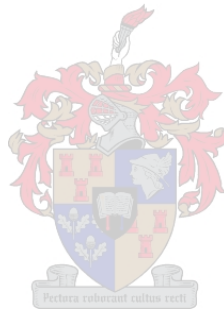


CHANGING IDENTITIES IN URBAN SOUTH AFRICA:  
AN INTERPRETATION OF NARRATIVES IN CAPE TOWN

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Promoter: Prof. Simon B. Bekker

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## **Declaration**

By submitting this dissertation electronically, I declare that the entirety of the work contained therein is my own, original work, that I am the owner of the copyright thereof (unless to the extent explicitly otherwise stated) and that I have not previously in its entirety or in part submitted it for obtaining any qualification.

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## **Abstract**

Identity reflects and aims to control one's experience. It is an act of consciousness which is neither essential nor immutable but a social construct open to change as circumstances, strategies and interactions fluctuate. It needs therefore to be situated historically and relationally, as identity is a matter of social context. This thesis sets out to investigate processes of identity formation in post-apartheid South Africa, i.e. a context marked by deep changes at both symbolic/material structural levels, in particular within the urban set-up. On the basis of focus group discussions with residents of Cape Town, various, and at times contradictory, strategies of identification are explored. Residents' discourses are analysed on the basis of two entry points, that of the context or the 'scale' within which discourse occurs (from the local, to the urban, the national and the continental) and that of the traditional categories of class, race and culture. The narratives that urban citizens draw upon to make sense of their lives and environment illuminate the emergence of new social boundaries among citizens which, though volatile and situational, reveal a changing picture of South Africa as a nation.

## **Opsomming.**

Identiteit weerspiëel, en probeer beheer uitoefen oor, ervaring. Dit behels 'n bewussynsaktiwiteit wat nog essensieel nog onveranderbaar is, maar eerder 'n sosiale konstruksie wat verander volgens wisselende omstandighede, strategieë en interaksies. Dit moet derhalwe beide histories asook sosiaal gesitueer word omdat identiteit 'n saak is van maatskaplike konteks. Hierdie tesis verken prosesse van identiteitsvorming in 'n veranderende Suid-Afrikaanse stedelike milieu. Die ontplooiing van verskeie, soms teenstrydige, strategieë van identifisering is ontleed op grond van 'n reeks fokus-groepbesprekings met inwoners van Kaapstad. Afhangende van konteks en 'skaal' – plaaslik, stedelik, nasionaal en kontinentaal – beklemtoon inwoners se diskoerse grense tussen 'n 'Ons' en 'n 'Hulle' wat vorige toegeskrewe ras-kategoriëe of weer voortbring of uitdaag.

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## 1. Introduction

Plurality ... is basic to the human condition. We are distinct from each other, and often strive to distinguish ourselves further... We know of no people without names, no languages or cultures in which some manner of distinctions between self and other, we and they are not made' (Calhoun, *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*).

Any city, however small, is in fact divided into two, one a city of the poor, the other of the rich, these are at war with one another, and in either there are many divisions, and you would be altogether beside the mark if you treated them as a single state (Plato, *The Republic*).

The era we live in, that of late modernity according to Giddens (1991), seems to be caught in a double bind. In the words of Touraine, 'the political balance between progress and tradition, between being and doing, between ascription and achievement, has been upset. We are in a society of achievement, but we are also witnessing a return to ascription, to national, ethnic, religious, local, sexual and family identity' (1998: 169). On the one hand, people throughout the world are becoming increasingly similar as they partake in shared cultural forms, norms and values which characterise our global village; on the other hand, late modernity emerges as the point 'where modern untying of tied identities reaches its completion' (Bauman, 1996: 49). On the one hand, it is a time of heightened individualism, of dilution of societal solidarity, of eclectic lifestyles and growing claims to autonomous subjectivity and self-realisation, a time when individuals, cut from former communal bonds, are finally free to choose who they want to be; simultaneously, as Hobsbawm points out 'never was the word "community" used more indiscriminately than in the decades when communities in the sociological sense became hard to find in real life' (1994: 428). Difference appears under a variety of forms from violent ethnic mobilisation, regional parochialisms, racism and xenophobia, religious fundamentalism as well as in movements about gender and sexual orientation so that 'the urge to express one's identity, and to have it recognized tangibly by others, is increasingly contagious and has to be recognized as an elemental force even in the shrunken, apparently homogenizing, high-tech world of the end of the twentieth century' (Castells, 2002a: 197). Claims for recognition, generically termed 'the politics of identity', have successfully challenged former assimilationist policies to bring about a multicultural model of accommodation of identities,

exemplified by the expansion of the notion of human rights to minority rights. In sum, concerns around highly centred and coherent subjectivities expected to disappear with modernisation have undergone a process of re-legitimisation (Comaroff, 1996).

The apparent tension between universality and radical alterity occupies centre-stage in contemporary social science debates to the extent that identity has become ‘the watchword of the times’ (Shotter, 1993: 188). Simultaneously, though identity and its politics are probably the most mundane characteristic of today’s world, its emergence and persistence cannot be explained by a single causal factor: identities are encoded in specific circumstances which are endogenous to where they occur (Otayek, 2000). Two important social contexts may be noted regarding the subject of this thesis, i.e. ‘changing identities in Cape Town’: the urban context and the post-apartheid social order in South Africa.

Cities have long concentrated both diversity and cosmopolitanism, both homogenisation and heterogenisation processes. This double characteristic of urban environments world-wide was sharpened by globalisation. On the one hand, cities are the main locus of the global culture of consumption and associated commodified norms and values. On the other hand, cities concentrate the biggest discrepancies between the rich and the poor (Marcuse, 1994); they are the sites of unfulfilled expectations of participation in the shared standards of life promised by urban dwelling. Cities are increasingly spaces of socio-economic divisions and inequalities, and subsequent encampment of homogenous communities, or what Davis has called the ‘bad edge of post-modernity’ (1990). Internationalisation of capital and state withdrawal from its role in economic norms-setting has accelerated social polarisation both between and within cities. On the one hand, economic and labour restructuring which characterises the new informational economy has given rise to sectoral growth in advanced services and high-technology manufacturing, promoting a new economic elite embedded in transnational networks. On the other hand, deindustrialisation fuels the growth of a surplus population no longer employable within the formal economy, as well as the proliferation of the informal sector and urban criminal economy. Polarisation in occupational structure in turn finds expression in differences of lifestyles and spatial segmentation so that ‘alienation occurs between social groups, social norms and spatial areas’ (Castells, 2002a: 307). This urban

structural dualism promotes collective violence as a means for the urban poor to claim political and socioeconomic rights associated with democratic citizenship, especially in countries where the expansion of these rights is a recent addition of democratic transition (Holston and Appadurai, 1999). The criminalisation of the urban poor is responded to by ‘market forms of justice’ (Holston and Appadurai, 1999) such as privatisation of security and of public spaces, and the emergence of enclosed residential neighbourhoods in global cities – a process which Davis termed the ‘south africanisation’ of urban spatial relations in American cities, where the crossing of ‘the apartheid divides of rich and poor communities’ (1990: 135) is increasingly restricted through social control.

While South African metropolises such as Johannesburg and Cape Town have been increasingly described as both dual and global cities by analysts, identities constructed in these urban environments are the product of a specific historical context. Apartheid was a matter of identity from above, a system based on the formal recognition of collectivities and their spatial and institutional segregation within a system of separate and unequal development symbolised by the 1950 Group Areas Act and Population Registration Act. Apartheid laws separated the officially defined races in all sectors of society – marriages, religious, media and educative institutions, labour unions, job reservation, public amenities, and residential segregation, leading to an impoverishment of identity choices among the citizenry. Simultaneously, opposition to apartheid counteracted with similar singularisation of identity, in the name of the fight against a common enemy.

In post-apartheid South Africa, it has been argued that no longer subjected to apartheid social engineering, South Africans are now free to explore, choose and express their identities (Crawhall, 1999). This thesis focuses on the changing nature of identity formation in post-apartheid Cape Town against the backdrop of shifting social, economic and political conditions at both local/urban and national levels.

Chapter 2, titled ‘Theoretical premises on the notion of identity’ addresses changes in conceptualizations of identity from a given and fixed entity to notions of autonomy, fluidity and reflexivity. While current theorisation on the concept of identity remains divided, the

tendency is to highlight agency over structure (Mamdani, 2002). This chapter explores the possibilities of identity choices offered by the current era, as well as continued structural determinants limiting such choices. As Giddens (1991) aptly points out, structure is both enabling and constraining, laying to rest both the idea of overt determinism of human action and the notion of a free and autonomous agent inscribed in post-modern theories. Variations in theoretical premises will be connected to the subjective and ideological background of analysts, associated to their perception of identity as ‘a threat’ or as having a positive value.

Since this thesis aims at studying the ‘changing’ nature of identities constructed by residents of Cape Town, Chapter 3, titled ‘Reviewing and periodising the literature on South African identities’ explores the various ways in which heterogeneity has been conceptualised in South Africa over the past two decades. As a concept deeply embedded in apartheid ideology and policy, ethnicity was long considered a taboo subject by academic research, either rejected *a priori* or accepted unconditionally. Transition to democracy in the country, and renewed interest toward cultural identities within international social theory opened this field of research in South Africa, beyond the ideological territory of the right. Subsequently, scholars’ interest shifted away from the race/class debate to notions of multiculturalism within a civic nation. Recent studies seem to suggest renewed interest within scholarship towards class/race-based identities, in particular as these are being claimed ‘from below’, at local-territorial level.

Chapter 4, titled ‘Epistemological premises, choice of methodology and limitations of field research’ focuses on the selection of a research methodology adapted to a view of identity which is contextual, situational and relational – a methodology which could reveal identities which are lived rather than merely documented (Sichone, 2004) and which would allow for the politics of identities and negotiations between various affiliations to emerge at both individual and group level. Large studies on identity tend to rely on quantitative methods of research for practical reasons. However, in such studies, research often ends up being descriptive and reifying, rather than explanatory, shedding very little light on the ‘how’, ‘why’ and ‘what for’ of identity construction. While qualitative research is presented as a methodology appropriate to the study of identities in this thesis, Chapter 4 highlights its

limitations both in general terms and in the ways it was conducted for the purpose of this study.

Given that the thesis argues that identities in post-apartheid South Africa are constructed within a context marked by new symbolic and material conditions, Chapter 5 titled 'Contextualising the study locally and nationally' starts with a short exposé of macro-economic developments in the country over the past decade. The chapter proceeds with a more detailed overview of elements of change and permanence which have characterised Cape Town since 1994, in particular regarding access to residential space and distribution of economic opportunities.

Chapter 6, titled 'Interpreting the results: identity narratives in the city of Cape Town', presents the results of empirical research conducted in this city over a period of six years (1999-2005). Residents' narratives are analysed at three scales – the local, the city and the country – and sub-categorisation within these three sections is derived from commonalities and variations in residents' discourse over these three themes.

Chapter 7, which concludes this thesis, considers the various identities that scholars have found, at various times, to be primary among the citizenry in the light of the empirical evidence gathered from focus group narratives.

## **2. Theoretical premises on the notion of identity**

The term identity became popularised in the social sciences in America in the 1960s and was subsequently diffused into public discourse, gaining particular popularity under its vernacular usage of 'identity crisis'. It has become a favourite word within journalistic vocabulary and has spread to all fields of human sciences, appearing in the title of an increasing number of publications.

Different disciplines have addressed issues of identity in various ways and have produced a substantial body of theory and research. In fact, it appears that the flexibility of this notion has enabled researchers to use it to frame questions that are of particular interest to them. This has led Goldberg and Solomos to argue that the question of identity has 'taken on so many different connotations that sometimes it is obvious that people are not talking about the same phenomena' (2001: 5). As any popular watchword, the concept itself has taken a protean character, leading scholars such as Brubaker (2001) to call for its complete abandonment. Given such polysemic nature, some clarification is needed of the various theoretical premises underlining the use of the notion of 'identity' in this thesis.

### **2.1. Identity: from 'essence' to 'social construct'**

In the past three decades, perceptions of social identity within social sciences have changed dramatically from notions of inherited affiliation to that of social construct. It is often argued that modernity has opened up identities as the dissolution of close traditional communities has enabled new forms of identification to emerge. Identity in pre-modern traditional societies was largely perceived as undifferentiated, socially derived, fixed to a position and unproblematic. Individuals were viewed as having one integral self which remained stable over time. Simultaneously, scholars have reminded us of the fact that 'people have long inhabited multiple social worlds at the same time' (Calhoun, 1995: 46) through transnationality (Wallerstein, 1974) and multidirectional migratory patterns, leading to subsequent cultural mixity, cosmopolitanism and the sharing of knowledge across geographic areas. Multilingualism, linguistic creolisation and religious syncretism were therefore as 'natural' a



phenomenon as monolingualism or religious orthodoxy, in pre-modern societies. In this sense, 'hybridisation' as a process is both unremarkable and as old as history (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001b), albeit a phenomenon clearly accelerated by globalisation and the emergence of a network society with its associated weakening of boundaries.

