happy. I find a lot . . . of things in the support group.

If you don't have something, like if you come to a support group, you'll have some ideas, some help to survive. Because I mean, to cry, to keep on crying, to keep on depending on somebody else, I don't think that that is working. Just get yourself to the support group. There are many people who are coming with the same problem, but today there is some way, there is some way [to solve the problem].

During the counselling phase and within the support group, there is considerable emphasis on disclosure. Without disclosing, at least to one's close family, it is not possible to obtain all-important physical and emotional support. For the PLHA, thoughts about disclosing can be completely engrossing. Ways of handling this problem, while at the same time minimising stigma, are carefully considered by each HIV+ individual. One female respondent commented: 'I want to tell people, but I can't until I've accepted it. But, I do tell people, but not everybody, only people who will accept it.' Sometimes, a person must also deal with

other issues in addition to their diagnosis. According to one of the female respondents:

I never told anyone, [not] even my mom . . . My mother knows [now] that I'm positive but she doesn't know how I got it. The fact that I was raped, I never [spoke of] . . . That thought was in my mind that I was raped. I never did get that counselling, that it was not my fault . . . I always blamed myself. I thought that I should have done something to prevent it.

Without disclosure, PLHAs face the danger of having their status and its concealment detected, and of being ill-prepared to defend themselves. However, with time PLHAs learn how to cope with stigmatic reactions and how to ward off some of the stigma. Very importantly, PLHAs realise, after a while, that stigma need not intrude into perceptions of self. The support group can be very helpful in this regard. Stigma can be managed, deflected and, in a sense, 'normalised'. In disclosing their identity, PLHAs attempt to normalise their identity, that is, make themselves 'normal', or close to 'normal', once again. Strategies aimed at successful normalisation are considered later.

RISKING DISCLOSURE

In disclosing seropositivity, the PLHA acknowledges that her or his identity is stigmatised, thereby admitting her or his own spoiled identity to others. This is a process of voluntarily taking off the 'normal' mask that the PLHA has been wearing. Likely responses are assessed by investigating how particular people react to other PLHAs. In the discussion that follows three contexts for stigmatisation are identified and explored. These are the community, the family and intimate relationships. The response of others in each of these settings shapes the PLHAs' social identity and also their perception of themselves.

The respondents defined 'the community' as neighbours and people with whom they were acquainted. In terms of the community, none of the respondents reported receiving support. In some instances, community members stigmatised people even before they were diagnosed. This type of reaction could possibly discourage a person from being tested. For some PLHAs, people who were once friends had drifted away, suspecting that they were positive, and had thus become part of 'the community'. Many chose not to disclose to friends because of the likelihood of stigmatisation. Respondents contrasted familial support

with community disbelief and opposition. Stigma in the community often took the form of voyeurism, gossip and taunting. These behaviours were their greatest fears and were the types of responses that were most likely to be identified as community stigmatisation. Their impact could be devastating, as a female respondent pointed out:

That's why many people are dying, because the person with this virus, she will be or he will be afraid to go outside, to [go to] the clinic . . . [O]ther people . . . are afraid to walk in the street. Until they die, they lock themselves in the house . . . because of the community.

Most respondents – females in particular – were the subject of gossip. The women in this study reported that in their neighbourhoods there was a great deal of suspicion associated with conditions such as weight loss, thinner people in general, tuberculosis, skin rashes, and baldness or hair loss. In addition, those who became sick or bedridden found themselves being suspected of having HIV/AIDS, whether or not this was indeed the case. Invalids might also be visited by inquisitive neighbours, or other unexpected guests, who take it upon themselves to observe the person's condition and to inform others in the community of the situation. These are two examples:

When I was very sick in 2001, they [would] come to my room and say, 'How are you today?' I say, 'I'm fine.' When they are coming outside, with their other friends they say, 'We must come and look [at] her. She's got Inculazi [Zulu for HIV/AIDS]'.

You know, in my street there is another nurse . . . she said, 'People who have shingles are positive.' Before I even get out of there, everybody is looking at me. The following day I even asked myself, 'She went the whole evening telling everybody?', because the following day, I couldn't walk [down the street].

Some respondents were doubted when they made their positive status known. Positive people are not expected to admit their status. Instead, this is supposed to be 'discovered' by the community. The following examples capture this idea; the second also revealing suspicion that people might claim to be HIV+ in order to obtain some benefit.

Ja [yes], I'm HIV positive . . . I was coughing and he [a friend] said, 'Oh, you're coughing'. I said, 'It's because I'm HIV positive' and he said, 'The minute you get the virus you won't tell anybody!'

I used to tell people that I must get warm because I have this virus and they don't want to believe [it]. [They would say] 'It's just because you want to get warm, you don't have it.'

Most of the respondents reported that they had supportive families. According to the clinic manager, with the ARV roll-out now in progress, it is important that PLHAs disclose to those around them and have the support of their partners and families so that they can take the medication on time. One female respondent commented: 'My mom was very supportive, and my dad was fantastic, everybody was just great.' Those who thought that familial support was unlikely had chosen not to disclose. Respondents reported that mothers, in particular, played a crucial role in supporting their HIV+ daughters. Additionally, most PLHAs felt disclosure of their status had brought the family closer together, and they appreciated being treated specially, with particular foods and supplements being bought for them. However, it is possible that there is an inclination to idealise a family's response in order to prevent stress.

When the PLHA did experience stigma from family members, this was often based on ignorance. For instance, there was often a reluctance to share cutlery and crockery. Because somebody with AIDS places new and unusual strains on the entire family, their infection could become a focus for conflict. Financial pressures can accentuate the burden. A number of regular attendees of the clinic reported a particularly sad example of this. The mother of somebody they knew fetched her dying daughter from the hospital, just so that the younger woman could collect the disability grant she obtained because of her illness. The daughter died in the hospital a few days later. Prior to her death, the family had lost their house and were facing financial difficulties. Mother and daughter allegedly had several heated arguments about money, and the respondents felt that the stress following the fights contributed to the daughter's death. One male respondent discussed this case further:

She [the daughter] [felt] a little bit better while she [was] getting her treatment from the hospital. At home . . . they neglect[ed] her. They [were] always fighting [with] her . . .

She complained to me [about her mother stealing her money]. I think that's where the fight originated.

Intimate relationships provided a third context for stigma; one which is characterised by a strong gender dimension, and which is associated with unequal power relationships. HIV/AIDS is also a subject that may be raised during a domestic spat to hurt the PLHA. A female respondent commented: 'We are fighting all the time. And when we are fighting he [husband] says, "You are HIV positive and you are going to die." but when we are not fighting, it's fine, [and] he says, "No, I love you," and all these things.' Both men and women commonly recognised male partners as a potential stressor when it comes to HIV/AIDS. There were also a number of women who had been deserted when they disclosed their status, despite the likelihood that their partners had infected them. Referring to her partner, a female respondent said, '[H]e left us. Uh, he said he doesn't have HIV. Why does the child have HIV? So I told him that I am HIV [positive]. He doesn't have HIV? So he left us . . . [but] he's sick, he's coughing a lot.' Recent research showed that more than 20 percent of patients at the two Johannesburg HIV clinics had not disclosed to their partners (Skogmar et al. 2004: 3). Some of those who had disclosed had their status brought up in arguments. Moreover, many women preferred being on their own, because of the tension that male partners produced. Some of the female respondents felt that their partners were inconsiderate and sometimes violent towards them:

The father of my baby used to chase me [away at] 10 o'clock. He says, 'Go, go, I don't want to die.' . . . [Another time] he'll force me to have sex. He says, 'How can you tire?' This virus makes you tired. Those . . . are the things that can make you so miserable.

In each of the three contexts, financial considerations are an important factor in the stigmatisation that occurs. Within the family, PLHAs sometimes suffer as a consequence of the financial burden their illness imposes, and in the community they are often suspected of coming out openly just to obtain financial and other rewards. However, not all PLHA are eligible to receive a disability grant. Only those with a high CD4 count (indicative of an advanced stage of illness) may obtain the grant, which is worth R740 (US\$125). This sum can make a substantial contribution to the budget of families with very low incomes. Other 'rewards' that might come with being HIV positive

include attending conferences and educating people about HIV/AIDS, but this is usually unpaid work, so suspicions about PLHAs benefiting financially are unwarranted.

Thus far, the argument of this chapter has concentrated on showing how stigma is introduced to a person's identity. The increased prevalence of HIV, and the greater awareness that people now have about the infection, have not ended the practice of stigmatisation. In fact, increased knowledge about symptoms may lead to a PLHA's status being discovered earlier. Within respondents' families, however, becoming acquainted with facts about HIV/AIDS has had the effect of reducing discrimination. Intimate relationships remain fraught, even when both partners are HIV+. Increased prevalence of HIV/AIDS has, though, led to the development of more support groups and other places of refuge against the stigma, to more knowledge about caring for PLHAs, and to further opportunities for creating identities in opposition to the stigmatised one. The discussion now turns to the ways in which respondents promoted various 'identity fixes' as a means of muting the impact of stigmatisation.

IDENTITY FIXES AND NORMALISATION

The notion of using particular facets of personality and situation as a defence against stigma is by no means new, but understanding this in terms of an 'identity fix' is somewhat of a novel approach. PLHAs use what I am calling an identity fix to diffuse expected stigma, and as a way of coping with social life in the wake of 'enactment'. The stigmatised identity is partially normalised by PLHAs, in effect, saying to others and themselves: 'Yes, I am HIV positive, but I'm a good and valuable person.' Evidence for identity fixes comes partly from Green & Sobó (2000: 91-100) and partly from my own research. The main fixes emphasise, first, moral identity, secondly, family identity and thirdly, work identity. The possibility of categorising them in this way reflects both the common experiences that PLHAs have of stigma and their discussions about how to respond to problems. They are, though, general categories embracing a number of specific approaches, and the list is not necessarily exhaustive. Moreover, any particular PLHA may adopt more than one identity fix.

The moral identity reasserts the morality of the PLHA. As Stanley (1999: 104, 116) showed, this may involve the view that AIDS is a 'message from God' and 'a blessing'; though, contrariwise, it might also be regarded as a form of punishment from the Almighty (Stanley 1999: 116). Either claim relieves the PLHA of a burden of guilt and shame.

Both were expressed in the interviews. This is not surprising because Christianity is very widespread in South Africa, and many respondents derived part of their identity from membership of a church. That HIV/AIDS acted as a form of redemption was a common theme. Many respondents said that the infection had made them realise the error of their ways or had given them reason to reassess their lives. Another common perception was that HIV/AIDS was God's way of testing or judging society because people 'do not live by God's ways'. The respondents also spoke about coming closer to God through their seropositivity. As one respondent reflected:

What I know is that I'm not going to die any time soon.
What I know is that God put me into this world to achieve many goals. And I'm not going to die until I've achieved what goals I must achieve.

Receiving a message from God could be regarded as a reminder of what was important. For some, it led to involvement in educating others about AIDS, or to participation in community work. Many affirmed how HIV had emotionally softened them, making them more compassionate. According to one female respondent: 'Sometimes I say, "Thank God I'm HIV positive, because I want to feel how people with HIV feel." Not that I was careless, but I wanted to be able to help people with HIV.'

Others rejected the pious morality that blames the PLHA for their seropositivity. They did not consider their sexual behaviour to have been any different from that of others, so why should they be discriminated against? This approach questions the foundation of any morally-based stigma. Related to this is a recognition of the great numbers of those infected with HIV/AIDS. One female respondent argued: 'But you think why, you know, what's wrong with me? It's in every house. Most of the times, they are both, three, four, you know.' An alternative approach is to claim innocence in obtaining the infection. South Africa has one of the highest incidences of rape in the world, so it was not surprising to hear many of the women saying that they had probably been infected in this way. Others blamed their HIV infection on husbands or past partners.

Family relationships, which formed a big part of the respondents' lives and identities, provided another ready-made means of developing a second identity fix. This was sometimes achieved by using one's family as a buffer, as expressed in the attitude that: 'my family accepts me and I don't care about what everybody else thinks'. Reconciling or improving

relationships with family, and also friends, could be very important because of increasing reliance upon them for financial and emotional support. Many respondents demonstrated the pivotal role of motherhood. Sometimes the mother in question was that of the PLHA, a person who cared for them. On other occasions the mother was the PLHA. In the case of the latter, worries about embarrassing one's child or children were often a reason for not disclosing one's status. But children also provided a key reason for the PLHAs wanting to live longer. Milestones in children's lives, such as starting and finishing school, getting married, and having their own children, became objectives in the respondents' lives. For instance:

My worry is my son and my daughter. He is in Standard Nine this year; my daughter is in Standard Seven. I'm worried for them. I pray [to] God every day for my child. Maybe they can pass matric.¹ Then you can do what you want to with me.

The third identity fix was associated with work. Employment was regarded by PLHAs as an important way of demonstrating their worth to their family or wider community, and, even if the job was menial and underpaid, it provided a strong identity. Unfortunately, the majority of the participants were unemployed, and, whilst most of them had never been employed or had only been in short-term employment, two had lost jobs as a consequence of their seropositivity or poor health. The employed and self-employed felt a sense of pride, and they also avoided the boredom associated with stigma-induced isolation. Many of the respondents were involved in helping others through volunteering or, in some cases, activism. For most, volunteer work was carried out in very personal ways, by spreading information and counselling those who were positive or suspected they might be. The men in the study tended to have paid employment out of necessity, so that they could provide for their families, and they did not feel as proud of their work as the women did. In contrast, one woman was willing to labour for four days a week – thereby limiting her access to medical care – for as little R800 a month. In some cases, an HIV+ diagnosis even provided the motivation to launch careers and businesses. Moreover, becoming a PLHA led to some of the women reducing their economic reliance on men. The following statements by two female respondents reflect the importance of the work identity:

I'm not starving, I can do business now. Now they are no longer looking at me like before, now they say, 'This person is even better than us'. Now that's what I'm realising now. 'We are stupid, this one is clever, but she is sick'.

So, we have to stand up. Like doing the beads [making beadwork ornamentation]; where I am, at the end of the day you bring the beads. You know that little bit [of income] is enough, because it is from your own hands. You are proud. I have R50 [US\$8.47], rather than wait for somebody else to give you R20 [US\$3.39].

A limitation of the work identity, and to some extent the family identity, is that they are dependent upon the PLHA being in reasonably good health. Whilst each of the fixes helped the PLHAs to some degree, it is important to note that they could only mute stigma if the individual has admitted to being HIV+. To the extent that they did this, the individuals were contributing to the rejection of anti-AIDS stigma more generally. The more public the disclosure, the more it began to blend into the development of a resistance identity.

'POSITIVE' RESISTANCE IDENTITY

Goffman's (1963) conceptualisation of the stigmatised identity does not tell the entire story, because he makes little allowance for a counterculture that rejects the stigma of broader society. Castells is, however, helpful, in this regard. He defines three 'forms and origins of identity building', which he refers to as 'legitimizing', 'resistance' and 'project' identities (Castells, 1997: 8). The second of these, namely 'resistance identity' is:

generated by those actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatized by the logic of domination, thus building trenches of resistance and survival on the basis of principles different from, or opposed to, those permeating the institutions of society (Castells 1997: 8).

This captures the essence of what, for PLHAs, is sometimes regarded as a 'positive identity'. Here, the PLHA discloses their status – or allows their status to become known – to people beyond their family circle; that is, to the community at large.

The identity fix was aimed at reducing enacted stigma, and at

¹ Grade Twelve, i.e. the final year of high school.

achieving a degree of normalisation, but it left a sizeable chunk of the stigmatised personality intact (because there was still a large gap between the individual's inner personality and how they were perceived by people at large). With the positive identity, the inner and public identities are brought into alignment. This can be dangerous, because it carries the possibility of attracting a level of stigma that may prove unbearable, either for oneself or for one's family. There are, however, a number of advantages. First, the PLHA is freed from the stress of having a discreditable identity that might suddenly become discredited. Secondly, it makes it possible for the PLHA to openly socialise with other 'Positive People'. Thirdly, through the development of a community of 'Positive People' and the promotion of a positive identity, it becomes possible to challenge the structures upon which AIDS stigma rests. It is, in this sense, that the positive identity is also a resistance identity. Even if PLHAs have no intention of resisting, by openly disclosing their status they forcefully challenge not only their own stigmatisation, but that of others too. To quote Castells (1997: 9) again, developing a resistance identity involves 'excluding the excluders by the excluded'.

Morgan (2003: 2-3) has written about the development of this kind of identity in Khayelitsha, a township just outside Cape Town, which is sometimes regarded as the home of the TAC. Here, he said, 'you can now see that the HIV positive people are often the ones dancing, laughing, toyi-toying, going to the clinics and getting on with their lives.' He continued:

In one support group discussion, several women shocked me when they all said their HIV is not such a bad thing. They know their status, they have access to treatment, some of them receive disability grants, and many of them do HIV- and AIDS-related work where their insider knowledge gives them an edge of expertise out of which they earn an income.

The notion that being HIV+ is 'not such a bad thing' was reflected in a number of the interviews. For some respondents, being a PLHA had offered opportunities they would not otherwise have had. One was provided with shelter and clothes, including a pair of shoes for her daughter, which could be worn to school. She also joined an income generation project and was able to earn her own money. Another woman found that her seropositivity helped her to get a job in a large company, heading its corporate HIV/AIDS programme. For others, adopting a positive identity was associated with engaging in AIDS-related voluntary

work, such as counselling, from which they derived personal satisfaction and purpose, but also opportunities for association with other PLHAs.

Some of the PLHAs told everyone they could about their infection, arguing that informing people helped to lift a huge burden of pretence. One of the respondents recalled how she told people about her status during a journey in a minibuss taxi. Her beauty and health made it difficult for people to believe that she was HIV+, so she was able to present an alternative picture of HIV/AIDS; one that challenged the stigmatised stereotype. As somebody who had been HIV+ for a while, her seropositivity was no longer cause for shame, but something to be proud of. Another woman explained:

I think I'm relieved when I talk to somebody; my heart becomes right, so I think I must tell everybody that I must talk to everybody and get relieved.

The idea of being a 'Positive Person' clearly involves a play on words. Having the confidence to be public about one's status requires a high level of self-assurance. This is not something that comes naturally for most people and the solidarity and advice gained from support group participation sometimes provided necessary strength. Being positive was a process that often began with individuals being encouraged to feel positive about themselves. For many, HIV/AIDS was an awakening. It made them evaluate the state of their lives, reconsider their priorities, and put themselves first before others:

[You] just don't think for another person; think for yourself first. Don't make the next one happy, or the second person, you must be the first to be happy. Then you can make the other one happy.

Moreover, spending time with others in a similar situation pushed PLHAs to take pride in the fact that they knew their status. Given that there is much denial about AIDS, this was often an important step. It removed the uncertainty about one's status and opened up possibilities for treatment. One female respondent boldly stated: 'I don't care. I just tell myself that I know my status, so whatever anybody can say, I don't care.' Along similar lines, another woman claimed:

You are better than the others because you know your status, the others they don't know . . . sometimes some of the people point their finger at me. But I don't care. I tell

myself that they don't know their status. So I'm better, because I know my status.

Some of the respondents were understandably proud of having lived as long as they had and told stories about what it was like when they were first diagnosed. These women were often veterans of the AIDS struggle; they knew a great deal about the illness and were knowledgeable about their rights. Some of these experienced women had attitudes similar to the participants in Morgan's (2003) study. According to one woman: 'You need to understand that it [HIV/AIDS] is your friend. It's going everywhere with you; you can't run away from it.' Echoing these sentiments, another woman asserted: 'HIV, it's just a friend of mine. I don't consider myself as a sick person. I just told myself I'm HIV [positive]. People now with HIV live longer. It's just like other diseases.' This type of positive outlook is also reflected in the following statement by another female respondent:

It [HIV/AIDS] has changed us. You know, I'm so happy – my life is so focused. I know what I'm doing, and I got new hopes with everything that I'm doing. And I actually don't care who says what. [I enjoy] being here, helping other people, seeing other people getting better.

Becoming a 'Positive Person' is not an attractive option for some PLHAs. Not all PLHAs are properly counselled, and many do not participate in support groups or only attend once in a while. For others there have been no rewards. Their status has not opened up opportunities for income generation, and they have not had the experience of interacting with other PLHAs. However, in assessing the 'Positive Person' identity, there is some basis for cautious optimism. The positive identity provides PLHAs with psychological, social, sometimes, economic benefits. Moreover, by adopting this resistance identity, PLHA are in a better position to directly challenging societal stigma, instead of succumbing to it.

CONCLUSION

With some exceptions, programmes designed to address stigma have, I suggest, failed because they have not recognised that stigma has structural determinants. This chapter attempts to begin to re-examine this problem by focusing on the way in which PLHAs experience, respond to and challenge the structure of stigma, both as it affects the behaviour of

individuals and, through the development of a resistance identity. Such resistance should be seen within the context of globalisation, which heightens inequality, thereby tending to buttress stigmatisation, but also provides resources and solidarity for organisations fighting for PLHAs.

The analysis presented here draws on, and provides evidence for, much of Goffman's theory of stigmatisation and identity. It shows how stigma produces a stigmatised identity, with an individual's discreditable identity in danger of becoming discredited through enactment, with consequent stress and damage to the health of the PLHA. It also demonstrates how PLHAs reduce the gap between their inner identity and their public identity by disclosing their status. This process of partially re-normalising an identity is, crucially, achieved, through solidarity with fellow PLHAs and through family support. The chapter therefore emphasises the importance of the private world of the family and support groups in developing a new identity. In addition, the discussion has shown how Castells's notion of a resistance identity helps us to comprehend the evolution of a positive identity – the birth of the 'Positive Person' – which constitutes an important basis for fighting against social stigma.

In developing this account, the study has presented the words and perspectives of some inspiring people, who have faced the difficulties of poverty and powerlessness to find themselves buffeted but not defeated. Despite great adversity, their achievement is marked by the fact that, still, they live! In contrast to much research on AIDS, it has been heartening to see how, despite receiving a death-sentence diagnosis, PLHAs can live a happy, active – and sometimes 'better' – life. This speaks well of interventions by HIV/AIDS organisations in supporting and improving quality of life, in the process contributing to the development of a new, positive collective identity; an identity with purpose, ambition and hope.

Chapter Eight

Constructing a conservative identity: The Tabligh Jama'at in Johannesburg

ZAHRAA MCDONALD

INTRODUCTION

HAVING HAD A baby, I find it quite obvious that no one is born with a social identity. Yet, even before we are born, those around us who consider themselves significant others, construct an identity over which we have no control. Boy, girl, 'white', 'black', Muslim, Hindu or a myriad of other labels. What influences the labels are as diverse as the labels themselves. Initially then, our identities are ascribed to us on the basis of what other people, for example, our parents, are experiencing with regards to us and the wider social context in which they exist, including their own identities. As we get older, however, our identities are no longer merely attributed to us but become products of our lives. They become constructions of inputs we receive as social beings. The word 'construction' lets the mind dwell on images of buildings, bridges, bricks and cement. These forms have a structure, and it is clear what was built first and what last, and also in which order they were put together. However, on a closer look, it is never as clear-cut as that. Rooms that might have been intended for 'X' may get used for 'Y' and after some time other rooms may be added, or the building may even become totally obsolete in some instances. With the construction of identities, a structure is also clear but it is not simple, or could it be?

This chapter merges theoretical understandings of identity construction with research gathered in Johannesburg on the *Tabligh Jama'at*¹ (TJ). The theories of Manuel Castells, Arjun Appadurai and

¹ *Tabligh(i)* means 'to invite'. *Jama'a(t)*, the name of the movement, literally means a congregation or group of people, who invite towards Islam. For the TJ, *jama'a(t)* also means going to different places, locally and abroad, to invite Muslims to a better practise of their religion.

Doreen Massey are employed in order to explain the way in which identities get constructed. These theorists lead us to the assertion that through the changing of space, time and interrelations, particular places are constructed. Following on the example used above about material constructions that may at one time be used for 'X' and another for 'Y', it is particular interrelations at a precise time in that specific space that make it 'X' or 'Y'. Interrelations imply people interacting in their individual ways or the exchanges between different people. The places in which people find themselves influence their identities, while they, in turn, affect the places. With knowledge from physics, it is easy to understand that only one body can fill a particular place at any given time. The possibilities for identities are, therefore, endless if you leave the explanation here. What I demonstrate, however, is that in manipulating the interrelations that occur in space and time, similar experiences are generated for many people; shared experiences. In this way, overarching or main identities come into being that have the power to influence the places in which more and more people find themselves. The preceding contention is explained in more detail further on in the chapter.

Yoginder Sikand (1999: 41, 50) claims that the *Tablighi Jama'at* is the single largest Islamic movement. The focus of the movement, according to Goolam Vahed (2000: 45) is on 'an unquestioning loyalty to a literal interpretation of Prophetic authority'. Abdul Kader Tayob (1999: 70) explains that 'the Tablighi Jama'at at was founded on a simple message by which individuals committed themselves to recreating, as far as possible, the lifestyle of the Prophet in the modern world.' *The Economist* (Anon 2001: 19) called it 'one of the most important and obscure of the world's Islamic movements.' The TJ was founded by *Maula-na*² Ilyas in 1927 (Cilliers 1983: 44; Khan 1999a: 5). Although the TJ now has a global scope, the initial target of *Maula-na* Ilyas was Mewat in India (Sikand 1999: 42; Khan 1999b: 1). During its relatively short history, The TJ has attracted a lot of support in the country of its origin, India, and in other countries as well, including South Africa. Attempts at understanding the movement internationally are, however, not extensive - either religiously or secularly.

The qualitative data for this chapter was gathered utilising three different research methods: semi-structured interviews, observations and an analysis of movement literature. Semi-structured interviews were with 19 people who considered themselves to be part of the TJ, and done with three key informants who not in the movement. The observations were done by the researcher, a Muslim female, and by a

male research assistant, also a Muslim, whose assistance was deemed necessary because there is strict observance of gender separation in the TJ. A review of the literature often used by members of the TJ provided documentary evidence. All research was undertaken in Johannesburg, particularly in Lenasia, Eldorado Park, Glen View, Greenside, Crosby, Mayfair, Bosmont and Maraisburg. These areas were selected because there are large numbers of Muslims within them, a fact largely related to the Group Areas Act of 1953. The aim is to relate some literature to the analysis of data gathered, in order to answer the question: what are the most influential factors in the construction of an identity among the TJ in Johannesburg? Evidence is presented showing that the TJ, working with other Islamic institutions, has succeeded by fostering an environment that is favourable to its enduring existence. The author wishes to state that no harm or offence is intended to the religion of Islam in any form.

WHY IDENTITIES ARE CONSTRUCTED

My research question assumed that identities are constructed. A plausible case for this assumption will be made, and this will be followed by an explanation of the assertion on identity put forward in the introduction of this chapter.

Many theorists utilise *construction* uncritically to understand identity. Castells (1997: 6) writes: 'By identity, as it refers to social actors, I understand the process of construction of meaning.' He also refers to 'the social construction of identity' (Castells 1997: 7), and, elsewhere, he asserts, 'Identity for me is the construction of, meaning' (Castells 2001: 115) Besides explaining what he believes identities to be a construction of and then detailing the real issue about the construction process, Castells never qualifies his use of *construction*. He takes it for granted that this is the best terminology. Similarly, when discussing how people's identities are formed, Massey (1994: 163) wrote of 'the notions of place-identity constructed'. Likewise, in making a case for the use of *culturalism* to designate a feature of movements involving identities consciously in the making, Appadurai (1996: 15) refers to the 'making of' identities (i.e. their 'construction'). Akin to Castells, Appadurai does not see the need to qualify the use of this terminology. Identities are made; they do not just exist of and by themselves. They have history and, if they survive, a future too. What has to be demonstrated now is how these constructions occur, or, as Castells (1997: 7) puts it, 'the real issue is how, from what, by whom, and for what?' The answer to these questions begins with the explanation that follows.

² Religious leader or authority.

Castells (2000b: 6) has claimed that identity is the construction of meaning for the social actor. Identity is, by nature, social, even though it refers to the individual. For Castells (1997: 7; 2000b: 6, 7) identity is the construction of meaning from shared experience and cultural attributes. From the quote, however, it is also clear that he does not deny there are other sources of meaning. Whether or not he would agree that identity could be a construction of another facet of the social world, could not be established. His argument also includes the observation that the construction occurs in the midst of power relations, which inevitably affect the construction process of the identity that is being built (Castells 1997: 7-9). He identifies three different forms of identities – [legitimising, resistance and project – which, in turn, have three different outcomes: civil society, communities and subjects (Castells 1997: 8-9).

During a visit to South Africa, Castells (2001: 123-4) drew out some implications of his emphasis on ‘shared experience’ as the basis for the construction of identity. Discussing how it would be possible to develop a stronger European identity, rather than a German, Belgian or French one, he argued that the objective should be to create a common European experience. Methods of achieving this could include language teaching, similar education systems, the same benefits for workers in each country, a common foreign policy, and the development of intra-European media. The general point is that, for a social identity to be successfully constructed, shared experiences must be enhanced and differences of experience reduced.

In Appadurai’s conception, the starting point of identity is difference. He explains (1996: 13) that culture in the present era is about ‘purely identity orientated instrumentality’ and ‘a contestation of values about differences’. His argument revolves around the fact that culture is culture for culture. It is about identifying with difference. By this, Appadurai is contradicting the common understanding of culture as being a product of the needs of a particular society. He is arguing that culture itself has become a need, in the sense that people need and want to identify with different substantial elements in their lives and, therefore, culture becomes culture for culture. Appadurai (1996: 15) proposes that ‘culturalisms’ are ‘a feature of movements involving identities consciously in the making.’ He (1996: 33), thus, explains identity as collective difference, which is mediated by five ‘landscapes’. These five – ethnoscaples, mediascaples, technoscaples, financescaples and ideoscaples – basically refer to the constant flow of various elements within contemporary global society.

Massey (1999: 6) contends that identity is a particular ‘position within a complex net of interrelations.’ She is arguing that identity is the construction of a place where an individual can situate himself/herself

in the midst of all that is happening around him/her. ‘Place’ had been defined by Massey (1994: 168) as being ‘formed out of the particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location.’ She further states (1994: 168) that the singularity of a particular ‘place’ is ‘formed in part out of the specificity of the interactions which occur at that location and in part out of the fact that the meeting of those social relations at that location will, in turn, produce new social effects’. The most significant point for Massey (1994: 169) is that ‘a proportion of the social interrelations will be wider than and go beyond the area being referred to in any particular context as a place.’ Identity for each person or group is, therefore, the particular ‘place’ that has been constructed out of the particular social relations for that individual or group. It is important to remember that these places – and, therefore, identities – are not closed, because there are, as Gillian Hart (2002: 35) put it:

relations with wider arenas and other places [or identities];
boundaries are always socially constructed and contested;
and the specificity of a place . . . arises from the particularity
of interrelations with what lies beyond it, that intersect or
come into conjuncture in particular ways.