The progressive dissolution of traditional bonds and the parallel rise of modern individualism have shed new light on the various layers of, and the many actors involved in, identity construction. 'Identity is people's source of meaning and experience' argues Castells (1997: 6). It cannot be understood as an inherited trait or 'as reflecting an ontological, immutable reality or an essence' (Martin, 1999: 189) but as a biographical construction which must be situated both historically and relationally. The notion of identity as a social construct has several theoretical implications.

In the first place, social constructionist arguments challenge essentialist assumptions that individuals have a singular/integral identity which they carry for the duration of their lives. 'From the moment we are born, our personal identity is changing, incorporating new elements and dropping old one' (Dascal, 2003: 155). Despite the ambiguities of the term 'individual', which suggests internal cohesion, we are not 'self-same' (Calhoun, 1995: 50). Selves are divided internally as various affiliations or 'consciousnesses' to use du Bois' terminology, are contested and negotiated by individuals through their daily lives. Identity, therefore, is something that we are constantly becoming, rather than something that we are, and a process rather than a state of being: it is a project always under construction (Calhoun, 1995), a 'threshold' or 'a space in between' (Krzyzanowski and Wodak, 2005). Since the concept identity implies both sameness and difference, it is as much a discourse on 'oneself' as it is on 'others' and from 'others': there is indeed 'no self outside a social frame, setting or mirror' (Appadurai, 2004: 67). According to Hall, 'identity is not only a story, a narrative which we tell ourselves about ourselves, it is stories which change with historical circumstances.... Far from only coming from the still small point of truth inside us, identities actually come from outside, they are the way in which we are recognised... without others there is no self, there is no self-recognition' (2001: 285-286). The fact that identity is relational, situational and contingent has led a number of scholars to question the legitimacy of the term itself, pointing

to the fact that it is semantically tied to permanence (Melucci, 1996), and contains reifying tendencies. Brubaker (2001) in particular suggests its replacement with the term identification which, he argues, captures more aptly the situatedness and elasticity of the notion of identity.

Given the multiplicity and complexity of self-identities, constructionists challenge essentialist accounts of collective identities, whereby a collectivity is supposed to be characterised by a set of core features, shared by all of its members and no others (Calhoun, 1995). Derived from the Latin root *idem* (sameness), the word identity is therefore misleading: only the close, almost organic imaginary community of Tönnies, could fit the strict model of sameness that the term suggests. There is 'no single subset of properties – no 'common denominator' – shared by all individuals displaying a given 'cultural identity' (Dascal, 2003: 156). As Calhoun argues, difference is basic to any society and comes along infinite dimensions. Differences are also often cross-cutting so 'we cannot understand all problems of difference from the presumption that each raises the challenge of radical alterity [and] total otherness' (Calhoun, 1995: 97). In other words, difference should not be used to claim that all those who differ from others in one way must be the same to each other as 'groups never wholly supersede the individuals who constitute them' (Calhoun, 1995: 97). Since the individual is socially constituted through intersubjective relations with others, difference and commonality are always co-constructed and groupness must be understood as a process which is contingent; it is a constant state of construction and deconstruction, rather than a given condition.

Accordingly, although often presented as homogenous entities, nations or cultures are neither unitary, nor static entities (Sen, 2004). They are internally divided objects which are continually reshaped through contestation and negotiation. 'No culture, past or present, is a conceptual island unto itself, except in the imagination of the observer.... Dissensus of some sort is part and parcel of culture ... a shared culture is ... no guarantee of complete consensus' (Appadurai, 2004: 61-63). In this sense, nations are 'imagined communities' (Anderson, 1983), whose existence depends on a 'daily plebiscite' in the words of Renan. Nations are entities in which individuals participate to varying degrees, for various reasons and to which individuals ascribe different scripts of meaning. Despite common sense assumptions around the notion of culture, cultural entities are not frozen in time immemorial or a matter of mere

'pastness' as those who emphasise the artefacts of traditions and customs would like us to believe. Cultures, as noted by Barth (1995), are in a constant state of flux, constructed in the minutiae of everyday life. Without the recognition of its dynamism, culture is mere folklore or stereotype, a museum-ised or 'dysneified' entity which has been reduced to a commodity to be displayed, performed, and potentially purchased according to Bissoondath (1994). Cultures are subjective and performative. As Moscovici suggests, 'it is possible to infuse a strong personal meaning into shared symbols which continue to be approved by a large part of society' (1988: 220-221). Ways in which individuals experience a shared religion, a national sentiment or an ideology vary widely, thereby creating a subjective imaginary of a culturally shared set of images. 'Culture is not some external straightjacket but rather multiple suits of clothes, some of which we can and do discard because they impede our movements' (Harris, quoted in Rubenstein and Crocker, 1994: 118). Despite claims of religious zealots to monopoly over 'true' definition of their faith communities, notions of 'non-practicing Christian' or 'non-practicing Muslim' as French footballer Zinedine Zidane describes himself underline the various meanings religious affiliations can take on. As Wieviorka aptly points out, 'the Islam practiced by young people in France is very different from the Islam of their parents, but it is nevertheless Islam' (1998: 903). Similarly, according to Bissoondath (1994), one can describe oneself as Hindu because of family and background, and yet not believe in or insist upon Hinduism.

In the African context, Mbembe (2002a) argues that meanings attached to 'whiteness' or 'blackness' have undergone numerous changes in the postcolony: 'although the "white condition" has not reached a point of absolute fluidity that would detach it once and for all from any citation of power, privilege, and oppression, it is clear that the experience of Africans of European origin has taken on ever more diverse aspects throughout the continent. The forms in which this experience is imagined – not only by whites themselves, but also by others – are no longer the same. This diversity now makes the identity of Africans of European origin a contingent and situated identity' (264). This belief is shared by Appiah in regards to notions of African-ness and ethnicity: 'like all identities, institutionalised before anyone has permanently fixed a single meaning on them... being African, is for its bearers, one among other salient models of being, all of which have to be constantly fought for and re-

fought... as the constantly shifting redefinition of tribal identities aims to meet the economic and political exigencies of the modern world' (2001: 226).

In sum, no collective or social representation is either fixed in time or uniformly shared, despite heartfelt nationalists' efforts to stress the quasi essential similarity of the nation's members. Changing national, ethnic, linguistic or religious affiliation is not only possible, it is a common occurrence, as is the multiplicity of cultural belongings. In Gutmann's words, 'not all people are as multicultural as Rushdie but most people's identities, not just Western intellectual and elites, are shaped by more than a single culture. Not only societies, but people, are multicultural (quoted in Wieviorka, 1998: 883).

Thirdly, the notion of social construction points to a constructor in identity. Processes of identity construction are complex and involve a range of competing actors leading Calhoun to argue that 'because our various identities may be contested, and because a range of agents seek to reinforce some and undermine others, there is always a politics to the construction and experience of identity, not just following from it' (1995: 233), a politics that is trying to determine what one ought or want to be (Ynvegsson and Mahoney, 2000). On the basis of this argument, Brubaker questions again the validity of the term identity. Identification, he argues, would allow us to specify the agents who are doing the identifying (the individual, the group, the state, an anonymous and diffuse actor such as 'public discourse', etc), and enable subtle differences to become visible in the process of identification: *identification as*, for instance, seems to suggest an external source while *identification with*, an internal process of self-identification.

Calhoun argues that despite the existence of a plurality of actors in identity production, social constructionist analysis can be as determinist as primordialist argumentation in its negation of differences within collectivities. Diffuse social pressures or cultural discourse, processes of socialisation or the omnipresence of social structure are often presented by constructivists as alternatives to biological causation which leads to a frequent neglect of individual differences and positions within groups. The cultural determinism inscribed in recent civilisational studies such as that of Harrison and Huntington (2000) exemplifies such neglect, with terribly biased

results when a connection is made between culture, rational instrumentalism and development or lack thereof. According to Wacquant (1994), common conceptions of the poor within American urban sociology tend to reify the dispossessed as a single group characterised by a set of shared behaviours, motivations and values which in turn leads to lumping them together under the derogatory category of the ‘underclass’. This label exoticises ‘antisocial’ behaviours and transforms ‘sociological conditions into psychological traits’ according to Portes (quoted in Wacquant, 1994: 264). The ‘loathsome imaginary of the “underclass”, an identity that nobody claims except to pin it on an Other’ (Wacquant, 1994: 235) purports to denote a new segment of the minority poor allegedly characterised by behavioural deficiency and cultural deviance. The ‘pathologies’ of the so-called underclass which are exemplified ‘by the defiant and aggressive gang member and the dissolute if passive teenage “welfare mother”, twin emblematic figures whose (self)-destructive behaviour’ (Wacquant, 1994: 232) represents the ghetto as an autonomous social entity that contains within itself the principle of its own production and reproduction. The ghetto is therefore conceived of as an alien social space, as being ontologically different from mainstream America, in a way which approximates the allocation of essential differences to the poor and blames the victims for their own dispossession. Such constructivist assumptions therefore are accused of negating individual agency and will in the identity choices individuals make for themselves and the various identity strategies which can be found within various communities.

## 2.2. Identity: autonomous choice and agency

Recent scholarship has highlighted the triumph of individuation, i.e. the replacement of great historical narratives (liberalism, socialism) by ‘the recognition of individual lives as narratives’ (Touraine, 1998: 169). Anthony Giddens is one of the leading sociologists who have articulated a view of identity formation in times of late modernity based on the primacy of individual agency and subjecthood. Giddens’ point of departure is that the self has a need to maintain an ‘ontological security’, which he defines as ‘a psychological state that is equivalent to feeling “at home” with oneself and the world, and is associated with the experience of low or manageable levels of anxiety’ (Cassell, 1993b: 14). Modernity has introduced new prerequisites in the management of ontological security according to Giddens (1991). In pre-

modern cultures, the low level of time-space distancing meant that ontological security had to be understood in relation to contexts of trust and forms of risk that were anchored in local circumstances. Social relations were constituted locally through four main institutions: the kinship system, the local community, religion and tradition which organised the brunt of social practices. While providing strong communal solidarity, those institutions depended on a strict social order, a system of clearly defined roles firmly based in tradition. Accordingly, identities in pre-modernity were largely ascribed by membership to an all-encompassing collectivity, the existence of which was socially and unproblematically recognised. Changes in self-identity were staked out and ritualised on the basis of a rigid framework of time and space.

The modern world, characterised as it is by a separation of space and time and a 'disembedding' of social relations has changed significantly the balance between social trust and risks. Globalisation in particular has extracted social/trust relations from local contexts of interaction, creating new determinants or 'dilemmas' for the individual to maintain his or her ontological security. Ties to nature, locality and kinship have progressively been replaced by distant social influences operating through what Giddens calls 'abstract systems' and expert knowledge. Accelerated social change created a world marked by numerous uncertainties, which in turn led to the need for individuals to construct 'self-actualisation suitable to a period of "radical doubt"' (Cassell, 1993b: 33). Life ruled by knowledge and information rather than tradition and religious cosmology has become 'reflexive', indeed always subject to revision by the autonomous actor. Accordingly, in post-traditional societies, identities are self-constituted: they have become 'reflexively organised' endeavours. 'What to do? How to act? Who to be? These are focal questions for everyone living in circumstances of late modernity – and ones which, on some level or another, all of us answer, either discursively or through day-to-day social behaviour' (Giddens, 1991: 70). Freed from former traditional ascription, the individual is now able to choose between various 'lifestyles'. The 'reflexive project of the self, which consists in the sustaining of coherent, yet continuously revised, biographical narratives, takes place in the context of multiple choices as filtered through abstract systems' (Cassell, 1993: 33). Communities that derive from such individual choice are based on what Giddens calls 'pure relationships'. Compulsory duties that characterised traditional communities have been replaced by contingent obligations. 'We can no longer count on the presence of a network of

kin to provide us with trustworthy companions; at the same time we are freed from the necessity to provide such companionship to relatives whose company we find unrewarding' (Cassell, 1993: 31). Communal belonging therefore is constantly re-evaluated through a process of individual reflexivity, and is meant to last only as long as its members experience the rewards of such belonging (Bauman, 2001).

Calhoun (1995) follows a similar line of argumentation in regard to the multiplicity of contexts within which individuals are said to be able to make identity choices in the modern era. This multiplicity of contexts, he argues, encompasses the plethora of contending cultural discourses, of 'value spheres' and of 'recognisable identities' which compete with each other in the public domain and over individuals' definition. Such multiplicity and the contrariety it generates between various self-definitions, make the building of 'integral selves' an uphill task. This variety, which he opposes to the uncomplicated set of socially sanctioned affiliations of earlier societies, also complicates, according to Calhoun, the quest for recognition. 'It is not simply... that it matters more to us than to our forebears to be who we are. Rather it is much harder for us to establish who we are and maintain this own identity satisfactorily in our lives and in the recognition of others.... Self-knowledge is never altogether separable from claims to be known in specific ways by others' (Calhoun, 1995: 194-196). Drawing from Taylor, albeit without Taylor's cultural premises, Calhoun emphasises the importance of recognition in the ability of the individual to 'be who he wants to be', to lead a good life and be able to be reflexive in his or her actions. Recognition allows individuals to live a life of 'dignity' without suffering the consequences of social devaluation of one's identity. Recognition by others and by social institutions of 'one's rights and one's belonging become pivotal for the final grounding of one's belonging' (Krzyżanowski and Wodak, *forthcoming*). This human need for recognition (which shaped the feminist slogan that 'the personal is political') is said to explain the numerous battles for the recognition of identities in the public sphere which have been taking place in various multicultural societies.

Simultaneously, notions of individual agency in the formation of identities in times of modernity, as well as assumptions of the plurality of identifications have been questioned by a number of analysts. Plurality 'is a source of stress and contradiction in both self-representation

and social action' according to Castells (1997: 6) who argues that under specific circumstances, in order to erase the contradiction between multiplicity of the self and the imperatives of collective action, a primary identity that is self-sustaining across time and space, and 'that frames the others', emerges 'to prevail over others' (1997: 7).

Furthermore, emphasising individual choices and autonomy in identity construction can lead to a neglect of the process of internalisation of identities imposed on individuals by external sources or processes. As Mamdani aptly questions 'while the tendency now is to highlight agency, not structure... is it not true that we always choose from a limited menu?' (2002: 493). The main benefit of social constructivism, i.e. its ability to show by whom, from what, how and why identities are constructed (Castells, 1997) leads also to its main criticism. Indeed, deconstructing the social and cultural historic processes through which identities come into being and traditions are invented (Hobsbawm and Ranger, 1983) should not lead to an *a priori* dismissal of their significance in individual lives as both a resource for collective action, and as the basis for the organisation of social networks. As Comaroff argues, 'the fact that a social category is "ontologically empty" does not mean that it cannot come to exert an implacable political force' (1996: 166). Similarly, Darbon contends that the category 'ethnic group' or that of 'race' in itself does not exist but it can exist for itself and therefore deserves to be studied as meaningful social categorisation and mobilising strategy for collective action especially in a unstable context of ethnically differentiated access to material and symbolical resources (Darbon, 1995). In this regard, the fact that race has no substance does not mean it is not productive of groupness. Pointing out the social construction of race and its reproduction through the ideology of racism in South Africa, for instance, does not obviate the fact that cultural meanings have been attached to phenotypes which have come to be widely accepted. As Alcoff has argued in the American context, 'race is irrelevant, but all is race' and '...in the very midst of our contemporary skepticism toward race stands the compelling social reality that race, or racialised identities, have as much political, sociological and economic salience as they ever had.... Race may not correlate with clinical variations, but it persistently correlates with statistically overwhelming significance in wage levels, unemployment levels, poverty levels and the likelihood of incarceration' (2002: 15). The US government taxonomic efforts inscribed in the infamous 'one drop of blood' rule continue to permeate American



consciousness and explain difficulties among its population to apprehend mixity and creolisation in others (Sichone, 2004). In other words, the fact that identities are invented should not lead to their quick dismissal since ‘imagined’ communities may be the only ones which exist (Walzer, 1992a).

Identity exo-assignment can take several forms, from identities ‘enforced through slavery’, as in the case of forced enrolment of the youth in ethnic militias during the conflict in Congo (Pottier, 2003), to the re-appropriation of negatively assigned labels as in the ‘Black is Beautiful’ campaigns of the 1960s on the basis of which African Americans challenged stigma by reversing the discrediting trait as a source of pride.

It has become common within post-modern analysis to proclaim the loss of meanings attached to the ‘grand legitimating narratives’ (Lyotard, 2003) of modernity, narratives of liberalism, socialism and nationalism. ‘The grand narrative has lost its credibility, regardless of what mode of unification it uses, regardless of whether it is a speculative narrative or a narrative of emancipation.... Grand Narratives do not problematise their own legitimacy; instead they deny the historical and social construction of their own first principles and in doing so negate the importance of difference, contingency, and particularity’ (Lyotard, quoted in Sewpaul, 2004: 3). The state, however, remains a powerful identity-constructor and the initiator of ‘powerful cultural narratives that compel us to situate ourselves in one place or another’ (Yngvesson and Mahoney, 2000: 78). The state as Bourdieu argued is the guardian not only of legitimate physical violence, but of legitimate symbolical violence as well. To a large extent, nationalism continues to define individuals’ location in the world, maybe ever more so as people are increasingly made aware of who they are through the always increasing restrictions on international mobility. National identities remain central to the way individuals mobilise feelings as they arise during international sport events or national catastrophes for example.

In his classification of identities (and their origins), Castells argues that ‘legitimising identities’ are ‘introduced by the dominant institutions of society to extend and rationalise their domination vis-à-vis social actors... they become identities when and if social actors internalise them, and construct their meaning around this internalisation’ (1997: 7-8). Public

discourses of legitimation reflected in policy statements, vehicled by the media and vulgarised through daily conversations and anecdotes, constitute ‘an active compelling and a pervasive part of the fabric of social life serving not merely to reflect society and social formations but as constitutive of society’ (Wetherell and Potter, 1992: 60). In other words, public discourse does not simply give an interpretation of reality; it shapes reality. Post-modern analyses of identities which emphasise issues of individuation, negotiation, performance and everyday practices of the self (Mbembe, 2002b) and view discourses from above as ‘empty myths’ with no echo on the ground or the ‘fantasy of arrested cultural development’ (Gilroy, 2000: 13) have been contested by a number of scholars. In the African context for example, Sindjoun reminds us of the fact that by focusing exclusively on the fluidity of identities and so-called popular or urban practices, the postmodern discourse ignore the importance of official discourses that remain sources of identity rigidity (2002). Popular narratives, Sindjoun argues, often parallel those of the elite, in a process of internalisation of official narratives. ‘The official nature of these narratives should not lead to their quick dismissal as if popular narratives and practices had a monopoly of legitimacy’ (Sindjoun, 2002: 19).

More generally, the emphasis given by scholars to notions of agency, subjectivity, contingency and reflexivity in identity formation in our era has been questioned on the basis of two lines of argumentation: on the one hand, the importance of material-structural determinants in identity construction in times of the widening gap between the rich and the poor is highlighted; on the other hand, the continued relevance of symbolic identities in times of global cultural homogenisation is pointed out.

### 2.3. A limited agency: material-structural determinants of identity

Dating back to the Weberian division between ‘identity-based communal action’ (*Gemeinschaftshandeln*) and ‘rationally regulated social action’ (*Gesellschaftshandeln*), a frequent distinction in the study of identities is made between aesthetic/symbolic and instrumental/utilitarian communities, between *abstract* attachments (to tradition, culture, religion, and the general need to belong in times of globalisation) and *functional* attachments (Krzyzanowski and Wodak, *forthcoming*), which point to affiliations based on individual

interests, often articulated in material terms. The latter category has sometimes been perceived as falling outside the realm of identities and identity politics. According to Brubaker for instance (2001), using an identity explanation of social and political action is to explain it in a non-instrumental fashion. Such explanation according to Brubaker privileges particularistic understandings of the self (through race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation) rather than universal self-interests, and have had particular success in America because of long-term resistance to social analysis articulated in terms of class. Appiah shares this belief in the non-rational nature of identity formation (which he opposes to the process of rationalisation that is inscribed in the study of identity): indeed, ‘identities are complex and multiple and grow out of a history of changing responses to economic, political and cultural forces, almost always in opposition to other identities... They flourish... despite... their roots in myths and lies. And... there is... no large place for reason in the construction – as opposed to the study and the management – of identities’ (Appiah, 2001: 227-228).

While offering a more nuanced version of the assumed opposition between the politics of interest and the politics of identity, Calhoun strongly criticises instrumental understandings of motivation which, he contends, have kept social theorists from fully appreciating the importance of identity politics. Sociologists, he argues, faced with claims from individuals to pursue an identity project, often choose to explain the phenomenon by drawing on some objective underlying factor, ‘the most common candidate being rational self-interest’ (Calhoun, 1995: 222). However, ‘neither identities nor interests neatly come before the other; the struggle to achieve what we believe to be in our interest shapes our identities as much as the identities determine what we see as in our interests... neither is altogether fixed’ (1995: 216). He further argues that while identities may remain unchanged, what people perceive to be in their interest may evolve as individuals develop different needs and better wants. In addition, because individuals host a plurality of identities, internal tensions among a person’s various identities and group memberships mean that acting on certain identities will frustrate others (Calhoun, 1995; Martin, 1992). Those tensions between the individual’s various identifications cannot be easily resolved through utilitarian compromise. Involvement in ethno-nationalist claims for instance, according to Calhoun, cannot be simply equated to either mere manipulation of individuals by ethnic charlatans, or the pursuit of rational self-interests.

People ‘marked by class inequalities may nonetheless join in a common process of participation in the creation of meanings and values’ (Calhoun, 2003b: 559) through a shared culture which may well appear as natural rather than optional to their members. Acts of heroism and self-sacrifice sometimes involved in nationalist struggles, Calhoun argues, often express an understanding of values and human nature in general which does not equate rationality to simple individual self-fulfilment since self-realisation sometimes depends exclusively on group realisation, irrespective of the level of affluence of the individuals involved. In sum, one cannot simply conceive of identity politics as restricted ‘to the affluent “post-materialists” as though there were some clear hierarchy of needs in which clearly defined material interests precede culture and struggles over the constitution of the nature of interests – both material and spiritual’ (Calhoun: 1995: 216).

A similar argument has been put forward by Gilroy in his study of race relations in Britain. In particular, Gilroy criticises self-interest arguments based on the assumption that class interests exist in a positivistic fashion and do not need to be created (in opposition to affiliations based on ‘false consciousness’ according to Marxist theorists), leading to the beliefs that ‘economic relations have a primacy in determining the character of race politics’ (1992: 9). Gilroy further contends that the reluctance to study race as a motivational factor is based on the false belief that the abolishment of race as an analytical concept will lead to the disappearance of racism, a belief which in turn leads to a neglect of how race as a political category is formed, experienced and reproduced.

In contradistinction to this first group of theorists, Bauman makes a very clear distinction between the communities of the rich and the communities of the poor. He argues that the fashionable communitarian discourse of today masks deep differences in the nature of community that is sought out by both groups. The former are those truly able to enjoy the opportunities of self-creation, self-realisation, and self-assertion which Giddens conceived of as typical of our period of late modernity. Freed from traditional diktats, the rich in Bauman’s opinion, are indeed able to take on full accountability for their identity. The poor however ‘find the rights they have been told to carry and enjoy pretty useless when it comes to making... ends meet’ (Bauman, 2001: 23). On the one hand the elite (or what Bauman calls

metaphorically ‘the tourists’) are able to adapt to ubiquitous and quick obsolescence which characterises ‘liquid modernity’ and the consequent need for high levels of flexibility. They build transient communities, devoid of long-term commitments, and valid ‘until further notice’. They live a life of endless experimentation with identity choices, drawing guidance and reassurance from experts’ knowledge. Bonds between members of these aesthetic communities are superficial and perfunctory, friable and short-lived. Social obligations become secondary since the elite is not likely to need, or benefit from, the type of long-term commitments traditional communities provided for. In particular, societal commitments which were the basis of the welfare state and universal redistribution, this ‘communal insurance against individual misfortune’ (2001: 50), is not only of no use to them, but antinomic to the meritocratic principles which form the very basis of their dignity. Dignity for the rich is therefore found in the denial of community.

In complete opposition to Calhoun’s argument, Bauman contends that the economic elite constitutes the ‘natural culturalists’ (2001: 60) who are the main actors of identity politics in America, of the new ‘cultural left’ which advocates a politics of difference focusing on minority or ‘lifestyles’ movements (gay, women, African American). Following Bauman, a number of scholars have argued that cultural claims are not only overlooking issues of wealth redistribution but stand in the way of poverty alleviation measures. ‘What about recognition of the steepest difference of all, which is the world’s development gap?’ asks Nederveen Pieterse (2001b: 219). The ‘reconnaissance battles’ based on particularist claims make collective fight against social inequalities difficult by allowing ‘the growing supply of individual anxiety and fear generated by the precariousness of our lives to be channelled away from the political arena... by blocking its social sources’ (Bauman, 2001: 88). Indeed, since the will to be different must be shared (or found and imposed) in order to be claimed collectively, ‘boundary drawing’ tends to downplay internal divisions, such as those based on socio-economic status.

At the other end of the spectrum, the poor (or the ‘vagabonds’ in Bauman’s metaphorical lexicon) are the true victims of the ‘risk society’ (Beck, quoted in Bauman, 2001), of our times of contingency, of a society from which the state has largely withdrawn from its role of ‘norm-setting supervisor of labour relations’ (Wacquant, 1993) and disengaged from its social duties.

As the gap between rich and poor widens both within and between societies, the quantitative majority is unable to adapt to our times of flexibility and downsizing. Confronted to a state of *précarité permanente* ('permanent precariousness') in the words of Bourdieu, in a context of decreasing social solidarity, the poor are the ones who long for 'the cosiness of the tribal camp-fires.... Ethnic herdings and confessional flocking together take over when the collective responsibility of the *polis* fizzles out. The dissipation of the social rebounds in the consolidation of the tribal' (Bauman, 1996: 57). Communalism in this sense is a philosophy of the poor, for whom community has little to do with the one built by the economic elite. The community of the weak is one which substitutes for what is missing in the era of *après-devoir* (after-duty), of declining social contract between citizens, of dissolution of universal safety nets and of the inability of traditional labour organisations to represent the victims of labour flexibility. The communities the poor seek out are said to be binding rather than aesthetical, objective rather than subjective, 'real' rather than imagined in as much as they aim to 'collectively make good' what their members 'individually lack and miss' (Bauman, 2001: 72). These communities take the form of strong networks of solidarity based on long-term commitments and therefore appear to stand in complete oppositions to the communities based on reflexivity which Giddens sees as symptomatic of our period of late modernity. Trust and loyalty within these communities must come naturally, and commitments must be inalienable.