Massey and Hart make a strong case for the fact that identities are particular positions, for why they are such and, to some extent, for what impacts upon them. However, much of this sounds like theory that one would be hard pressed to calculate in the real world. One has to admit, though, that identity is an extremely complex concept to grasp, and it might be that only a complicated equation can really do it justice. A formulation that reads, identity arises from ‘the particularity of interrelations with what lies beyond it, that intersect or come into conjuncture in particular ways’ (Hart 2002: 35), provides a clear sense of just how complex the construction process really is. Yet, at the same time, one could ask the question, what makes a certain particularity more possible than another? Space, according to Massey (2002: 11), is fundamental to these possibilities because, as she had argued previously (1994: 265), it ‘is created out of the vast intricacies, the incredible complexities, of the interlocking and non-interlocking, and the networks of relations at every scale from local to global.’ Perhaps a synthesis of what has been discussed thus far will expand the understanding of identity.

It was pointed out earlier that identity is by its very nature social, and the debate has also highlighted the importance of understanding identity in order to make sense of society and social life. Identity has a connotation of being individualistic. However, identity is wholly tied

up in the process of the individual interacting with the social world. This can be summed up in the following statement: we are never alone in any one identity that we are, we are only alone in all that we are. All the identities that I, personally, have are shared by others, but all of them together are what make me different from all other people. Differences arise out of the particular space one finds oneself in and, if the laws of physics can be applied to sociology, only one body can fill a certain space at a given moment in time. Any given interrelations can, thus, affect only one person in a specific way. It was Massey who assisted in developing an understanding of this complexity of identities because of the ephemeral quality of space within time. In the process she provides an invaluable grasp of the concept of identity. The implication of her explanations of place is that there is the ability to intentionally form a 'particular set of social relations which interact at a particular location' (Massey, 1994: 168). In so doing, the construction of identity is influenced.

In the endless possibilities of identity creation, how are primary identities constructed and maintained? The answer lies in manufacturing, swaying or manipulating the construction of identities. The capability to manipulate an identity is directly related to the ability to contain the social relations and interactions, that Massey and Hart refer to, within a specific place. This is where the discussions of Appadurai and Castells can add to our insight on identity. Appadurai's formulation of culturalisms requires the enhancement of shared experiences in order to create any of the three types of identity to which Castells refers (legitimising, resistance or project). Particularising place, as indicated above, can do this. The techniques that Castells proposes – similar education, the same benefits etc. – are examples of achieving this. All of these have the power to position more people within the same or a similar complex net of interrelations, thereby putting people in as common a place as possible, thus, consequently, having a mutual overarching identity (creating a culturalism). The more people there are with overall identities that are alike, the greater the probability for that identity or that particular place to extend over space and time. This is because similar interrelations or shared experiences are generated in more spaces and times. This answers Castells question as to 'how' identities are constructed and illustrates that the 'from what, by whom and for what' will influence the identity. In South Africa, this feature of identity construction was exploited in a particularly dehumanising form, with the Group Areas Act operating as part of the broader apartheid strategy.

The chapter now follows with a brief overview of the TJ. Thereafter, factors influencing the construction of an identity among the TJ in

Johannesburg will be considered. Special attention is paid to the mechanisms that the TJ itself uses to construct a lasting identity.

A HISTORY OF THE TJ

The section above made it clear that identities do not only exist within themselves, but go beyond, to include, among other features, their past. Islam and its history is central to the Johannesburg TJ identity. A first wave of Muslims arrived in the Cape as political exiles and slaves from as early as 1658 (Tayob 1999: 21-2; Ebr-Vally 2001: 273). Ahmed Davids (1982), Ebrahim Mahida (1993) and Ebrahim Moosa (1995) provide interesting and informative material on these immigrants and the Malay/coloured communities that they established. A second wave of Muslims arrived in Natal from India during the second half of the nineteenth century, some as indentured labourers, many as 'passenger Indians' (so called because they paid for their own passage). Most of the indentured labourers were Hindus and came, in particular, from south India. In contrast, passenger Indians were generally Gujarati speaking Muslims, who were, or became, traders and merchants (Jhazbhay 2000: 371; Vahed 2000: 45; Ebr-Vally 2001: 276). Surendra Bhana and Joy Brain (1990) have provided an excellent and detailed account of the arrival of Indians in South Africa. Moosa (1997), Tayob (1999) and Vahed (2000), in particular, have contributed to an appreciation of the development of Muslim history in South Africa. No details will be provided here, save to note that, from the end of the nineteenth century, large numbers of Muslims made their way to Johannesburg from both the Cape and Natal, and that, in and around the city, ethnic divisions between Malay and Indian Muslims were re-enforced by apartheid. In Johannesburg, as elsewhere in South Africa, recent years have witnessed the arrival of a new wave of Muslim immigrants; some from India, but many from Pakistan, Somalia, Morocco and other countries.

The TJ has been contributing to the development of South Africa's Muslim communities since the early 1960s (Cilliers 1983: 96; Moosa 1997; Hansen 2003: 9). Chidester *et al.* (1997: 9) explain that in the South African 'Indian' Muslim community there are, broadly, three different strands of Islamic practices, Deobandi/Tablighi, Bareilwi and Reformist. They do not draw a distinction between Deobandi and Tablighi but consider them to be two sides of the same coin. It is said that *Maula-na* Ilyas, the founder of the TJ, studied *hadith*³ at the University of Deoband (Khan 1999b: 11; Sikand 1999: 42). Deobandis, according to

³ Practises and teachings of Muhammad, s.w.s.

Gail Minault (1997: 2; see also Sikand 1999: 42), 'sought to purify personal religious observance and to spread the knowledge of the *shariat*⁴ more widely among Muslims in India.' Sikand (1999: 42) argues that as a product of this Deobandi school of thought, *Maula-na* Ilyas was intent to spread reformist Islam among ordinary Muslims. Similarly, Jacobus Cilliers (1983: 46) argued that the TJ's attachment with the ideas of the Deobandi University was associated with *Maula-na* Ilyas and other *ulama*.⁵ They studied there and then led the new movement. Barbara Metcalf, an authority on Islam in India, has characterised the Deobandi school of thought in the following manner:

This approach [is] an aloofness from the state but without overt opposition to its excesses; a careful balance between Sufism and legalism but with a puritan emphasis on the early authorities of Islam; and, more important, an alliance with the merchant class as opposed to subservience under political rulers (Tayob 1999: 70-1).

Vahed (2000: 59) has remarked that the *ulama* are key shapers in terms of Islamic consciousness and identity. This influence seems to be heavily swayed towards the Deobandi ideology as many people have sent their children to study at Deoband University in India (Hansen 2003:8, 29). Indian Muslim religious leadership was organised for the first time, in 1934, by *Maula-na* Ebrahim Sanjalvi, as the Jamiatul Ulama Transvaal⁶ (Tayob 1999: 70). According to Tayob (1999: 70), the status of the *ulama* in Transvaal was increased by the TJ, in that, regarding content and discourse, the goals of the TJ and the *ulama* coincided in terms of religious reforms that were promoted. Both identified with the Deobandi approach to Islam in India (Tayob 1999: 70). In claiming that 'the Tabligh Jama'at is perhaps the strongest and fastest-growing Muslim religious movement in Southern Africa,' Moosa (1997: 28, 34) offers two explanations of this success. First, he says, 'it represents a type of Islam with a sufi orientation which provides a broad religious appeal to a variety of audiences . . . Second, the theological commonality between the Tabligh Jama'at and the theological orientation of the Deoband school of thought is of critical importance.' In answering the chapter's central question, some attempt will be made to verify Moosa's second claim.

We turn, now, to an analysis of some of the new empirical data.

FOSTERING AN ENDURING TJ ENVIRONMENT

The TJ base their principles and practice on relating to those who are already Muslim; that is, people who believe in Allah and have accepted Islam as their religion. It has promoted an environment where their particular interpretation of Islam has become hegemonic, strongly influencing the Muslim community. They leave little to chance in assuring a place where the TJ way of doing and taking care of business will be secure. The subsequent sections attempt to explain, in some detail, how this is achieved.

Lack of competition and 'the work'

The TJ's success is partly related to failure on the part of the broader Muslim community to actively engage in improving the state of Islam in the country. Muslims seem to be complacent about their goals, and are content to let the TJ dictate the aims and objectives of the perfect Islam. In Johannesburg there is no equal to the TJ in terms of organisations that promote Islam among Muslims. Feroz, a mosque leader who is not a member of the TJ, suggested that if other Muslim communities, where the TJ is not a force, do not develop the ability to mobilise people in Islam, people who want that kind of identity – a good Muslim identity – will go to the TJ. He added, more specifically, that there is 'a lack of activity within the Malay community . . . [and] unless Malays find a similar concept to *tablighi*, the Malay identity will be wiped out.' He added that 'mainstream Islam' is seen to be the TJ in Johannesburg at the moment, and there is nothing of a similar nature that could compete with it. The TJ identity thus holds a kind of monopoly in Muslim communities in Johannesburg.

TJ members work diligently to make the movement a success, and no other Islamic organisations compare with it in terms of effort. For example, the TJ mobilises on a weekly basis and no other organisation even comes close. 'We call it our work, because it is our work'. These are the words of Thaabet, a 40-year old male TJ adherent. Members of the TJ refer to the activities of the TJ as 'work', and this is no coincidence. The members are encouraged to spend a lot of time doing TJ activities. The sixth point of the TJ principles is to spend time 'doing this work'; this means going in *jama'at*⁷ three days every month, forty days once a year and four months at least once a lifetime. Raania, a female respondent, who has been involved in the TJ since childhood, mentioned that the 'elders' have decided in India that the three days

⁴ Islamic Law.

⁵ Religious leaders.

⁶ The 'Jamiatul Ulama' Transvaal is an organisation to which Indian religious leaders belong in the former Transvaal Province (Gauteng, Mpumalanga, Limpopo and part of Northwest).

⁷ This is when groups of men, on average between 5 and 10, leave their homes and go to another place, sometimes near, sometimes far, to invite other people towards the TJ way of life.

should be increased to 10 because more time is needed. In addition, men spend one or two nights each week in *ghusht*⁸ where they go from door to door in their area, or an area in a nearby vicinity, inviting people to come to mosque at the next prayer time. They remain in Johannesburg when going on *ghusht*, and it is only when they go in *jama'at* that they leave Johannesburg.

Being part of the TJ is not a light-hearted matter; it is a commitment that takes a lot of time. Fadiel, a male respondent, who has been part of the TJ for about ten years, said that 'this effort is 110 percent'. Activities of the TJ are structured in such a way that once you are involved it becomes your life. Thaabet, a male respondent who has been involved with the TJ for seven years, said, 'it [TJ] means everything in my life . . . it's become my whole life'. Thaabet described going out in *jama'at* as 'where they take us from house to house, meeting people, talking about Allah, inviting them towards *salaah*,⁹ towards *deen*,¹⁰ 'That,' he added, 'made a very great impact on me.' However, nobody is taken to task if they do not participate in activities. People are merely constantly encouraged via lectures and through talking in general terms.

The TJ has become a part of the daily life of the Muslim community in South Africa, whether or not that person is directly involved or not. For most Muslims, oneself, a family member, neighbour or friend have had contact with the TJ at some point in time. The results of the tireless efforts of active TJ members have left the Muslim community forever pondering on when they too will be given the guidance to also selflessly devote their lives to their religion. If other ordinary people could do it, then certainly anyone is capable. The constant and consistent effort of the members of the TJ have definitely stood them in good stead and paid off.

Limited autonomy and limited reading

Members cannot initiate amendments to the TJ's practice or principles, and the data gathered in this research demonstrate that not much has altered since the beginning of the TJ in Johannesburg. One female respondent, Roshan, mentioned a detail that had changed, but this was decided upon by the elders from India and Pakistan. When she became involved about five years ago, the six points were described by one person in the *ta'lim*.¹¹ She said that the elders revised this, so that each point is now described by a different person, because they felt that the old way led to too much pride. She said that 'a *mashoora*¹² was made from

India, all *mashoora* come from India. As the condition of the *ummah*¹³ changes, on that basis they make the *mashoora*.' Feroz expressed the hope that the TJ would at some point give their followers more autonomy.

Rieyaad explained that, 'it's not a new movement. It's basically trying to raise the level of *iman*¹⁴ of people, based on the six qualities of *sahaba*¹⁵ which the elders have put forward. We have accepted that this will make Islam grow faster.' Roshan also made a comment about the 'elders' elsewhere. She said that 'three days [for going in *jama'at*] is how our elders have set it out.' Ahmed also observed that 'for everything, the elders need to be asked first.' No interviewee ever made mention or spoke about any individual person in particular who is a known elder. Thaabet did, however, explain that it was not an individual's age that made him an elder, but the amount of time he has spent 'doing the work.' Importantly, 'elders' refer to male members of the TJ only.

It is partly this lack of autonomy that holds TJ members back from getting involved in politics or anything controversial. Mishkah, a female respondent who has been involved for more than twenty years, since the age of nine, believed that the rationale behind not becoming involved in politics is that everyone is entitled to an opinion, and if *ta'lims* were about controversial issues, such as 9/11 or the war in Iraq, people would end up losing time in argument, and no one would have the authority to end such an argument. The Qur'ân and *sunnah*¹⁶ cannot be argued with and, therefore, this is the topic of the *ta'lims*. However, in the *ta'lims* only parts of the Qur'an and *sunnah* are read (those that were felt to be of importance to the author of the books considered below). These are not discussed, and no other sections of the Qur'ân and *sunnah* are ever read out in the *ta'lims*.

The TJ has a set programme of reading, and this comes from certain prescribed books. This, too, cannot be changed. Regardless of substance, the activity of reading and re-reading a very limited range of literature would be a strong source of shared experience, not just in terms of people's lives now, but also historically. The main book include stories based on the lives of the Prophet (sws) and his companions. These stories are read at all *ta'lims*, and members are encouraged to read them daily in their homes. In the women's *ta'lims* it was observed that the book was read by different people. Each person would get a chance to read a passage, with passages read from different chapters at each meeting. This

¹¹ A meeting held to increase Islamic knowledge.

¹² A consulted decision.

¹³ Community.

¹⁴ Faith.

¹⁵ Companions of the Muhammed (sws).

¹⁶ Practices and teachings of (sws).

⁸ A weekly TJ event whereby members go from door-to-door inviting Muslims males to go to mosque.

⁹ Prayer.

¹⁰ Religion.

was done weekly, and the chapters are re-read over and over. The chapters of the main book, *Faza'il-e-amal*,¹⁷ are Stories of the *Sahabah*, Virtues of the Holy Qur'ān,¹⁸ Virtues of *Salaat*,¹⁹ Virtues of *Zikr*,²⁰ Virtues of *Tablighi*, and Virtues of *Ramadaan*.²¹ The prescribed books are the only ones read at TJ events and activities, and neither the *Qur'an* nor other sources of *hadith* are ever opened or looked at. The only other book that was encountered during the observations was one detailing the six points. These books have been translated from Urdu into English. The author is an Indian by the name of Muhammad Zakariyya Kaandhlawi and the translator is Abdul Rashid Arshad. The fact that the books are in English does not mean that they are more accessible than the *Qur'an*, because that is also available in English.

Seven of the respondents discussed the books, though not all in the same light. Most thought that the books were good to read and that they would be beneficial in some way. One of the respondents, Ahmed, however, related his wife's despair at having to attend the weekly ladies' *ta'lim* only to read texts that were constantly repeated. On the other hand, Aneesa, another interviewee, a woman of 65 who had been involved for about five years, related a story that was told to her in a lecture in which a man asked his teacher why it was that even though he went to these *ta'lims* weekly, he remembered very little. He also wanted to know if there was any benefit for him in doing this when he forgot most of it. The teacher's response was the following: he was asked to go home, get a basket and fill it with water continuously. When the water seeped out, he was to refill it with water. When he returned the following week, he told the teacher that no water remained in the basket no matter how many times he filled it. The teacher asked him whether there was absolutely no change in the basket at all. The man remarked that there was a change; the basket was very clean. The moral of the story then, for Aneesa, was that it was worth going to the *ta'lims* and listening to those stories repeatedly, as they do have a benefit. These books seem to be taken as the ultimate collection on Islamic teaching and example, because no effort is made to gain an understanding from any other sources. No respondent ever contested the content of these books. This literature is also published under the name 'Teachings of Islam' and was referred to as such by Mariam, one of the TJ women. She said that:

there is so much *barakat*²² in this work. Read [the] 'Teachings of Islam'. It brings a lot of *barakat* and helps strengthen your faith. Teachings of Islam is very good. People have said that they have seen light coming out of it. The author, Maulana Zakariyya, used to read two *rakaats*²³ *salaah* before he commenced writing each time. It really changes your life.

The TJ allows very little, if any, room for members to take control over the movement's activities. Their programmes are set, and so are the books they read, the way they dress, communicate and even eat. There is, moreover, not very much impetus to change. The annual TJ *ijtima* in India is attended by more than a million people, the largest Islamic event in the world after the pilgrimage to Mecca. As the saying goes, 'if it ain't broke why fix it?' The TJ has managed to convince many people that theirs is the way they will achieve eternal bliss, no questions asked, guaranteed! According to Moosa (1997: 41), the members of the TJ 'embrace the mission of the movement in an uncompromising manner.'

The role of educational institutions

Many respondents, in particular the women, felt that the TJ had gained in strength in the recent past (about 10 years), and that this had a lot to do with the *madrasas*²⁴ (Muslim seminaries/colleges). The Darul Uloom Zakariyya, commonly known as *Madrasa Zakariyyah*, was mentioned, in particular, as having had an effect on people, and consequently and more importantly on communities. Situated to the south of the city near Lenasia, this is one of two very big *madrasas* in Johannesburg, accommodating students from various parts of the country in hostels. It has a definite Deobandi inclination, with most of its teachers being from that school of thought.

Rayhana mentioned that her first experience of the Tabligh Jama'at was when she studied at *Madrasa Zakariyyah*. 'When I went to Zak park,'²⁵ as she called it, they spoke about *jama'at*. Gadija, a female respondent, observed that as the students came out of *madrasas* they conveyed what they had learnt. Her words were:

There are [now] more young people involved with tablighi than before. The young people go to the *madrasas* and learn

¹⁷ This is the book evaluated in this research.

¹⁸ Holy Book of Islam.

¹⁹ Prayer.

²⁰ Remembrance of Allah.

²¹ The month of the Islamic calendar in which Muslim are commanded to fast.

²² Blessings.

²³ A series of actions that make up the *Salaah* or prayer.

²⁴ *Madrasa* in this chapter is specifically used to refer to Islamic seminaries in South Africa. This chapter is in no way referring to classes attended by school going Muslim learners as general religious instruction.

²⁵ This is the name for the area in which the *madrasa* is situated, but also includes a mosque and residential area around it.

Qur'an and *hadith* and understand the Arabic language. They then go more toward the *tablighi* way. Older people send their children to the *darul ulooms* and then the children come into the homes and change the lives of the parents. The more the children go to the *darul ulooms*, the more we will have our *deen* built up.

Similarly, Mariam explained:

Before, to become a *hafiz*²⁶ you had to go to India or Mias farm,²⁷ and they were very strict. Children didn't want to go there. But when they opened *Madrasa Zakariyya*, each and every house had a child learning to become a *hafiz*. When they opened the girls' *madrasa*, the girls also went. And when the girls' and boys' came home, the parents learnt from them.

The importance of the *madrasas* was also highlighted by the non-members of the TJ who were interviewed. Feroz, the male leader of a mosque, explained:

Indians started importing *ulama* and then started *madrasas* both with a Deobandi slant. The *madrasas* became very structured, and because the Indian community was financially strong, and with the added emphasis on *sadaqa tul jaariah*²⁸, the *madrasas* were well funded. They had text books and syllabi. And the Malay community also started taking from them.

Feroz further mentioned that *madrasas* enabled the TJ to make inroads into communities where it previously lacked influence. According to him: 'Their children are going to the *ulooms*. And they are coming home from where the *jama'at* is being promoted. The concept of *tablighi* is now being brought home.' Zulfa, a young 25-year old woman, confirmed this impression, stating 'there are lots of girls that go to the *darul ulooms* and come back and wear *purdah*,²⁹ because that's what they do when they are there.' The Johannesburg *madrasas* are not only TJ

²⁶ A person that knows the *Qur'an* by heart.

²⁷ Another big *madrasa*, the Waterval Islamic Institute, situated on ground owned by the Mia family in Woodmead, Johannesburg. The Fazail-e-amal evaluated as documentary evidence, was published by this institution.

²⁸ A form of charity that is said to offer rewards long after it has been given. For example, a student is given financial assistance to complete their Islamic studies, and as long as that person uses his knowledge and imparts it to others the giver will receive rewards.

friendly, they sometimes actively mobilise for the TJ. At the *Madrasa Zakariyya*, the students are even compelled to go on three days *jama'at* every once in a while. Being institutions of tertiary education, the *madrasas* are widely held to be encouraging what is right, so that the TJ is taken as having the correct approach, and in accordance with Islam.

The *madrasa* system operating in Johannesburg has had a profound effect on the ability of the TJ to establish itself in the Johannesburg Muslim community. Both the TJ and the *madrasas* work from the assumptions of the Deobandi school of thought. They, therefore, feed off each other and strengthen one another. If these *madrasas* remain the only local institutions where Islamic studies can be pursued at a tertiary level, the TJ will continue to gain support, if not a hard-core following. Their ideas and teachings will become the views and reality of the Muslim community as a whole, and their identity will be the one that is sought after. The TJ as a movement has managed to position itself as the correct way to be Muslim, and has successfully constructed an identity out of this. The influence of the *madrasas* is likely to increase as more people attend them, and, given that the extent of TJ support within the *madrasas* it is difficult to see the Muslim community, at least in Johannesburg, aspiring to any other form of Islam. The role of Deobandi scholars within the Johannesburg Muslim community is extensive, and is being enhanced because of the strategic role of Islamic educational institutions. The TJ has spread its influence through its association with these scholars, as a consequence of their combined influence within the *madrasas*, and because of the impact of the *madrasa's* graduates within the wider Muslim communities.

Inhibiting force

The TJ is a closed space, as much as it proclaims to be 'inviting' to Islam, which has the contradictory idea of being open to. The fact that the space is closed does not mean that people are not constantly floating in and out of the movement, but the content of 'pure TJ' is not up for debate; it has been constructed out of the best quarry stone. 'This work', as it is commonly referred to, was done by the Prophet (sws) and his companions and maulā-na Ilyas merely restarted it in India. The narrative of the TJ being a reincarnation of the initial fervour of Islam is subscribed to by members of the TJ in no uncertain terms. For most respondents as well as the impressions gained from the observations and the documentary evidence, the TJ is either a natural extension of their religion, Islam, or is in fact the true manner in which Muslims should

²⁹ A veil.

conduct their lives. Religious legitimacy forms an important part of the way in which the TJ maintains the construction of its identity. One of the respondents, Thaakier, a male in his sixties who was on a mosque committee for about three decades and who is not part of the TJ, said that one of the reasons why many people do not speak out against or criticise the TJ, is that it is seen to be tantamount to speaking out against Islam. The TJ only concentrates on reading one set of books in all their activities. This is in spite of the fact that the third point of *tablighi* is to acquire Islamic knowledge. The Islam that the TJ is promoting and inspires is that contained in these books. Whatever is therein is regarded as the most important and even if not the most significant, then it is still the only Islam its members are confronted with, if that is all they read. There was no other material ever looked at in any of the activities observed.

EXTERNAL FACTORS CONTRIBUTING TO THE ABILITY OF THE TJ TO FOSTER AN ENDURING ENVIRONMENT

An important aspect of identity construction that was highlighted by the data, however, was that in the case of the TJ identity, at least, external factors are detectable that enable the ability to foster an enduring environment. This is related to the fact that all the TJ members interviewed were many other things besides being members of the TJ. Without those many other things, they might not have been members of the TJ. The three broad factors related to the TJ identity are explained as the material ability of the members, having particular family ties and being resident in a particular geographic and belonging to a particular race. The implications of these factors are explained briefly below.

Material Ability of Members

The work described earlier of the TJ requires time and more importantly with regard to this explanation, money! Ahmed, from Crosby, mentioned an incident that had taken place when he was unable to go on *jama'at* because people had promised him funds and not made good on that promise. Ahmed's comment demonstrates that without the financial ability, it would be impossible to embark on all TJ activities. Thaabet mentioned that he goes in *jama'at* for forty days every year. He runs his own business. Ameen, from Lenasia, also goes in *jama'at* for forty days every year and he works in his brother's business. Both these men are able, financially, to take time off from their respective jobs because they are in control of their employment situation. It would, then, seem

that there is also an element of class difference with regard to the capability of doing TJ work. Ahmed also highlighted the fact that 'among *tablighi* you get the richest people.' He did not draw any distinction to say who they were or what he meant by rich. Feroz argued that 'finances play a big part in Muslim identity'.

The members of the TJ pay their own way when going out in *Jama'at*, whether this is from Johannesburg to Cape Town or to Cairo or any other place they may go. Without the financial means to do this, it would just not be possible, no matter how willing a person might be. The *jama'ats* that leave the country go for either forty days or four months. Very few, if any, employers offer this kind of benefit in terms of leave. It is partly for this reason that the Indian trading community form an important backbone of the TJ in South Africa. Hansen (2003: 3) claims that the 'Gujarati Muslims by far are the richest and most influential' within the TJ. Having a business of your own or being part of a family business enables you to be in a position to do the above. The affluence of some Indian Muslims in South Africa has enabled them to travel a great deal internationally in *jama'at* (Moosa, 1997: 41).

Family Ties

Family plays a very important role in the TJ. Many of the interviewees were introduced to the TJ by family members, husbands, wives, sisters-in-law and parents. The data demonstrated a very strong association between having family members involved with the TJ and participation in the movement. The TJ becomes a lifestyle choice. It is not a rule that family always influences family in the same direction, but where there is influence in the TJ direction it is very often from family members. Having family members or, more specifically, parents who are members of the TJ also influences the length of time different people are involved in the TJ.

Geography and 'Race'

Geographical/apartheid was about the settlement of people in places where they were kept apart from others. Indian and Malay or coloured people had to live in separate areas, go to separate schools and basically live lives that were separate entities altogether. The result of this segregation was that, two totally separate communities were created. This has contributed to the existence of at least two distinct Muslim communities in South Africa

Phaldie, when asked whether the TJ transcended the divide between Malay and Indian, he emphatically said 'no'. The reason according to him was pride. Ahmed, the elderly African male from Crosby, alleged that:

What I have observed is that Africans are less respected. Whoever is leading the way [during *ghust*] would give a European respect, but with some Asians that respect is not accorded; worse when it comes to an African. . . This is some of the things that have happened not once but several times. A good movement like this shouldn't have this.

He further stated that 'it's a movement that everybody should be in, if only sincerity and honesty is being practiced. And that is what it lacks. I'm speaking of in Jo'burg.' Not many of the Indian interviewees were asked if they felt that Ahmed was fair in his assessment, because he was interviewed later than them, but some of them were asked about the fairness of Ahmed's statement. Nazeema was one of them, and she argued that 'since *tablighi* started people realised it doesn't matter what you are. *Tablighi* is something for all and it makes people comfortable. It's so simple. But I don't disagree with you that some African person doesn't feel very welcome. It depends on the area, how people are treated, but it's human.' By this she meant that it is human to make mistakes.

One key informant, Feroz, an *imam* and a non-TJ member said that, 'when foreign *jama'ats* come, non-*tablighi* Malays would sit and listen to the lecture.' By this he also meant that when local Indian *jama'ats* come they would not sit and listen. From this it would seem that they are not against the TJ per se but against its local content.

In South Africa any identity is profoundly affected by geography and 'race' because apartheid was, partly, about racialising space, and its effects are something the country is still trying to deal with. The TJ is a movement of Indian origin, and is much more prevalent in areas, which in apartheid or pre-1994, were Indian areas. The fact that Indian people are concentrated in various areas in Johannesburg makes it easy to spread the word of the TJ.

These external considerations have enabled the TJ to continue to carry out activities and promote its message. At the same time, however, these same considerations represent limitations to the growth of the TJ in South Africa. Any change in the material ability, position of family or geography could profoundly influence the construction of the TJ identity.

CONCLUSION

The argument presented here clearly illustrates the grip the TJ has on the identity they have constructed. It demonstrates a very powerful manipulation of the interrelations and thus, the particular place that can

be constructed. Fostering an enduring TJ environment has influenced the construction of a TJ identity in a powerful way. Returning to the question about the most influential factor in the construction of an identity among the TJ in South Africa, the chapter has brought the following to the fore. In the first instance, the literature established that a main or overarching identity is the result of a manipulation of interrelations; thereby creating shared experiences that transcend time and space ensuing in a recycling of culture. Secondly, the literature pointed out that there is a strong connection between the religious leaders, which are the TJ and the Deobandi philosophy or thinking around Islam. Thirdly, and in addition to this connection, is the fact that the leading organising body amongst religious leaders in Gauteng, the Jamiatul Ulama, is aligned to the Deobandi philosophy as well.

The research data made a strong case for the manipulation of interrelations as well. In the first place, there is not much competition in the space in which the TJ currently operates. Secondly, the members of the TJ work constantly and consistently at spreading the principles of the TJ. Thirdly, there is not very much chance of the TJ status quo being challenged. Fourthly, the TJ and the major Islamic educational institutions have a controlling hold over the way Islam is supposed to be lived. Fifthly and lastly, the TJ inhibits the rest of their members' possible interrelations by focusing on the TJ way consistently. The literature on the TJ as well as the analysis of the data, both confirm that the TJ has successfully created an enduring environment for the TJ identity to develop. The core TJ identity, therefore, has not changed since its establishment in South Africa. This stability can possibly be accounted for by the fact that there are three factors that exist outside of the TJ which enable members to locate themselves within the enduring environment created by the TJ. The first is the class to which members belong. The second is the effect of family relations and influence within the TJ. The third is that, geographically, the racial space in South Africa has changed relatively little for the adherents of the TJ. They continue to be segregated along the same racial lines, which, assumedly, encourage the same social interrelations that existed at the time when the TJ was established here. The claim is not made that democracy has left the members of the TJ unaffected, but that in many ways, besides being able to vote and the knowledge that they are living in a democratic country their lives have taken on much the same shape.

The argument of the paper also provides an account for the unchanging nature of the TJ identity. Although the core TJ identity has remained constant, what the TJ has, and is continuing to alter, is the broad space within which the TJ interrelations take place. They are

shifting what it means to identify with the TJ in a fundamental way. This shift is from being a mediocre player on the broad Muslim front to being the yardstick by which the Muslim community is to be measured. The TJ have successfully constructed a culturalism in Appadurai's conceptions of the term, a movement involving identities consciously in the making. The success of this endeavour directly relates to the institutional capacity of the TJ connected to a financial ability of the supportive 'Indian' middle class.

Chapter Nine

Women changing the mind of g-d¹: The practice of psalm recitation amongst South African Jewish women

Nina Lewin and Maria Frahm-arp

INTRODUCTION

I PULLED UP somewhat apprehensively in front of an ordinary looking pre-school in one of the mainly Jewish areas of Johannesburg, South Africa. This was where Orthodox women met once a week to recite the psalms, and I had been told that if I was interested in learning more about Tehelim, psalm recitation, I should go along to one of their meetings. As a practicing Jewess their devotion impressed and puzzled me. What did they get out of meeting to say the psalms together, and given the heavy demands made on their time as mothers, wives and working women, did they really meet this regularly? A few women had already arrived and were reciting psalms when I entered the living room where the women congregated. I slipped into an open space in the group and began to recite the psalms quietly under my breath as the other women were doing. After a while, a few more women unobtrusively joined the group. Now and again one of the children would come into the room and demand something from his or her mother. None of these disturbances seemed to matter and the women continued to soliloquise until they had completed the psalms they had agreed to say. The longer I read the psalms the more I seemed to be carried deeper into them, almost as one can become immersed in a

¹ Editor's note: For religious reasons, this alternative to 'God' has become standard among Jewish authors writing about the Psalms.

poem. By the end, I felt that I had shared something with the women in this circle, although we had not actually spoken to one another. In my later interviews, some of the women from this group explained that they had begun to say Tehelim as a way to intercede for a loved one who was in need, and had remained in the group because they had seen their prayers answered. For them Tehelim was not just a spiritual experience that made them feel good, but something that they believed changed the mind of G-d, and thereby the events here on earth.

This group of women was part of a much larger international network of Tehelim groups, and the more I learnt about them the more I realised that this was something of a global movement within Orthodox Judaism. At the time that I was researching these groups, Maria Frahm-Arp was doing fieldwork amongst Pentecostal-Charismatic women in Johannesburg and we began to notice interesting similarities between the two groups. Our many discussions led to our collaboration in the writing of this chapter. We were both interested in the role of religion in globalisation, something that has been largely overlooked by social scientists. Yet, religion is one of the most fascinating and divergent variables in global society. In this chapter we aim to shed some light on the relationship between the formation of contemporary religious identity and globalisation by looking specifically at South African Orthodox Jewish women who, at the time of the fieldwork interviews, were part of local and international internet-based psalm recitation groups. To do this we will ask three interrelated questions. First, what is the relationship between psalm recitation and globalisation? Secondly, is psalm recitation a contributing factor in the establishment of a new identity, particularly for some South African Orthodox Jewish women? Thirdly, does globalisation act as a transforming pressure on the identities of these women?

Recounting psalms is an ancient Jewish devotional practice, but towards the end of the twentieth century a new form of women's psalm recitation groups has emerged. We will begin this chapter with an explanation of the place that psalms currently hold in the theology and practice of one stream of Orthodox Judaism in South Africa. From here we will describe Tehelim groups in South Africa and two of the major internet Tehelim groups that the South African women are part of. Having set the stage, we will then be in a position to move on and explore our three questions.

PSALMS

In order to understand psalm recitation, we first need to appreciate the place of psalms in Jewish worship. Within Jewish devotional literature,

there are specific prayer books that are made up of the Book of Psalms along with prescriptions as to how and with what accompanying blessings the psalms are to be said. Whilst these are usually printed in Hebrew and often have English translations on the page opposite the Hebrew version, the editions of the books promulgated by psalm reciting groups tend to be interlineal. These word for word translations enable the reader to see Hebrew and read English simultaneously. It was in this format that the Tehelim Trust in South Africa chose to print its donation-funded edition of Psalms. This privately-funded printing enterprise shows the intensity of focus on psalms that has emerged in South Africa and reflects the mystical importance that Hebrew words are given within Orthodox Judaism. Individuals may recite the psalms in Hebrew, in translation, or in some cases a mixture of both.

Psalms are poems in the first person and, on occasion, the gender in the text makes it clear that the person is male. At times, the person may also be a group, Israel for instance. The 150 psalms are a collection of poems written for various occasions, ranging through praise, vengeance and desperate pleas to G-d in times of need. Kselman and Barre (1991) divided the Book of Psalms into hymns of praise, lament, trust, royalty, wisdom, liturgy, history and thanksgiving.² The authorship of most of the psalms is attributed to King David, often as a superscript inside the text. The Jewish tradition holds that David is the author of the whole Book, with a few other authors as minor contributors. Kselman and Barre (1991: 524) point out that 'although David is portrayed as a musician and poet in 1-2 Samuel, such features may come from royal ideology rather than from authentic historical memory'. From early on in the Jewish tradition, psalms and the messianic – ontological and nationalistic – promise were firmly linked. Psalm recitation, as a traditional ritual form of prayer, is believed to be effective in bringing about physical, spiritual, political and emotional healing.

It is the psalms' link with King David, who stands in Jewish tradition as the paradigmatic petitioner, which makes them a uniquely important means of prayer. The psalms are interpreted within the rabbinical tradition as having been written as a reconciliation with G-d in the face of David's own personal and political failings. Psalms are spiritually powerful because they contain the essence of David's intense and reciprocal relationship with G-d (and, by extension, that of the people of Israel). The recitation of the Book of Psalms can be seen as a court of last appeal in desperate situations. Psalms are associated with piety and an emotionally profound level of interaction with G-d.

² 'In which the King is the speaker or the focus of attention' (Kselman & Barre 1991: 524).

Through repetition of the psalms, the recitors enter a relationship with David identifying with him so that his words take on personal meaning. This is not an unprompted experience, rather it is encouraged by classical commentaries, popular religious literature, inspirational talks, tapes and videos. Psalm reciting women are not experiencing something unusual, for the Book of Psalms is part of what is generically called Torah. As Armstrong (2000: 19) notes, within Judaism 'Torah is God's word: by becoming deeply absorbed in it, and speaking [it] aloud, they bring the divine into their own beings and enter a sacred realm.' What is unique to psalm recitation is that David acts as a mediator through which the recitor is connected to the ancient state of Israel, to the Temple and so with the divine. Thus the experience of the divine becomes sexually, geographically, and politically rooted.

AN INVESTIGATION OF TEHELIM GROUPS

Jews devotionally recite psalms in order to obtain healing for the sick, distressed or troubled. From Hebrew, the word for 'Psalm' is transliterated into English as 'Tehelim' or 'Tehillim' and so these psalm recitation groups are often known as Tehelim groups and the various enterprises of reciting psalms can be called Tehilim. As the word is a loose transliteration, there are a variety of spellings.

Those for whom psalms are recited include: the recitors themselves, a list of individual distressed members of the community, the collective body of the Jewish people, and the state of Israel. The aim of a psalm recitation group is to ensure that the entire Book of Psalms is recited from once up to a thousand times, depending on the number of recitors and the urgency of the request, yet even one psalm recited with passion and feeling is held to be effective. The groups divide up the psalms, so that the different members simultaneously recite a number of psalms, or all the psalms are read either aloud or sub-vocally. Throughout much of the history of Judaism, and within the living memory of South African Jews, women have held psalms groups in times of crisis. But the formation of women's psalms groups, set up with the intention of meeting regularly once or twice a week to say psalms for the larger Jewish community, is a recent phenomenon. The first South African group of this nature began in Johannesburg about 15 years ago.

The various practices of psalms reciting are most often found within Orthodox Judaism, though they also attract a number of women who are more lax in their religious practice. Within Orthodox Judaism, there is currently a large focus on psalms and psalm recitation as a way to bring about the peaceful restoration of the true land of Israel. In many

synagogues, men and women are encouraged to say a specific set of psalms for Israel, as often as possible. There is no coherent theology about psalm recitation within Judaism and there is no one body co-ordinating a revival in psalm recitation. But there is an increasing number of loose organisations and groups of Jewish men and women who are beginning to say psalms regularly for specific purposes. Our study focused on South African women-only groups, which have recently begun meeting in people's homes to say psalms for Israel and for the sick within the community of the people of Israel.

In the specific form of women's psalm recitation groups that we looked at, there were a variety of different formations. We found local groups within a South African Jewish community that had little or no contact with other recitation groups, and other groups that were well connected to one or more of the larger international internet networks for psalm recitation. From interviews with the co-ordinators of the South African groups it seems that the South African groups were representative of the thousands of groups organised throughout the Jewish diaspora, in people's homes and in small community centres, generally meeting once or twice a week. The different individual groups were small in number, usually between three to twelve women. Occasionally the groups would hold large meetings to which they would invite the Jewish community generally. There were also many women's Tehelim groups that exist on the internet, creating virtual groups by means of group emails, faxes, email newsletters and websites. It was the organic evolution of the groups, as they use the ever progressing contemporary technologies, which has allowed psalm groups to rise with the tide of technological innovations, rather than being overwhelmed by them, and has enabled social forms to keep pace with technology.

In this study we were particularly interested in South African Jewish groups that communicate via the internet with each other and with groups globally. The vast majority of the internet sites function in English. Therefore we looked at the Ashkenazi Orthodox Jews, who in 2003 and 2004 made up the majority of South African Jews and were fluent in English. The women who belonged to these groups were part of the middle and upper classes of white South Africa. They were all well educated and were active players in the modern, technologically advanced first-world sector of South African society. Some of them were stay-at-home mothers, but a large percentage worked in the commercial sector.

The research project was undertaken by Nina Lewin during 2003 and 2004. It encompassed: eight interviews with members and group leaders; participant observation at group meetings; content analysis of literature circulated amongst the groups, including the two internet

websites Eishes Chayil³ and Aneinu that were most popular amongst the South African groups; email questionnaires to the internet group co-ordinator in Israel and Rabbi Salzer in Johannesburg who acts as patron of the Johannesburg email group; and structured interviews with a local Johannesburg Rabbi and the co-ordinator of the email Tehelim group in Johannesburg.⁴ Lewin focused on the Cape Town and Johannesburg ‘on the ground’ groups and on the Johannesburg email lists, which operate both ‘on the ground’ and virtually. At the time of the research there was no email group in Cape Town.

All the interviews except for the ones given by Rabbi Salzer and the international co-ordinator, Chumi Frieland, were given to the researcher on the condition that they remain anonymous. Within the South African Jewish community there was a strong focus on *Shmiras Halashon* – the religious laws of good speech – that are exacting and complex. These laws prohibit gossip or any form of speech about another person that might misrepresent that person. The stringent observance of *Shmiras Halashon* has evolved into a sort of international movement that is associated with psalm recitations and often has overlapping memberships. This movement holds events, such as rallies, to promote the observance of these laws, and at most of these psalms are said and people commit to certain hours or days in which they will not gossip. This is seen as another technique for obtaining healing. Refraining from gossip produces merit, which in the same way as psalms reciting, can be transferred to sick people. An example of this interrelationship between *Shmiras Halashon* and psalm reciting is present in the following extract from an Eishes Chayil posting:

Tzipora Chaya bat Sarah and her baby Tinok ben Tzipora – this is a young mom, who delivered in her sixth month, and her baby. They both need our tefillos [prayers]. There has also been a request that we refrain from speaking *Lashon Hara* [bad speech] on Thursday in the *zechos* [merit] that they should both be okay (Frieland 2003).

This anti-gossip movement made the interviewees guarded in their responses, and meant that we have had to blend common themes without making reference to specific members or giving any precise remarks. We have tried to ensure that no one is guilty of any religious transgression, however unwittingly, by having taken parting in an

interview. Therefore, the voices in this chapter are, by their own request, muted.

In their current form, a Tehelim group can be organised by any Jewish woman who may have some particular need or is burdened with a sense of wanting to do something for people who are suffering. These women generally form groups by drawing on their friendship circles, and encourage other women to join them on a regular basis, usually in their homes, to say Tehelim for people in distress.

In Johannesburg, one female volunteer operated as a co-ordinator of the email Tehelim group, and most requests for prayer from people in need are phoned or emailed to her. By the Tuesday of each week she aimed to have 150 people – the number of psalms in the Book of Psalms – saying one psalm each for the people on her list. She co-ordinated the requests and sent out email and fax lists of the names of people to be prayed for, to the people who have agreed to recite a psalm. A new list went out every week, informing the recitors of the new requests and reminding them of old ones. This was a virtual group, but many of the people who had agreed to recite a psalm were also the leaders of the different physical Tehelim groups, and would pray for people on the email list. It was the co-ordinators who ensured that all the requests remain up to date and that Tehelim was not being said for someone who had died or had recovered.

There were also Tehelim groups in Johannesburg that were not part of the email group. Either they only said Tehelim for people within their own community or, for those that were posted on international Tehelim websites. In Cape Town, there was no central co-ordinator and, therefore, no master list; just a variety of Tehelim groups within the larger Cape Town Jewish community. These groups were generally linked to the different synagogues, and people within the community phoned or emailed Tehelim requested to the different group leaders. Some groups or members within the Cape Town groups were also linked to the international internet Tehelim sites and said Tehelim for the people posted on these sites.

Ensuring that people who had committed themselves to saying Tehelim remain motivated to perform this devotion, and guaranteeing that the lists remained up to date, were on-going problems for the email groups. The physical groups faced the problem of loss of enthusiasm and a gradual dropping away of membership. The Johannesburg co-ordinator tried to resolve the problem by recruiting more members and by following up on the members that she already had to make certain that these women are praying. She also focused on making psalm reciting more attractive and energised through talks, tapes, and mass reciting. In

³ Eishes Chayil is one of the most prolific internet Tehelim organisations.

⁴ All of the research was conducted as part of Nina Lewin's MA dissertation, and data was collected and analysed by her.

this way, she tried to overcome the sense of impersonality and apathy that plagues anyone trying to pray regularly for a long list of people she has never met. The co-ordinator is reluctant to remove a name from the list as the internet sites do, however big the list became, because it could be an act of condemning a person to death.

Some of the internet Tehelim sites have suggested other ways of personalising the practice of Tehelim in the face of large numbers of people requesting prayers. For example, a standard Eishes Chayil posting is:

‘Adopters’ are given a name of someone who needs a refuah [mercy/healing] and whatever details we have. You daven [obligatory prayer] for them daily in refaenu [a prayer called ‘give us mercy’ included in the daily set prayers] or/and whenever else you can . . . Unfortunately there are many Cholim [sick]. The lists get longer, the names build up and become just that: a name. But that person is someone’s mother or father, sister or brother, or child. There are many people that need our Tefillos [prayers] . . . We are just asking people to adopt a specific name for which they will daven with extra kavanah [intension/prayer focus] (Frieland 2003).

The co-ordinator gives people who sign-up for this programme the name of a sick person whom they have committed to pray for and, at regular intervals, the co-ordinator sends the adopters emails reminding them to pray for their adoptee and updating them with the progress or death of the person that they are praying for. However, the anxiety remains as to whether the name or the adoptees are real people. Paradoxically, in South Africa internet prayer groups both displayed and cultivated more trust than face-to-face groups by raising inquiries that face-to-face groups never would. In this process, they also attempted to have more control over those saying Tehelim, how regularly they said it, and the on going status of the person being prayed for. The name of a sick person was sent to an adopter by email. Through the process of gate-keeping and controlled access, confidence in the site was maintained.

While they are influenced by the international, internet Tehelim organisations, the Jewish community in South Africa had its own local texture, which was reflected in their Tehelim groups. The last survey released by the Jewish Board of Deputies (Kosmin *et al* 1998: 1) found that there were just over 75,000 Jews in South Africa, concentrated in two areas: the northern suburbs of Johannesburg and the southern

suburbs of Cape Town. South African Jews have remained highly endogamous, largely Orthodox in tradition and strongly Zionist. Together with France and Buenos Aires, South Africa forms one of the three major centres of the Jewish diaspora outside of the United States.

Within contemporary Judaism, the main axis of religious influence links America and Israel, with the other diaspora communities looking to this alignment of power for guidance and inspiration. Like other diaspora communities, the South African Jewish community regularly funded Torah luminaries from Israel and America to come and speak in Johannesburg and Cape Town, making South African Jews consumers of the American-Israel Jewish culture. Within the South African Jewish society, there were interesting international influences and some local hybrids that remained only very loosely linked to the larger global networks. To unpack this, we need to turn our attention to the first of our research questions, namely ‘what is the relationship between Tehelim and globalisation?’

TEHELIM AND GLOBALISATION

Beckford (2004: 104) argued that we should be careful not to reduce all explanations of religious change to either globalisation or post-modernity. This chapter aims to look at the relationship between globalisation and religious change in order to show that globalisation is a factor in the emergence of a particular new formation within Judaism. While globalisation is the variable we are focusing on, it is not the only factor stimulating the formation and spread of Tehelim. There may be other socio-economic and political forces at play, which cannot be discussed within the confines of this chapter.

There are broadly two ways in which social theorists have looked at religion and globalisation. The more specialist theorists like Beyer (1994), Lehmann (1998), Lechner (2000) and Robertson (2000) have highlighted religion and discussed the impact of globalisation on religion and the changing dimensions of religion within a globalising society. The more generalist theorists like Giddens (1990) and Castells (1996, 1997) have made some reference to religion in their broad social theories. They have tended to investigate fundamentalist religious groupings and so focused on religions outside the mainstream of social life in peripheral spaces. Our discussion, particular to our case study, aims to add a piece to the puzzle of religions in contemporary society and our understanding of globalisation more generally.

At a general level, the different religious bodies have picked up on and responded to globalisation in a variety of ways. As Beckford (2004:

110) shows these range from trying to promote their religious traditions as the cultural values that the emerging global community would benefit from the most, to deploring globalisation as a conspiracy to homogenise the world into a standard way of life through marketing and the Americanisation of all aspects of life. While this continuum is useful, the Jewish Tehelim groups we studied seemed to fit uncomfortably within it. As a movement within Judaism, the Tehelim groups were not trying to promote their cultural values everywhere, only within Israel and the Jewish diaspora. They prayed for anyone on the list and the entire body of Israel, including sworn political enemies. Their focus is on the essential unity of the Jewish people, created by the mystical birthright embedded in the people of Israel whose king is David. This created a paradoxical tolerance with regard to behaviour and belief. They deplored any attempt to create a homogenous society but used all the tools of marketing to create an 'Israelised' life-style and a homogenous Jewish society. In order to explore this further we need to look more closely at the Jewish Tehelim women in South Africa and the larger international Tehelim organisations with whom they interact.

During 2003 and 2004 while the research was conducted, there were two internet Tehelim organisations that were particularly influential amongst the South African Tehelim groups – Aneinu and Eishes Chayil. Aneinu was an organisation of Jewish women who helped to establish and support women saying Tehelim. They printed booklets and distributed these to psalm reciting groups, and provided an organisational centre for women who headed local Tehelim groups all over the world. Many of the South African groups used these Aneinu booklets. The booklets were free, on the condition that all who used them placed the name of the sick daughter of the founder of Aneinu at the top of their list of people for whom Tehelim are said.

In 2004 Aneinu claimed to have nearly 2,000 groups in five continents. On the organisation's homepage, the opening question is:

Do you feel paralysed by fear and overcome with hopelessness upon hearing of yet another devastating diagnosis among our loved ones? You can make a difference and take action by joining one of the Aneinu Tehillim groups that meet worldwide to open the gates of Heaven on behalf of our Cholim (Aneinu Tehillim 2004).

Aneinu's slogan, also on its homepage, summed up its central belief: 'The uniqueness and power of this new type of group lies in

“THE COLLECTIVE STRENGTHS OF ALL THE WOMEN GATHERED”

(bold and upper case in original). Its aim is to gather all the women throughout the Jewish diaspora and encourage them to become active intercessors within the life of the international Jewish community. This meant encouraging women to take on a new religious role, going beyond the basic religious requirements demanded of Jewish women. Such responsibility was not new in theory, but had rarely been practiced except indirectly as women raised their children. It had not been a major part of Ashkenazi women's formal devotional life, which has tended towards the personal and emotional (Weissler 1998: 45).

Eishes Chayil women of valorous goodness,⁵ was a site linked to Aneinu, which co-ordinates huge international lists of people for whom psalms should be recited and distributes them to those who had undertaken recitations for the distressed. This undertaking may have been formal, as in South Africa, where people are contacted and agree to recite psalms, or informal, in that anyone could subscribe by going to the site. The Eishes Chayil had a newsletter, which was hosted by the organisation Shema Yisreal and was found in the women's section of their online publication. Their newsletter was distributed from Israel but most of the contributors and inspirational stories were from the United States. Whilst South Africa appeared infrequently, it was integrated into the group, though with the feeling of being located as something of an outlying suburb. Although South Africans did sometimes make requests or gave contributions, the dominant flow of information was from the United States and Israel to South Africa. Below is an example of an update, taken from an Eishes Chayil email newsletter, about a South African Jew for whom a Tehelim recitation was requested. Individuals rarely place themselves on a Tehelim list. It tended to be an act that is performed for them while they remained passively in the 'sick' role.

Tehillim Updates on Chaim Gershon ben Rivka. After being shot in a carjacking in South Africa a month ago, he was taken out of Intensive Care and is now in High Care. He is off all assisted breathing, and is beginning to eat solids. He is able to move around and the doctors continue to be amazed by his recovery. Thank you Hashem, and please continue Tehillim for him (Frieland 2004).

⁵ This is the archetype title of the 'perfect' Jewish women. It is taken from the first line of a set of biblical verses - 'a woman of valour who can find her price is above rubies' - that is included in the Sabbath liturgy sung by a husband to his wife.

Gerlach and Hine (1970: 33), in their groundbreaking work on social movements as networks, argued that a movement was a network when there were three key features in place. First, a movement was decentralised and there was no one leader or centralised authoritative decision making body. Secondly, there was segmentation, and a variety of groups or organisations within a movement performed the same or similar functions. Thirdly, all the different parts or nodes of a movement were somehow tied together and there was the sense of a network, reticulating crossing and intercrossing lines. According to this definition, Tehelim was a transnational network movement weaving over the Jewish diaspora and Israel. The most dominant groups within the movement were based within the America-Israel axis, but there was not one central authority. Rather, multiple organisations, each with their own co-ordinators, filter information and policed access into the movement. While most Tehelim groups are found within Orthodox and ultra-Orthodox Jewish traditions, they were not regulated by a specific Rabbi or Rabbinic body. Instead, what emerged was a network community that was using the technology of modernity. The high degree of value they placed on the community acting as one body, reciting the same psalms and praying for each other, meant that these women were rejecting modernism's ideal of the secular autonomous individual who subscribes to the values of liberalism, plurality and relativism. Lawrence (1989: 2) argues that accepting and exploiting practical aspects of modernity, like technology, while at the same time rejecting modernist values is a common feature of fundamentalist groups.

Globalisation theory has focused on fundamentalism as the common denominator in recent religious developments. While there has been a great variety and disparity in the nuances and definitions of the term fundamentalism (see Marty & Appleby 1991; 1994; 1995; Lehmann 1998; Lechner 2000; van der Veer 2000; and Turner 2001), Beckford (2004: 129) suggested that some key features of the term have emerged. First, there has been a teasing out of the difference between modernity and modernism, so a fundamentalist movement can be modern without taking on the values of modernity. There is the realisation that it is possible to be against modernity in a thoroughly modern way. Secondly, fundamentalist religious groups believe that a universal truth-claim can still be made; that is, there is only one true religion, namely the specific religion that the fundamentalist adheres to.

The Tehelim groups we were studying were definitely modern in the way they used technology but they were not modernist in their values. They were anti-modern to the degree that they rejected cultural values such as individualism, relativity and secularism. In their social

practices, they were conservative, adhering to Kosher laws and maintaining traditional gender demarcations. Orthodox Judaism is, by definition, not the one religion for all people, but the religion of the Jewish people, so Tehelim groups accepted modern pluralistic perspectives (though not within the boundaries of Judaism). However, South African Jewish Tehelim women that were interviewed promoted a conservative faith in the psalms, believing in the universal truth-claim of the superiority and sheer power of the one divine G-d, to whom appeals could be made to act on behalf of humanity. They rejected all post-modernist or pluralist claims of multiple truths. While these Tehelim groups did not regard themselves as fundamentalist, they did meet the broad criteria of fundamentalism.

A central reason why these South African Tehelim groups would not classify themselves as fundamentalist was that their understanding of the state of Israel challenged that of closed fundamentalist groups, such as Gush Emunim. Those that have studied these groups agree that Jewish religious fundamentalism's strength lies, not in its few thousand members, but in its ideology having gained a place as the only religious pro-Israel position (see Aran 1991: 287–304). It is the legitimacy generated in the diaspora and in the pro-Israel discourse that has given Gush Emunim its power. This is one of the central ways in which diasporas operate as globalising instruments. The flow of money and ideas between the countries of the diaspora and Israel makes Jewish fundamentalism a prime example of the effects of globalisation, with identities constructed, disputed and maintained in transnational networks, rather than in localised contexts.

The psalm reciting groups in South Africa offered women another way of reconciling the religious and nationalist parts of their Jewish identity, doing so without claiming that messianic times have already arrived, which is the view of Gush Emunim. Maintaining a Jewish religious identity that incorporates the state of Israel has been problematic over the last fifty years, because the two dominant forms of Judaism have separated religion and nationalism. Consequently, religious Jews have often been in the uncomfortable position of having no nationalist identity, and the Jew whose nationalism is stronger than their faith have had no way to pray about Israel. By saying psalms for Israel, and so pleading with G-d to intervene to restore peace to the nation of Israel, the psalm groups have found an alternative pro-Israel voice (Heilman & Friedman 1991: 255). They have found a solution that enables them to keep alive a religious component to Judaism while not giving away the nationalistic cultural component. This has made them an important alternative to the ideology that religious violence and

settlement are the only options available to those who wish to maintain a connection to the land and people of Israel.

All the interviewees said that, at least part of their motivation, and often the primary trigger, for taking up the practice of psalm recitation, whether on email or in a group, was a worsening of the situation in Israel. South Africa's Jews as a community have been intensely religiously Zionist (Hellig 1995: 199), and their psalm reciting can be seen as a spiritual substitute for both immigration and active fundraising, which have now fallen somewhat out of fashion. Rabbi Salzer, the patron of psalm reciting groups in Johannesburg, clarified his support for Tehelim as follows:

Question: Why have you personally promoted this practice [saying psalms] rather than, for example, the saying of a prayer in Shul for the welfare of Israel?

Answer: Tehelim are FAR more powerful.

Question: Would it be fair to say that the saying of psalms for Israel is prompted by a new level of urgency with regard to the situation in Israel?

Answer: Definitely.

Question: Would you characterise this use of psalms as a political act?

Answer: Most definitely NOT! We understand that increased levels of violence and insecurity is a call from Above to pray and improve our ways.

The term fundamentalism has been useful in helping us to think about globalisation and religion, religion and modernity/modernism and religion and pluralism, but our case study showed that the term is limited and can be confusing, as very dissimilar groups are lumped together. It might be time for us to rethink the usefulness of 'fundamentalism' as a concept, paying more attention to the details of the different religious movements and avoiding pigeon-holing them into one neat category.

In his essay 'Globalization and the Future of Traditional Religion' Robertson (2000) put forward the thesis that religious movements not only function on the national or global level, but also on the local level. Turner (2001: 143) has pointed out that a 'global age does not automatically result in "MacDonaldization", because there can be

equally powerful pressures towards localism and hybridity.' From conversations with South African women who were part of Tehelim groups, the local influences became apparent and the Tehelim movement seemed to be at once a globalising and an anti-globalising force. It was 'globalising' within Judaism, in that it promoted a universal and uniting movement for all Jewish women, and yet it was also anti-globalising, because it was 'anti' any overarching movement that would dilute or dissolve Judaism in its 'true' form. Like Pentecostalism, the local nodes or variants of the movement were hybrids of global phenomena. In 'The Power of Identity' Castells (1997) has argued that fundamentalist religious nodes are 'communal' in nature, and Orthodox Judaism, within which Tehelim groups are popular, could fit his definition of cultural communes. These, cultural communes, he argued (1997: 65), worked 'on raw materials from history, geography, language and environment.' Earlier (1996: 25), Castells explained:

[F]undamentalism, whether it be Islamic or Christian, has spread, and will spread, throughout the world at the historical moment when global networks of wealth and power connect(sic) nodal points and valued individuals, throughout the planet, while disconnecting, and excluding large segments of societies, regions and even entire countries . . . There seems to be a logic of excluding the excluders, of redefining the criteria for value and meaning in a world where there is shrinking room for the computer illiterate, for consumption less groups and for under-communicated territories.

He saw fundamental religions as giving a 'face' to the faceless. He was quite clear that these fundamentalist groups were not in some way pre-modern, but hypermodern. His concept of hypermodern, by which he meant interacting with contemporary cultural forms, was useful because it corrects the tendency of many researchers to think of these organisations as nostalgic (see Marty & Appleby 1994). But Castells failed to observe that some contemporary religions were fundamentalist whilst also associated with the nodes of technology and power. In South Africa, the Jewish women who belonged to Tehelim groups were well integrated into what he would probably agree is the dominant network of power. As a religious group, they were not faceless women on the fringe of society but politically active, campaigning in a unique way for political peace in Israel. Nor were they being excluded because of a lack of technological literacy.

Castells' typology sees fundamentalist religions as 'havens' for the voiceless, the oppressed, and those who are excluded from what he called the Network Society. He associated fundamentalism with cultural communes, thereby offering an incomplete model of the link between contemporary religion and globalisation. In contrast, we maintain that Tehelim groups could be better understood utilising the definition of social networks detailed by Gerlach and Hine (1970). We propose that the Tehelim movement should be seen as a network of modern conservative Jewish groups interacting with the dominant global powers, and not a fundamentalist commune disconnected and excluded from the Network Society.

NEW RELIGIOUS IDENTITIES

In becoming part of this contemporary Tehelim network, some South African Orthodox Jewish women were changing their religious practices. This leads us to pose our second question: what is the impact of this participation on identity? Unlike Jewish feminists, Tehelim women are not campaigning for women to say Tehelim in the synagogue with men after daily prayers, or to be called up to read the Torah.

Moallem (2001) has done some pioneering work comparing women who become active members in Islamic fundamentalism and feminism. Her basic concepts form a good starting point for our discussion. Like Islamic fundamentalists, Tehelim reciting women have taken aspects of feminism and reworked them into fundamentalist or conservative patriarchal forms of religion, thereby creating a new hybrid. This hybrid is at least partly due to the spread of global culture, which has led to:

a war of representation and position between dominant and dominated ethnicities as well as hegemonic masculinities and emphasized femininities . . . Gender issues and gender identities are at the heart of shifting cultural and economic meaning systems . . . These changes have left unresolved such issues as the separation between the private and public realms, between domestic and non-domestic production, and between an ethic of care based on the invisible emotional labour of women and the ethic of responsibility based on the notion of abstract, rational citizenship. Such changes have intensified gender identification across class, race, and ethnic lines, and contribute to the significance of identity politics (Moallem 2001: 119).

In some conservative religious movements women are given less freedom or prestige than, feminists would argue, women in western liberal society. But in many of the contemporary forms of religious movements that have emerged over the last few decades, the status and freedom of women has not been as restrictive as it may appear from the outside. This has been shown in the work of Ammerman (1987), Neitz (1987), Davidman (1991), Kaufman (1991) and Manning (1999), who have shown that conservative religious groups not only define women's roles narrowly, but also demarcate the role for men in the family. The female members of these groups have found this both freeing and appealing. They perceived themselves and their partners as having a relationship of equality in which they each fulfilled different roles. Within Judaism they have found the unique 'freedom' of acquired religious responsibility for the continuity of Judaism as apposed to the anomie that goes with the freedom of the individual.