Mollenkopf and Castells (1991) have drawn somewhat similar conclusions on the basis of their study of the *dual city* which is emerging in America as a result of present socio-economic restructuring. In the case of New York, the 'dual city' concept refers to a changing urban social structure that is progressively polarising, fragmenting and becoming more exclusionary, due to the restructuring of the labour market. Such a process produces the coexistence in the city of a professional and managerial elite and a growing urban underclass. While spatially, this process manifests itself by minimising contact between these two groupings, socially it symbolises the breakdown of what Castells calls the 'urban contract' (2002b: 377); that is a growing 'distance, as seen and as lived, between the urban glamour zone and the urban war zone' (Sassen, 1996: 636). In terms of identity construction, the authors argue that 'the tendency toward cultural, economic, and political polarisation in New York takes the form of a contrast between a comparatively cohesive core of professionals in the advanced corporate

services and a disorganised periphery fragmented by race, ethnicity, gender...’ (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991: 406). On the one hand, economic prosperity leads to social integration promoted by shared values such as individualism, life-style choices and consumption patterns, cosmopolitanism, and increasingly an obsession with security. On the other hand, poverty encourages fragmentation and segmentation, mainly in ethnic terms, of the excluded who build ‘defensive communities’ that fight and compete against each other for access to work and services and ‘to preserve the territorial basis of their social networks, a major resource for low-income communities’ (Castells, 2002a: 310). In the former case, identity expresses itself through individuation, in the latter, through communalism, a point equally made by Calhoun for whom ethnicity is a powerful source of identity ‘especially in settings of ethnic diversity and among those who are least empowered as individuals, within the dominant field of social organisation and competition’ (2003b: 560).

Similar development in regard to communal allegiances has been observed by Gilroy in Britain’s destitute urban areas which he explains as follows: ‘the growth of populist political forms which appeal to national sentiment, seemingly above and beyond the narrow concerns of class, has been matched by a detachment or distancing between the poor and their traditional means of political representation – the trades union and labour movements. The effect of these developments can be seen in the proliferation of political subjectivities apparently unrelated to class and often based on ascriptive criteria (age, “race”, gender)’ (Gilroy, 1992: 21), although the growth of what he deems to be ‘class-less’ affiliations within a class-bounded community (that of the less privileged) seems to confuse cause and effect and to point to the changing nature of class formation rather than its disappearance.

More broadly, scholars have increasingly represented the communities built by the poor as being inscribed in local territories, in places inhabited by its members and its members only, and therefore exclusive and exclusionary by definition. Beyond mere topographic entities, these localities are said to generate various sources of meaning, which Castells describes as ‘resistance identities’, that is those ‘generated by those actors that are in positions/conditions devalued and/or stigmatised 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' (1997: 8). 'A peculiar irony' argues Marcuse 'accompanies the evolution of the outcast ghetto. As its residents are more and more cast out, marginalised, unemployed and unwanted by the dominant forces in society, their internal cohesion is weakened, but the importance of place to them may even be strengthened. As real economic bonds, bonds of a common and viable education, cultural life, work and community building, are eroded, the bonds of a common residential area increase. Thus, even if the internal organisational structure of Harlem appears weakened, its residents' turf allegiance is strengthened – defensively, it is true, and as a last resort, but nevertheless the allegiance is strong' (Marcuse, 1996: 181).

The role race and ethnicity play in those 'communes of resistance' is highly contested. Assumed withdrawal of the poor into 'imagined' religious or cultural ghettos in the cities of the North is contradicted by the fact that creolised popular cultural artifacts often originate from these disadvantaged youth. According to Nederveen Pieterse for instance, 'research in English and German major cities finds that it is precisely lower-class youngsters, second-generation immigrants, who now develop new, mixed lifestyles' (2001b: 229). Furthermore, many analysts find that affiliations based on race and ethnicity, when they matter, often coincide with class affiliation, rather than supersede or cut across it. This is the argument of Castells who argues that 'race matters, but it hardly constructs meaning any longer' (Castells, 1997: 59). In regards to African Americans, Castells contends that growing class divides among black Americans have translated into a growing hostility among the marginalised against those who left them (and the ghetto) behind. While middle class African Americans continue to face difficulties of integration within mainstream America and express strong feelings of racial discrimination, they increasingly insulate themselves from the ghetto. Among the poor, Castells argues, 'in a parallel move, end-of-millennium ghettos develop a new culture, made out of affliction, rage and individual reaction against collective exclusion, where blackness matters less than the situations of exclusion that create new sources of bonding, for instance, territorial gangs, started in the streets and consolidated in and from the prisons' (1997: 57). Ethnicity in that sense is of meaning at infra-ethnic level as 'the foundation for defensive trenches, then territorialised in local communities or even gangs defending their turfs' (1997: 59).



While vertical communalism on the basis of race or ethnicity is contested, the communities of the poor – of the flawed consumers and of recent migrants to the global cities of the North – are generally seen as exclusionary, based on the ‘exclusion of the excluders by the excluded’ (Castells, 1997: 9), in a process which reverses the rules of the game, and reasserts tendencies to self-alienation and self-enclosure by the same individuals who are refused integration by mainstream society. The process of communal ghettoisation is said to provide networks of sociability and coping alternative institutions which operate both as a substitute for, and as a protective buffer from, the dominant institutions notably in the field of socio-economic upliftment and security. Gangs, in that sense, are purported to have come to occupy some of ‘the empty social spaces’ (El-Kenz, 1995: 103) which emerge as a result of state disengagement and lack of substitute organisations/associations within the public arena for the poor to voice their concerns. They represent an ‘exit’ option, to use Hirschmann’s categorisation (1970), for the poor as well as ‘a major form of association, work and identity for hundreds of thousands of youths’ (Castells, 1997: 64). This, in turn, is said to explain the ambiguous relationship between gangs and local residents whose basic needs they may partially meet.

The romanticisation of identity politics among the poor, which is said to be a source of both solidarity and significance (Sullivan, 1995), and their organisation through alternative and self-reliant communal institutions should not be exaggerated. Assumptions regarding the existence of strong communal networks of solidarity among the poor are contradicted by the frequent tales of fragmentation and individualisation told by researchers studying urban poverty. Wacquant has written extensively on what he calls the American ‘hyperghetto’, characterised by the ‘slow rioting of “black-on-black” crime, mass school rejection, drug trafficking and internal social decay’ (1994: 232) that has replaced the former communal ghetto which was marked by a multitude of social classes, organised around an autonomous division of labour, communitarian agencies of mobilisation, and which used to be ‘bound together by a unified collective consciousness’ (1994: 233), heavily united around positive symbols of identification such as the word ‘soul’ as ‘a symbol of solidarity and a badge of personal and group pride’ (1994: 235). The new hyperghetto or ‘domestic bantustan’ is characterised by social stigmatisation, economic deprivation, the absence of public space and a

‘culture of terror’ and violence derived from competition over drug territories. It is a social order which is ‘organised around an intense competition for, and conflict over the scarce resources’ (1994: 237) which impedes community building initiatives. Indeed, ‘sharing stigma and public humiliation does not make the sufferers into brothers; it feeds mutual derision, contempt and hatred’ (1993: 121) in a process whereby the poor internalise public discourse of shameful poverty. Ghettos, he argues, are characterised by growing disintegration – anomy, the absence of social trust and solidarity, atomisation, and widespread attitudes of finger-pointing at one’s neighbours as ‘welfare cheats’ – in a process of internalisation of mainstream society’s discourse on the behavioural deviance of the ‘underclass’. In that sense, to be poor, is to have one’s choice of identity made for one, to have what one is and what one can be determined externally. In other words, it is to be robbed of the means to produce one’s own identity and to be forced to bear a label that nobody claims, that of the underclass.

Such a bleak portrait of identity formation within marginalised communities has been contested by recent studies in various global cities which argue that the poor are able to influence both the material and symbolic conditions of their existence. A number of analysts have observed processes which express the transformation of the objective category of class into subjective consciousness, the mutation of the social category of poverty into a political category on the basis of which action is taken (Darbon, 1995). In his study of the poor in Iran’s large cities, Bayat (1997) has observed what he calls the ‘ordinary practices of everyday life’ which encompass a number of clandestine/ illegal activities aimed at the redistribution of social goods (through unlawful acquisition of land, shelter, and services), as well as various subsistence activities such as street vending and parking allocation, which might ensure minimal living standards. These practices symbolise the quest for autonomy, both cultural and political, ‘from the regulations, institutions and discipline imposed by the state’ on the poor (Bayat, 1997: 59). They are said to constitute a spontaneous and silent form of resistance and mobilisation against exclusion, aimed at effecting social change through non-institutionalised forms of activities, which are situated beyond the sphere of social organisations traditionally associated with civil society. These semi-legal ventures are pro-active and stand in opposition both to the poor’s assumed passivity and to the various survival strategies often conceived in terms of cost to others or to themselves, such as theft, begging and prostitution. Far from being

simply a politics of survival, they reconcile the politics of interest with the politics of identity/dignity, argues Bayat, in the sense that ‘the disfranchised groups carry out their activities not as conscious political acts, rather they are driven by the force of necessity – the necessity to survive and live a dignified life.... Thus the notion of ‘necessity’ and a quest for dignity justify their struggles as “moral”, “natural” and “logical” ways to survive and advance their lives’ (1997: 58). These activities, furthermore display a will of the poor ‘to run their own affairs’ through norms which differ from those of the institutions which have failed them and through which they reassert control over their lives and space. The ‘quiet encroachment of the ordinary’ is a form of ‘quiet, atomised, and prolonged mobilisation with episodic collective action – an open and fleeting struggle without clear leadership, ideology or structured organisation, one which makes significant gains for the actors, eventually placing them as a counterpoint vis-à-vis the state’ (1997: 57).

Such argumentation is close to that offered by Appadurai on the basis of his study of the mobilisation of the poor in Mumbai within a coalition of three NGOs. Appadurai observes increasing capability among the poor to exercise agency, to ‘voice’ their concerns and drive changes in the arrangements that disempower them. He argues that ‘the poor are not just the human bearers of the conditions of poverty. They are a social group partly defined by official measures but also conscious of themselves as a group... in their own societies and also across societies’ (Appadurai, 2004: 65). This culture of the poor (to be differentiated from the much loaded notion of ‘culture of poverty’ of Oscar Lewis, a form of social Darwinism which confuses causes and effects where poverty is concerned) finds expression in increasing mobilisation through a variety of urban movements which evolve between local activism and global networking. Appadurai argues that these social movements are able to change ‘the terms of recognition’ for the poor, from within civil society, rather than from without, as the ‘exit’ option of Hirschmann’s categorisation (1970) presupposes. Drawing from Sen’s ‘capabilities’ approach to poverty and development, he argues that while their politics is one of interests since it involves the redistribution of public goods, it is also one of dignity built on an ethics of patience, moral discipline and a ‘capacity to aspire’. This mobilisation of the poor enables ‘the citizens without a city’ (Appadurai, 2004: 72) to affect both core social norms and changes in the conditions of their poverty based on a long-term approach to needs, a careful

management of their resources (through daily savings programs, which are also used to reinforce social trust) and the use of their knowledge and their skills in the design of homes and sanitary facilities that are appropriate to their own needs. Accordingly, the poor have become participants in, rather than mere users of poverty alleviation measures.

Such an argumentation regarding the poor's ability to affect their destiny and their environment is close to Castells' (1997) argument regarding urban social movements, which he defines as 'processes of purposive social mobilisation, organised in a given territory, oriented toward urban-related goals' (1997: 60). These movements are 'critical sources of resistance to the one-sided logic of capitalism, statism and informationalism' (Castells, 1997: 60) in the face of the failure of traditional proactive movements, such as political parties and unions. According to Castells they aim to counteract both economic exploitation and cultural domination which have compelled people either to surrender or to react on the basis of the most immediate source of self-recognition and autonomous organisation, that is their locality. A vast number of communities around the world, Castells argues, 'have built their "own welfare states"' (in the absence of responsible public policies) on the basis of networks of solidarity and reciprocity, often around churches, or supported by internationally funded non-governmental organisations (NGOs), sometimes with the help of leftist intellectuals' (1997: 63). While such local communal organisations are said to be a source of meaning, they are essentially religious communes according to Castells.

To conclude this section, a summary of the debate on the limits posed on individual agency and modern subjectivities by material-structural determinants of identity formation as it has been articulated within the African context is appropriate. Nederveen Pieterse argues that 'if the South is in the North and the North is in the South, and privilege and poverty are no longer neatly geographically divided, yet the overall distinction between North and South, crude as it is, still makes sense' (2000: 131). This continued North-South divide is one which is often neglected by social sciences which 'whether it concerns modernity, postmodernity or globalisation, tends to represent a narrow western or northern view' (Nederveen Pieterse: 2000: 130). According to Robins, debate regarding the prevalence of agency upon material determinants of identity in the African context opposes 'a younger generation of "postmodern"

scholars' to 'Africanist intellectuals claiming loyalty to the anti-colonial and nationalist struggles' (Robins, 2004: 18). Mbembe in particular has been very critical of a narrative 'implicitly rooted in the ideology of Marxism', that of *afro-radicalism* which he says stems from a 'reified vision of history' whereby 'the present destiny of the continent is supposed to proceed not from free and autonomous choices but from the legacy (both) of a history imposed upon the Africans and of [current] economic conditionalities' (2002a: 243). Richard Werbner and Terence Ranger (1996) argue that Mbembe's work offers the possibility of shifting Africanist scholarship away from political economy and characterisations of postcolonialism that lead to the same conclusions as 'dependency' theory and the sociology of underdevelopment, in terms of which Western imperialism and neo-colonial practices come to be seen as an all-encompassing 'cultural machine' that ends up determining the content of local sociality and presents Third World people as passive victims of global capitalism. They underscore the need to recognise the creative agency of those living at the margins of the world economy, their 'practices of the self' (Mbembe, 2002a: 272) and their elevation to the status of subjects rather than passive victims. In his introduction to *Postcolonial identities in Africa* (1996), Werbner calls for an analysis of 'the politics of everyday life', of 'how, over time and in a plurality of contested arenas, postcolonial strategies improvise multiple shifting identities' (1996: 1) within postcolonies which are themselves 'radically unlike'. They point to the multiple popular strategies of local resilience and survival in contexts of state failures, the 'social subjectivities' and 'moral agencies' in the face of the AIDS pandemic, dire poverty and abuse of political authority.

In opposition to those arguments, several scholars of Africa have denounced the ethnocentrism contained in the notion of autonomous agency, and underscore the limits to the subjectivity and self-authoring that Africans are able to enjoy. Mbembe has been accused of defending a neo-liberal Western-influenced 'cosmopolitan' intellectual agenda, detached from the lived realities of African countries, failing to take into account the specificity of African historicity and experience, the continued influence of colonial legacy in post-colonial Africa, and the continued primacy of material conditions conditioned by global economic relations of dependence (Robins, 2004). In the words of Zeleza, African scholars, 'surrounded by material poverty and political tyranny, by underdevelopment ... are [more] preoccupied with questions

of development and democracy than about gazing at sexuality that seems to titillate the intellectual imaginations of some of our colleagues in “post-modern” societies’ (Quoted in Murunga, 2004: 29). This divide between North and South is commonly experienced as northern hegemony revisited (Nederveen Pieterse, 2000), and creates frustrations which cut across class divides to create a shared African identity. Similarly, Nyamnjoh argues that ‘the causes of Africa’s problems are neither simply external, nor exclusively internal, but a combination of both. Africans have been, and still are both dependent and autonomous agents in relation to the historical forces that have impinged, and are impinging upon them and their continent. While it would be too simplistic to see Africans entirely as zombies totally overwhelmed by external forces, one must also be careful not to credit them with utopic agency, which is certainly not feasible within the current structures and relations of unequal exchange championed by the giant compressors of the West’ (Nyamnjoh, n.d.<sup>1</sup> (a):18).

#### 2.4. A limited agency: symbolic determinants of identity formation

While constructivist conceptions of identity are widely acknowledged, the quasi natural tendency within lay, scientific and political discourse recurs in cultural taxonomy (Sen, 2004; Sichone, 2004). There is a level of resistance to interculturality and to notions of multiple ‘rootedness’ and an ingrained belief in the supposed link between blood and identity, between collective belonging and social continuity. The idea that ‘it is only possible to belong to one national genealogical tree’ (Featherstone, quoted in Ingvesson and Mahoney, 2000: 78) remains anchored in cultural representations, especially in societies where debate over multiculturalism in the public sphere took place. As Bissoondath (1994) has noted in the Canadian context, ideas about *who* a person is (his individual self) continue to derive from *what* the person is (his collective self), and if the person happened to be an immigrant, no matter for how long he or she has stayed in the host country, he or she is often conceived of as one forever.

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<sup>1</sup> The abbreviation n.d. will be used for ‘no date’ throughout the thesis.

#### 2.4.1. Identity as an inheritance: primordialism revisited

Identity in political rhetoric often appears as being deeply ingrained, and devoid of contextual construction or historicity. It continues to be represented by stakeholders in identity politics as a matter of inheritance, rather than of individual choice. This is not a new phenomenon since ‘for all hegemonies, the claim to purity has served as part of a claim to power ... Status requires boundaries and with boundaries come boundary police’ (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001b: 228). In political discourse, identity is conceived of as a single condition where ‘strict defining traits in terms of which neat inclusion and exclusion rules can be formulated and absolute contradictions pointed out’ (Dascal, 2003: 159). Such conception clearly permeates the ‘mobilising narratives’ (Martin, 1992) of ethno-nationalist propaganda. More generally, the struggle for recognition of collective identities encourages the purification of identities, their ossification and the obliteration of other identities. It promotes an in-group essentialism of a sort, on the basis of which a quantitative and final solution to the negotiation of belongings is sought out (Calhoun, 1995). Identity claims therefore, for all the good they do in the struggle against discrimination and the promotion of equality of opportunities, often exaggerate differences from without, since to be protected, identity must be first found and named. They can also be repressive in their dismissal of differences from within, forcing potential individual members to define themselves as either one or the other. Gender and class identities for instance are easily cast aside by national rhetoric. In Calhoun’s words, ‘in the discourse of nationalism, one is simply Chinese, French or Eritrean’ (1995: 255). And in the words of a nationalist, ‘a Russian can become rich, a democrat but not an Estonian’ (Huntington, 1993: 27). In the discourse of ethnic intermediaries, individuals who dare claim a different identity are stigmatised as traitors. Indeed, the politics of patronage is a common occurrence within minority movements especially when the issue of numbers is vital for access to employment and education opportunities (allocated through policies of affirmative action for instance). This largely explains opposition of African American leaders to suggestions that the US census should include a ‘multiracial’ category (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001a). Such essentialist tyranny inscribed in political discourse on identity applies equally to partisans of ‘authoritarianism as an Asian value’ (Sen, 2001), to Asante’s militant brand of Afrocentricism and Farrakhan’s Black Nationalism, to various African leaders’ discourse of authenticity and

autochthony used to justify authoritarian policies in the name of so-called traditional African values (Dougan, 2004); or to many gay and feminist activists.

The continued essentialist articulation of identities is not limited to the field of minority propaganda discourse. Involvement of academia in the field of identity is not a recent phenomenon and dates back to the heyday of nation-building and colonial anthropology. It is not absent from works done by constructivist scholars according to Brubaker who despite being fond of qualifying their theoretical premises with the ‘constructivist cliché’, i.e. the merely cursory qualification of the term identity with adjectives such as ‘multiple’, ‘instable’, ‘contingent’, ‘fragmented’, or ‘negotiated’, many scientists end up treating identity in a positivist and singular fashion. The permanent character of essentialist outlooks grants scholars a ‘misleading conceptual and methodological ease in the exploration of identities by stabilising inherently unstable identities and simplifying the inherently tangled nature of lived experience’ (Dougan, 2004: 33).

More generally, scholars of identity have been accused of lacking neutrality regarding the subject of their investigation. Given the political implications of identity studies in the field of political outcomes and institutional arrangements, what is at stake is often more than mere theorisation on how people construct their various affiliations; what is at stake is the legitimacy of certain identities over others from a quasi moral point of view. In the context of African scholarship, for instance, Mbembe has compared theories of identity to ‘dogmas and doctrines repeated over and over again, rather than methods of interrogation, [which] have led to a dramatic contraction and impoverishment both in the modes of conceptualising Africa and in the terms of philosophical inquiry concerning the region.... The urgency today is to restore a separation on an intellectual level between the desire *to know and to think* and *the urge to act*’ (2002b: 629-636). It has been argued that among progressive analysts, there is a tendency to perceive trends deemed desirable as actually occurring (Connor, 1990). On the other hand, analytical bias has been imputed to ingrained prejudice and the fact that ‘many identity academics are both analysts and actors of identity politics’ (Brubaker, 2001: 70). Regarding American urban theory, Wacquant argued that a ‘sociology of sociology’ would show how many assumptions made on the subject of identity ‘reveal more about the relation of the



analyst to the object, and his or her racial and class preconceptions, fears and fantasies, than they [do] about their putative object' (1994: 236).

In its most extreme form, essentialism can still be found in social science literature over what is labelled 'ethno-nationalism' (W. Connor, 1973). According to scholars of ethno-nationalism, ethnicity as a social affiliation is inevitable, permanent and able to transcend all other interests. Ethnic differentiation is conceived as intrinsic to human nature rather than a contingent subjectivity. Smith for instance describes the national sentiment as a feeling that 'has always been there' and symbols of ethnic identity as 'permanent cultural attributes' (1986: 3). Socio-biologist van den Berghe alleges that the social concerns of ethnic and racial groups function around common biological descent (Wilmsen, 1996). According to Pfaff, nationalism is 'an expression of the primordial attachments of an individual to a group, possessing both positive and destructive powers, and ... a phenomenon which existed long before the group to which such passionate loyalty was attached became the modern nation-state ... the nationalist has his heart in his work ... He acts from the roots of being, of human society, from a given earth and clan' (quoted in O'Brien, 1993: 144). Such academic assumptions led to a number of works interpreting the emergence in the 1990s of nationalist movements in the Balkans and former USSR in terms of a 'genie out of the bottle' theory, whereby 'ancient hatreds' previously smothered and hidden in the past, waiting to awake, were finally able to re-emerge intact (Martin, 1992).

Ethno-nationalist studies clearly dismiss the contextual nature of ethnicity and its roots in structural determinants of power and resources, to argue that 'ethnic movements should be studied as ethnic' (Conversi, 2002), instead of being seen as mere epiphenomena. Ethno-nationalism is conceived of as an emotional and irrational sentiment, detached from 'goals' to become an unaccountable phenomenon. According to Connor, materialism cannot explain fully human affairs, hence 'a solution to ethnic heterogeneity must ultimately be found in the political sphere and not in the economic one' (1990: 25- 29). Drawing from history (the responses to workers to calls for national unity ('Union sacrée'), Tiryakian contends that 'the deep emotional bond that attaches people to their national community... frequently overrides economic considerations of self-interest... In contrast to the prevailing belief that emotions

and sentiments, like religion, withdrew from the public sphere into the private sphere, that both became thoroughly “domesticated”... another reading of modernity is possible. Nationalism needs to be seen as providing new meaning to the concept of *communitas*, creating ties that not only provide great satisfaction to individuals but also exerts obligations’ (1997: 160-169). Similarly, according to Horowitz, ‘economic theories cannot explain the extent of the emotion invested in ethnic conflict... Materialist theories leave unexplained the striving for such goals as domination (or autonomy), a “legitimate place in the country” and “the symbols of prestige”, all of which may take precedence over economic interests in determining group behaviour. ... Symbolic claims are not readily amenable to compromise. In this, they differ from claims deriving wholly from material interests. Whereas material advancement can be measured both relatively and absolutely, the status advancement of one ethnic group is entirely relative to the status of others. That is an important reason for being precise about what is at stake in ethnic conflict. Ethnic claims are expressed in moral language and are not quantifiable’ (quoted in Bekker, 1993: 15-16). Explanations of behaviour in terms of elite ambitions and mobilisation, or rational choice theory are said by these scholars to fail to grasp the passions that motivate ethnic communities, this ‘intuitive sense of kindredness’ (Connor, 1990: 16) which emanates from the ground and which ethnic entrepreneurs simply recognise.

According to Glazer, it is this sense of ‘kin’ which presides over the destiny of the multicultural city. While Mollenkopf and Castells have argued, as we saw, that increasing horizontal divisions within global cities were at the origin of growing social and spatial ethnic ghettoisation, Glazer argues that socio-economic cleavages in divided cities (such as New York) is insufficient to capture adequately what is of meaning, of interest, and of concern to local residents. Vertical divisions of ethnicity in both society and social space ‘play an independent role, particularly as carriers of certain values in conflict’ (1994: 187). The divided city model of Glazer refers to ‘cities divided by race, ethnicity, religion rather than by economic fortune, income, wealth, even though the latter divisions are real enough. ... Divided cities refer to divisions that we sense to be of kind, rather than quantity.... Sometimes, as we know, this kind of division is marked by a real wall, but generally the invisible wall is good enough to keep groups apart’ (Glazer, 1994: 178).