Tehelim was an example of this process of acquiring freedom in restriction. The religious practices of these the Orthodox South African Jewish women interviewed by Lewin both fitted into the existing gendered roles of Jewish society and created a new religious space. Here, women were given the opportunity and encouragement to begin their own religious journeys. The status of motherhood was elevated, as being not only physically important but also spiritually powerful. This was expressed in a variety of ways. The most obvious was in the organisation of the request lists. Both in South Africa and worldwide the lists of names was uniquely formatted, in that the person's Hebrew name was given followed by 'son or daughter of' their mother's Hebrew name; for example, Yonathan son of Sarah. Normally, in Jewish rituals and prayers in the synagogue, individuals are known as the sons or daughters of their fathers. The use of the mother's name emphasised the particularly female centred nature of praying for the sick. It was through the mother that the child's status as a Jew was recognised. With the pressure of globalisation to blur the identity of an individual into a general member of the global village, many fundamentalist nationalisms and conservative religions have been finding that the 'site of women invokes a particularistic "community of G-d" that operates above nation-states and boundaries. Through childbearing, women create the group. Thus, a group can share its identity through the conduit of women's bodies and women's powers of social reproduction' (Moallem 2001: 125). Thus, the religious meaning attached to 'being a women' is not simply that of being a second class citizen, but one of particular potency, especially when the boundaries of religion/ethnic group are threatened.

Within established Judaism, praying for healing presents a theological problem. Women in the role as creators of life and preservers of culture are able to use their particular role within Judaism to resolve this issue. On the yearly judgement day of Yom Kippur, individuals, the world, the physical and metaphysical state of the universe, are all judged and assigned their fates for that year. This is very eloquently expressed in the liturgy of the day of judgement, when it asks how the individuals standing there will die and live in the next year? In this judgement, it is understood that there is a balance between strict judgement and mercy. It is G-d's choice to assign the best possible fate, even one not strictly deserved, to each individual and to the world. A person's or group's fate is also affected by the natural course of the world – those processes that were set in motion at creation and not specifically decreed by G-d each year – and by the plan of ultimate salvation, according to which the entire world goes through a process of purification that ends with the appearance of the Messiah. This liturgy explains that sickness, war, drought, or famine, have already been decided in any one year. Asking G-d to change these events is asking G-d to change his mind.

Psalm reciters are, thus, adventurers in the spiritual world. As Sered (1993: 101) points out, in her study of the female world of Judaism, Jewish women as Jewish mothers often extend their physical nurturing and protecting role to the spiritual realm. Mothers are warriors who perpetuate the Jewish people, even under the threat of total extinction, and are audacious in that they join with G-d to become a creator of life. There is one psalm group in Johannesburg that was begun by a woman, who, faced with the death of her child, began a group specifically to protect children and fertility. Tehelim reciting women draw on a strand of Jewish religious interpretation that sees humanity as a partner in the act of creation with G-d. This co-creation is most clearly experienced in the act of motherhood. In an interview, one psalm group recitor pointed out that she, like many others in the South African groups, began to say psalms regularly when she was pregnant. Her spiritual journey with psalms began to become more focused when she read a book that expanded her understanding of Tehelim as being a process of co-creation with G-d. She explained:

I started saying Tehelim much more when I had children, because it was easier to say Tehelim than it was to actually daven [to pray the regular set prayers three times a day] . . . you can say Tehelim basically anywhere and anytime, um, basically it was just, it was really great to have it, and I was educated about it more. I mean, how you could say it for your children, and what Tehelim could do, and what, you

know, stuff like that. So I definitely got more connected to Tehelim after I started having children.

These women storm heaven on behalf of either a sick person or the fate of humanity, and demand that G-d change the world, although in their personal capacity they stay humble. In this sense, they experience themselves as able to affect creation.

Sered (1992) looked at the way that women practiced and experienced a different form of Judaism from that of the standard male rabbinical tradition, while still being participants within that larger tradition. She has shown that traditionally religious Jewish women tend not to see a distinction between nurturing the world physically and nurturing the world spiritually. So, in as far as women are able to act on a physical level to produce and maintain their families, they are, equally, able to do spiritual work. Often this is expressed in terms of cleaning, feeding and energy. And in a radical way, Tehelim can be done while breast-feeding and between running after a restless child. The spiritual does not have to be separated from the mundane.

In her historical study of Ashkenazi Jewish women's devotional practices, Weissler (1998) showed that there is a logic to the insistence on saying the psalms on a regular basis, because, just as housework needs to be constantly renewed, so spiritual work is ongoing. In the same way as they prayed for beloved individuals, women prayed for the land of Israel, connecting with it on a personal level. Praying for an ill person becomes a form of expressing love for them. The women were resolute on meeting in groups because they realised that Tehelim is spiritual work, and each person only has a limited amount of power and energy, not to mention capacity, to change and receive mercy.

This concept of spiritual work is one that Weissler (1998) identified as a constant theme in Ashkenazi women's devotional literature. As a group they could achieve more spiritual power and energy than an individual. By breaking up into thousands of groups that meet across the world at different times, they maintain an almost continuous flow of psalms for those in need. This is vitally important because as soon as the psalms stop being recited, their effectiveness is halted. Only when the healing of a particular individual or group is complete can psalm recitation stop. Tehelim women in the South African groups expressed the same views and emphasised that it was their responsibility to continue to say Tehelim until those in distress are healed and the land of Israel restored.

In this link between spiritual work and housework, giving birth and child rearing, the importance of motherhood has been rescued from the

devalued status it has been assigned by the world-travelling, career-consumer businesswomen. Amongst the South African Tehelim women being a stay-at-home mother was respected and seen as a laudable vocation. For these women, this was important because many of them worked and did not wish to derive their primary identity from the workplace. Within Orthodox Judaism, the low status of housework has been a persistent problem for women. As much as they have wished to see this work as spiritual, it has not matched the glamour and power attributed to the fulltime Torah study and prayer of men. Tehelim is spiritual work that happens in the home, not the synagogue. Nevertheless, it has acquired a high spiritual status through its newly emphasised association with the power of David. As such, Tehelim has helped create a religious practice that gives women the same status and power as men, but without challenging either their own anti-feminist rhetoric or the patriarchal religious structures of Orthodox Judaism.

Manning (1999) explored Orthodox Jewish, traditional Catholic and evangelical Protestant women who made conscious decisions to become members of conservative religious groups. These women felt that feminism and the average consumerist, American life-style left no space for G-d and the homemaker. They felt that their new religions gave meaning and structure to their lives, something that had been lacking before. Davidman (1991) and Kaufman (1991) drew similar conclusions from their work. These women were not 'prefeminist'; they did not want to go back into the kitchen and be unseen. Rather they wanted to go back into the home and be valued and respected for being stay-at-home mums who put the needs of their children before their own career advancements. They wanted the importance and spirituality of a Jewish home to be recognised and their work therein to be regarded as essential. This stance was not a movement as such, but rather a critique of feminism, which appeared as a common theme in the interviews conducted with South African conservative Orthodox women. For them it was an expression of a new identity that they were creating for themselves, namely, the identity of the G-dly, nurturing mother who was valued for the care she takes of her family. This was not dependent on her having a career outside the home, but it did mean that the care of her family was her primary focus and a religious duty.

By religious law, men are required to go to synagogue and pray three times a day. Women, on the other hand, are not required to attend synagogue or to pray, except on festivals and when they light the Sabbath candles in the home. Often the Jewish women's spiritual role has remained in abeyance for lack of institutional support. This has effectively meant that women function within the community as non-

spiritual actors. For the women in this study entering into the heart and mind of G-d through Tehelim meant that they were starting to perform the basic religious functions of praying for individuals, the land and the nation of Israel. Seeing people healed as a consequence of changing the mind of G-d through their devotional work was shifting the way women saw themselves spiritually. It has begun to make the Orthodox theory that men and women are separate but equal more of a lived reality. A number of the respondents said that because Tehelim has power they gained power, but they had also become conscious that the current events of history made it urgent and necessary for them to use this power. They said that Tehelim was more than a means of acquiring spiritual power; it was a demand to take up spiritual responsibility, which, ultimately, was a most empowering place to be in.

The Tehelim recitors in this study explained that the way in which they recounted the psalms was a second reason why they were able to change the mind of G-d. It was this process which worked to create a psychological identity shift enabling women to become 'responsible' individual who were developing an internal relationship with G-d. In the process of saying psalms, the recitor put herself into the words of the psalms themselves. This was unlike petitioner prayer, where a person stays in the place they are and puts out their request. Ultimately, the aim was to attempt to transform themselves into a person more like that of the original author, King David, saying the psalms with the same passion, joy, demand or repentance that he encoded into them. The recitors did this by their access to the spiritual mystical power of psalms, which was activated whenever they were said with true intension and preferably in the original Hebrew. As these women changed themselves, they acquired merit. They were not the original person who had been judged and thus, the world was not the original world that was judged, because spiritual work had been done. They had become better people, sometimes just by asking for mercy for another person and thereby altering the course of events.

However, a further dimension has been added to the layers of identity that Tehelim reciting women can acquire, for David was no ordinary biblical king. He represents the flowering of the kingship of Israel in spiritual terms. Thus, reciting David's psalms was seen by the South African Tehelim women as making a political move, appealing to the ideology that lies at the root of Zionism, the sacred and peaceful occupation of the land of Israel realised during his reign. In search of an answer to present-day Israel's hurtful situation, these religious Jewish women looked to the last political ruler of the land directly ordained by G-d, David. They have been asked to do this by their spiritual leaders

and by religious organisations that have mobilised a diaspora-wide campaign promoting the daily saying of specific psalms. This campaign reveals a seamless flow of information between the mediums of the internet, fax, posters in synagogues, car and fridge magnets, pulpit appeals and direct mailings. With some slight variation in tone, authorities cited and layout, these appeals all say the following:

Psalms around the world - grass roots unity campaign activated.

Many Jews feel helpless as hatred and anti-Semitism erupt time and again . . . a sense of foreboding has overtaken the worldwide Jewish community. What is needed now . . . is a grassroots unity campaign that will encompass every individual of every affiliation or non-affiliation . . . The aim is to rally world Jewry around the banner of King David's deeply spiritual verse . . . What greater leader for this effort could there be than King David Himself, the ancient King of Israel, slayer of Goliath . . . Psalms has the spiritual clout not only to unite the Jewish people, but also to defeat the material enemies of the nation as well (Aneinu Tehillim 2004).

By taking up these challenges and saying these psalms, the Tehelim women in South Africa have embarked on a voyage that has brought them religious freedom, power and responsibility. These women felt that their role and identity as Jews and as women had changed. Their understanding of motherhood has been extended, and by repeating psalms in the likeness of King David they have become co-creators with G-d, changing the events of history and improving the lives of individual people in distress.

GLOBALISATION AS A TRANSFORMING POWER

As the women in the Tehelim groups that Lewin interviewed began to take on the new responsibility of reciting psalms, our third research question comes to the fore. How have the pressures of globalisation acted as transforming forces shaping the new identities that South African Orthodox Tehelim women were taking on? These Jewish women were not going back to some static, old tradition, but were taking on elements of a living Jewish tradition and re-shaping it, both within and against the language and ideas of the current global culture. Giddens (1994: 100) has suggested that what was previously religious

tradition has become religious fundamentalism in the globalised world, but this oversimplifies both fundamentalism and tradition.

Robertson argues that the very notion of 'tradition' is itself a feature of modernity, a defensive response against its practices and values; a form of what he called 'countermodernity' (Robertson 2000). Traditions themselves have been 'manufactured' or 'constructed' in the dialectical relationship between local and extralocal, between local religious practices and values and the trends of global cultural norms. What we call traditions are not fixed things but entities that are continually being 'reconstructed' or 'invented'. Beyer (1994: 3) expressed this eloquently when he said that the 'global system corrodes inherited or constructed cultural and personal identities, yet also encourages the creation and revitalisation of particular identities as a way of gaining control over systemic power.' Whilst Robertson and Beyer provide insightful assessments, their analyses do not allow for the possibility of new identities evolving within an existing tradition without a prior corrosion of identity. The women in the South African Tehelim groups were not inventing or reconstructing a tradition, rather they were re-shaping living religious practice. It was the environment that globalisation has created which acted as a transforming pressure, so that women were able to take a religious practice and restructure it, and in the process re-created themselves.

Globalisation has created a context in which two very different social forces were shaping the identity formation of these Tehelim women. On the one hand, globalisation has created an environment in which new forms of organisation are possible; particularly loose network organisations that are made up of a variety of divergent local expressions of a larger ideology. This environment of loose association has meant that members can belong to these network organisations in an open-ended fashion, such that their membership is not dependent on a strictly defined identity or code of conduct, but on a looser interpretation of what membership means for each individual. Within the confines of Orthodox Judaism in South Africa, women were able to belong to Tehelim groups, a free network association, in very globalistic ways, interpreting their membership and participation as best suited them. To some degree this has been a process of creating a personal religious identity for oneself and not merely accepting the one dictated by religious authorities.

On the other hand, globalisation has created an environment of universal hegemony that many Jewish women have rebelled against. Tehelim groups in South Africa have been a response to the external pressure of the secular, relativistic, homogenous, modern world that

questions the beliefs, values and practices of the Orthodox Jewish people. To counter the pressure of globalisation on Judaism while also expressing their own contemporary beliefs and values, the Orthodox Jewish women Lewin interviewed had reshaped an ancient Jewish devotional practice. In this process, their identities were being reformed from pressure associated with the forces of globalisation, both within the group and externally.

CONCLUSION

Religions are, by their very nature, 'self-reflexive'. As Beckford (2004: 105) puts it, they 'are not simply the effects of external forces; they are also agents, observers and critics of their own development.' He adds that 'they are like filters that detect and analyse evidence of change in the atmosphere', and this filtering reflects their own values and beliefs. We have seen this process taking place within the South African Tehelim groups and organisations we studied.

The forces of globalisation have created a new social environment in which loose organisational transnational networks are possible. At the heart of the shifting economic and cultural systems within world religions, there are deeply contested gender representations. These modifications have also corroded the notion of nation states and led to the spread of dominant homogenous global cultural norms. All this has been made possible by the technology of modernity, which has enabled us to communicate in a variety of ways, thereby restructuring the way we represent ourselves. This new environment has offered the possibility and the language for religious change, and it has been the catalysing force for transformations within many contemporary religions. The example of South African Orthodox Jewish women who say Tehelim, which has been investigated in this chapter, showed that some women have reacted to environmental changes by creating a new religious space for themselves in the form of the Tehelim internet and 'at-home' groups.

Tehelim is not a fundamentalist haven on the outskirts of the dominant forces of power, but an alternative network intersecting at various points with the greater Network Society. It does not take on the values or beliefs of modernity but uses the technology of the modern world to critique these cultural constructs. While the practices of psalm recitation are as ancient as the psalms themselves, the Tehelim groups we encountered were contemporary networks of religious groups that used the technology of modernity to draw all Jews back into the one people of Israel, earnestly praying for the peace of the Messiah amongst them.

In using the tools of modern technology, they have ridden the waves

of modernity's changes, rather than becoming crushed beneath them. Globalisation has provided these women with the *milieu* in which to create a loose organic network, woven across the whole Jewish diaspora, which has drawn them into a new set of devotional demands flexible enough to access and engage with in different ways. They have assisted in the creation and maintenance of a new pro-Israel voice that keeps alive both the spiritual and the physical Israel in all its divergent tensions. In the process, they are reorganising their own identities, from faithful wives, to competent warrior wives who co-create the world with G-d and fight to change the forces of global political power.

Chapter Ten

Internet chatrooms: real or virtual identities?

Maritha Marnebeck

INTRODUCTION

COULD INTERNET RELAY Chat (IRC) be a medium through which new egalitarian relationships and democratic identities develop? A substantial amount of academic literature has addressed this question and the wider issue of the influence of computer mediated communication (CMC) on individuals and society at large (Reid 1991; Walther 1992, 1996; Reingold 1993; Turkle 1995, 1997, 1999; Castells 1996, 1997, 2000a; Jones 1997; Baym 1998). It has been assumed that CMC has the potential to provide individuals with an opportunity to forge a new identity, irrespective of 'real life' considerations, such as class, race and gender. This potential could, for instance, be realised if the axiom 'in cyberspace everybody is equal' were valid. In testing such notions, analysis will be drawn, not from the global north, as in the literature cited above, but from a South African chatroom. It is argued that the unique socio-historical context in which this chatroom operates influences the particular social milieu it attracts, reasons for chatroom participation, and the relationship between chatroom activity and social identity formation.

Three data gathering techniques were used in this study, namely, virtual ethnography, participant observation and in-depth interviews. The methodological underpinnings were informed by Burawoy's (2000) extended case method. In conducting virtual ethnography, I 'extended' myself into the world of the participant(s) by joining one specific chatroom for six months. In an attempt to minimise my influence on the conversations and identities constructed in the chatroom, the research intention was not revealed to the other chatters. During this six-month

period, I spent 53 hours over 37 days as a regular chatter on the selected site. Through the 'extension' of observation over a significant period of time, the researcher was able to ascertain the dynamics of the communication process as well as the depth of the relationships that developed within this chatroom. In order to differentiate between the identities created online and the real life circumstances of the participants, the researcher attended a social meeting organised by the chatroom,¹ and also interviewed selected respondents. These opportunities for face-to-face interaction presented the researcher with a chance to 'extend' from the micro processes of chatroom personae to the macro forces of the participants' real-life social contexts. Attendance at the social gathering enabled the researcher to meet the people behind the personae in the chatroom, and afforded other chatters the opportunity to familiarise themselves with the researcher. Additionally, attending the social gathering provided the researcher with insight into the extent to which a person's 'real identity' corresponded with their chatroom personae. As age, race and gender characteristics are difficult to determine online, these 'socials' created an opportunity for the researcher to learn the biographical details of participants. Attendance at the social was followed by an in-depth interview with the owner of the chatroom,² to obtain his permission to conduct interviews with selected participants and use the data gathered during the virtual ethnography phase. During this interview, the researcher learnt about the history of the site. In addition to the owner, five regular chatters, who had been part of this chatroom for four or more years, were approached for in-depth interviews. These interviews were conducted, either face-to-face or through private conversations via the chatroom. These interviewees were all aware of the purpose of my enquiries.

Some of the most obvious ethical considerations in this study concerned the notions of privacy and informed consent. Since a significant amount of data was collected through covert virtual ethnography, thought had to be given to whether chatrooms constituted a private or public space, and whether the information generated in this context constitutes private or public data, as defined by Homan (1991). The guidelines followed in this research were based on a position taken in a similar study, where messages posted in public conversations, such as those conducted in IRC, were viewed as public discourse (Sudweeks &

Rafaeli in Paccagnella 1997). These messages were regarded as public since they were deliberately posted on a public forum and meant for public consumption. Despite this, the researcher took the added precaution of changing the name of the chatroom (hitherto fore referred to as Conversations), as well as all nicknames used by the chatters.³ These extra measures were deemed necessary, since not all the participants in this chatroom were aware of the study, and nicknames are very private and definitive of the person to which they belong. No attempt has been made to generalise from the present research to other CMC, however the linkages between offline social realities and online participation have generated some insights, and hopefully these will encourage further research.

NETWORK SOCIETY: THE DENIZENS OF CYBERSPACE

This particular study makes use of notions of globalisation that refer to the progressive interconnectedness of different spheres, countries and cultures. Various authors discuss this interconnectedness, including those with 'globalist', 'sceptical' and 'transformative' perspectives (Castells 1996, 2000a; McGrew 1998; Hardt & Negri 2000; Ruigrok & van Tulder 1995; Hirst & Thompson 1996; Held 1995; Rosenau 1997). Castells first coined the concept 'Network Society' in the 1990s, but references to the 'Network Nation' and discussions regarding the dynamics of a networked environment can be found at least as far back as the late 1970s. Hiltz & Turoff (1978: 489) recognised that CMC could enrich human lives by enabling people to 'have access to vast stores of information . . . human resources . . . opportunities for work and socializing'. However they also discussed the problem of increasing polarisation between people who had access to resources and those who did not.

Ferguson's (1999) account of Zambia's Copperbelt miners provides evidence of the increased interconnectedness of some and the 'disconnection' or 'abjection' of others who are excluded from the new networked world. The global economy and accompanying connectivity to the network are linked to the 'particular position of a country or region in the international division of labour' (Castells 1996: 102). While dominant segments of most national economies are connected to the web, this is not true of certain regions within countries, particular economic sectors and many communities, which are thereby

¹ This particular chatroom organised social meetings every second month. These meetings took place in pubs in the greater Johannesburg area. Chatters attending these meetings were, generally, Johannesburg residents but sometimes people from elsewhere in South Africa would participate.

² It was important to be granted permission for my research from the person responsible for hosting, maintaining and managing the site. The owner functioned as a gatekeeper for information and, importantly, confirmed the identities of chatters that were interviewed.

³ All the participants know each other by their nicknames and these names are used both in the chatroom and at the social meetings. These nicknames are protected and once a nickname is registered on the site, it may not be used by another user.

disadvantaged in terms of processes of accumulation (Castells 2000a: 135). As a consequence, contemporary society is characterised by the 'close proximity of extremely unequal populations' (Hardt & Negri 2000: 337). Societies and individuals that are connected are exposed to a wider selection of interaction and communication possibilities, while the unconnected are marginalised, becoming increasingly impoverished by their inability to take advantage of the global economy (UNDP 1999). Polarisation between the connected and disconnected is particularly evident in developing countries, including South Africa, though in terms of average income the country ranks as middling rather than poor. According to the Computer Industry Almanac, in 2004 there were 934 million people connected to the web globally. In Africa, South Africa is the most connected country, with just under five million people accessing the net; this representing about one in ten of the population.

The dynamics of the current network society should be interpreted as interrelated with the logic of particular forms of capital accumulation evident today. Castells (2000a: 5) mentioned, on the one hand, that technology *per se* does not shape society but that 'technology is society'. On the other hand, he goes on to say that a society's ability 'to master technology and particular technologies that are strategically decisive in each historical period largely shapes their destiny' (Castells 2000a: 7). If the network society is understood as a by-product of capitalism, it should also be viewed as something that would serve to maintain and advance capitalist tendencies. In studying globalisation and the network society, it is necessary to retain a constant awareness of the polarisation between the connected and the disconnected. A certain amount of disposable time and income are required to enable people to become part of the network, especially if they intend to regularly partake in leisure activities such as electronic chatting. Thus, the network society, and, in particular, identity and the network society, cannot be properly understood in a vacuum that ignores the influence of social class.

Thompson's (1968) notion of class as an historical phenomenon where dissimilar and seemingly unconnected events are unified and experienced within human relationships is of great value in understanding identity formation within the network society. According to Thompson (1968: 9-10), 'class happens when some men as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared) feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs'. These 'common experiences' are rooted in the historical relationships between different cultural groups as identified by their position in

relation to the available political and economical resources within a specific society. The degree of control that members of a specific cultural group or class can exercise over the conditions of production, as well as their experiences in relation to other classes, will be defined by their specific position within a society. Shared interests and the articulation of individual identities may or may not lead to the development of class-consciousness, as understood by Marx (see de Ste. Croix 1984: 100). What it does lead to is the development of class awareness, whereby members of a certain class have similar attitudes and share common lifestyles (see Callinicos 1998: 135).

Individuals who share a particular position within broader society in terms of their relationship towards economic resources – with class capacity associated with lifestyles, disposable income and education – constitute the network society. 'Residents' of the network society must have the resources to 'buy' their way in, more so in developing countries where technology and the accompanying infrastructure are significantly more costly than in the developed world.

COMPUTER MEDIATED COMMUNICATION

Computer Mediated Communication has been used as an umbrella term to refer to all communication occurring via a computer terminal and a communication network such as the Internet. This generalisation has led to an assumption that there are certain regular, overarching features and limitations embodied in the technology, which would be valid for all forms of communication where computers are used. Of importance in this study is the interactive and spontaneous nature of communication taking place in this chatroom and as such, a distinction should be made between different types of CMC. Technology used in CMC can be divided into two basic categories. The one type utilises delayed message cues while the other makes use of real time interactive communication. In delayed message cues, there is a deferred time response between the message posting and a response from the recipient, such as e-mail, newsgroups and mailing lists, affording the participants an opportunity to prepare a response. With real time interactive CMC, this delay is minimal and could be compared to a telephone conversation, where the respondents do not have a protracted period to prepare their responses, allowing for more spontaneous communication. Internet Relay Chat (IRC), MSN messenger and computer conferencing are typical of real time interactive CMC.

Research on CMC has concentrated on establishing whether the medium is more conducive to task-related or socio-emotional

communication. Earlier research was based on experimental procedures and favoured the task-orientated approach, where the focus was on the lack of socio-emotional cues traded between communicators (Hiltz, Johnson & Turoff 1986; Sproull & Kiesler 1986 and Walther 1994). Other research has, however, recognised the possibility for the development of relationships via CMC with high levels of socio-emotional interactions taking place (Reid 1991; Baym 1998), and in some instances even outperforming the level of affection in face-to-face interaction (Walther 1996). In recent studies, findings emphasised the importance of expected future interaction between the participants as well as the longer period of time taken to develop social relations via the Internet.

Various models of the features of CMC have been developed, each focusing on different aspects of the interaction processes that takes place via the Internet. Spears & Lea (1994) developed the Social Identity and Deindividuation model (SIDE model). In their work, they recognised the capacity of CMC to both 'reinforce' and 'relieve' power relations (Spears & Lea 1994: 428). By way of explanation, they use the metaphor of the panopticon, as employed by Foucault. Through the medium of CMC, the information that participating individuals share with each other can be selective as both the sender and receiver are anonymous. This anonymity of the participants has liberating effects and may reduce evaluation anxiety, thus allowing participants to give expression to what they feel are their authentic selves (Spears & Lea 1994: 430). Through the anonymity of both parties, as well as the selective sharing of information that lowers social cues with regard to status and power, participants are both less aware and less likely to be influenced by these power and status differentials (Spears & Lea 1994: 431). If, however, the view is taken that an awareness of power and social influence is integrated within each individual, then it is not as easily argued that relationships developed through CMC would not be governed by the same controls as those in face-to-face contact. The manner in which disparate positions of power are reproduced from real life society to the relationships developing via CMC, could be viewed as 'indirect and ideological' rather than 'direct and coercive' (Spears & Lea 1994: 440).

Both Social Information Processing the (SIP) theory and the Hyperpersonal CMC perspective focused on developmental processes in CMC (Walther 1992; 1996). The SIP theory emphasised the prolonged time taken in CMC to develop social relationships. Given that all the communication cues are transferred through one code system (text messages via the computer), a much slower rate of information processing takes place via CMC. Users adapt their text displays to facilitate the process of relational management, such as the human need

for affiliation, where impression management takes place through the information that is displayed and decoded via text messages (Walther 1992: 67-70). A further important aspect of the SIP theory was the expectation of future interaction, which prompted participants to seek more personal information and to act in a more congenial and friendly manner towards each other. Through the hyperpersonal perspective, the development of intense socio-emotional relationships via CMC is explained. This perspective focused on the following three processes: firstly, receivers tend to idealise the impression of their partners; secondly, senders present themselves selectively in order to ensure a socially favourable projection and, finally, through behavioural confirmation between the sender and receiver, these idealised projections and interpretations are intensified (Walther 1996:17-21). Walther's research illustrated that CMC could be employed for both task-related and socio-emotional interactions. The lack of communication cues available to both senders and receivers could result either in the deficient development of social interactions, or the intensification of social relationships. Further, the study highlighted the importance of continued interaction between the respondents over a longer period of time, which enables them to disclose enough personal information to each other. The research cited in the above studies have been conducted in experimental settings – with the exclusion of Reid's study on IRC usage – and the overall assumption being made in the work of these authors was that CMC has certain general features, such as anonymity, which would be indicative of the type of interaction taking place via CMC and the resultant relationships between the participants.

CYBERSPACE/ CYBERPLACE: VIRTUAL COMMUNITIES OR NOT?

Numerous studies have been based on a comparison between real life communities and the social 'spaces' created by CMC to determine whether cyberspace could host the development of virtual communities or not. Various authors have viewed cyberspace either as superficial or as an extension of traditional communities. The sceptical view relates that cyberspace is impersonal and superficial; an environment in which no meaningful relationships can develop and only the illusion of community could be created. The development of communication technology, such as telephones, television and the Internet, have transformed the already weakened traditional community into 'pseudo-communities', where mass media messages are personalised for greater impact (Beninger 1987; Stoll 1995).

Other researchers focus on interaction and the development of social ties in a specific environment. For example, Reingold (1993: 5) suggested that 'virtual communities are social aggregations that emerge from the net when enough people carry on those public discussions long enough, with sufficient human feeling to form webs of personal relationships in cyberspace.' These emotional ties and feelings of community are emphasised in the work of various authors, where the establishment of social networks is based on shared interests, and the Internet could, therefore, improve the sense of community because it (the virtual community) is free from the constraints of time and space (Jones 1997; Hamman 1998; Castells 2000a). Other research has also demonstrated that the structures associated with CMC – especially where there was an emergence of group specific regulations and control mechanisms, as well as participants' identification with the online group and each other – can influence the development of a specific culture and character, and, therefore, a sense of community (Reid 1991; Baym 1998).

Even though these studies have generated extensive academic knowledge, to consider chatrooms as virtual communities, whether separate or in addition to real life communities, would be too simplistic. The following two dynamics should be considered when studying chatrooms. Firstly, the conversations are ephemeral, and chatters who are not participating at that particular point in time do not have access to the discussions. Since conversations are only accessible to participants present at that particular moment, IRC is not free from the constraints of time, even if people from different time zones can log on and participate at the same 'time'. Secondly, by regarding chatrooms as communities, the influence of different social contexts and real life social institutions on online participation is not acknowledged. Therefore, in studying real time interactive computer mediated communication, such as chatrooms, it is essential to locate the individuals within their current social contexts and environments as it affects, if not determines, their online participation patterns (Kendall 1999: 60).

Massey's (1993) understanding of time-space compression and her sense of place as a process is of greater value to the study of chatrooms. Massey (1993: 61) took into account the 'power-geometry' of time space compression where she acknowledged that different individuals or social groups are placed in distinct ways in terms of flows and connections associated with time space compression. Here, Massey (1993: 62) not only included the availability of resources, or lack thereof, to partake in these new technologies, but also acknowledged the differences in power that people have within these flows and connections; what she refers to as 'differentiated mobility'. For her, these disparities are multidimensional

where it not only involves the 'degree of movement and communication, but also the dimensions of control and of initiation' (Massey 1993: 62).

New technologies associated with time-space compression have changed the 'geography of social relations', as these relations have become increasingly 'stretched out over space' (Massey 1993: 66). In so doing, the actual time needed in social interaction has been compressed – we need only to think of the advances made in travelling, communication and media technologies. In understanding the relevance of time-space compression and, in particular, 'space' for computer mediated communication, it is necessary to view the spatial dimension as detached from geography. Technology and the accompanying time-space compression have, therefore, increased the social space of societies, specifically, western societies through the network society, and in so doing, have decreased the size of the world (Van Dijk 1999: 157). This has occurred both through the decrease in the time needed to form new social relations as well as through an increase in the possible amount of social relations that could be formed with connected individuals across the world, through new technologies and particularly through CMC.