In such conceptualisation of identity and ethnicity, conflict is imputed to immanent dislike and distrust between members of various communities, to a 'genuine' antipathy toward the other that no amount of education can correct, rather than to the expression of fears in a context of social changes exploited by political leaders. Putative kinship-based affinities drawn from belief in common ancestry (Glazer, 1983) are rather crudely counterposed to horizontal affiliations such as class as a basis for collective action. The migration of cultural others within national communities are said to challenge social trust and social capital towards those who are not close kin 'even in countries that have a professed universalistic and democratic ethos' (Tiryakian, 1997: 173). This stands in contradistinction to numerous studies which have emphasised that social trust is a variable dependent on wealth (Putman, 1995). It also completely negates numerous examples of former antagonisms turned into affinities whereby 'a hereditary enemy becomes a privileged partner' (Martin, 1992: 583, my translation). Such assumptions often rely on social psychology arguments to explain the emotional bond found in ethnic identity and to explain hate, affinity and the universal 'need to belong', looking at in- and out-group behaviours in terms of innate social categorisation. Discrimination or ethnic 'nepotism' is deemed to be 'natural' (van den Berghe, 1987). Tajfel's social identity theory based on his minimal group experiment is often drawn upon since it argues that when people are divided into groups, they tend to think immediately about the group they fall into as the in-group, to attach value and emotional significance to the group and promote its position. They display an innate bias towards their in-group, irrespective of considerations such as maximisation of one's gains. In such conceptions, ethnicity is intrinsically based on perceptions of ontological differences and therefore exclusive/exclusionary. In Connor's words, 'the peculiar emotional depth of the "us"- "them" syndrome which is an intrinsic part of national consciousness, by bifurcating as it does all mankind into "members of the nation" versus "all others" appears thereby to pose a particularly severe impediment to coordinated action with any of the "others"' (1973: 17).

Such theorisation tends to treat members of a community as identical to each other and ignores the cleavages within groups which often stand at the source of the weakness of ethnic solidarity, and motivates much ethnic violence, according to Laitin (1998). It also passes over

the 'in-betweens' and hybrids, it ignores notions of linguistic code-switching and cultural creolisation, and the changing nature of ethnicities. Such studies offer a positivist and still view of social life as continued formation of subjectivity is dismissed. Identity is viewed as a-historical, pre-political or pre-discursive since the existence of common consciousness is presumed. Identity is measured through descriptive and quantitative objective elements, using demographic data on language and religion as independent variables by cultural taxonomists. It is not a coincidence that primordialist studies often fail to predict conflict. They are mostly *a posteriori* and inductive analyses, whereby causes of conflict are deduced from conflictual events, while non-events are not taken into consideration. When attempts are made to predict, they generally fail as in the case of many conceptualisations of the South African conflict in ethno-nationalist terms articulated in the beginning of the 1990s.

Such conception of identity leads to the defence of pluralist or consociational institutional and political arrangements, a form of polity introduced by Lijphart (1975) on the basis of the plural society model first elaborated by Furnivall (1939) on the basis of his observation of Indonesia under colonisation, a society marked by the coexistence of separate communities which come together only within an unequal economic platform, creating 'a medley for they mix but do not combine' (quoted in Rex, 2003: 107); an assumption of cultural coexistence without mingling, i.e. a 'mosaic of ghettos' (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001a: 401). In a 'deeply divided society', ethnic groups are said to form the basis of social organisation and members are said to be fully aware of which side they fall over, leading to claims of group rather than individual representation. Consociational theory advocates power-sharing arrangements (through a number of institutional guarantees and vetoes) between political parties, which are assumed to represent ethnic groups in conflict. 'Ordinary democracy – that is democracy heedless of the special needs of divided societies – is inadequate to produce interethnic conciliation.... If peacemaking in divided societies is a term with any real content, the content must be cast in terms of institutions: structures and recurrent patterns of behaviour that work to reduce conflict' (Horowitz, 2000: 1-7). Based on this conception of ethnicity, majoritarian political systems can only create permanent majorities/minorities. This type of constitutional solution is an elite driven process, detached from processes of identity formation from below. 'Such schemes are by their nature inflexible and imply a significant measure of managed,

technocratic rule from above – i.e., by the very agents who stand to benefit most by presenting themselves as the representatives of ethnic constituencies’ (Dubow, 1994: 369). It is worth noting however that Lijphart himself offers a more careful view of collective identity, differentiating between what he calls ‘pre-determined’ and ‘self-determined’ groups, the latter pointing to situations ‘whereby the segments are allowed, and even encouraged, to emerge spontaneously – and hence to define themselves instead of being predefined’ (2001: 12).

One of the most influential primordial studies of recent times is Huntington’s determinist analysis of the world in terms of civilisations/cultural blocs depicted as unchanging, ‘intact’ and ‘watertight’ (Ajami, 1993: 2). It is a world of irreconcilable differences and quasi-natural categories, separated by a ‘velvet curtain’ of culture and religion, rather than national, economic or ideological cleavages. ‘What ultimately counts for people is not political ideology or economic interest. Faith and family, blood and belief, are what people identify with and what they will fight and die for’ (Huntington, quoted in Rubenstein and Crocker, 1994: 117). It is a world opposing the West to six or seven non-Western civilisations, a world population separated between ‘kin-countries’ to ‘non-kin’. While individuals are acknowledged as having various levels of identification, those are said to be imbricated within each other, like Russian dolls, and therefore hierarchical rather than coexisting at independent levels. At the broader level, that of civilisations, deep loyalties become irreconcilable. Differences in values lead to proclaimed incompatibility in how individuals articulate their relation to God and to the group, an idea which legitimises assumptions that ‘the fates of countries are effectively sealed by the nature of their respective cultures. This [is] not only a heroic oversimplification, but it also entails some assignment of hopelessness to countries that are seen as having the “wrong” kind of culture. This is not just politically and ethically repulsive... but also epistemic nonsense’ (Sen, 2004: 38). Conflict is seen as inescapable since, as ‘the world is becoming a smaller place, the interactions between peoples of different civilisations are increasing; these increasing interactions intensify civilisation consciousness and awareness of differences between civilisations and commonalities within civilisations... [which] in turn, invigorates differences and animosities stretching or thought to stretch back deep in history’ (Huntington, 1993: 25-26). Huntington’s analysis, under the veneer of cultural relativism, is mired with stereotypes and prejudices, and leads to drastic calls for migration

policies limiting the number of non-Westerners allowed entry in so-called Western countries and for the implementation of assimilationist policies.

#### 2.4.2. The communitarian debate

While theory on group rights plainly ignores ‘difference within’ to focus on accommodation of ‘difference without’, a more nuanced perspective on the overall influence of cultural identity is offered by liberal ‘communitarians’ or ‘multiculturalists’, such as Taylor or Kymlicka. According to these scholars, we are essentially social beings, and our desires, values, reason(s), and moral selves remain constituted through a shared social order. The public protection of cultural groups therefore is legitimised on the ground that cultural belonging is the basis from which subjects are able to construct themselves freely. Taylor focuses on ‘the ideal of authenticity’ which is each individual’s original way of ‘being human’, to be true to oneself, and his or her autonomous ability to determine what a good life means. Culture is the framework within which authenticity is formed according to Taylor and Kymlicka. ‘To have a belief about the value of a practice is a matter of understanding the meanings attached to it by our culture’ (Kymlicka, 1995: 83). Culture in that sense is a ‘primary good’, the basis for self-understanding and an essential element in the ability of individuals to define and lead a good life. Meaning, that is the symbolic identification by an actor of the purpose of her/his/their action, is dependent on culture. Choice, agency and reflexivity and moral thought therefore are derived from cultural belonging.

This notion of identity leads to a universalistic formulation of the politics of difference since withholding of recognition can become a form of oppression. Since our identity ‘is partly shaped by recognition or its absence, often by the misrecognition of others [so that] a group of people can suffer real damage, real distortion, if the people or society around them mirror back to them a confining or demeaning or contemptible picture of themselves. Nonrecognition or misrecognition can inflict harm, can be a form of oppression, imprisoning someone in a false, distorted, and reduced mode of being.... Due recognition is not just a courtesy we owe people. It is a vital human need’ (Taylor, 1994: 25-26). Universal equality therefore no longer means ‘the right to be equal’ (universal access to equal rights) but also encompasses the ‘right to be

different' (universal dignity) and to be publicly recognised as such. Lack of group recognition may well lead to default in individual self-esteem and a self-definition. Lack of recognition in this sense can create devaluation of one's identity. Recognition therefore applies to 'an ethical obligation to extend a sort of moral cognisance to persons who share worldviews deeply different from our own' (Appadurai, 2004: 62).

Accordingly, multiculturalism as a policy goes beyond mere tolerance of cultural diversity to ensure 'balanced articulation between respect for difference and for universal rights and values' (Wieviorka, 1998: 895). The extent to which culture should be preserved for itself, and choice-denying communal pressures should be allowed is contested. Similarly, the degree of distinctness to be recognised in politics and within centres of cultural production and reproduction such as the media and educative institutions has led to numerous debates in North America. In its most extreme form, it is argued that citizenship should not aim to transcend differences, but simply to recognise them as they are irreducible. Young advocates a differentiated citizenship on the basis that groups, because of their experience 'have abilities/capacities, needs, a culture and cognitive styles' that differ and have 'specific conceptions of all aspects of society and social issues' (quoted in Wieviorka, 1998: 895). Cultural rights according to Taylor should be constrained within a framework of individual rights, which is the *habeas corpus* (1993). In some instances, such dispositions favour the group over the individual in the name of cultural survival, which is acceptable within reasonable bounds according to Taylor. In the case of Quebec where 'political society is not neutral between those who value remaining true to the culture of our ancestors and those who might want to cut loose in the name of some individual goal of self-development. Policies aimed at survival actively seek to create members of the community, for instance, in their assuring that future generations continue to identify as French-speakers' (Taylor, 1994: 58-59).

Debates over multiculturalism have highlighted the difficulties of reconciling a view of culture which is always 'under construction' and the fact that no protection can take place without asserting *a priori* the existence of a group or an entity called culture; of striking a balance between the rights of individuals to autonomy and choice in matters of identity and the fact that

cultures may not survive without public recognition, through the mere free association of citizens. Many scholars have criticised such an approach on the ground that it postulates the primacy of cultural identities over agencies, and the endemic nature of cultural difference and its overall importance over other forms of affiliations (Comaroff, 1996). ‘Cultural difference is part of the play of history. Meanwhile cultural difference is but one difference among many – like hot and cold, wet and dry, dead and alive’ according to Nederveen Pieterse (2001a: 394). Most criticisms directed toward multiculturalist theory argue that it is a view from above which reifies and aggravates differences and deny the plurality of individual identifications. ‘For a multiculturalist policy to be implemented, the cultural particularism to which it applies must first of all be listed’ argues Wieviorka (1998: 901). This quest for strict definition and categorisation fails to represent the various meanings attached to cultural identities, and the group internal differentiations. How else to know who is ‘entitled’, without a rigid notion of group boundaries? Appiah highlights the essentialism and limits on autonomy inscribed in communitarian theory. He argues in particular that ‘there is an error in the standard framing of authenticity as an ideal... authenticity speaks of the real self buried in there, the self one has to dig out and express’ (1994: 155) and warns against strict assumptions regarding group behaviours: ‘collective identities – the identification of people as members of a particular gender, race, ethnicity, nationality or sexuality – come with notions of how a proper person of that kind behave’ (quoted in Gutman, 1994: x). However, he continues, collective identities ‘matter to us for reasons so hererogenous [that it] should makes us careful not to assume that what goes for one goes for the other... between the politics of recognition and the politics of compulsion, there is no bright line’ (1994: 151-163).

In this regard, Bissoondath has been very critical of the 1972 Canadian policy of multiculturalism, initiated by Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau, which he argues ‘indulges in several unexamined assumptions: that people, coming here from elsewhere, wish to remain what they have been; that personalities and ways of doing things, ways of looking at the world, can be frozen in time...’ (Bissoondath, 1994: 43). By focusing on the allocation of group rights, multiculturalism freezes group boundaries. While such disposition may address issues of domination (such as majority oppression, racism or discrimination), it does not address ‘domination-within-domination’. Ironically, it encourages the denial of differences and various



forms of recruitment/patronage politics or patriarchal behaviors within communities. In the same way as consociationalist arrangements do, multicultural policies have a hard time recognising the hybrids. If we recognise difference, what about ‘difference within’? ‘What about those who straddle or are in between categories and combine identities? ... Recognition refers to the willingness to socially or publicly validate or affirm differences as they are perceived, but what about differences that are not being perceived’ (Nederveen Pieterse, 2001b: 219- 220). Leaky boundaries and the question of cultural creolisation and permeability are dismissed by such identity conceptions. The processes of cross-fertilisation (Martin, 1999) whereby *memes*, the cultural counterpart of *genes*, are shared, assimilated and transformed is ignored. Codified cultures appear as statistically circumscribed which ignores the fact that group boundaries are contingent and provisional, and that culture is open-ended. Even a liberal multiculturalist such as Kymlicka, who articulates a notion of voluntary and fluid group affiliation, still ends up neglecting individual agency in favour of group agency. Statements to the effect that ‘these incorporated cultures, which I call “national minorities”, typically wish to maintain themselves as distinct societies’ (1995: 10) are illuminating in this regard. Finally, as Nederveen Pieterse argues, ‘if cultural identity is understood to be a matter of individual agency, it clashes with the allocation of group rights, which assumes ascribed status’ (2001a: 403).

#### 2.4.3. Cultural globalisation and the quest for meaning

While the post Cold War period gave way to a number of prophecies of ‘The End of History’ (Fukuyama, 1992) claiming the demise of ideological conflict, the advent of a post-national order and the triumph of liberalism, and the multiplication of perceived ethno-national claims (e.g. the dissolution of the USSR and of Yugoslavia), promoted another theoretical model which focused on ethnic and religious conflict as ‘The dark side of modernity’ (Tiryakian, 1997) or the symptom of ‘an alternative to modernity’, a passage from the “me” generation to the “we” generation (Comaroff, 1996: 178).

Often, a connection is made between on the one hand globalisation (i.e. ‘a process of accelerated flows of capital, consumer goods, people, and products of culture and knowledge’

(Nyamnjoh, n.d. (a): 1)), and on the other hand the ‘cultural backlash’ of ethno-nationalism, de-secularisation, localisation, re-traditionalisation and indigenisation. It is argued that globalisation creates a double trend of cultural homogenisation (the global village of Marshall McLuhan’s prophecy), and of cultural heterogenisation and the subsequent clash between the liberal cosmopolitan and the illiberal local (Calhoun, 2003). Global flows of communication ‘continue to produce both cross-cultural influences and challenges to cross-cultural understanding’ according to Calhoun (1995: 111). Similarly, Appadurai argues that global culture is marked by ‘the politics of the mutual effort of sameness and difference to cannibalise one another’ (1990: 308). The connection between globalisation and localisation is not always easy to apprehend and sometimes leads to assumptions of a mechanical connection from one to the other, all too often left unexplored and unexplained.

Globalisation is ‘the material and cultural compression of the world’ (Comaroff, 1996: 167). It is marked by interdependence, trans-institutionalisation, and the emergence of a single culture: even ‘the remotest of communities throb to worldbeat and gawp at the monolingual, monolithic, monopolistic, monotonous CNN’ (Comaroff, 1996: 168). On this basis, some analysts have drawn from what Freud called ‘the narcissism of the small difference’ (Adam, 1995: 468) which expresses loosely the idea that the more individuals and peoples become similar, the more they want to assert their differences, and the smallest the difference is, the more important it will become to preserve it. According to a number of scholars, the unlimited array of identity choices offered by globalisation creates anxieties for the individual, resulting in an ‘identity crisis’ and the desire to define oneself through a single narrative. Fears of a completely open society create longings for ‘closed’ frameworks ‘where such choices are made for them’ (Dascal, 2003: 160). ‘Openness’, is equated with permissiveness and corruption of ‘true values’ leading to resistance toward a generalised or specific ‘other’ viewed as the agent of corruption, and strict insulation is conceived of as the remedy. Social insecurity transforms multiculturalism into ‘multi-communitarianism’ according to Bauman. A similar point is emphasised by Schlesinger who speaks of the defensive reaction around the planet to relentless global capitalism, engendering a withdrawal from modernity and a tendency for people confronted by forces beyond their control and comprehension to retreat into familiar, intelligible, protective units and enclaves. Migrants ‘living lives of quiet

desperation in modern societies hunger for transcendent meaning and turn to inerrant faith for solace and support' and the 'spiritual frustrations and yearnings generated in the vast anonymity of global society' (Schlesinger, 1997: 10-12).

Often, localisation is explained as a reaction against 'global Americana' (Werbner, 1996: 5), against the 'westoxification' or 'coca-colonisation' of the world (Huntington, 1998), 'the global republic of technology' (Jussawalla, quoted by Nyamnjoh, 2000: 3) and general 'commoditisation' of life. Indeed, according to Barber, the balkanisation of the world is a reaction to global interdependence, 'against technology, against pop culture, and against integrated markets; against modernity itself', against 'integration and uniformity – MTV, Macintosh, and McDonald's – pressing nations into one homogenous global theme park, one McWorld tied together by communications, information, entertainment and commerce' (1996: 4), in other words in a world caught 'between Babel and Disneyland'. The forces of 'Jihad' and 'McWorld' that Barber observes within and between societies are said to reinforce each other: integration and disintegration feed on each other (Schlesinger, 1997). 'Primordia have become globalised' according to Appadurai (1990: 306) as language, skin colour, territorialized locality, religion come to the fore and feed on the very technology they question, i.e. the ICTs (Castells, 1997). Globalisation in this sense is both the target and the means by which the 'new markets for loyalty' (Price, quoted in Appadurai, 1998: 908) and the myths of immemorial kinship, of regional pride, and of paranoia and conspiracy theories rooted in frustrations, both in the South and in the North, are publicised and vehicled (Appadurai, 1998).

More complex analysis of the link between homogenisation and heterogenisation focuses on the decreasing role of nation states, which according to sociologist Daniel Bell have become too small for big problems and too big for small problems. Bypassed by global flows, states surrender control to extraterritorial forces: control over political processes (supranational institutions); economic processes; judicial and criminal processes (commercial arbitration, human rights and global customs); and cultural processes. Their grip on both the material (capital transfers, choice of economic policies and control over the movement of people) and the symbolical worlds (information, communication and ideology) is loosening up. This crisis

of regulation of the nation state leads to a crisis of legitimisation for its existence as the politics of representation becomes detached from the politics of intervention (Castells, 1997). ‘Globalisation of production and investment ... threatens the welfare state, a key element in the policies of the nation-state in the past half-century, and probably the main building block of its legitimacy in industrialised countries’ (Castells 1997: 253). This crisis of legitimacy and the ‘depoliticisation of social problems’ (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1999) in turn opens the way to both supra and infra-national affiliations. In this regard, the explosion of Islamic movements according to Castells is the symptom of a hyper-modern phenomenon: ‘political Islamism and Islamic fundamentalist identity seem to be expanding in the 1990s in a variety of social and institutional contexts, always related to the dynamics of social exclusion and/or the crisis of the nation-state.... In large part, they find legitimacy in the failure of the nation-state, created by nationalist movements, to accomplish modernisation, develop the economy, and/or to distribute the benefits of economic growth among the population at large’ (1997: 17-20). Though often led by educated intellectuals, Islamic movements gather their strength and numbers from a young urban population frustrated in its socio-economic expectations, joined in their desperation by the masses of impoverished new migrants to cities.

Furthermore, it is argued that the crisis of the nation-state leads to defensive efforts by national governments to reassert or reawaken their sovereignty and control and to reclaim ‘as a *raison d’être*, their unique cultural foundation’ (Comaroff, 1996: 174), promoting new discourses on closure of the ‘imagined communities’ (Anderson, 1963). Issues of homogeneity and difference therefore make a comeback at the forefront of public discourse, be it through the denigration of immigrants or the denunciation of foreign capital as ‘taking over’. This in turn evokes in the dispossessed an even greater awareness of their own particularity and exclusion. This paradox of globalisation has been highlighted by Geschiere and Meyer who contend that in a world characterised by flows, ‘a great deal of energy is devoted to controlling and freezing them [through] a policy of “fixing” identities’ (Geschiere and Meyer, 1998, quoted in Nyamnjoh, 2000: 5). In a constant effort to define who is a stranger and who isn’t – and subsequent shifting definitions of those who have access to scarce state-provided goods – state discourse fosters the destruction of social trust within common societies and promotes renewed longing in reinvented homelands. As a result, which Maalouf has highlighted in his

study of migrant identities, ‘the more the immigrants feel that their original cultural lore is respected in their new home, and the less they feel that because of their different identity they are resented, pushed out, threatened or discriminated against – the more willingly they open up to the cultural offerings of the new country and the less convulsively they hold on to their own separate ways’ (quoted in Bauman, 2001: 141). Ghettoisation, ostracisation and alienation of foreigners, both socially and spatially, all combine to create a vicious circle of separation and alienation.

Assumptions of the cultural heterogenisation associated to globalisation have however been questioned. Statements to the effect that ‘today there is no tribe, no faction or splinter group or neighbourhood gang that does not aspire to self-determination’ (Barber, 1996: 10) seems indeed to be a gross exaggeration. Nederveen Pieterse for example criticises the ‘boundary fetishism’ (2001b) which some social scientists impute to global capitalism. He emphasises the hybridity and the erosion of boundaries brought out by globalisation, through new technologies which promote high levels of intercultural exchanges and rapidly changing social mores. Similarly, while the overall influence of American representations of the world is unquestionable within the realm of pop cultural, world-wide consumption patterns, and within the sphere of social sciences (Bourdieu and Wacquant, 1999), scholars have highlighted the fact that global influences are dispersed and multidirectional, leading to the creation of multiple imagined worlds, and therefore more complex than a purported one-way flow from North to South. According to Appadurai, ‘the new cultural economy has to be understood as a complex, overlapping, disjunctive order, which cannot any longer be understood in terms of existing centre-periphery models’ (1990: 296). The flow of people, goods, ideas and representations ‘follow non-isomorphic paths’ (1990: 301) leading to a multiplicity of geographical spheres of influence (Nederveen Pieterse, 2000) and of actors shaping the imagination of the world (from tourists to immigrants). Furthermore, it has been argued that localisation is less a reaction to global influences than the re-appropriation of foreign norms, ideas and cultural artefacts by the importers. Heterogenisation in that sense is a process by which ‘the colonising signs and practices come to be domesticated and localised in terms of familiar symbols and meanings’ (Hannerz, quoted in Comaroff, 1996: 174).

The irredentist forces or the 'cultural bundle' to use Tiryakian's expression (1997) associated with global homogenisation have been contested both within America (negating the so-called 'disuniting of America') and beyond. Ideas according to which the victims of globalisation display a strong yearning for the past have been questioned by Nederveen Pieterse (2001b) who argues that the trans-border informal sector puts to rest the assumption that only the elite embraces and benefits from trans-nationalism. Hybrid bicultural knowledge is indeed as much a necessary resource and a survival technique for these informal traders as it is for cosmopolitan elites.

According to Wieviorka (1999), what appears to oppose communities in cities of the North 'takes its roots in socio-economic conditions rather than culture: their violence is not of a communal type, impelled by a minority culture or religion. On the contrary, its main source is social and economic' (1999: 224). Violence in European cities is therefore less a matter of culture, than culture a result of unmet social demands; a direct consequence of fractured social relationships rather than a position of cultural inferiorisation. Social exclusion, in other words, creates cultural differences as 'those who are deprived of action, and excluded from the space within which opposition and negotiation take place, may consider themselves as people apart, and feel they are treated as different, and should the case arise, tend to assume an identity that ensures them of the collective reference points that they do not have. These references can no longer be provided by the working-class movement, its hopes, promises, and capacity to fight for the control of historicity, and since no referents are to be found in other social movements, the excluded produce them or adapt them in the cultural field, in the broad meaning of the term... From this point of view, statements of identity, for example religious or ethnic, are regarded as ensuing from social change and even appear to be distinctly socially conditioned' (1999: 230-231).

So-called intensification of 'civilisation consciousness' associated with globalisation (Huntington, 1993) and subsequent renewed cultural assertiveness via discourses and policies of indigenisation (Huntington, 1996) ignore internal political dynamics which are at the origin of cultural policies of authenticity implemented in various African countries. These policies which insist on the importance of upholding African traditions, cultures and values and

promote the romanticisation of ‘traditional Africa’ stand in contradistinction with leaders’ own lifestyles, ‘heavily influenced by the institutionalisation of consumerism by a Westernised elite who have seen in consuming Western a source of power and identity’ according to Nyamnjoh (n.d. (a): 27). Yet, they find little echo on the ground. ‘Traditional Africa... allegedly epitomised by the rural poor, is a symbol of tradition despite itself; African peasants have been forced to pose as custodians of a tradition of which few, least of all the leading elite, are proud. The villagers aren’t interested in preserving tradition any more than their urban counterparts are; they are well preoccupied with enhancing the chances of attaining their objective interests even as foragers and scavengers for crumbs underneath the dining-tables and refuse-mountains of peripheral consumer capitalism’ (Nyamnjoh, n.d. (a): 28).

## 2.5. Conclusion

This chapter aimed to present various theoretical premises on the notion of identity. While mainstream theorisation has evolved over time, debate on the nature of identities remains unabated within scholarship. On the one hand, the self is presented as contingent and transitory, unanchored and fragmented, relational and illusory, hybrid and creolised, and first and foremost a matter of choice. Simultaneously, scholars argue that our times are marked by a ‘widespread surge of powerful expressions of collective identity which challenge globalisation and cosmopolitanism on behalf of cultural singularity and people’s control over their lives and environment’ (Castells, 1997: 2).

Accordingly, the most conspicuous feature of identities in late modernity appears to be between the aspiration and capacity for self-constitution among some, and the inability or unwillingness to concretise such capacity among others. The formation of identities is a therefore a complex process, perhaps best encapsulated by Calhoun in the following quote:

Identity is neither simply a matter of inheritance and essential commonality nor a matter of free-flowing ubiquitous and undetermined construction. It is socially produced, shaped by material factors, culturally organised and yet also open to human action (2003a: 549).

Instead of taking a clear epistemic position, this thesis will be guided by the necessity to account for both conceptions of identity – an identity which is a matter of agency and one which is the result of forced circumstances; an identity which is experienced as optional and one which is articulated in terms of collective imposition or unfettered loyalty and obligation. This apparent paradox will be the guiding line for the interpretation of identity narratives gathered in Cape Town during the field research phase of this study.