In understanding space as standing apart from geography, Massey (1993: 66) extrapolates that place would be 'constructed out of particular constellations of relations, articulated at a particular locus'. Places occur where these particular interactions and social relations intersect, allowing us to think of places as processes, rather than static occurrences, with definite linkages to other 'places' through these social relations and interactions. If place is then viewed as a process which forms part of a far wider network of social relations and understandings, could Internet chatrooms not be viewed as 'places' created by the intersection of particular interactions and social relations? Rather than thinking of chatrooms as virtual communities, the suggestion is to view them as meeting places. In a study of Internet chatrooms as meeting places and the influence thereof on identity, these social relations and power geography associated with time-space compression, should be researched and analysed to come to an understanding of identity on the Internet as well as the influence of chatrooms on identity.

IDENTITY AND SOCIAL IDENTITY CONSTRUCTION ON THE NET

Two schools of thought dominate the debate on the relationship between the Internet and identity. One is rooted in post modernism, where identity and society are characterised by multiplicity and fluidity

(Reid 1991; Turkle, 1995; 1997; 1999), while the other emphasises the importance of context, history and primary identities (Giddens 1991; Castells 1997; 2000b; Jones 1997).

The studies conducted by Turkle (1995; 1997; 1999) and Reid (1991) accentuate the anonymity of participants and the freedom of expression granted to the participant through the medium of CMC. Turkle (1997: 1097) defines identity on the Internet as the creation of 'multiple representations of the self' where people can 'cycle through different virtual communities' with the self existing in many different environments at once and engaging in different roles. In her research on Multi User Domains (MUD), Turkle's respondents claimed not to differentiate between 'real life' and their virtual persona, as the same level of importance is granted to both identities. A substitution of the 'representation of reality for the real' is taking place where the distinction between real and artificial is questioned. The computer screen is described as a looking glass through which we step into virtual communities where the self and identity are reconstructed (Turkle 1995: 23, 177). Through CMC, people become used to thinking about themselves as constructed personae with decentred identities, which they can employ to explore previously unexamined aspects of themselves (Turkle 1999: 643). In her study on IRC, Reid (1991) suggested that the anonymity of interaction evident in CMC allows participants to escape cultural boundaries of gender, race and age. This creates an environment without any rules, apart from those created by the users themselves and, therefore, the 'language of culture and body' can be escaped to return to an 'idealized "source code" of mind' (Reid 1991: 9).

In contrast to the above authors, Castells (2000b: 6) emphasised the development of identity within a specific social and historical context. 'Identity, as with everything in this world is not made out of words or feelings or moods, it's made material, as everything else is, with the works of history and experience.' The manner in which identities are constructed within a given social context is through the interaction of individuals, where experiences are shared and meaning is attached to these shared experiences (Castells 2000b: 7). This 'meaning' attached to shared experiences is defined as the 'symbolic identification by a social actor of the purpose of her/his action' (Castells 1997: 7). Thus, identities become sources of meaning and also give meaning to experiences, thereby building new identities.

This study acknowledges the influence of offline realities, such as expendable income and education affecting the use of CMC, and emphasises the importance of social context and history in the study of

identity and the Internet. Through interaction similar meanings are attributed to shared experiences. These shared experiences take place within a given social context, which leads to the development of a dynamic social space, creating a 'place' within which social actors can share their fantasies, beliefs and experiences. There is, however, a certain dichotomy at play, since the socio-historical context within which social actors find themselves will, to a large extent, determine which social actors will be in a position to come into contact with one another. Consequently, identities are constructed within a dynamic social space, which influences who comes into contact with whom, as well as the relationships that are formed and, therefore, the way in which the identities of social actors shape and are shaped by one another (Latane & Liu, 1996: 27).

AN EXPLORATION INTO THE REALITIES OF A CHATROOM

An introduction to 'Conversations'

'Conversations' became a popular site about four years ago, when a previous chatroom experienced financial and managerial difficulties and most of the regular chatters migrated to what was then little more than a pilot site. The majority of these initial users still actively participated in 'Conversations'. They were all known to each other and most described other regular long-term chatters as their friends. In a 24-hour period, approximately one hundred people participated in the chatroom, with the daytime being busier than evenings. Seventy percent of the current users were new participants and mostly used the site during office hours. The user profile of the daytime and night-time users differed significantly, with the evenings being populated mostly by the initial, regular chatters. Even though the topics discussed on this site were specific to 'Conversations', the general structure and administration were similar to that of all chatrooms (technically referred to as channels) that operate on a server network.

'Conversations' was specifically focused on an adult audience, and children or teenagers were not permitted. As such, there was neither a ban on rude language nor strict rules on acceptable topics of conversation. Heated discussions took place on various issues such as sexual preferences, sexual habits, racial differences, language and religion. Draco (a male in his mid thirties), the owner of the site, commented in an interview that, as an adult, one would 'have the logic and the means to make your decisions for yourself. If you make bad decisions it means you are big enough to live with them . . . and that is why [I], as the

founder or owner of the channel, do not tolerate children.’ Distinctive of this site was the identification of female chatters, whom the channel operators⁴ had met in person, who have a + sign added in front of their nicknames. According to Draco, this rule offered a measure of protection from potential abuse to both male and female chatters. Males would know with certainty that, if they were looking for female conversation, the nicknames preceded with a + sign were females known to the channel operators and were not males posing as females. Since this explicit identification of a female could have led to increased male interest (especially in the private rooms where males tried to ‘pick up’ potential partners), the channel operators were very protective of female users and would have kicked a male off the channel, should females have complained about his behaviour.⁵

Since the study, especially in the interview phase, was focused on people that have been using this specific chatroom regularly, and over an extended period of time, the respondents represented a particular segment of chatroom users, in general, as well as of this chatroom, in particular. Even though all the interviewed members lived in the greater Gauteng area, the possibility does exist for national and international participation. During one of the conversations, Mouse, a single, thirty-year-old male, provided the researcher with a list of the names of the people he knew from the chatroom who have migrated with him from the previous chatroom: ‘I know AD and Kitten and Draco, Dan, SOS, Strawberry and Sly.’ Mouse did not attend social meets, was very shy and did not grant the researcher a face-to-face interview.

Flame, another regular chatter, confirmed that during the evening, the chatroom is mostly populated by the same regular chatters. Flame was a thirty three-year-old, gay male, who worked as a hairdresser and only frequented the site after hours. He described himself as very introverted and shy when he had to meet people in person, even though he came across as obnoxious and outspoken in the chatroom. He also did not want to meet for a face-to-face interview but was happy to talk at the next social meet. It was, however, more expedient to conduct an interview with him making use of a private room in the chatroom. Flame was a channel operator and he estimated that about ninety percent of the people who used the chatroom (during the evening when he was participating) were the same chatters that migrated from the

previous channel. Even though ‘Conversations’ share many of the features common to all chatrooms, there were certain unique elements inherent in the history of this room that could have influenced the data. The most important element was the prolonged nature of the relationships between the core members of the chatroom, who knew each other well and had, in some instances, even pursued romantic relationships. These core members, however, were not an exclusive unit with a strong group identity. One of their reasons for participation in the site was to continuously meet new people.

Chatroom usage and social identity formation

Measuring changes in identity or the possibility for the development of new social identities in the individually orientated environment of chatrooms is not a simple matter. In order to address questions relating to social identity formation, the social context created in chatrooms was examined, rather than attempting to extrapolate social identity formation and changes in social identity from personal identity issues. Therefore, in locating the findings within social identity theory, social context is seen as the locus for identity formation. A consideration of the extent to which the social contexts of ‘real life’ are mirrored in cyberspace is important in the reading of these findings. Should the social context for identity formation in real life and cyberspace remain similar, it could be concluded that cyberspace only provides increased opportunities for individuals to explore their own identity, without setting the stage for changes in social identities. The findings presented below are focused around issues of equality and the control people have over the disclosure of personal information. In addressing these issues, a very interesting interplay between anonymity and fantasy, versus honesty, came to the fore.

‘We are all putting on the same act’: the significance of anonymity and fantasy

Using chatrooms as a means to communicate with and meet new people gives a person the opportunity to become whoever they want to be. The anonymity associated with chatroom usage has often been lauded as a unique opportunity to free humanity from the limitations imposed through real life circumstances. Even though this happens to a certain degree, the freedom granted by anonymity is in itself limited by certain factors and desires inherent in the reasons for the selection of a particular chatroom as a medium for communication and interaction. This point was made clear by Draco who asked: ‘Do we turn around and say that the anonymity gives you the complete freedom to express yourself and

⁴ Channel operators are chatters that have regulatory responsibilities on the site. Usually, they are people who have chatted for a long time and are known to the owner. There is always at least one channel operator present to supervise activities on the site. Their names are listed first, in red and preceded with an @ sign.

⁵ Channel operators have access to special commands through which they have the power to ‘kick’ a user, which forces out a particular ‘nick’ from a channel. This serves as a warning and a user can immediately re-enter the room under the same ‘nick’ or a different one if they wish to do so.

be you who want to be? The answer is no, because eventually if you want to take that relationship to fruition you will have to meet that person.'

People deal with this duality of fantasy and reality through the way in which they use the different rooms in the chatroom. In the general room, they will tease each other, say and do outrageous things, both to explore some issues, as well as to initiate certain topics of conversation they know would provoke a reaction from the room. Other chatters would then become interested in them, and in order to find out more, they may be requested to participate in a private conversation, which is not accessible to the rest of the room. In this private room, chatters will be very upfront and honest. During her interview, Dolphin clearly indicated the difference between conversations conducted in the general room and those conducted in the private rooms:

When I am chatting in the main room and I chat to somebody in private, it is totally different . . . In the main room, I love action and creating reaction . . . It is all just to create an atmosphere or to create interest with the other chatters . . . If I am in private and they now want to know more about me, then the real me will come out and I will tell them where they stand.

The topics of conversation, typically, depict issues that people in similar life stages have to deal with. As explained by Draco: 'We all have the same type of shit here, we are all putting on the same act.' The possibility of creating different scenarios to explore these issues is made possible because of the nature of chatroom environments. Draco explains how the freedom afforded by anonymity allows people to explore sensitive issues safely:

[W]hen people talk about chatrooms it is free . . . we have black guys, white guys, coloured guys . . . nobody knows who is who, unless you choose to let that other person know . . . we can not see each other so we can tease each other . . . the reason you can do it is [because] you can say that in real life there are lesbians, blacks, whites, coloureds . . . we can not say certain things face to face to each other . . . now we can make those statements . . . without the fear that I am going to get up and smack you. We can explore them, deal with them, work with it . . . like playing a computer game, you can have a world war without actually killing anybody but you can explore your aggression,

gaming and communication skills . . . without really doing anybody physical harm.

The regulars know each other well and they respond to these comments within the framework of what they know about each other. Should a stranger make offensive remarks, it will not be tolerated and the channel operator will kick them from the chatroom. The following is a short excerpt of a conversation that took place one evening between an apparent stranger and the regular chatters in the room. When the chatters realised it was a regular making snide remarks to test the response from the room, their attitude towards him changed.

Whoknows: u [you] know the Afrikaner [was] bred to hate english speaking person
 Furnace: [channel operator] has kicked Whoknows from Conversations (enough shit now thanks)
 Furnace: behave now please
 Whoknows: my name sir, is gander! [nickname this chatter has been using for a long time]
 Furnace: gander . . . why are u [you] acting like such an asshole tonight

A further aspect influencing this dichotomy of fantasy and reality is the custom of this chatroom to organise social meets on a regular basis. The researcher attended such a meeting and noticed that some of the chatroom participants were more introverted at these meets than was the case in the conversations conducted in the general room of the chatroom. This observation was confirmed by a comment made by Flame during his interview: 'Well if I go to a meet I sit there and say nothing.' Some other chatters do not even go to the social meets as they fear they may be judged by others who are sometimes disappointed in the person when they meet them face to face. Mouse, a regular chatter who has been on the chatroom for many years, and who does not attend social meets, stated that he is 'sometimes scared to meet in case the expectations are not up to standard.' This feeling was reiterated by Draco who claimed that 'after every meet your chatroom either loses people or gains people . . . they meet and the disappointment . . . my true colours are showing and I am embarrassed so I back off.' However, if people never attended these meets, the room viewed them with a certain amount of suspicion, as they then believed the person had something to hide.

The anonymity in chatrooms served to make the chatters braver since they were given the opportunity to approach people or issues from

behind their computer screen, masking their faces and, in so doing, part of their identity. Even though the long-time chatters all knew each other and were all 'putting on the same act', the fluid nature of chatrooms and the number of new visitors that frequent the site made it possible for these chatters to continue playing the game and meeting new people. The regular chatters formed quite a strong clique in this chatroom and new people needed to be outgoing in order to become part of any particular conversation. These conversations in the general room were similar to acting with the regular actors all taking their roles, fully aware of the true face of the other people in the act. This play, however, was ever-changing and always written anew because the visitors constantly vary and 'private' each other as well as the regular actors to find out more about the person behind the 'act'. Anonymity, therefore, grants a higher level of control to the chatter, whether new or regular, over the information that is divulged in the company of other people, and in exercising this control, the chatter can manipulate the judgement that their persona would invite.

Information control and the management of judgement

When interacting in a chatroom, one can manipulate opinions that other chatters may form through the persona that is represented in the chatroom. This is done through the type and amount of information that one chooses to disclose. According to Draco, through selective disclosure, one is 'inviting judgements on the person that you are putting across.' Your chatroom persona might be a total fabrication. It may be a fantasy identity; the person you want to be if you could free yourself of your personal limitations, or it could be an honest representation of who you think you are. In fact, according to Draco, people could even construct an identity to purposely entice judgements on this persona. They are, however, not personally influenced by these views since it is not really who they are. For Draco, 'you don't have to feel bad because it is not even you . . . if I was fat and ugly and I went in there as male and gay and they judge me as male and gay, it is nothing because I am not really male and gay, I am fat and ugly.' A person's fantasy identity is not necessarily a fabrication. It could also be a portrayal of who you want to be. As Draco said, 'everybody has fantasy identities; we might not admit to it . . . How do you see yourself? . . . you are making the bucks, cracking the deal or making the right decision . . . that is your alter identity.'

For both Flame and Mouse, the chatroom created an environment where they could give expression to their 'true self' without feeling inhibited by the extreme shyness they experience during face-to-face

contact. In a conversation with Mouse, he explained the reasons for using the chatroom to socialise rather than meeting at a pub or club: 'Why are they here, not sitting in a pub, or dating? Because of the feeling of being equal, not being judged . . . so they are accepted unconditionally for who they are online.' Mouse echoed Draco's sentiments about the people all putting on the same act. He saw the chatroom as populated by 'similarly minded individuals . . . sorta [sort of] like an Alcoholics Anonymous.'

Whereas AD, Flame and Mouse did not see themselves as the type of people who would go to a pub to meet new people or socialise, Dolphin had no problem doing that. Her main concern relates to potential responses to her physique. She was neither shy nor introverted, but she related how the fact that she was overweight influenced other people: 'I can go into a pub and strike up a conversation and meet new people . . . there is a stigma about fat people . . . not every second guy is going to want to chat to you, but in a chatroom they can get to know you before they meet you.' Dolphin further claimed that even if you have told them in the chatroom that you are overweight it creates less of a problem: 'It is all about a man's ego. If they are all sitting in a pub and one of them is getting up to go and talk to an obese woman, the others will roar at him . . . In a chatroom they can chat to you, nobody knows they are chatting to you and you can build up a friendship without their ego's being put on the line.'

Based on the information divulged, the control that chatters may have over the judgements of others is not limitless. These beliefs can change, as a consequence of gaining additional information over time, either through attending social meets or getting to know the other persona online. In the interview with Panther, he recounted how people's attitudes to him changed over time. When he started chatting he was very outspoken about being coloured, and other chatters treated him in a manner that would continuously remind him of his 'place'. For example, if a white girl were to show interest in him, they would call him 'klonkie'⁷³. This, however, changed when they realised that he was a very successful businessman. This detail became an increasingly important aspect of how he was seen by other chatters, especially women, as he was regarded as a 'good catch'.

Equality and the experience of race

Does the social context created within a chatroom differ from society at large in terms of equality, or are the inequalities evident in society mirrored within the chatroom? A clear indication of inequalities within

⁶ Derogatory reference to a coloured person.

chatrooms was the hierarchical structure of the room, which is evident when you log on. The channel operators, who were listed first, with their nicknames in red and a clear @ sign preceding it, were endowed with regulating powers, which afforded them the privilege of making decisions and kicking people from the room. These channel operators can use their control responsibly, by regulating participation in the room and protect users from potential abuse. However, the 'ops' could, themselves, be abusive in their position. As was explained by Draco, 'it has become technical inequalities. I am an 'op' and you are not. I can make your life miserable, I can kick you, I can ban you . . . I can manipulate people and take advantage of you because I have power.'

Apart from the inequalities rooted in the regulating powers given to some of the chatters, there are other technical inequalities, which are more subtle and could relate to the chatter's education or expendable income. These inequalities are associated with the advantages some chatters may have, such as more bandwidth, better technology, more developed technical skills or fluency in conversational language, which would allow them to dominate the discussions and to build a stronger online persona, in comparison to chatters who lack similar resources or skills. Chatters are, therefore, only equal to a certain degree. They are similar in as far as everybody is aware of the advantages resulting from their anonymity, the management of personal information and the 'act' that they are a part of. This study has shown, however, that long-term, regular chatters did not retain their anonymity and, as chatters got to know each other better, their status changed depending on additional information gained. This was previously illustrated in the interview with Panther, where his status changed twice in the chatroom. Shifts in status were accommodated by the social meets and the opportunity these face-to-face gatherings created for the chatters to 'see' the status and personal details of other participants. Mouse showed how offline status can be mirrored in the chatroom.

Researcher: you must know each other quite well?

Mouse: no not really . . . me not in their clique

Researcher: Oh, why not?

Mouse: hey, I don't have the same status

The short excerpt above is a clear indication of how a person's offline status can influence both their online participation as well as their offline relationships with the other chatters.

In an effort to investigate the experience of different racial groups in this chatroom, the researcher had to question the respondents on

their reaction or feelings toward participants from different racial categories. The only person interviewed from a racial category other than the predominately white participants, was Panther, and contact was made with an Indian participant who revealed his racial background in a private conversation. AD related how she was convinced that she could identify certain racial groups through the language they would use when chatting and said that she did not mind chatting to people from all racial groups. She was, however, clear that she had no interest in actually meeting people from different races or building friendships with them. The accurate identification of people she chats with, which might lead to them meeting offline and possibly pursuing a sexual relationship, was so important to AD that she would ask for racial details when she starts her conversations. 'Often you chat and you form this friendship and then he says, I hope you do not mind but I am Indian or coloured . . . I got to the stage where I will say . . . are you white?' Similarly, Dolphin related that she has coloured and Indian friends whom she met through the Internet and that she will talk to anyone who wants to talk to her, but 'if the person now wants to become friendly, I start drawing a line.' From the above evidence there is a clear indication that the chatroom was not free from the racial prejudices evident in society and that these prejudices not only affected online relationships between chatters, but also influenced the potential development of future offline relationships and friendships.

Living the reality: Chatrooms vs 'Real life'

Regarding the 'realness' of experiences, participants found it difficult to differentiate between online and offline realities, since both are real to a certain extent. In probing their responses, it was found that the distinguishing factor is not the actual online or offline experiences, but rather the difference between the persona created online and the offline personal realities. Some respondents could contrast these two 'realities' while others became so involved in their online persona that they found it difficult to separate the two, and their online persona would sometimes become a part of, or would 'visit', their real life environment. In his interview, Draco illustrated this interweaving between the real and virtual world: 'If you can honestly differentiate between the two worlds, you cannot . . . they become so intertwined . . . Internet is a microcosm, it is a mirror of society'.

Flame stated that the reasons for his chatroom usage are, firstly, his extreme shyness and, secondly, the fact that the screen made him brave enough to be himself. Working as a hairdresser, he had to be sociable and friendly to people all day but that did not intimidate him, since his

workspace had become a space in which he was outgoing and gregarious. Even though this may seem contradictory, Flame described his work environment versus the chatroom as his work personal space and his social personal space, respectively. For him, 'if I am at work, I am full of shit, as in very outgoing, or it seems that way to everyone, but that's [because] I have made that my personal space.' When asked why the screen makes him brave, he answered that he also made the chatroom his personal space and, therefore, he felt that he could be his true self when he was on the internet. Flame did not believe that his chatroom persona was a fantasy identity. He saw it is his true self. The chatroom was just a medium he used to express his real personality. For Flame, there was definitely a difference between the chatroom and real life, where, in the latter, he regarded himself as ugly, fat and shy. But, the absence of visual contact on the internet, made him feel that he could be expressive and convivial.

For Mouse, there were differences between people in real life and their chatroom persona, and for this reason he was not keen on meeting people offline or attending the socials. He related how chatroom participants get to know online personas and become friends, but when you actually meet these other chatters face-to-face, they change. Despite Mouse's views in this regard, he went on to say that it sometimes becomes very difficult to separate real and virtual life from each other. Similarly to Flame, he saw himself as very shy and introverted and preferred using the chatroom to retain social contact as he also felt that the screen made him bolder.

AD, however, found it difficult to differentiate between the chatroom and real life. For her, the persona she portrayed in the chatroom and the relationships and conversations she conducted here, were more real than the circumstances she found herself in at home. 'I am totally living two lives,' she claimed. 'You know, the scary thing is that you grow so complacent in your second life, it so fits in . . . it [chatroom activities] becomes natural eventually.' She further described the chatroom as her 'whole life' and did not engage in any other activities apart from work and chatroom-related activities. The chatroom and the relationships she had with the other chatters became her reality. For AD, the chatroom led to a complete change of lifestyle, values and personal identity. She believed that the chatroom allowed her to discover a very sexual side to herself. Her sexually conservative lifestyle changed to one where she became very sexually active, even engaging in numerous affairs.

Most of the the respondents acknowledged the chatroom and the chatters as part of their reality, and, for some of them, such as AD, this reality extended to their offline lifestyles to such a degree that they started to live their chatroom persona. However in the cases of both Mouse and

Flame they were very shy offline and even though they were brave in front of the computer, chatroom activity did not change the fact that they were shy. The bravado afforded by the screen gave chatters the confidence to explore issues or behaviours they would not engage with in real life.

Feeling 'braver behind the screen': Chatrooms as a vehicle for discovery

The boldness and courage afforded by the computer-mediated interaction was clearly an important reason for chatroom participation and was also cited as one of the central differences between real and online life. As Dolphin reflected, '[T]he crux is that through the chatrooms you can explore what you would never have done, you can do anything.' Flame ascribed his reasons for being braver behind the screen to the lack of face-to-face contact. He believed that in the chatroom he did not have to prove himself to anyone. He felt more in control of the information given to other chatters and, therefore, over the type of judgement that could be made. The chatroom thus became a secure environment where he was able to articulate his ideas and feelings and give expression to his true self.

The influence of a chatroom on a person's individual identity depends on the reasons for the chatter's participation and the meaning and value they attach to the chatroom, or to the relationships they have with others in the chatroom. For some chatters, the chatroom and its participants become their whole life, with this activity imprinting their lifestyles as well as their identities. For others it is used for amusement, as a convenient meeting place or a way to explore issues or ideas that they would not necessarily engage with in real life. In cases where chatters are able to differentiate between real life experiences and online personas, their chatroom behaviour is less likely to dictate or change their actual lifestyles.

CONCLUSION

People frequenting chatrooms such as 'Conversations' are denizens of the network society, sharing a particular class capacity and class awareness, even if they do not recognise a shared class identity. Through their participation in chatrooms, individuals have the opportunity to increase their social space by conversing with both new and familiar individuals on a regular basis, and thereby, develop a network of diverse social relationships with other individuals who share their class capacity. Even though all the participants in a chatroom have similar access to resources, their 'differentiated mobility' influences the level of control and initiative

they have in the online conversations as well as the development of future offline relationships (Massey 1993: 62). Moreover, race tends to affect opportunities for online participation and for the development of friendships both online and offline. The findings further suggest that even in circumstances where participants from a variety of racial categories could afford to become part of this chatroom, their participation in the chatroom and its activities were still influenced by the social reality of their race. Perceptions of 'race' were sometimes linked to the purpose for which some participants used this particular chatroom, namely to meet people with the specific motive of developing sexual relationships. The socio-historical taboo with regard to interracial sexual relationships, which is deeply embedded in the fabric of South African society, was clearly evident in 'Conversations'.

In previous research, anonymity and the accompanying role of fantasy were often cited as the foundations of equality and freedom in cyberspace. In sharp contrast to previous writings, this investigation has shown that anonymity and equality were not always significant features of chatrooms. More recent research supports this finding, as it was shown that 'gender and other identity hierarchies continue to constitute a significant context for online interaction. Participants clearly can and do reproduce offline power relationships in their online interaction' (Kendall 1999: 67).

The argument in this chapter has been rooted in the notion that identity formation takes place within a given social context where individuals attach meaning to shared experiences. As the meaning people attach to these shared experiences are closely related to the purpose of their actions (Castells 1997), it is important to investigate the reasons for individual participation in order to understand the influence of chatrooms on identity. The importance of anonymity has been recognised as one of the most significant aspects with regard to the influence of CMC on the development of new identities. For instance, where the motivation for participation was to meet new sexual partners, anonymity was of less importance and accurate personal information was shared in private conversations. In the case of AD, her participation in chatrooms has led to the reconstruction of her real life identity, to the extent that she did not differentiate between the virtual persona and her reality. The motivation for her participation patterns and the influence of the chatroom on her are, however, directly linked to her offline life. In contrast, for both Flame and Mouse, their anonymity was more important, as it reduced their anxiety, providing them with the opportunity to express what they thought of as their authentic selves (Spears & Lea 1994). Flame and Mouse both drew a clear distinction

between their real life circumstances and their virtual persona and reverted to their 'real' identities when not participating in the chatroom.

One of the most important contributions of this study is the acknowledgement of the many pitfalls in the assumption that all CMC share the same overarching features. Future research should, in particular, take into account the differences between communication technology utilising delayed and instantaneous messages. Newsgroups, the focus of most of the research conducted by Reingold, are an example of a medium where people can join in conversations long after a topic is raised and postings are made. By logging onto a newsgroup, all postings available on the server may be accessed, and these postings can date back several years. Participants in these forums are, therefore, not subject to 'time constraints'. This, however, is not the case in chatrooms, where participants are only privy to the conversations taking place while they are logged onto the channel. In this respect, chatroom participants are not free from the constraints of time, only of space.

Chapter Eleven

‘fitting-in’ to a ‘classy place’: the zone and youth identity

Lucert Nkuna

INTRODUCTION

THE QUINTESSENCE OF contemporary South African youth culture, is about fun and fashion, and attracts young people from all races. It is ‘The Zone!’ A hi-tech entertainment and shopping complex opened in 2000, The Zone is situated in Rosebank, at the heart of Johannesburg’s still mainly-white, northern suburbs. Carefully selected boutiques, restaurants, music shops and movies provide a honey-pot for the target market, excluding those who are too old or too poor to fit the specifications. Physical proximity to Y-fm, the most popular youth-oriented radio station in the country, adds to the mix, ensuring a steady flow of local celebrities. Sarah Nuttall (2004: 434) describes its appearance well: ‘The Zone’s indoor roads sometimes feel like catwalks, the television screens that hang over the walkways are reminiscent of modern gyms, and its surfaces (reflective, shiny) and their colors (an energetic metallic gray flecked with primary colors) differentiate it from the neutral beige of other shopping centers.’ Babalwa Shota (2004: 12), a young, black tabloid-columnist for the country’s top-selling newspaper, captures it thus: ‘an autograph hunter’s nirvana. Somewhere between the KTV generation playing car-racing games in the Galaxy arcade and the 20-something professionals networking over cocktails at pavement cafés, there are enough celebrities, fashionistas, musicians, wannabes and have-beens to fill up an autograph book.’

Some of The Zone’s regulars explained its special attractions. According to Extro-Ice, ‘This is a *much* place to be. It’s happening here. . . . I’m a DJ, you know what I’m saying. So *ja* [yes], this is the one place

I can get what I want to entertain *peops* [people].’ For Jacqui: ‘it’s a hip place. It’s lovely, fun. You meet different people, young I mean. Things are happening here.’ Dineo added: ‘when you are there, I’m myself. . . . It’s cool and the atmosphere is so very relaxed.’ Sharlene’s view was similar: ‘The Zone is calm and collected.’ Thapelo thought it was different from other malls because it was not packed with people. She added that The Zone had an ‘in-factor’; it was ‘the place where fashion rests’. Tebogo said: ‘It’s small and full of nice shops. Lots of things that one can do to get rid of boredom. . . . Shops are unique. They are not shops you can obviously find in every mall in Jo’burg.’ Some people go to The Zone because it also attracts celebrities (musicians, actors, radio DJs and fashionistas). For instance, Dineo said:

The main thing [is] the celebrities and sophisticated people. *Coz* when you go there, you WILL see somebody you know from television. And you wanna scream at them, and say ‘hi!’ So, if you look good, you feel confident about yourself, and they might give you that, you know (*laughs*), they’d say, ‘Hello!’

Like Nuttall, I have also investigated contemporary South African youth culture as epitomised by The Zone. Nuttall (2004) calls this the Y culture or the ‘Loxion Kulcha’ (a hip brand name that plays on the word ‘location’, the older term for black townships). Young people, she argues, see skin colour as their only significant difference; they dress and act the same, regardless of ‘race’. The self-stylisation of the Y generation is reflected in and shaped by *Y-mag*, a fashion and style magazine, which, Nuttall (2004: 443) shows, has a ‘line [that] captures the confidence of a free black youth’. She (2004: 451) notes, however, that for these young people there is a ‘gap . . . between aspirational culture and the real social conditions’. In concluding, she asks: ‘Is Y culture the celebration of a lifestyle that refuses to engage with agony, conflict, and exploitation?’ (Nuttall, 2004: 251). My research leads to a positive response to this question. I think that young people are not ‘refusing’, rather they are actively trying to create a new multiracial identity. They are doing this on the basis of having fun together. Spending money is part of the game. It is a celebration of present prosperity and represents a moving on from old, politicised priorities.

My emphasis is partly a consequence of perspective. Whilst Nuttall writes as a cultural theorist looking at The Zone from the outside, I am, in a sense, an insider. As a young black woman, I regard it as my zone, a space where I can relax, be with friends and be happy. I was already

hooked on the place before I tried to understand it sociologically. From my vantage point it has been possible to accept most of Nuttall’s generalisations. Overall, the youth who go to The Zone – whether black or white, rich or poor, female or male – do so for the same motives. They want to make and develop friendships with people who have similar tastes to themselves; and many of those ‘tastes’ – in clothes, games, food, ambience, and architecture – can be found at The Zone. However, being an insider, it is perhaps easier to have sensitivity to some of the inner contrasts: the racial inflections associated with dress, the clever use of the odd Zulu word, gender differences, and, in particular, the disparity between township groups in unfamiliar territory and the self-confidence of the Model Cs (i.e. those from formerly-white schools).

Whilst this chapter does draw on experience gained from spending many days in The Zone (my misspent youth perhaps), it is based mainly upon traditional sources of sociological data. These included a questionnaire survey conducted on 25 September 2004, a Saturday when The Zone is at its busiest. This was undertaken with the approval of The Zone’s managers and with the assistance of nine students from the University of Johannesburg (formerly the Rand Afrikaans University, RAU), and I would like to acknowledge them for their help. The assistants were positioned close to the two main entrances of The Zone and, in order to ensure that they selected a random sample, they were told that, having completed one interview, they should approach the fourth next person to enter. It probably says quite a lot about the character of The Zone, that we experienced only a small number of refusals (though the younger, township groups tended to be the most helpful and polite and a few whites refused to assist because they thought the fieldworkers were collecting money). When it was busier and large groups were arriving, the assistants sometimes had to ‘grab’ the fifth or sixth person, but this did not appear to affect the social composition of the sample. Unfortunately, however, the survey was conducted on a Jewish holiday, and, in some measure, this reduced the number of white people entering the mall. Our survey also coincided with the annual Gay and Lesbian Parade, which passed just outside, reducing the number of people entering to a trickle for a couple of hours. This, though, had a negligible impact on the demographic composition of the respondents. We conducted the survey between 10am and 9pm, knowing from mall management statistics that it was very quiet before and after these hours. In the morning, people tended to rush around, but from about 3pm they were generally more relaxed, and there was some shift in motivation from shopping to watching movies. During these eleven hours 283 questionnaires were completed.

I also conducted two sets of interviews. The first consisted of ten one-on-one semi-structured interviews undertaken at The Zone between November 2003 and July 2004. I would have continued with such research, but was banned from doing so by mall security on the grounds that I was harassing customers. All ten respondents were black and aged between 18 and 28. Seven were women (Star, Thandi, Phumzile, Beki, Nomsa, Joyce and Lerato) and three were men (Extro-Ice, Bongani and Bafana); five were students, three were hair-stylists, one was a DJ, and the other was unclear about his occupation. Having learned that a high proportion of people at The Zone were students, the second set of interviews comprised two small group interviews on what was then the RAU campus. These were with first-year sociology students who had responded positively to a request from their lecturer. Five of these were 19-year old black South African women (Dineo, Thapelo, Tebogo, Prudence and Patricia), and one was a Zimbabwean woman in her late-20s (Linda). All interviews were conducted in English, and, for the survey, the questions and nearly all responses were in English. Finally, I spent many hours observing behaviour at The Zone, sometimes as a participant sociologist and sometimes as a non-participant.

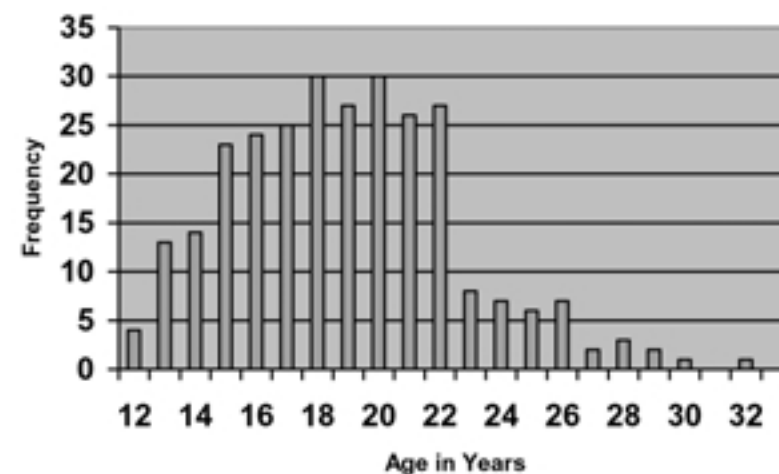
In focusing on youth identity, I follow Ellemers *et al.* (1999: 12) in taking identity to refer to ‘social categorisation of self and other, self-categories which define the individual in terms of his or her shared similarities with members of certain social categories in contrast to other social categories. . . . It is the social categorical self (e.g., “us” versus “them”, “in-group” versus “out-group”).’ A description of The Zone youth is followed by a discussion of some of the key cultural markers of identity operating in this space. I then highlight the importance of friendship and ‘fitting-in’ before drawing some conclusions. I finish by saying that The Zone is not just a mall, or even a mall where a new culture is being constructed, it is also an identity.

THE ZONE YOUTH

The most striking thing about The Zone is that it is a temple to youth culture. Its unofficial motto might be: ‘for the youth, of the youth, *buy* the youth.’ The mean age of our respondents was 19 years old (with a range between 12 and 47). 74.9 percent (n=212) were aged between 15 and 22, and in practice, The Zone seems to define ‘youth’ as existing between these years. As shown in Figure 1, after 22 years old there is dramatic decline in the numbers of people frequenting the mall. Dineo opined: ‘Adulthood, I think, psychologically, is 21, but [in practical terms] 22 to

24, *ja* [yes]!’ Typical undergraduates are the same age as the mid-section of The Zone users, and 48.4 percent (n=137) of the respondents were attending a tertiary institution. The most numerous of these (n=45) were from the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits), which, at the time, was running a coach from its residences to the mall on Saturdays. The Zone’s youth orientation was reflected in women’s clothing sizes, which were only rarely bigger than 36 or 34 (though this also defined an ideal body type, with Thapelo commenting: ‘I’m bad. I still need to shape up a bit. Sometimes I just don’t fit in them [Zone clothes]’).

Figure 1: Age of Respondents



In terms of ‘race’, using the conventional South African categories 59.0 percent (n= 167) of respondents were black, 18.7 percent (53) were white, 17.7 percent (50) Indian/Asian and 4.6 percent (13) coloured. This might be compared with the population for Johannesburg, of which, at the time of the 2001 Census, 75.8 percent was black, 14.9 percent white, 5.9 percent Asian and 3.4 percent coloured (Statistics South Africa 2003). Just over half (52.7 percent) of the respondents gave one of South Africa’s indigenous languages as their home language. The most popular of these was Zulu - 16.3 percent (46); followed by Tswana - 12.4 percent (35); Southern Sotho - 8.1 percent (23); and Xhosa - 6.7 percent (19). Given the proportion of respondents who were black, and considering census data for the region, these figures are unsurprising (see Statistics South Africa 2003). Interestingly, though, 11.8 percent (13) of blacks indicated English as their home language. Overall, 38.5 percent (109) gave English as their home language, and only 4.2 percent (12) specified Afrikaans. A small number, 4.6 percent (13), had a ‘foreign’ home language.

Importantly, only 14.1 percent (40) of respondents attended publicly-funded township schools (either in the past or the present). A total of 41.7 percent (118) indicated that they attended public suburban schools and 41.3 percent (117) attended private schools. Many of the public suburban schools charge fees that are as high as, or higher, than those for universities, and, culturally, their alumni have much in common with those of private schools. In popular discourse, these youth are often collectively referred to as Model Cs (though only the public suburban schools were officially designated as Model C, a category that technically belongs to the last years of apartheid). It should be noted in passing that a significant minority of young people who live in Soweto, or one of the city's other townships, now attend a former Model C school. The dominant language in Johannesburg's suburban schools, even for informal conversations, is English, and this is the main language heard at the Zone. In contrast to the question about home language, when we asked about language preference with friends, 78.4 percent (222) gave this as English; only 17 percent specifying an indigenous South African language. This, more than anything, highlights the middle-class character of The Zone culture. However, black youth frequently add vocabulary from their home language to conversations, giving it a subtlety and 'hipness' that is lacking in the English of most white youth. For instance, Dineo said:

I mix everything together. For example, when you wanna say 'I'll go with you home [sic]', I go, like, 'I'll *khapa* [escort] you home'. You know what I'm saying? So, that's the kind of language that we use.

Being at The Zone is not cheap. One must have a substantial amount of money to be part of the 'in-crowd' and have fun. We asked how much people at The Zone spent per month. Only 8.8 percent (25) indicated that this was less than R100 per month, 50.9 percent (144) spent R100 to R500, 21.9 percent (62) spent R600 to R1000 per month, and 18.4 percent (52) spent R1000 or more just at The Zone. These figures might be contrasted with the value of one of the National Research Foundation's bursaries for master's students, which, in 2004, was less than R1,700 per month (a sum that some students manage to live on whilst also making a contribution to family income, though most need to supplement). Linda and Dineo both argued that it was possible to have fun at The Zone with less than R200, but Dineo added: 'I have to have about R500 spending money, just for a day . . . you know, for just maybe like eating or movie'. Thapelo agreed with the figure of R500. For

teenagers, this kind of spending is generally only possible with parental support, and most respondents, 65.7 percent (186), reported that their parents provided their spending money, compared to 32.2 percent (91) using their own money.

The cost and highly aspirational nature of The Zone identity is reflected, particularly, in the importance attached to cars. According to Dineo, 'It's just not nice to leave a place like The Zone using like a [mini-bus] taxi. At The Zone you meet like really high class people.' Thapelo captured the tension this can involve, recalling: 'Sometimes I'd dress elegantly and people would ask, "What car are you driving?"', and I'm like, "Shit! I don't drive," you know.' Selikow *et al.* (2002: 24) have generalised this point, observing that youth culture is consumerist; with emphasis placed on material possessions, dress code and luxury cars.

The majority of respondents, 65.7 percent (186) were female. So, the archetypal Zone users – its core in some respects – consisted of 18–20 year old black, women students, and this was the category of person I mainly interviewed. It is noticeable that many young women at The Zone smoke cigarettes freely, something that is generally regarded as unacceptable for South African females of this age. I understand that similar behaviour developed among privately-educated young women in Zimbabwe, and, as is the case there, it should probably be taken as a reaction to patriarchal restrictions. Whether female or male, most people at The Zone had considerably more money to spend than the average South African. A budget of R400 per week, which would seem a fairly typical amount, might be compared with only 45.5 percent of adult South Africans earning more than R370 per week at the time of the 2001 Census.

THE ZONE CULTURE

A key aspect of The Zone culture, part of the identity of The Zone youth, is wearing the right kind of clothes. Musical tastes are also significant, though rather less indicative. Fashion and music reflect strong global influences, but also some concern with local identifications. The Zone culture is strongly multi-racial, yet there were some racial markers of taste.

Most of the young people at The Zone wear trendy clothes. Only a few people do not wear branded fashion. For body-wear, 47 respondents were wearing Levis, 16 Guess, 13 Sissy Boy and Billabong, and 12 Diesel; 22 had Nike footwear, 16 Adidas and 11 Soviet. One very cold night it was observed that most young people were dressed in designer boots and jeans, with a chain stretching from one belt loop to a front pocket of the

jeans, a style similar to that adopted by international stars like Britney Spears, Justin Timberlake, Christina Aguilera and Kelly Rowland. Jacqui explained: 'This [Diesel] is youth brand. It is part of my identity. I mean, to be considered a hip young somebody these days, you have to wear recognised clothes. Levi's, Sketchers, Nike, Puma – youth stuff, you know. These are youth things.' Bongani developed the point: 'Labelled clothes are just "cool". There's no doubt about that. They make one feel expensive and "cool". Wearing labels was also about getting noticed as somebody who *looked* expensive. Dineo commented, 'When you go there . . . you have to show the label, like "I'm wearing a Levi's jean" you know,' and Thapelo added: 'Yes, Levi's! . . . When you move around, they must see that you are wearing expensive gear.' Dineo later emphasised this point: 'It's just that when you are wearing a label, they look at you, you get attention.'

But getting attention must be done in a sophisticated way. Dineo contrasted the 'cool' and 'relaxed' atmosphere with the fact that it could also be intimidating, adding: 'Like people are dressed, but nice, and you came there and you are overdressed (laughs).' Clearly 'overdressing' is evidence of being a newcomer; somebody who does not yet 'fit in'. There is, perhaps, a tension between wearing labels, which implies similarity, and the difference that is necessary to be noticed. In part, this is resolved by having the right combination of branded clothes with carefully chosen accessories. But there are also some Zone regulars, often the older ones, who have the confidence not to wear branded clothes. It is just a label,' suggested 24-year old, Thandi, explaining: 'I don't like to follow trends type fashions . . . Labels are cool, but not that important to me. I can even go to cheap shops, as long as they've got nice things I like. It's about the look. It's not what you wear but how you wear it. I love to be an African girl.' This notion of 'African girl' reveals an added dimension, the self-assurance, even pride, that exists among the black youth, especially the young women. Prudence thought that western and African culture 'can work well together.' One manifestation of this is the Afro-chic or Afro-fusion fashion associated with local designers, Stoned Cherrie, who have a boutique in the mall. These clothes, which are expensive, mostly have references to traditional African ideas and colours. Another example is Loxion Kulcha, a label selling in a few Zone shops, which, says Nuttall (2004: 437), recreates the 'bad boys of the 1950s, pantsulas, migrant and blue-collar laborers, and the black cover-girl phenomenon'. More generally, whilst white girls tend to wear printed t-shirts and denims, the black and Indian girls often preferred elegant tops and trousers. Among the boys, there were fewer ethnic differences, with branded t-shirts coupled with 'worn-out' jeans being very fashionable.

Another way of expressing individuality is through hair and body piercing. 'Your hair says a lot for starters,' commented Dineo. Most of the black youth, males and females, have dreadlocks, or they attach hair extensions or braids, sometimes even blonde ones. Long, luxurious hair is still popular among Indian girls. Body piercing is popular with black and white youth, though rare with Indians. Whereas, nose rings and eyebrow rings are common among whites, both boys and girls, black boys seem to like rings in their tongues and lower lips, and belly button rings have recently become popular with black girls (to go along with the short t-shirt 'stomach out' style).

An interesting development has been the advance of two sub-cultures, at least among the young men. These are the 'amabourgeois' and the 'amatsatsatsa', with the latter, probably a reaction to the former. 'Amabourgeois', which predominates at The Zone, is seen as a white thing, as 'expensive', so is probably only a conscious style among the black and coloured youth. There are some Indian amabourgeois, but they do not try to get attention by the way they dress like black and coloured youth. The amatsatsatsa are keen followers of fashion, but are not 'high class' people, or do not wish to appear so, avoiding expensive brands. For the amabourgeois, luxury and 'high class' places are important. When I was conducting one of the group interviews, Thapelo commented on a young man who walked past, saying that he dressed very nicely, like a 'bourgeois'. He was wearing Levi's jeans with a short-sleeved, striped shirt and Diesel sneakers. Kenny Latimore, the R&B singer, was also said to be an example of a 'bourgeois', and Dineo kept talking about his bootleg jeans, 'nice' shirts and jackets, and, most importantly, the way he matches everything with his stylish caps. His movements were also described as 'bourgeois'.

Some youngsters felt that music and clothes, or the way one dresses, have some kind of a link. Dineo, for instance, said:

Sometimes it does have a link coz you get these guys who have baggy jeans and hanging shirts, and then you know that, fine, that one is hip-hop. And then you get those who wear tight jeans and you know that'll be Usher or a Jaheim [R&B performers], you know. But with girls, you don't get it often. You get it mostly about guys. It's like he dresses like this because he likes this kind of music. Then you associate it. What you wear does tell a lot about who you are . . . also, like, the kind of shoes that you wear.

The most important aspect of music tastes among The Zone youth is

that, overwhelmingly, their preference is for US music. In the survey, 41 percent (116) said their favourite style was R&B and 23.3 percent (66) specified hip-hop. In contrast, only 9.9 percent (28) mentioned the local genre *kwaito* (a word linked to the Afrikaans for 'angry' and used as township slang for 'hot and happening') (*Time* 2004: 52). Fewer still, 4.2 percent (12), liked jazz. These findings were reflected in answers to a question about favoured artists and bands. Some of the most commonly cited names were the R&B stars, R. Kelly, Alicia Keys, J-Lo, Usher and Beyoncé, and US hip-hop performers 50 Cent, Jay-Z, Eminem, Missy Elliot and Outkast were also popular. The most frequently mentioned South Africans were Skwatter Camp, a hip-hop band; Revolution, who play house music; and the *kwaito* groups, Kabelo and Trompies. All the individual interviewees were asked about music, with seven out of ten giving R&B as their first choice. When asked why they preferred this to *kwaito*, most responses were along the lines that *kwaito* does not have 'meanings' – messages one can learn from – in the songs. Some said they identified particularly with R&B because it was usually about being in love, while hip-hop had more to do with partying with friends. In explaining her choice, Jacqui explained:

I identify with it [R&B and hip-hop]. *Kwaito* and classic [old-style R&B, such as Marvin Gaye] is just not me. R&B and hip-hop are what up-to-date youth listen to. They define us as young people . . . The Western is always better. It is quality and long-lasting. For example, if you listen to Arthur's 'mnike' album [*kwaito*], you will [only] listen to it for one year. The next year you don't want it. You find it boring. But, if you buy Mariah Carey's [R&B], I mean you can listen to it for a long time – ten years – and it will still entertain you, and you'll love it. So, western music is quality.

David Everatt, from the Sociology of Youth Committee at the University of Cape Town, has commented: 'All they [youth] want is to be famous. They want to be noticed and look hip. Young people want to have fun and look glamorous' (Mlangeni, 2003: 5). This assessment is valid, though one might add that young people are interested in 'meanings', and they have their own views about 'good taste', even if these things are not always obvious to older observers. Globalisation is significant in two ways. First, The Zone youth are among the 'winners', and their culture, with its emphasis on 'expense', is an affirmation of success. Secondly, they embrace the cosmopolitanism of US styles, rejecting the parochialism they associate with *kwaito* and the township.

FRIENDSHIPS AND FITTING-IN

'Consumerism' and wanting 'to be noticed' might imply individualism, but The Zone is actually a place of considerable social interaction. Shopping, eating, sipping coffee, going to movies, playing games, walking around, watching people and chatting are all activities undertaken with friends. The Zone also provides opportunities for 'bumping into' acquaintances. In our survey, only 16.6 percent (47) of respondents said they were on their own, compared to 59.4 percent (168) who said they were with a friend or friends and 21.6 percent (61) who were with at least one family member (these were probably siblings in most cases). The field workers' observations produced similar findings. These showed 19.1 percent (54) of respondents having nobody with them, compared to 49.4 percent (140) with one companion and 31.5 percent (89) with more than one companion.

Whilst being with friends is part of the fun associated with The Zone, choice of friends can be far from innocent. This is clear from the following comment made by Dineo (who comes from Dobsonville, a middle-class part of Soweto). She said:

If I went to Westgate [a mall much closer to Soweto] it doesn't really matter. I'd pick any friend and I'd pay for them. But if I go to The Zone, *uish!* [gosh] I choose someone nice [with whom] I can have a good conversation. Then I choose my friends that way. And then when we get there, then you know that, fine, she's not too loud, she's sophisticated. You know she wouldn't embarrass me in public.

For black youth, the township is 'the other' that helps to define The Zone identity. The former is dull; the latter represents an exciting new world that is hip, classy and multiracial. This contrast was underlined in the following opinion voiced by Prudence. 'I mean,' she said, 'The Zone is, like, an up-market place. So you won't find boring people, like in the townships. It's a place where you can find someone decent.'

Entering the new world might come easily to the Model Cs, who grow up learning its accent and etiquette at school, and generally have parents with the resources to fund its style and *buy* into the identity (even if this means accumulating debt). For poorer kids, especially those from township schools, the social divide is huge, and gaining entry means carrying a new kind of passport, an expensive one, the right 'look'. To avoid the kind of xenophobic glances that say 'you do not

belong in our world,' young people must first acquire trendy clothes. The young women who were interviewed felt, however, that if one was wearing one's best outfit it was easy to socialise. Linda, one of the older Zone people, gave this a slight twist, arguing: 'it's not necessarily what I'm wearing, but how I feel about myself and how I'm looking at that very moment, you know. So it's not always about clothes . . . it's all about your self-confidence.' Nevertheless, the importance of fashion was underlined in a story recounted by Thapelo. She told of a girl who has everything – Diesel, Levi's, Adidas, Nike and more. 'You would think that she is from a very rich family when you meet her,' Thapelo said, before adding: 'but the truth is that she stays in one of the shacks in Soweto, and her family is very poor.'

Dineo, among others, emphasised the importance of 'fitting in'. She captured the tension that this entailed:

Because you wanna give this impression, it's like when you are there, from my perspective, you go there and you become somebody that you are not. You try to fit in *coz* you wanna fit in so badly. So you wanna have more money, you wanna look good, you wanna flow good, you wanna have that persona that tells them . . . '[L]isten, I can fit in with you guys, you know. I'm part of this thing. I come here all the time, you know. This is my hang out, and I can be like you guys. I can hang out with you guys. Can I please hang out with you guys?' You know what I mean? It's different when you go to other malls. Like in my area, I just go there and I can wear flip-flops. Doesn't really matter. It does not mean much *coz* I go there all the time. So, when you go to The Zone, you think to yourself, 'you know this is a hang out where sophisticated people hang out.' You wanna play in with everybody else.

For young women, part of the value of the effort and expense involved in going to The Zone lies in finding 'nice guys.' Prudence explained: 'you find people with class. Someone you can take home and say, "Ma, you know" . . .' At this point she laughed and Patricia interrupted: 'and he must have money.' 'So he must have money?' I queried. 'Of course,' she replied firmly. In another discussion, Dineo and Thapelo were asked whether The Zone was a place where you pick up nice guys. 'Rich guys! *Ja!*' said Dineo laughing. 'Of course,' added Thapelo. Then Dineo, always clear and joyful in her appreciation of the culture, continued: 'Definitely rich guys!' There was more laughter, and then:

If you go to Westgate you get these local [guys] and they ask YOU for money. But when you go to The Zone, you know you are getting out of there with a car – at least that's transport. They even offer you lunch and you just go like: 'Oh, OK!' So, it's a nice place to pick up guys.

There can be no doubt that The Zone culture is very materialistic, and Nuttall is right in highlighting its aspirational character. However, one should avoid an essentialist conception of the place. At one end there are the well-off, twenty-something Model Cs who walk and talk with confidence. Particularly if they are regarded as celebrities, these are taken to be the trendsetters. They are the leaders of fashion and they shape The Zone's culture and identity. At the other end of the spectrum, there are township school girls desperate to fit in with this world. Some make it, but some don't. From the outside, The Zone seems like one place, but on the inside it provides a range of experiences; it is many different places.

CONCLUSION

The Zone is not just a mall, it is also an identity. It is a world dominated by expensive shops and the culture of the Model Cs. It is multi-racial, English speaking, very fashion conscious and brand aware, R&B supporting, and up-market. It is regarded by the young people who identify with it as hip, relaxed, fun, luxury-loving and sophisticated. One of the most common words used to describe The Zone, and, arguably, the most significant, is 'classy'. For the regulars it is a wonderful and much loved space. Here they can learn the meaning of 'class' and be reassured that they have it; that they really are part of the 'in-crowd'. It is also a place where they can escape from parental constraints (smoking cigarettes if they so desire), and begin to develop a culture that, especially for young blacks, is a distinct advance on that of their parents (which they associate with hardship, struggle and township tedium). For parents, it is a place where their children are happy, but it is also relatively safe (important in a city with high rates of crime), and it provides an opportunity to meet a good 'class' of young people.

The Zone is emblematic of the new South Africa. It could not possibly have existed before 1994. Here, blacks and whites now have friendships based on equality, and, for the most part, men treat women with respect. The culture is also about age. The Zone youths are a generation that have grown up together in the post-apartheid era. Whilst the new culture is racially and gender inclusive, it is also, in particular,

class exclusive; the culture of a relatively thin layer of late teens and early twenties. What distinguishes these multi-racial, middle-class, male and female youths is identification with Model C English, R&B music and relatively costly brands. These signifiers include and exclude, carving out The Zone identity. Americanised, global youth culture provides ready-made signifiers, but South African inflexions – especially in fashion – can add to local and, more particularly, black self-confidence (and, since fashion is gendered, specifically black female pride). Globalisation is implicated in the identity of The Zone, both through the range of cultural options it provides and through the inequalities it intensifies. But The Zone youth are not mere passive recipients of this culture, they actively, and sometimes consciously, engage in its development. They are framing a new multiracial and middle-class identity for themselves.

Chapter Twelve

Students, activism and identity

Marcelle C. Dawson

INTRODUCTION

THE FLARE-UPS ON campuses across South Africa since April 2004 have sparked media attention, and have forced university management to sit up and take a closer look at students' grievances. The most pressing issue faced by students today is the funding crisis. Cutbacks in financial aid mean that certain students may not be able to complete their tertiary education, while others may be caught up in a spiral of debt, since they would need to take out additional loans to cover the costs of their studies (Shivambu 2004). In addition to concerns around fees and finances, students at the Eastern Cape Technikon (Umtata Campus), for example, are demanding 'more accommodation, more computer laboratories, and that the campus caterers be changed' (Sapa 2004). The unrest on this particular campus led to the institution being temporarily shut down after students vacated the premises in August 2004.

Moreover, the recent mergers in higher education have led to heightened activity on certain campuses. For example, in February 2005, students on the Mamelodi Campus of the University of Pretoria (UP) (formerly part of Vista University) were reported to have held a demonstration, in which they protested against high tuition costs and the apparent unequal distribution of resources between the existing and newly merged campuses. Further incidents occurred on some of the campuses of the University of Johannesburg (formerly Rand Afrikaans University) during February 2005 and March 2006. Students of the Doornfontein, Soweto, Auckland Park (Bunting Road) and East Rand campuses organised a peaceful protest in which they put forward a number of grievances around issues such as administration, campus

security, student governance fees and the use of Afrikaans as a medium of communication.

Student activism is by no means a new phenomenon. Being attached to universities, students are in an ideal position to be able to study, conceptualise and even challenge the existing order. Lipset (1972: 97) regarded universities as 'centres of activism', and Nkomo (1984: 9) suggested that the tendency for students to challenge the existing order is a result of the nature of the university itself, which encourages critical thinking. This chapter takes a look at student activism in South Africa, and attempts to map out the different identities on South African campuses today. In the discussion, the focus falls mainly on the South African Students Congress (SASCO). The extent to which SASCO acts as a source of identity articulation amongst students in present-day South Africa will be assessed. Essentially, the chapter looks at whether or not, and in what way, SASCO shapes students' constructions of themselves and their counterparts. What does SASCO offer in terms of identity shaping cues? Who is most likely to make use of, or pick up on, these cues in the process of identity construction? Are there any other alternatives available to students who do not relate to SASCO? The discussion looks at the key issues affecting students today and at how SASCO, as the biggest student organisation in South Africa, is addressing these issues. The analysis is concerned mainly with the relationship between organised campus-based activity and student identities. Finally, this chapter asks whether or not student activism in South Africa is experiencing a revival. Can we begin to talk of an emerging student movement in South Africa, as part of the global south, or is such a debate premature?

The data for this investigation was generated qualitatively, allowing for rich and detailed responses. A combination of interviews and focus groups were conducted mainly with members of SASCO (i.e. 'student leaders'), as well as with 'ordinary students.' In addition to contrasting the views of these two broad groups of students, the study makes use of another lens through which to view student activism, with the aim of providing a less one-sided and more multi-layered picture of student identities on South African campuses. To this end, interviews were also conducted with members of a young, rival student organisation, namely the Socialist Student Movement. The research sites chosen for this investigation included the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) and the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (Westville campus)¹, since these

¹ In 2004, the University of Natal merged with the University of Durban-Westville to become the University of Kwa-Zulu Natal (UKZN). Some of the interviews were conducted in 2003 at the former University of Durban-Westville, while some of the fieldwork was carried out post-merger on what is now the Westville campus of UKZN.

campuses are currently, and have in the past been, two of the main sites of student struggles.

Under apartheid, three broad groups of universities were identified: Some universities, such as Wits, University of Cape Town, University of Natal and Rhodes were classified as English-medium 'open' universities. These universities were allowed to enrol 'all who were academically qualified for admission', however, up until 1984, 'admission of black students was severely restricted' (Shear 1996: xi). The second category of universities included Afrikaans-medium institutions such as 'Pretoria, Potchefstroom, Rand Afrikaans University, Orange Free State, Stellenbosch and . . . Port Elizabeth (Shear 1996: xi). The last category comprised institutions that were specifically established to provide separate education for African, Coloured and Indian students. The University of Durban-Westville would have fallen into this group, along with other historically black universities (HBUs), some of which were so isolated that they were referred to as 'bush' colleges (Shear 1996: xii).

Five in-depth interviews and two focus groups were conducted with office-bearers of SASCO and the SSM. Shorter discussions were also held with ordinary members of these organisations. Seventy-eight snapshot interviews were conducted with students on each of the campuses (42 at Wits and 36 on the Westville campus). An SSM meeting and two SASCO meetings were attended on the Westville campus. All interviews were conducted in English.

A BRIEF HISTORY OF STUDENT ACTIVISM IN SOUTH AFRICA

In 1924, the first student organisation in South Africa was established. A number of students, mostly from the liberal, white English-speaking universities, such as Cape Town, Rhodes, Natal and the Witwatersrand, joined forces to form the National Union of South African Students (NUSAS) (SASCO 2004: 1). As a federation of Student Representative Councils (SRC)² involved in the anti-apartheid struggle, NUSAS was an attractive option for black students whose attempts at forming their own student organisations shortly after the Sharpeville massacre in 1960 were thwarted by the government and uncooperative university management. The attraction was, however, short-lived, as most of the black students in NUSAS felt that the organisation was ineffective in addressing their needs. Moreover, during a NUSAS conference at Rhodes in 1967, separate accommodation and amenities were provided for black

² The Student Representative Council comprises elected representatives from the various student organisations on each university campus.

delegates (Nkomo 1984: 94). Feeling that they were 'a token minority that could not effectuate meaningful change in the organization,' a number of black students, including Steve Biko, Barney Pityana, Aubrey Mokoena, Patrick Lekota, and Saths Cooper, withdrew from NUSAS and formed the South African Students' Organisation (SASO), which was officially launched in July 1969 at Turfloop under the leadership of Steve Biko (Kane-Berman 1978: 103; Nkomo 1984: 94; Badat 2002: 2).

Through its philosophy of black consciousness, the SASO leadership aimed to promote a strong sense of identity amongst black students, and also managed to cultivate widespread support within the broader community by way of the Black Community Project (BCP). As a result of this programme, a number of health centres and literacy classes were initiated (SASCO 2004: 2). SASO was very effective in mobilising both students and non-students. Mass meetings, demonstrations and protest marches and public rallies were held on campuses as well as in the cities and townships. In addition, pamphlets, leaflets and other publications were widely distributed (Badat 2002: 131).

The Black Consciousness Movement was also influenced by events within and beyond South Africa's borders. For example, the upsurge of strikes in Durban in 1973 gripped the attention of SASO and encouraged students to launch an enquiry into the deaths that occurred at the hands of the police during the strikes. Furthermore, the collapse of Portuguese colonialism and the subsequent liberation of Mozambique and Angola in 1974, coupled with guerrilla warfare in Zimbabwe and Namibia, sent out the message that white rule was not invincible (Kane-berman 1978: 106; Hyslop 1999: 153; Badat 2002: 60). It was not only university students who were becoming increasingly militant. Secondary school learners belonging to the South African Students Movement (SASM) also identified quite strongly with black consciousness, and together these youngsters were a rather formidable force in the Soweto uprising on 16 June 1976. The boycotts, protests, shootings, and demonstrations that marked this event – often described as the most renowned act of resistance in the history of South African education – were aimed at revoking the government's decision to use Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in secondary schools, and at obliterating apartheid and all its manifestations (Hartshorne 1999: 27; Badat 2002: 60).

In 1977, however, SASO was banned, and in 1979, the Azanian Students' Organisation (Azaso) was established to fill the void. In 1983, various wide-ranging pockets of struggle against apartheid by youths, students, women, religious groups, trade unions, and many other organisations, came together under the banner of the United Democratic

Front (UDF). At this time, NUSAS together with Azaso and the Congress of South African Students (COSAS) pooled their resources and formed the UDF student wing (Philip & Barry 2003: 1; SASCO 2004: 2). Azaso steadily began to stray from its black consciousness roots and started aligning itself with the principles of the freedom charter. This shift in orientation also brought with it a name-change (SASCO 2004: 3). In 1986, Azaso was renamed the South African National Students' Congress (SANSCO) (Badat 2002: 210–211). At this time, there were high levels of tension between different groups of students. These were the 'immediatists', who called for 1986 to be 'the year of no schooling', and whose slogan was 'liberation now, education later'. Opposing this view were those who wanted the school boycotts to come to an end. Fearing that these tensions would divide those who were supposed to be on the same side of the struggle, thus weakening the movement for change, the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) was formed by a number of 'education-based organisations', including SANSCO (Hyslop 1999: 172–173; Badat 2002: 238). This umbrella organisation replaced the earlier slogan with, 'people's education for people's power' and, using this as its motto, SANSCO continued to struggle 'specifically to advance the interests of the workers' (Badat 2002: 240). Thus, even though the education arena was regarded as 'its principal field of operation' (Badat 2002: 237), SANSCO also acknowledged that students should 'throw their lot behind the efforts of the large majority of exploited black workers to eradicate inequality in all respects' (Badat 2002: 236, citing Phaala 1981). Despite earlier tensions that drove a wedge between black and white student activists, NUSAS and SANSCO began to realise that solidarity could perhaps bring more success. Moreover, with the internal structural and ideological changes that took place in the metamorphosis from SASO to SANSCO, the two organisations started to find more grounds for co-operation. The most important centripetal factor was the shared desire for the creation of a single non-racial student alliance. This reunion of sorts – a merger between SANSCO and NUSAS – gave birth to the Congress of South African Students' Congress (SASCO) in 1991 (for a detailed examination of black student politics in South Africa between 1968 and 1990, see Badat 2002).

THEORETICAL UNDERPINNINGS

In attempting to put forward suggestions as to the underlying causes of student rebellion in the United States during the 1960s, Lipset (1972: 97) argued that 'protest-proneness is related to how the university treats students.' This suggests that student activism is a latent tendency that

will only manifest itself under certain conditions. Working on a similar topic in the same period, Wood (1974) also warns against making a direct association between student activism and political consciousness. He suggests that 'even though political consciousness contributes to engagement in student activism, other conditions such as humanitarianism can also contribute to activism independently of political consciousness' (Wood 1974: 6). Interestingly, in a similar study on black universities in South Africa, Nkomo (1984: xxi) pointed out that students are most likely to engage in some form of activism 'when there is a radical discrepancy between student conceptions of a rational order and the order upheld by the established political authority.' Nkomo (1984: xxii) also contended that one should look beyond the most obvious factors and most immediate context (i.e. the academic institution) for explanations of student activism. He suggested that an analysis of the existing social order, international events and the social networks of students, amongst other things, could help to elucidate the nature of student activism (Nkomo 1984: xxii). In an attempt to explain the interaction between these factors, Nkomo (1984: 8) argued that '[t]he intrusion of external factors into the university's social environment tends to transform the university-orientated student consciousness into an outwardly focused political consciousness.' In her study on conflict between students and managerial staff at universities in South Africa, Baloyi (1998) presented a similar argument. She identified a number of factors in addition to the political inclination of students that could possibly contribute to the conflict. These factors included insensitivity and lack of empathy with regard to the other party's frame of reference and the desire of management to maintain the status quo (Baloyi 1998: 55-56).

The arguments being made here underscore a central issue in the current investigation, namely that being a student does not necessarily translate into being a student activist. There are a number of intervening variables or preconditions that need to be present before student activism is able to manifest itself, and even under these conditions, different students may respond differently, depending on a wide range of personal circumstances. In other words, there is a complex relationship between being a student, responses to campus life, political orientation, upbringing and personal background, and activist tendencies. Based on these arguments, one would expect two outcomes. Firstly, a single, coherent student identity is unlikely, and secondly, student activism is not monolithic; it undergoes manifest and latent phases, and over time, the nature of student activism changes, due to the diversity of the role players involved. In this investigation, an attempt is

made to gain a deeper understanding of the nature of student identity in South African universities today. The examination also endeavours to assess where, more or less, student activism in South Africa can be plotted along the latent-manifest continuum.

Studies that have attempted to shed light on the type of student that is likely to show activist tendencies have been inconclusive, particularly with regard to the class position of such students. Some studies have shown that lower-middle and working class students tend to distance themselves from campus activity, because 'they tend to be upwardly mobile . . . and preoccupied with narrow careerism' (Lipset & Altbach 1967: 219; Lipset 1970: 32). Other investigations have revealed that it is indeed the students from lower-middle and working class backgrounds who engage in activism. They are the ones who tend to '[bear] the brunt of existing inequities, the ones with the most to gain from social and political reforms and the individuals most likely to be caught up in the competition for status (Lipset 1967: 29). The obvious limitation of these studies is that they are dated and based on university students in the 'global north.' Moreover, there tends to be an assumption that in terms of class, careerism and activism are diametrically opposed. This study hopes to reveal a more layered and complex relationship between class and activism.

The day-to-day experience of student life is not the same for all students, and for this reason, it is important to distinguish between a role and an identity. Castells (1997: 6-7) argues that a role is 'defined by the norms structured by the institutions and organisations of society.' In contrast, 'identity is people's source of meaning and experience.' It involves a 'process of self-construction' and 'individuation.' In his later writing, Castells (2000b: 7) maintains that 'identity is the construction of meaning, the meaning of actions by social actors on the basis of social attributes.' Castells (2000b: 7) also emphasises the historical development of identities in his claim that '[identity] only becomes a material force and a material source of meaning, when it has been enforced enough over time and in the depth of people's bodies and souls. Then it becomes an experience' (Castells 2000b: 7). While this may hold true for the formation of certain identities, such as national identities, Castells does not seem to account for the fact that time is relative. Thus, 'while *some* identities must be "enforced enough over time", in order to become a "material source of meaning", other meaningful identities can develop through short-lived, "shared experiences"' (Dawson 2003: 152, emphasis in original). Relating this claim to the current investigation, it can be argued that the experience of being a university student, either coupled with, or as opposed to, being a member of a student

organisation, may play a significant role in shaping student identity, despite the fact that this experience may last only a few years.

Bearing in mind the arguments that have been made about the changing nature of the student movement and the implications thereof for identity, the chapter now turns to a discussion of student identities on South African campuses. Firstly, 'politicised' identities will be considered, taking into account the views of student leaders belonging to the South African Students Congress (SASCO). To add a further vantage point from which to view student activism and student identity, the views of the Socialist Students Movement (SSM) are also considered briefly. The next type of identity that will be discussed is a 'middle class' identity, which categorises most university students. The layers and sub-types within this category will also be fleshed out. Finally, attention is paid to 'struggling' students, who do not fall into the middle class majority. By looking at these different identities, an attempt is made to assess the extent to which student activism shapes student identity.

'STUDENT POLITICIANS': SASCO AND THE SSM

In terms of SASCO's ideological character, it was mentioned earlier that the shift from SASO to SANSCO was coupled with an ideological shift away from Black Consciousness, towards the adherence to the principles of the Freedom Charter. The latter was, and still is, the underlying philosophy of SASCO, and this helps to explain SASCO's close relationship with the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) and loyalty to the ANC today. With regard to the membership and profile of the organisation (based on information from interviews conducted in 2003), SASCO is relatively large. The Wits branch claimed to have 700 paid-up members out of a total of 25,902 students (undergraduates and graduates) registered in 2004. However, only 300 were said to be actively involved in organising and coordinating SASCO's activities. Out of a student population of approximately 11,000 on the Westville campus, SASCO has 65 paid-up members. SASCO's membership on both campuses is black. Floyd, Chairperson of SASCO's Wits branch, argued that since SASCO is organised by African people, it is largely an African body. He maintained that the lack of involvement by white students in SASCO was not a result of them being less politically aware than their black counterparts. Instead, Floyd suggested that 'if something is organised by whites, you will find whites going there.' At the Wits branch, the gender distribution of the committee and of the executive committee is well-balanced, with five women and six men serving as committee members and two

women and three men holding office in the executive committee (Focus group, December 2003). As in the case of Wits, the gender distribution of the executive committee and of ordinary members of SASCO-Westville is relatively even (Focus group, October 2003).

In comparison, the SSM is a relatively small organisation. According to Solomzi, a SSM member at Wits, the SSM branch on the Westville campus is the biggest, with more or less 180 members. However, during the research visit in October 2003 to the Westville campus (UDW at the time), it came to light that the SSM had collapsed when the key figure at that time left the campus. During a second visit to the Westville campus in April 2004, there was evidence that the SSM had regrouped, as meetings were being held by the SSM to discuss the issue of financial cuts. In terms of the SSM's class profile, Solomzi suggested that the Wits members are 'overwhelmingly middle class,' by which he meant that membership comprises 'students who have had access to alternative education and alternative material to engage with.' The SSM believed that they would have had more appeal amongst working class students, due to the nature of their organisation, yet this does not seem to be the case. In terms of race, the SSM's membership, like that of SASCO, is predominantly black.

SASCO claims to have a 'radical strategic' approach to student activism, which is based on five pillars, namely, campus work, policy work, community work, international work and building a strong student and youth movement (SASCO 2004: 7-9). Campus work is geared towards 'ensuring that SASCO continues to be the leading force in all structures of student democracy [on university] campuses' and ensuring success in SRC elections (SASCO 2004: 7-8). The idea behind community work, and a core aspect of the identity of SASCO members, is that membership of their local communities takes priority over their affiliation to any higher education institution. Quoting from a leaflet on SASCO's history (SASCO 2004: 8) both Floyd (Chairperson, SASCO Wits branch) and Ebrahim (Chairperson, SASCO Westville branch), stated, 'We are members of the community before we are students.' Through its policy work, SASCO is provided with a platform not only to critique current university and state policies, but also to suggest alternatives. In terms of this pillar, SASCO strives towards increased participation in the policy-making process in as far as it relates to higher education. International work involves maintaining an awareness of struggles faced by developing nations beyond South Africa's borders and a commitment to assisting in these struggles where possible.

Being based at an institution of higher learning, issues around education are undoubtedly a crucial item on SASCO's agenda. Their

main concern appears to be that despite the changes that have happened in South Africa, as a whole, democratic transformation does not seem to have filtered deeply enough into the education system. Frans, the political education officer at SASCO-Wits, argued that many of the issues dealt with by SASCO 'stem from the legacy that white people were resourced and black people were not resourced, and these things still affect the black students' academic lives' (Focus group discussion, December 2003). Ebrahim suggested that real democratic transformation in education could be deepened by making education free, since 'education is not a commodity, it is a basic right.'

SASCO also felt that it has a role to play in improving the lot of workers. Ebrahim argued that '[a]s students, our mothers and fathers are workers, so there are common interests between us and workers, and therefore, the challenges faced by the workers become our challenges.' This statement underscores the close cooperation between workers and students in the struggle for justice and equality, which is something that has always been a feature of student activism in South Africa. He suggested that part of SASCO's work involves targeting 'globalisation [and] more specifically imperialism, which we identify as the main cause of the present conditions of the workers. This is the basis on which we emphasise our worker-student alliance.'

The SSM, in addition to championing the cause of the working class, has also been involved in fighting broader social issues such as electricity cut-offs, the war against Iraq, privatisation and the ongoing crisis in Palestine, in conjunction with some of the new social movements in South Africa, such as the Anti Privatisation Forum (APF) and the Anti War Coalition. In its activities, the SSM has tried to link the different struggles on and off campus. In an interview with members of the Wits-SSM, James and Solomzi, the following was discussed: 'We also get respect from communities because we organise around electricity cut-offs. We have started making the connections between the electricity cut-offs and being excluded from the institution on a financial basis and the type of education you are receiving.' Moreover, it was argued that the SSM has continued its fight against financial exclusions on the Wits campus, which is one of the main reasons the organisation was established in the first place.

In their efforts to achieve their objectives, the student politicians have often come into conflict with the university management, especially over the issue of fees. Frans, the political education officer at SASCO-Wits held that '[g]iven the poverty we are encountering, the fees should not be increased' (Focus group discussion, December 2003). In April 2004, Wits University issued a letter stating that, due to the increase in

the enrolment figures, and the subsequent rise in the numbers of students who qualified for financial aid in terms of the National Student Financial Aid Scheme, the full costs of all needy students could no longer be covered. Those under the scheme were informed that their financial aid would be cut by 50 percent. This decision sparked the fury of several students, who disrupted classes and encouraged other students to join in the protest and the police were called in to disperse the angry crowds (Kalideen 2004; Kalideen & Ancer 2004; *Mail & Guardian* 2004). Responding to a letter from a reader published in *The Star* on 21 June 2004 ('Cutting Student Loan Mid-year was a Mistake'), Floyd, as the SASCO Chairperson at Wits, had this to say:

Denying academically deserving, yet poor students a chance to complete their studies is an odious phenomenon that can't be accepted, whenever and wherever. . . [Cutting loans] was a grave sinful act, which would have condemned poor black students to hopelessness and destroyed futures, since they would have dropped out of the university owing lots of money (Shivambu 2004).

SASCO's Wits branch regarded management as 'unsupportive' and maintained that 'we are like rivals to management' (Focus group discussion, December 2003). In this most recent conflict over fees however, SASCO suggested that the government was at fault:

While Wits University management was to blame for the general administration of student funding, we must equally acknowledge that the national government has the larger share of the blame for the shortage of funds. The government must ultimately realise that campuses will be turned into protest and toyi-toyi grounds if student funding is not addressed with due haste (Shivambu 2004).

Similarly, the SSM regarded university management structures and also the capitalist system and neo-liberal globalisation as their biggest obstacles. While SASCO seems to see the government and globalisation as mutually exclusive entities, each responsible for different problems, the SSM's views imply that their condemnation of capitalism and neo-liberal globalisation is simultaneously an attack on the government, since some of its policies endorse a neo-liberal agenda. In the flare-up around financial exclusions on the Howard College and Westville campuses of UKZN in February 2005, for example, SASCO gave the impression that

the root of the problem lay with the legacy of white domination by racist Afrikaners. They consequently felt that they would find a solution by appealing to the current government. The SSM, however, emphasised that the university management, which consists of both black and white staff, was merely doing the government's bidding, and that the ANC was thus to blame for the financial crisis on the campuses. In addition to pointing the finger of blame at 'the government' (either the former white-led, or the current black-led government), both groups of student politicians maintained that the attitudes of certain students were an obstacle. According to Frans, 'there is a new culture emerging and [this] new culture leads to young people in particular not being much interested in things like politics' (Focus group discussion, December 2003).

Over and above the problem of students consciously disengaging themselves from the struggle, the SSM feels that active engagement in a certain type of student politics, namely that espoused by SASCO, presents another problem in the form of 'careerism'. According to Solomzi of the SSM at Wits, students joining SASCO are told that they will be 'guaranteed a job in the state bureaucracy' when they leave the university. 'So here you have a student [who] comes from a township, and [who] would actually want[s] to get involved politically, but we don't have a state job to offer, and SASCO does have that to offer, so they get involved in SASCO [instead]'. During the UKZN protests in February 2005, the SASCO-led SRC, who claimed that management had met all their demands, called off a planned strike. The SSM, however, pointed out that there was no written proof of relevant documentation, such as the memorandum of demands and the agreement by management. They were concerned that SASCO was using the SRC as a vehicle by means of which it could keep students happy, thereby justifying their dominance within student politics, while at the same time protecting its relationship with the ANC, by not engaging in a strike.

Among the middle class black students, the SSM felt that there are also students who wish to distance themselves from the struggle in order to avoid being associated with, or being labelled as hooligans or trouble-makers. These students, according to Solomzi, want to promote the idea that they are attending Wits in order to receive 'a quality education, and not to listen to people complaining about the problems of the world'. In 2002, the SSM organised a march, or what they called, 'a festival of resistance', involving a number of students and workers. Solomzi continued that their toyi-toying was met with a negative response by some black students who allegedly asked, 'What are you doing? This is Wits University. You are embarrassing us.' Ironically, the Wits campus has, since the days of NUSAS, been a renowned site of student struggle

(See Shear 1996 for more in this regard).

In sum, it is argued that in their efforts to fulfil their objectives, both SASCO and the SSM have faced many obstacles. In some cases, these hurdles are the students themselves, or more specifically, non-members of the respective organisations, and, at other times, the university management is the main obstruction. To a limited extent SASCO regards the government as 'the other' i.e. as the opposition, while the SSM points the finger of blame directly at state policy as the root cause of most of the inequalities experienced on the campus and beyond.

Leadership is a key aspect of the identities of the student politicians. SASCO members believed that, as student leaders, they appeal to other students because they 'speak the same language as students.' However, identities are not created in a vacuum, and it is important to consider how others view the SASCO leadership. The SSM, for example, was highly critical of SASCO's close relationship with the ANC. The SSM accused SASCO of encouraging careerism in the ANC, and argued that students are attracted to SASCO precisely for this reason. In his response to this criticism, the chairperson of the UDW branch of SASCO conceded to a certain extent, but gave the following explanation:

In one context, it is true, but in another context it is not true to say that because you are a member of SASCO, you become much more familiar with the politics of the ANC, and you become part of that line of thinking. That ideological context, I think, is part of the congress movement and if you get ANC people who are in government, and let's say there are employment opportunities, then I hope they have tendencies to employ people who are having that ideological background and context. It is not about people going to SASCO for employment; it is about SASCO, or the capacity of such people [SASCO members] to get employment in relevant sectors.

Similar comments were made by other members of SASCO. Frans felt that selecting people from SASCO to occupy positions in the government may, to a certain extent, be justified.

The ANC wants people who understand itself . . . [I]magine I am the secretary of the mayor, and there comes a document which [contains] political concepts and so forth, and personally I would find that nonsense, because I am not used to these concepts, and so forth. There will be

delay of some processes because I will have to wait for the mayor to interpret these concepts, but if I am familiar with these concepts, I may intervene at the level of service delivery and so on and so forth. But also, if you go to any company, they will say that you need experience, so if you have been working in this environment of politics, they know that this one is experienced, because he has been working here and there, so it is part of experience. It is not that we want this thing [careerism] but as a result [of SASCO membership], you become credible to be employed (Focus group discussion, December 2003).

Moses, the Deputy General Secretary of SASCO-Wits, was adamant that careerism would not be tolerated. He argued that '[w]e want to build cadres for the sake of political consciousness and for the growth of the movement itself. We are not building people so that they become mayors and councillors. Careerism is condemned.'

SASCO's Westville campus counterparts were also familiar with the SSM's critique that it is contradictory to say that SASCO is 'fighting for students, when at the same time we are having a relationship with government' (Bongani, Deputy Chair, SASCO-Westville campus). Bongani, however, maintained that SASCO would reject any policy that it felt was 'anti-students', such as the decision by university management to expel students who were not able to pay their fees. Furthermore, he argued that while careerism may have been encouraged in the past, it is no longer the case today: 'This is not an employment agency . . . I think people are attracted to SASCO, because SASCO is talking the issues of students.' Interestingly, these 'ordinary' students do not seem to share this outlook. It is to their views on student life and identity that the discussion now turns.

'ORDINARY STUDENTS': THE MIDDLE CLASS MAJORITY

The brief time spent observing student life on the Wits and Westville campuses during April and May 2004 revealed a world that appeared to be very far removed from the clean, but small and sparsely furnished offices in which the interviews with student leaders were conducted. On the Westville campus, 'the quad'³ was teeming with young students who were either passing time before their next lecture, or catching up with

friends. Some were in pairs, others in bigger groups, all huddled together; not because they were cold, but rather so that they could be in the shade, so as to avoid the glare of the warm autumn sun. While some students were flicking through text books, others were paging through the latest tabloids and fashion magazines, with headers such as 'Do you have a love match?' leaping off the pages. Fashion tastes amongst female students ranged from the casual look (denim jeans, a T-shirt and takkies⁴) to the more glamorous and stylish tailored trousers, tight fitting tops and high-heeled boots or sandals. Most of the male students opted for the casual look; the most noticeable sign that they were following any fashion trend being their gelled, dyed, spiked or braided hairstyles. Regardless of what they were wearing, most clothing items were emblazoned with brand names, the most popular being Puma, Nike, Levis, Billabong (surf gear), Soviet and Calvin Klein.

The Wits campus was largely similar. The most striking contrast between the two campuses was that Wits boasted large grassy areas, with swimming pools and other sports facilities in the background, while most of the Westville campus is made of concrete. The other noticeable difference, of course, was the student profile. On the Wits campus, there was a relatively even spread of African and white students, with smaller proportions of Indian and coloured students, while the overwhelming majority of students on the Westville campus were African and Indian, with only a handful of coloured students, and even fewer whites.

A snapshot survey of 'ordinary' students, revealed a layer of student identities that is very different from the picture painted by student leaders. Most of the students agreed that there was a need for SRCs to exist on university campuses. For example, Mbuso, a black first year mechanical engineering student at Wits, argued that if universities did not have SRCs, 'management would do anything to students.' However, all of the students asserted that the SRC does not adequately represent students. Evashni, a first year B.Com (Accounting) student on the Westville campus claimed that the SRC 'does not represent Indian students' and Evangeline, a white second year BA (Social Work) student at Wits suggested that 'the hostel students need the SRC.' When asked to whom she was referring, Evangeline replied, 'the black students who live in res.'⁵

Since most of the students in this category felt that the politicised student organisations did not represent their interests, they suggested that it was a waste of time to vote in the SRC elections. However, all the

⁴ Trainers.

⁵ University residences.

³ Open square, or quadrangle, where most students spend their time when not attending lectures.

students that were interviewed voted in the national elections which took place on 14 April 2004, more or less a fortnight before the interviews were conducted. There is thus a sense that students are not displaying a complete lack of interest in politics. Instead, they seemed to be calling for a separation of student and national politics. Phindile, a second year B.Criminology student on the Westville campus of UKZN urged student organisations to ‘forget about parties and politics, [because] they are too involved with the [political parties] and they no longer represent us. They represent parties.’ Ntokozo, a first year civil engineering student at Wits echoed these sentiments in his suggestion that ‘student organisations should not be politically affiliated.’ Therefore, most of the students felt that there was no place for politics at university. Instead, they regarded the university as a place ‘for studying’ (Victoria, BA student at Wits); ‘for meeting new friends and broadening horizons’ (Patience, second year, B.Com (Accounting) student at UKZN-Westville campus) and for socialising (Geetha, fourth year Law student, Westville campus and Nolwazi, second year psychology student, Westville campus).

Within this category then, there is a sub-category of ‘academic students’, for whom the experience of student life is centred around the library, writing essays and studying for tests and exams. A larger proportion of the middle class category comprises ‘trendy students’ whose identities are forged around fashion, fun and festivity. To them, campus life means socialising with friends, listening to music and dressing up in the latest trends. These students claimed not to be interested in student politics, saying that it did not serve their interests. Moreover, most of the students in this category, the first year undergraduates in particular, stated that they were not very familiar with the SRC and with student organisations on campus. Mbuso mentioned that he was ‘confused about what the SRC does’ and that ‘there is a gap between the SRC and first year students.’ He suggested that the SRC should meet with the first year students during orientation week to inform them of their activities. Pretty, a first year B.Com (Law) student at Wits complained about not hearing any feedback from the SRC. She stated that ‘we don’t really know what happens between the SRC and management.’ Evashni raised the concern that ‘the only time we see the SRC is during the election campaign.’ Perhaps the simplest, yet most damning, critique came from Nolwazi, who urged for more students should be interviewed: ‘You should talk to other students,’ she said. ‘SASCO tells lies. They don’t know what we want.’ This is quite a powerful statement and a slap in the face for SASCO who firmly believes that it appeals to ‘ordinary students.’ Clearly, SASCO does not relate to, and is, in fact, not speaking the same language, as ‘ordinary’ students.

‘STRUGGLING STUDENTS’: THE POOR MINORITY

There seems to be another group of students to whom SASCO does not relate. These are students who are struggling to make ends meet at university. Although both SASCO and the SSM have some sympathy with these students and would like to believe that they have their concerns on the agenda, the interests of these students are served elsewhere. The SSM put forward a relative deprivation argument, suggesting that many of the students from working class backgrounds are ‘schooling with kids [who] have flashy cell phones, nice clothes, [and who] drive a car. Most of the students aspire to have those very same things’ (Solomzi). Amongst the working class students,

things like struggling are criminalised.⁶ Students from townships find solace in religious institutions, for instance Christian organisations. [These organisations] fill halls with students, and if you look at the character of students [who] are there, [most] of them are overwhelmingly working class students and black students. So they start finding solace and identity within those religious groupings and they start alienating themselves from political struggle and political engagement, because that is criminalised by the institution. [This type of behaviour] is seen as not what progressive students in the twenty-first century at *larney*⁷ institutions like Wits University should engage in (solomzi, interview).

Some students like Sipiwe, a second year mechanical engineering student on the Westville campus complained that the activities of the SRC do not benefit poorer students. While he acknowledged that ‘it is important for the SRC to represent the middleman between students and management,’ he claimed that ‘the SRC does not have our [poor students] interests at heart. The SRC is selfish, and they only help themselves. They don’t use their money in a good way, only to enjoy themselves. They spend money on bashes⁸. There are four to five bashes per semester.’ Sipiwe is the kind of student who would be adversely affected by the financial cuts mentioned at the outset. He compared his experience of student life to a kettle that had reached boiling point,

⁶This term refers to certain behaviour by students being regarded by the university as unacceptable and punishable. The SSM thus suggested that students are made to feel guilty even before they engage in any acts of struggle.

⁷The word ‘larney’ is slang, which is used to describe something that is elitist or exclusive in nature. It is also used in a derogatory sense to refer to white people.

⁸Parties.

suggesting that if you don't turn it off, it boils over. He was implying that problems start to spiral out of control if they are not dealt with. For Siphwe, not being in control meant that his time and energy were focused on how he was going to feed himself and pay his fees, denoting that his studies were neglected.

When asked what the role of the SRC should be, most students suggested that the SRC should assist students with problems related to lectures. Siphwe, however, claimed that the SRC was not at all helpful with in this regard. He said that their response to students with lecture-related problems was, 'We can't help you with that.' Siphwe also suggested that the SRC 'should offer more services to students, such as lifts and financial aid.' The following excerpt shows his lack of faith in the SRC:

There's nobody to talk to, so you isolate yourself. You can't relate to others who are dressed well, you can't afford food in the cafeteria. You're under stress, so you fail, and then the university kicks you out.

CONCLUSION

Judging from the comments by 'ordinary' students, it would appear that there is a definite rift between them and student leaders – one that SASCO, in particular, is oblivious to. This suggests that the notion of student identity upheld by student leaders is very different from that espoused by 'ordinary' students, who feel that they have nothing to gain from throwing their weight behind any particular student organisation, since they do not believe that these organisations, and the SRC as a whole, represent their interests. Ordinary students do not regard the university as a site of struggle, and their idea of what the SRC's role on campus should be differs vastly from that of the student leaders, for whom student politics is closely enmeshed with national politics.

The data provided here represents only a small slice of student activism on South African campuses. At present, SASCO is by far the dominant campus-based student organisation. Links with the ANC have encouraged its growth and prominence. Despite claims that it operates independently of the ANC, one gets the sense that SASCO is groomed and guided to quote lines from a well thought through script. This apparent lack of independence is one of the main reasons for the tension between SASCO and the SSM.

In mapping the different student identities on South African university campuses, it has been suggested in this chapter that the majority of students fall into the middle class, and that this group

has sub-categories, including 'academic students' and 'trendy students.' These categories are, however, not mutually exclusive. There is also a minority of poor or 'struggling students' who feel isolated and who may turn to religion as a source of comfort during difficult times. Lastly, some identities, such as those of the student leaders, are shaped in relation to politics. For them, student life is about challenging university management and sometimes the government, and fighting for the rights of students.

In bringing this chapter to a close, it is suggested that the majority of the 'ordinary' students feel distanced from SASCO and its activities, and their identities are unaffected by student politics. Thus, it would be inaccurate to suggest that there is evidence of an emerging, or re-emerging student movement in South Africa. However, despite the current fragmentation within the student body, the soil is fertile at present for such a movement to grow, and to a certain extent, the seeds have already been sown. SASCO has played a key role in challenging university management and even the government on issues related to student finances. SASCO now needs to bridge the gap between itself, as a student organisation, and the rest of the student body. By doing this, it will equip itself with the tools to create a formidable organisation in the arena of student identity and student politics.

Chapter Thirteen

Local identities and the South African National Civic Organisation

Ndanduleni B. Nthambeleni

INTRODUCTION

This chapter looks at the shifts in identities within civic associations in South Africa. Drawing on the findings from my master's thesis and also from my current doctoral research, I will show how civic identities have changed over time. The focus is on the transformation that took place from the pre-1994 period, when civics operated at the local level, but, importantly, also identified very strongly with the national struggle, to the post-1994 situation, where, at local level, the civic movement is vibrant. Yet it has virtually disappeared from the national scene, despite efforts by the South African National Civic Organisation (SANCO) to nationally coordinate all civic activities in South Africa. SANCO was formed in 1993, largely in response to grievances by community members who were dissatisfied with the government and basic service provision. Further, as a national coordinating body, SANCO was able to act as a watchdog by monitoring development and democratisation processes in the country. However, since the 1994 and 1999 general elections in South Africa, SANCO's national profile has declined and its national leadership has been severely criticised for failing to champion the cause outside the African National Congress (ANC). South African civic organisations are disappointed and disillusioned and are choosing to opt out of SANCO. This partly explains why, today, civics have stronger local identities, and why the fervent national ones that they had prior to 1994 are waning.

Before the 1994 general elections, civics played an active role in mobilising communities and operated at local levels with strong national

identities. Due to their relations with the United Democratic Front (UDF), civics were drawn into the political arena and mobilised opposition against state structures. As civics became politicised, they continued to align themselves with the ANC as most of the problems experienced by residents of poor local communities were rooted in apartheid. Civics linked national and local issues, arguing that key civic issues could not be resolved without important national changes in the local government system and in political power itself. In contrast, in the post-apartheid period, local civics have embraced local identities. They are opposed to SANCO's stance of claiming to be a national civic coordinating structure and they accuse the body of failing to address community issues by not championing the cause of the poor. Overall, SANCO is criticised by local civic organisations for neglecting to act as a watchdog for local communities.

The findings from my interview-based research in Alexandra and Tembisa townships suggest that there is growing discontent within SANCO-local branches with regard to the operations of SANCO. Alexandra is situated in the northeastern side of Johannesburg. It is a small area of about 3.5 square kilometres, and is wedged between rich white suburbs such as Sandton and close to a light industrial 'buffer'. The township is on a hillside, which slopes from west to east into the valley of the Jukskei River. Founded in 1912, it was one of a small number of townships where the government allowed Africans to buy stands and build their own houses. In the 1930s and 1940s, urbanisation increased rapidly as massive numbers of 'squatters' inundated the towns in search of better fortunes. A fraction of these new inhabitants settled in Alexandra where, because of a critical housing shortage, they constructed tin and wooden shelters in the yards of formerly privately-owned homes. They were met with grinding poverty in this new urban environment.

Tembisa is located northeast of Johannesburg, between Kempton Park to the south, Midrand in the north and Halfway House to the west. Residents of Tembisa work in the factories of Isando, Modderfontein and Olifantsfontein and in the shops and homes of Kempton Park, Edenvale and Pretoria. As with many South African urban townships, Tembisa is characterised by informal settlements, crime, and high rates of unemployment. Local civic activist Bongimusa Phakhathi of Alexandra asserted in an interview that there is growing discontent within SANCO local branches with regard to its operations, to the extent that the SANCO-Alexandra as well as the Tembisa branches have disengaged. It is important to mention, however, that the dissatisfaction with SANCO in Alexandra and Tembisa townships does not imply that

there is widespread frustration within all SANCO local-branches. For instance, in townships where there are no huge housing problems, like Mpheni, a rural area in Limpopo Province, local civic structures are content with SANCO's performance. Local civic leader of Mpheni, Mavhungu Khwathani, contended that SANCO is still regarded as well positioned to deal with issues of under-development and to foster crime prevention strategies in the community. Unlike Alexandra and Tembisa, Mpheni does not have problems with informal settlements and many of its residents, most of whom are Vhavenda and Shangaan-speaking, have formal dwelling structures. This example draws out another key point, namely that there is great diversity between various locales. Many civic stalwarts challenged SANCO, arguing that as a national coordinating body SANCO ignores regional diversity. It fails, so they argue, to recognise that grassroots struggles are about dissimilar issues in different areas, that there are differences between urban and rural areas, and that a long history of civic activism and community involvement in political activities at grassroots levels, such as with Alexandra and Tembisa, can influence the outcome of SANCO's efforts.

OVERVIEW OF CIVIC ASSOCIATIONS IN SOUTH AFRICA

Civic associations are autonomous voluntary organisations whose strength lies mainly in their ability to lobby over local issues. They focus on community mobilisation, which is directed at transforming people's understanding of their social and political environment rather than just eliciting support for a political cause. Civic associations are also depicted as a special type of community-based organisation because of the inclusiveness of their membership and their non-partisan stance. Yet their strategies are multi-faceted; both confrontational and consultative. Swilling (1993: 16) defines civics as localised grassroots organisational structures that are accountable to local constituencies. They address the local grievances that residents have with their conditions of daily living, and are located outside formal governmental, party-political or developmental agency institutions.

In South Africa, civic organisations played a critical role in the democratic transition. As representatives of civil society they emerged at the local level out of a long tradition in black communities of collective association around basic needs. The South African civic movement, according to Sachikonye (1995: 48), first mushroomed in the late 1970s and consolidated itself in the mid-1980s. He argued that the basis for the emergence of these mass organisations could be traced back to the colonial type subjugation of blacks by apartheid rule. This emergence

laid the conditions for the consolidation and strengthening of the national liberation and mass democratic movement inside the country. The formation of civics was triggered by a steady deterioration in the standard of living, which was exacerbated by an economic recession that led to further inequalities. Economic disparities contributed to the building up of a consciousness that valued collective action above individual efforts. Although communities created civic organisations as a response to the horrifying living conditions in the black townships, they were also seen as organs of people's power through which, amongst other things, the transfer of political power from the white minority regime to the oppressed black majority would be procured. According to Lanegran (1996: 116), civic members originally focused their energies on obtaining everyday necessities such as housing, electricity, water, sewage and reasonable rents. However, civics increasingly directed their attention towards addressing the root cause of economic and social hardship in townships, namely the exploitative apartheid system. Civics linked the struggle for bread-and-butter issues with the struggle of defeating the apartheid regime, arguing that key civic issues cannot be resolved without significant changes at a national level. They accorded themselves the sole right to organise and represent communities, on the grounds that in the absence of democracy the townships would be vulnerable to the machinations of the apartheid state. Civic organisations in South Africa have, therefore, been central to citizen participation and in establishing a tradition of activism in civil society.

In the early 1980s, civics spearheaded rent and consumer boycotts, and co-ordinated opposition against attempts by the apartheid government to impose Community Councils and Black Local Authorities on unwilling townships. Civics were at the centre of resistance to the programme of oppression that the state sought to implement. Studies of apartheid structures indicated that the day-to-day struggles were waged at the local level in areas that were dominated by ordinary people. Collective action soon broadened to the national level, mainly through the formation of the UDF in 1983. Civics became more closely aligned to the UDF, which was leading the resistance movement in the absence of banned political organisations. Before the formation of the UDF, civics acted independently of political organisations. Alongside the UDF, they were able to achieve their policy objectives by mobilising people to place pressure on those with political and economic power. Through the formation of the UDF and the fight for national liberation, civics developed a strong national identity, especially in the mid-1980s.

The former Mayor of Greater Johannesburg, Isaac Mogase, indicated that civic activists did not initially see local civics as political structures

and the majority of members were not ANC members. Mogase argued that the coordination of civics was mostly around leaky roofs, water bills and rent. However, when the struggle against apartheid intensified and, in particular, with the formation of the UDF in 1983, civics played a central role in the ANC's strategy of making townships ungovernable under the organisational impetus of the UDF (Mogase, interview). They became a key element of the strategy pursued by the UDF, which owed allegiance to the principles of the ANC and acted as a substitute for the banned movement during the 1980s. Civics looked at the ANC as the symbol of the struggle, but operated autonomously from the ANC and whatever coordination existed between these organisations was provided by the UDF (Kitchen & Kitchen 1994: 41). However, after the unbanning of the ANC and the disbanding of the UDF, most civic organisations came together to form SANCO.

SANCO AND LOCAL CIVIC BRANCHES

In contrast to their operations as autonomous voluntary associations, with the formation of SANCO civics adopted a unitary constitution that restricted this autonomy by defining local civics as branches of the national organisation. SANCO became the supreme civic movement, and spoke on behalf of more than 2,000 affiliated civic associations. The constitution adopted by SANCO at a conference on 14 February 1993 required that all local branches should dissolve their own local constitutions and refrain from negotiating with municipal authorities. They should also cease all fund-raising activities because funds would be collected by a national office and subsequently allocated to branches. The official ideology of SANCO depicted civics as independent, non-party political formations that remained rooted in 'civil society', and not contenders for local, regional or national governmental power (Swilling 1993: 1).

SANCO strived to give the civics a presence at the national level by imposing its centralised organisational structure on the civic associations. SANCO's organisational structure is a unitary and constitutional one, which follows a pattern that looks exactly like the ANC organogram. The organisational structure of SANCO is divided into national, provincial, regional and local units. Each level has a 15-member elected working committee. The national executive committee, the highest body of SANCO, includes a working committee elected by the national conference and provincial chairpersons and secretaries. The working committee includes the president general, deputy president, national chairperson, secretary general, deputy secretary general, treasurer

general, national organising secretary, and nine heads of departments. The national structure of SANCO plays a political role, formulating policies and controlling finances (Heller & Libhongo 2001: 17).

The first president of SANCO was Moses Mayekiso, a leader of the National Union of Metalworkers of South Africa (NUMSA). He played a substantial role in the Alexandra Civic Organisation (ACO) and the Civic Association of Southern Transvaal (CAST). CAST, the first regional civic structure, was formed on 15 September 1990. This followed the signing of the 'Soweto agreement' by 38 Transvaal civic associations, which resolved to continue with mass action such as rent boycotts until both black and white local authorities were dissolved. Between 1990 and 1992, CAST was the most prominent civic structure and many other civic associations became affiliates of CAST. In 1993, CAST became the Southern Transvaal region of SANCO. However, some of CAST's affiliates, including the Soweto Civic Association (SCA), refused to join SANCO (Friedman 1991: 107). The reason for their objection was that the establishment of SANCO implied that civic associations had to disband and be replaced by SANCO branches. In contrast, the Tembisa Civic Association gave way to the SANCO-Tembisa branch, arguing that SANCO pledged to give all local civics a presence at the national level.

The leadership of the SCA was concerned that SANCO's ties to the ANC would undermine civics and particularly the non-partisan character of the movement. The former president of the SCA, Isaac Mogase, maintained that the reason they did not join SANCO was due to SANCO's stance on the issue of funding. He explained that SANCO wanted control over funding while the association preferred to continue to raise its own funds, as they had always done. However, in 1994, the leadership of the SCA decided to adopt the constitution of SANCO at a general meeting held in Soweto attended by 600 delegates. The majority of delegates voted in favour of disbanding the association in favour of SANCO. However, some members still objected. The SCA was eventually given six months to disband in favour of the Soweto branch of SANCO (Nthambeleni 1999: 74).

CIVICS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

In the post-apartheid period, which has opened up new frontiers of struggle, civics have shifted from confrontational politics to transformational politics and are subsequently redefining their identity. The central question facing civic organisations in a post-apartheid South Africa is the form they should take if they are to continue to survive. The national civic organisations' space for transformational politics

seems to have declined. Part of the reason for this shift lies in the disintegration of civic branches at grassroots level, which, according to Gumede (1997: 20), can be attributed to the centralised structure of SANCO and its relations with the ANC.

Seekings (1998: 1) outlined four broad reasons to explain how community organisations that were active during the struggle against the apartheid regime became marginalised in post-apartheid period, and why such processes are common after social change. Firstly, he argued, there might have been changes in the nature of popular discontent, which refers to the grievances that motivated people to participate or support protest movements. Secondly, the institutional environment or political opportunity structure may have changed and this may have caused the aggrieved people to seek other channels through which they could address their grievances. Thirdly, civics may have lost access to resources that enabled them to express or address their supporters' grievances effectively. In the case of SANCO, this was caused by their failure to effectively raise funds. With the introduction of democracy in South Africa, organisations that were supporting the anti-apartheid struggle, and therefore institutions like SANCO, ceased their financial support. For example, SANCO had mainly depended upon external sources for funds. Major donors in 1991-1992 included the USAID and International Centre for the Swedish Labour Movement. Two years after the 1994 general elections the USAID ended its funding, and as a result eight staff members were retrenched at SANCO national headquarters. Lastly, civics as representatives of civil society in South Africa might have made strategic or tactical choices that served to marginalise them.

Mzwanele Mayekiso, younger brother of Moses Mayekiso, offered some reasons for the disillusionment around SANCO, and hence the rejection by local civics of the national body. Mzwanele was the former president of the ACO before his expulsion from SANCO. In 1998, together with other disgruntled former SANCO members, he founded the National Association of Residents and Civic Organisation (NARCO), and became its first president. He is currently a senior lecturer in the school of architecture and planning at the University of the Witwatersrand. Mzwanele Mayekiso (1996: 276) suggested that the decline of SANCO after 1994 was a consequence of the decision by its leadership to give an entire layer of its staff, mainly those in leadership positions, to government. This left a vacuum in the leadership structure of SANCO. Moreover, SANCO was further crippled by incidents of corruption. Jacobs (1993: 30) argued that as a national civic coordinating structure, SANCO has failed to represent civics. SANCO has hampered the strength of local civic organisations, because the local civics were

required to dissolve their constituencies and surrender their autonomy and local accountability.

Like Seekings, Klandermans, Roefs and Olivier (2001: 8) argued that 'since the 1994 elections, civic organisations have lost their representative functions because, with the end of apartheid, social solidarity within communities, which had been engineered by anti-system politics, begin to fragment, and the flow of external resources, upon which South African voluntary associations were so dependent, began to dwindle.' Seekings (1998) suggested that SANCO should have been sensitive to differences between town and countryside in terms of levels of development. The co-ordination of civics under SANCO also posed a top-down approach, where higher tier structures dictated terms to lower tiers. Further, SANCO was formed as a national organisation that seeks to represent all civics on a national level, but from its inception, SANCO was faced with the difficulty of coming to grips with post-liberation politics. Its greatest challenge was its inability to cut links with the ANC. Moses Mayekiso argued that SANCO should be closer to the trade union movement than to political organisations. Not only has SANCO, since the 1994 elections, lost most of its leadership to the government, but also, as Moses Mayekiso argued, SANCO did not fulfil its important role of acting as a watchdog for its member's interests, which the organisation pledged in 1993.

Ali Tleane is a Tembisa civic stalwart who also became the president of the SANCO-Tembisa branch. He is currently the secretary general of NARCO. According to Tleane, SANCO placed itself in a difficult position because of its political alliance with the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP). Tleane insisted that SANCO should adopt an aggressive political position that resembled the civic movement in the 1980s (Seepe 2000a: 8). He felt that the close relationship between SANCO and the government makes it difficult to distinguish between the two. Most of SANCO's leaders occupy official positions, either as members of provincial parliaments or as local councillors. For example, SANCO's chairperson in Gauteng, Richard Mdakane, is also ANC Chief Whip in the provincial legislature. Despite the strong alliance between the ANC and SANCO, there have also been reports of serious tensions between the two organisations. Both organisations held summits to improve their relations. At the February 1997 summit, SANCO presented a report that referred to a looming breakdown of political linkages between SANCO and the ANC at various levels. Evidence of this included the expulsion of SANCO from the ANC Alliance in the Transkei, the closure of SANCO offices by ANC officials, the anti-SANCO propaganda distributed in the Limpopo Province, and

the refusal by ANC leaders to hold meetings with SANCO leaders. The tension between SANCO and the ANC even resulted in Transkei's SANCO regional leadership announcing its secession from the national organisation. They cited, as their reasons for withdrawal, dissatisfaction with the organisation's ANC ties, its promise to support independent candidates in the 1999 elections that was never met, and the dropping of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in favour of Growth, Employment and Redistribution Strategy (GEAR) (Gumede 1997: 5).

Deteriorating relations between the two organisations prompted the leadership of SANCO to suggest that they might convert SANCO into a political organisation. A discussion document in 1999 proposed that the civic organisation would transform itself into a political party to challenge the ANC in the local government elections (Seepe 2001: 2). However, Mlungisi Hlongwane, the current president of SANCO, rejected such proposals, arguing that SANCO would not become a political party and would not accept expelled ANC members. He further stated that SANCO would have no relevance if its intention were to compete with the ANC. He concluded by saying that the organisation would not consider becoming a political party at any time (Kindra 2002: 2). Regardless of warm rhetoric from the leadership of SANCO, it is evident that SANCO's capacity to influence ANC policy has diminished sharply. This can be shown by the role played by SANCO in the local government negotiations forum of 1993, when the organisation was overshadowed by the ANC in the final negotiations.

In addition to the rapid turnover of SANCO's top leadership and its contentious relationship with the ANC, SANCO is experiencing financial problems. Funds that were regarded as contributions to the struggle against apartheid and for representative democracy, dried up as soon as the ANC government was elected in 1994 (Seekings 1997: 8). A membership fee of R6.00 (about US\$1), which was prescribed by SANCO's constitution, should have been collected and then divided between the different levels of the organisation. This, however, did not ensue, as SANCO was unsuccessful in collecting membership fees from all of its branches. SANCO's national office may have been able to procure membership fees had it equipped regional offices with self-supporting structures to do so, and had it allowed the local civics to raise their own funds. Moses Mayekiso, the former president of SANCO, suggested that the funding dilemma experienced by the national association made it difficult for SANCO to pay its staff. Civics in different regions, therefore, have to occasionally negotiate with local institutions to pay salaries or to fund a project. Because of lack of funds,

the SANCO national structure agreed that civics could negotiate their own approaches as long as those agreements were free from corruption. 'We could act as consultants, even at a national level, to secure funds for the organisation. But we have to be careful that civics are not used in a corrupt way, such as to help one developer compete against another' (Mashabela 1994: 12).

However, it was not long before accusations of corruption began to plague SANCO. In Cape Town, some developers wooed SANCO leaders through the promises of holidays, computers and other offers. The same happened in the Free State province, where it was alleged that SANCO helped developers win contracts in return for large donations to SANCO's coffers. Additionally, there were cases of fraud and mismanagement of a joint venture by SANCO to sell policies on behalf of a US insurance group. This shift by SANCO into the business world was highly criticised by Mzwanele Mayekiso. His publicly expressed reservations led to his expulsion from SANCO, which provoked the Gauteng provincial branch to threaten its secession if he was not reinstated. However, there are many divergent explanations for his expulsion from SANCO. Some have suggested that he was expelled because he prioritised his own interests above those of the organisation, while others suggested he was expelled because he was uncooperative and arrogant. Others make the case that Mzwanele Mayekiso tried to make the SANCO Research Development Institute (SRDI) autonomous from SANCO and sought to secure the grant for himself. Still others argued that Mzwanele Mayekiso was expelled from SANCO because he questioned the strategic direction of the civic body (Seekings 1997:14).

FROM NATIONAL TO LOCAL IDENTITIES

In the post-apartheid period, civic organisations have undergone an identity shift. The uneasy and contentious national-local dynamic in SANCO has opened up the field for civics to renegotiate their identity. The first factor that complicates the relationship between local branches and the national body is the difference in focus. At the local level, SANCO branches are preoccupied with fighting for services in the communities, organising boycotts against municipal authorities and, for example, encouraging illegal reconnections of electricity through Operation Khanyisa (Khanyisa is a Zulu word meaning 'to light'). At the national level, on the other hand, SANCO's leadership supports the recovery plan of paying the outstanding debts of municipal services and cut-offs. Local level action is becoming more urgent, however, especially

in the context of rising unemployment, acute levels of poverty, and large-scale outsourcing of services, all of which can be regarded as consequences of globalisation. Local civics are actively trying to meet people's basic needs, and, as a result, have superseded the national SANCO body in the eyes of local communities.

The second, and important, dynamic that throws the identity of civics into question arises out of the disillusionment with SANCO. There is, firstly, disaffection with SANCO as a body. SANCO local branches have accused the national structure of being weak and ineffective. For example, the leadership of SANCO-Wattville branch condemned SANCO's national leadership for its poor handling of a dispute with Eskom (Victor, interview). Furthermore, local branches have been more effective than the national organisation in fighting for services and in removing corrupt officials (Klandermans, Roefs & Olivier 2001: 9). Thus, in the post-apartheid period, local civic branches have re-emerged and have assumed direct responsibility for creating a framework for participatory democracy and significant forms of local collective action. Another point of dejection is SANCO's top-down approach where higher tier structures dictate terms to lower ones. Local SANCO branches often criticise SANCO's method of operation that contradicts the norms of transparency, consultation and democratic participation. As a result, tensions have surfaced between the ANC and branches of SANCO, for example in the Eastern Cape and Northwest.

Secondly, there are problems with SANCO's leadership. In addition to cooptation struggles, local SANCO branches criticise SANCO's national leadership for undermining and compromising the autonomy of local branches (Seepe 2000b: 5). Finally, SANCO's relationship with the ANC has caused a major rift between the local branches and the national body. Local civics have opposed SANCO's leadership being part of the tripartite alliance and complained of it supporting the privatisation of services at the expense of poor communities. In many townships, there are reports of rivalry between the ANC and local civic branches. For instance, the regional and national leadership of SANCO criticised local SANCO branches for pitting their candidates against candidates from the ANC in the local government elections in 2000. By way of explanation for SANCO's continued alliance with the ANC, despite widespread opposition, Siphwe Thusi, secretary of SANCO's Gauteng region, argued that SANCO still regards the ANC as the only legitimate organisation that is championing the rights of the poor and the marginalised, and is the only political organisation committed to steering the cause of transformation in the country.

The three factors mentioned above have led to a situation where

civic activists are beginning to stress local concerns. Thus, local branches often take positions and organise protests that are contrary to the provincial and national stance. Thus, despite the existence of a national body, local identities are re-emerging, largely due to organisational politics. Conversely, before the formation of SANCO in 1993, when the civics were local organisations, identification with the national struggle was strong, and efforts were made to cultivate a national identity. In accounting for the shift in identities from the national to the local level, Thusi argued in SANCO's favour, claiming that it is a progressive organisation that is responding to the challenges posed by the post-apartheid politics. He argued that it is at branch level where basic associational practices that define a civic take place.

CONCLUSION

SANCO's formation in 1993 was an important endeavour in the pursuit of coordinating the activities of civics in South Africa. Through a consolidation of efforts, it was felt that the civics would represent a more formidable force against the apartheid government and that their objectives could be reached more effectively. It was also envisaged that local and regional processes and actions would be brought in line with national goals. However, the failure of SANCO in playing its watchdog role and in finding a meaningful position in post-apartheid South Africa has placed the organisation at a crossroads, and has encouraged several local civics to redefine their identities. The inability of SANCO to gain momentum on local issues has led to it being sidelined and renders the organisation weak in playing a meaningful role in the post-apartheid period. As a consequence, there is evidence of a shift in identity within local civics that seems to contradict SANCO's political identity at the national level. Before the formation of SANCO in 1993 civics operated at the local level, with a strong national identity because of their involvement in the fight against the apartheid regime. Currently, civics are actively embracing local identities because of disillusionment and dissatisfaction with SANCO. Civics are also mobilising to meet basic needs at the local level, largely due to the ineffective provision of these at the national level. These local efforts are likely to intensify, since, due to globalisation, the poor are becoming marginalised even further. Despite the fact that the coordination of civics in the form of SANCO was aimed at providing local civics with a strong voice on national politics, most civics are no longer keen on being part of the national coordinating structure, and are more committed to pursuing goals as localised civic organisations.

Chapter Fourteen

Afterword: for a South African sociology

Michael Burawoy

IF THERE'S A signature tune to South African sociology it is engagement. This refreshing collection of studies of everyday life, ten years after the fall of apartheid, continues this tradition with a flourish and a difference. Written by students under the energetic, encouraging and guiding eyes of Peter Alexander and his two collaborators, Marcelle Dawson and Meera Ichharam, these ethnographies refuse to make of South Africa a special case, a case apart from the rest of the world, but instead locate it within the rest of the world, adapting approaches to globalisation, such as those of Manuel Castells, Doreen Massey and Gillian Hart to their own purposes. The originality of their engagement with South Africa's social fabric becomes clear in historical perspective.

Precisely because it is engaged, South African sociology has always reflected the features of the society it seeks to grasp. When I was in South Africa in 1968, working as a journalist, I was hard pressed to find a sociology. When the rest of the world seemed to be in revolt – this was the year of the Prague Spring, of the Biafran War and of student revolt across the globe – South Africa was uncannily quiet. The Black Consciousness Movement was beginning to stir across the campuses of South Africa but it had not hit the headlines. Afrikanerdom had reached the apex of its repression, so confident both in its ideology and in its domination that the *verligte* fraction began pressing to release capital from some of the rigidities of apartheid. Then, after decades of government subsidies and sponsorship, Afrikaner capital had come into its own, sharing with English capital an interest in the stability and flexible deployment of African labour. Representatives of this same capitalist class would later privately negotiate with the African National Congress in exile.

In the post-Rivonia years the South African police state killed, imprisoned or expelled oppositional forces. While some assembled in the military camps of Umkhonto we Sizwe in Tanzania, others set up sociological camp in England. Entering the expanding social science departments of British universities, the exiles were captivated by the resurgence of European Marxism, especially the French variety. It seemed tailored to their engagement at a distance with South African struggles, making a virtue out of a necessity. Althusser, Poulantzas and Balibar insisted that the Communist Party make a space for theoretical practice, turning against the 'immature' humanist Marx and embracing the scientific structuralism of the mature Marx. With South Africa far away this band of white male sociologists, led by Harold Wolpe, Colin Bundy and Martin Legassick, and including such young figures as Mike Morris, David Kaplan, Rob Davies and Dan O'Meara, appropriated French Marxism to understand the specificity of the South African articulation of modes of production, the composition of its ruling class, and specific relative autonomy of its state. Fixated on the structures of capitalism, they asked and answered how South Africa had lasted so long, appeared so impregnable, precisely when, ironically, its final unravelling began in the 1970s. Only Jack and Ray Simons, old warrior communists of a different generation, also in exile, would pay attention to the history of struggles in their classic social history, *Class and Colour in South Africa 1850-1950*. But even they ended on a despairing and abstract note, that the pressure cooker of capitalism would eventually explode the irrationalities of a colonial superstructure, unleashing a South African socialism.

All along things were astir in South Africa, beginning in 1973 with the Durban strikes, moving forward to the Soweto uprising of 1976, unleashing an inflammatory confluence of labour and community struggles in the 1980s. Against these struggles French Marxism looked awkwardly flat footed, unable to come to terms with the struggles they had not foreseen. After 1968, and after the end of the academic boycott, I next came to South Africa in 1990 to attend the annual meeting of the new multi-racial – yes multi-racial – Association for Sociology in Southern Africa (ASSA). I was astonished by the vibrancy and engagement of its sociology, an oppositional sociology, linked to the expanding labour movement and civic organisations. South Africa was on fire! The South African Communist Party staged its coming out in a celebratory mass gathering in Alexandra township. While the Marxists had been arguing the world in England, an indigenous oppositional sociology, involving such figures as Eddie Webster, Ari Sitas, Jackie Cock, and a new generation that included Wilmot James and Blade Nzimande,

collaborated with a South African working class that was taking apartheid by storm. Out of this cauldron developed the theory of social movement unionism – two decades before the concept gained currency in American sociology – as well as sophisticated debates about the proper stance of intellectuals to the movement and the apartheid state.

The authors of *Globalisation and New Identities* are the post-apartheid inheritors of this august tradition. We can see the legacy in some of their articles but with a difference, they turn from the ebbing movements to their underlying lived experience which they then locate in a world context. Thus, Chris Bolsmann tackles the fate of Volkswagen workers, not in the restricted context of anti-apartheid struggles but in a globalised world of competition. German workers no longer see South African workers as allies bedevilled by apartheid but as a threat to their livelihood. Carina Van Rooyen examines the fate of female farm workers as the bottom rung in a highly competitive export economy of flowers. Post-apartheid deregulation has brought unemployment to many and downward spiralling conditions of wage labour to most. We may call it the informalisation of the South African economy, joining other countries of the Global South, as Meera Ichharam shows in her comparative study of garment workers.

No study of South Africa would be complete without an ethnography of gold miners, and Marlize Rabe fills the gap. The world market in gold moulds employment practices that in turn shape the multiple forms of family structure and fatherhood. The abstract Marxist accounts of the reproduction of labour power are now enriched with an experiential diversity of family separation and unity. Family life is inevitably accompanied by the threat or reality of the AIDS pandemic. The spread of AIDS among mine workers is especially virulent, a fact not unrelated to the pressures of competition in a world market as well as the legacy of colonial despotism. Working out from a hospital in Johannesburg, Sandra Roberts focuses on the struggles of individuals, communities and movements to counter the ubiquitous stigmatisation of people with AIDS – a crucial first step to containing the disease.

Globalisation can appear as a distant force that disrupts, distorts, destroys everyday life, but it can also be deployed as a set of connections that transcend national boundaries. That was tenuously the case with the Volkswagen and garment workers, and certainly true of religious groups such as the Muslims studied by Zahraa McDonald and the Jewish women studied by Nina Lewin and Maria Frahm-Arp. One cannot but notice that the transnational connections described in this book go east and west but not north to the rest of Africa. Taking the linkages in that

direction would reveal, as Darlene Miller has for Zambia, the everyday world of South African sub-imperialism, carried out in the name of African Renaissance. South Africa not only sustains invading waves of global forces it also sends them back out into the surrounding territories.

Globalisation also affects the images and identities we deploy to organise our lives and in this regard South African youth are most receptive to external cultural forms. Whether it be Maritha Marneweck's internet chatrooms or in Lucert Nkuna's shopping mall, where the children of the new multi-racial bourgeoisie assemble, identities are consumed and manufactured as though geographical boundaries hardly exist. Even Kurai Masenyama's study of national television finds national identity to be elusive and weak, subverted in multiple directions by global stimuli and local hybridity. In the realm of politics Marcelle Dawson's study of student activism finds a withdrawal from national issues to matters of bread and butter that affect the possibility of effective learning. Even the South African National Civic Organisation, studied by Ndanduleni Nthambeleni, comes under attack from its members for failing to be responsive to local needs. All these studies show how globalisation constitutes and is constituted by the spreading of localised interests and identities – quite a transformation from the intense national politicisation we associate with the anti-apartheid struggles.

What overall picture of South Africa emerges from this collection of ethnographies? It is one of proliferating identities, organisations, movements, forming a national mosaic with strong local flavours. Post-apartheid South Africa has opened itself up to a kaleidoscope of global forces resulting in social chaos – an image so different from the 1970s Marxist account of repressive state regulation of capitalism or the 1980s movement sociology targeting the overthrow of apartheid. Now the political project is lost in a cacophony of voices, shaped in unpredictable ways on the terrain forged between globalisation and localism. Gone is the South Africa exceptionalism, and instead we encounter a country buffeted by global storms – the perfect place from which to study globalisation. While the presence of the past can always be discerned, nonetheless the world described in these accounts is indeed distinctively postmodern in its detachment from history.

How much is this portrait of South Africa a reflection of its social order and how much a reflection of the students who chose the sites, and the interests they took to those sites? Of course, it is impossible to neatly separate the two as the authors are themselves shaped by the emerging post-apartheid world. Still, one cannot but note that whereas the 1970s Marxism was developed by a band of young white men in

exile and the 1980s movement and labour sociology was also dominated by whites and still largely male, by contrast among these twelve youthful researchers there is but one white male, half are non-white (three black African, two coloured and one Indian), and three-quarters are female. While still under-representing previously subjugated populations, this profile has surely affected the choice of topics, the lived experience examined, the techniques of research adopted. As important as the racial and gender demographics is the fact that these students and teachers, none of whom had a PhD in sociology at the time of writing, are deeply embedded in a world beyond the academy, many with heavy family responsibilities, holding down one or more jobs as they pursue their studies. They do not have the resources to distance themselves from the world around them. They are not insulated in the academy but part of the very social fabric they describe.

As resources flowing to universities decline, as independent research becomes even more difficult in the face of heavier teaching loads and inadequate wages, so we can expect embedded research of an ethnographic character to become ever more common. It will be taxing and exhausting but it will be engaged and critical. It will produce a committed social science that will turn private troubles into public issues, bringing social theory to bear on lived experience. The future of South African sociology, willy nilly, will depend on cultivating the ethnographic imagination, on the sort of dedication exhibited by this team of collaborators. With ethnography even a little state funding can go far.

We should not think of ethnography as a poor person's sociology, but a rich person's sociology – a person rich in needs and talents, a sociology bristling with imagination, giving voice to the interests and needs of diverse publics, empowering those publics by helping them locate their problems in relation to others, helping them identify the broader forces restricting their freedom. South Africa has an opportunity to pioneer such an engaged public sociology, and multiply resolute collaborations, such as this one and its companion, *Beyond the Apartheid Workplace*, put together by Eddie Webster and Karl von Holdt. Taxing and exhausting though they are, the fruits are clear. Such collective endeavours provide a remarkable education for the participants, but more broadly they can replace sterile text books with the immediacy of live research, more easily assimilated by inquiring students, setting examples for others to probe further. As a compendium of ethnographic research they draw on, but also add to, cosmopolitan bodies of social theory as a necessary vehicle for interpreting daily lives, and they thereby contribute to a world sociology.

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