Since the focus of this work is on changing South African identities, results will be interpreted against the backdrop of identity scholarship focusing on South Africa. The following chapter reviews the literature on identities from the beginning of the transition to the beginning of 2006. Works written on this subject evolved over time, both following the shifting trends within international scholarship which were explored in this chapter, and as a result of internal developments which occurred in South Africa over the past decade.



### **3. Reviewing and periodising the literature on South African identities**

The close link between apartheid and identity explains why such a concept, especially that of ethnicity, was long considered a taboo subject within academia (Bekker, 1993), either accepted unilaterally by the supporters of the regime or dismissed unconditionally by a section of social analysis motivated by ‘the ethical demand’ (Pillay, 2004: 5). Such ambiguity toward ethnicity has been aptly captured by Vail, at the level of the African continent: ‘African political leaders, experiencing it as destructive to their ideals of national unity, denounce it passionately. Commentators on the left, recognising it as a block to the growth of appropriate class awareness, inveigh against it as a case of “false consciousness”. Apologists for South African apartheid, welcoming it as an ally of continued white dominance, encourage it... If one disapproves of the phenomenon, it is “tribalism”; if one is less judgemental, it is “ethnicity”’ (1989: 1).

The progressive dissolution of ties between academia and state in South Africa led to renewed interest in identity; in how identities are shaped, negotiated and reclaimed within a context of social change and the emergence of a new moral order based on a single citizenship and an equal access to the struggle for resources (Mamdani, 2002).

This chapter attempts to periodise identity studies in South Africa, across various disciplines, over the past fifteen to twenty years of scholarship, from the period of late apartheid until present. While it appears that identity studies have taken different focuses over time, as a result of both broader international theoretical shifts and internal developments, this periodisation which evolves in three time periods is evidently not as clear cut as it appears in the following chapter. Instead, shifts in focus and theoretical premises overlap across ‘time periods’.

#### **3.1. The old debate: class, race and nationalism**

Throughout the transition to democracy, both individual and collective identities in South Africa have been largely perceived as singular, integral, and ‘self-same’ to use Calhoun’s

term. Furthermore, the process of identity formation has been conceived as dependant on the relationship between citizens and state, that is, a process taking place within the political sphere, and leading to political action. In sum, it has largely been equated to the politics of identity – identities built by the state, to resist the state or to change the state, to use Castells' categorisation (1997). However, the nature of identities constructed 'from above' and the degree to which they were either internalised, or rejected 'from below' was deeply contested amongst scholars with issues of race, class, nationalism and loyalty to the state dominating the debate over South Africans' identities at the beginning of the transition to democracy (Bekker, 1993).

By the end of the 1980s the debate within scholarship centred on the class/nationalism debate, with race appearing in both camps as a metaphor for other concerns. Accordingly, violent conflict, which was largely perceived as inescapable at the beginning of the 1990s, was either conceived in material terms, opposing the proletariat/masses against the apartheid elite/establishment, or articulated as a nationalist struggle for self-determination opposing 'African nationalists', or various African ethnic communities against Afrikaner or white nationalists. On the one hand, race was reduced to a vehicle of competition over access to economic and state resources, in a context of racialised access to wealth, and on the other hand, race appeared as a broader rallying factor expressing cultural and symbolic values within the framework of nationalist discourse. Such disagreement has been captured by Horowitz, who contends that 'there is disagreement over the extent to which the conflict is really about race, as opposed to being about oppression merely in the guise of race, or about nationalism among groups demarcated by race, or about contending claims to the same land' (Horowitz, quoted in Bekker, 1993: 18).

While the nature of identities was contested, there was wide agreement over the inescapability of conflict. By the end of the 1980s, the number of publications predicting imminent doom dominated both journalistic reports and social sciences with titles such as *Can South Africa survive? Five minutes to midnight* (Brewer, J., 1989). According to Herbst, 'the descent into civil war was always possible in South Africa and will be for sometime to come' (Herbst, 1994: 129). Marais, in an article entitled *Political violence in South Africa: Apocalypse now?*

quotes an editorial of *Business Day* that appeared under the heading *At the abyss* purporting that ‘the events at Bisho have brought this country to a divide, it is a divide between... settlement and revolution, between peace and civil war.... Bisho has shifted us dangerously close to the abyss’ (8 September 1992). Similarly, according to Ellis, ‘the last eighteen months of white South Africa were fraught with danger. Many participants believed that the risk of civil war, particularly after Hani’s murder and during the battle of Bophuthatswana in March 1994, was at times very great’ (1998: 294).

These pessimistic predictions, according to Herbst (1994), derived from the radicalisation of discourse from various leaders on both the left (e.g. PAC’s motto of ‘one settler, one bullet’) and the right of the ideological spectrum, which were purported to arouse increasing interest within their targeted audience as negotiations and compromises accelerated. In particular, while the far-right was believed to be well-armed and militarily trained, their arguments against majority rule were said to resonate increasingly with the ruling minority. Schlemmer, for instance, argued that ‘a community, when it fears that its very existence is threatened, rallies to leaders who they can be sure will defend it utterly and by any means, even if those leaders’ beliefs and means are not normally acceptable’ (1990: 268). Within the opposition, a large section of the ANC’s constituency was said to feel increasingly frustrated with concessions to minorities and to support Jordan’s opinion that ‘negotiations should be aimed at liquidation of one of the antagonists as a factor in politics’ (Herbst, 1994: 125). The period 1990-1994 seemed to confirm this downward spiral towards violent clash since it was marked by a dramatic escalation of violence (almost 15000 casualties, 95% of which among black South Africans according to Adam (1995)) and a growing number of gross human rights violations in the country (Truth and Reconciliation Commission Report of South Africa, 2003).

### 3.1.1. The ethno-national argument

Transition to democracy in South Africa followed shortly after disintegration of the Eastern bloc. ‘Ethno-national’ analyses of ‘the ethnic turmoil plaguing central and eastern Europe’ (Barber, 1994) which postulated that nationalism was an integral part modernity, rather than a

remnant of the past bound to disappear with modernisation, influenced many South African experts. The 1980s saw the multiplication of comparisons with societies deemed to be ‘deeply divided’<sup>2</sup> along ethnic/linguistic/religious lines such as former Yugoslavia, Israel or Northern Ireland. For instance, a workshop aimed at comparing South Africa, Israel, Northern Ireland and Lebanon was held in Freiburg in 1983 under the aegis of the European Consortium on Political Research; and in 1989 a conference in Bonn sponsored by the Friedrich Naumann Foundation and IDASA led to the publication of *The Elusive Search for Peace: South Africa, Israel and Northern Ireland*, edited by Giliomee and Gagiano (1990).

According to this line of scholarship, ethnicity in South Africa is either conceived as primordial, or as a powerful and encompassing emotion, rooted in history and able to foment inalienable group loyalty independently of material interests. ‘South African nationalists of all varieties insist on the reality of ethnic diversity in the country [as] a society of many minorities ... independent of apartheid’ (Adam, 1990: 228). Piennar, for example contends that ‘as far as historians can tell, there was endemic conflict amongst black tribes and nations during the pre-colonial and colonial eras, and enduring tensions exist between certain ethnic groups today, exacerbated by apartheid policies and ideology’ (1996: 78-83). The most common qualifier of South African society in these works is ‘a deeply divided society’, which points to a society ‘in which conflicts take place between groups and not classes, and where the groups are defined ascriptively, whether it be on the basis of race, ethnicity or religion. The basic political unit is the racial, ethnic or religious group, and where they have the chance people continue to vote overwhelmingly for parties representing the respective segments’ (Giliomee, 1990: 299). In such a society, ethnic conflict is said to be at the centre of politics since ‘ethnic affiliations are powerful, permeative, passionate and pervasive’ (Horowitz, 1985: 12). Crick for instance argued that ‘both liberal economists and Marxist socialists underestimate the strength of desire for cultural autonomy in South Africa, Northern Ireland as well as Israel, however economically irrational that can be... Political leaders in these three countries see their opponents as beyond political persuasion. They see them as threatening not merely their basic interests and beliefs but all that they are, their very being, their precise human identity: thus

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<sup>2</sup> Such process continued after the transition although the focus has shifted to restorative justice and community policing ‘in divided societies’ (Brocklehurst, H., Stott, N., Hamber, B. and G. Robinson, 2001).

literally beyond reason, like another order of human beings' (quoted in Schlemmer, 1990: 263-264).

In such conceptualisation of South Africa as 'a world in one country', individual identity is derived from communal belonging, which draws from both racial and ethnic origins, and finds expression in differences of cultures or 'life-styles' (Piennar, 1996), as well as ideologies. According to Giliomee, 'the dominant group shares an important link with the West, or more particularly Europe', believing 'their history to be one in which "progress" and "civilisation", defined in European terms, were brought to a land the natives were using unproductively... the historic claims and cohesion of the Afrikaner and the larger white community have not simply withered away. This is due partly to a common position of privilege but equally important is the desire to preserve in South Africa a First World identity' and 'a state which is technocratic, capitalist, oriented towards Western standards and somehow breaks up the black majority – in short one within which white identity is secure' (1990: 300-307). Beyond its productive characteristics, land underpins a national identity, which Giliomee places in parallel to the opposition's 'national liberation struggle', articulated in terms of 'Europe's exploitation of the Third World' and against 'cultural chauvinism' (1990: 300). This perception of differences in terms of 'clash of civilisations' is said to cut across segments of the white minority. In this regard, Gagiano argues that 'when weighted against the hold of the state on the white community, the fractures and divisions within the white ruling group are weak political forces' (Gagiano, 1990: 207). Similarly, according to Schlemmer, while whites as a collectivity don't have a fully blown myth of origin, they have an equivalent and equally powerful myth of mobilisation around 'European standards' in a sea of Third World conditions. In sum, conflict takes its roots in whites' 'primordial fears' of assimilation (Giliomee, 1990) or of an 'African revenge' (Morris-Hale, 1996). Conflict takes on the label of a 'vivid sense of oneness of kind' (Giliomee, 1990), of kinship (de Jongh, 2000) or 'clan loyalty' (Barber, 1994), a label which is then collated to all parties involved in the South African conflict.

While many scholars concur that ethnic is too narrow a category to refer to the larger white community, ethnic groups are said to constitute very strong components of the society

(Lijphart, 1985) and common belief in a shared ancestry is deemed a powerful emotion within South Africa's various groups (Connor, 1990). 'That the Afrikaners constitute an ethno-national group is beyond doubt. And although relations between them and the non-Afrikaner white community have significantly improved during the last decade, it would be an error, to interpret a period of ethnic tranquillity as evidence of the absence of diverse groups. Similarly, while it is currently bad form to draw attention to the ethnic divisions among blacks because of the manipulative nurturing to which they have been subjected by the government, those divisions are quite real' (Connor, 1990: 20). This perception is widely shared by a section of South African scholarship with Schlemmer for instance arguing that 'if the shelter of the structure of white domination were to be stripped away, and Afrikaners' cultural symbols and their collective sense of "place" in the society were to be an issue, virtually all comparative and historical precedent would suggest that Afrikaans "nationalism" would come to the fore once again' (1990: 256). Similarly, Gagliano (1990) underlines continued divisions between the English- and Afrikaans-speaking communities, which he argues are reproduced through group socialisation, spatial segregation, and the use of separate religious, educative and media institutions. While the role of the state in promoting Afrikaner ethnicity is sometimes acknowledged, race and ethnicity appear within ethno-national literature as powerful and homogenous categories, leaving little room for the possibility of their deconstruction. Conflict is interpreted on the assumption that identities would never change and need therefore to be protected. Ethnicity in that sense may not be assumed to be primordial, but feelings it appears to generate among citizens are perceived to be primordial.

This conceptualisation of the South African society which was particularly popular in conservative journalistic reports at home and abroad at the beginning of the 1990s (e.g. depictions of the ANC as a 'Xhosa-communist alliance') led to assumptions of the existence of ethno-national sentiments within the majority population, in a process which has been sometimes explained as 'reactive nationalism': 'thus a militant declaration of Zulu or Afrikaner nationalism tends to produce a reaction in kind, whereby others respond by identifying themselves as Tswana, or Xhosa, or Swazi, and so on. If that behaviour predominates, Verwoerd's assumption of a multi-national state will be realised' (Barber, 1994: 72). Such explanation has been used by some commentators of South African politics to

explain the so called 'black on black' violence. Giliomee for instance argued that 'as the race for power in a post-apartheid society accelerates, serious clashes have occurred in Natal between Inkatha, as a Zulu-based movement operating legally, and the ANC, whose leadership is predominantly Xhosa and which was long banned. Open fighting, which broke out on the Witwatersrand in August 1990, suggests a tendency for the conflict to be reduced to a straightforward Xhosa-Zulu ethnic battle which could seriously jeopardise a settlement between whites and blacks' (1990: 311). Similarly, according to Waldmeir, in the conflict between residents of Merafe hostel and of Mapetla, 'the tribal element was real.... For despite the ANC's denials that ethnicity was a fact, local people always articulated their worries in tribal terms. When Mapetla got wind of an attack from the hostel, the cry went up, "the Zulus are coming" – not Inkatha is coming. And at Merafe hostel, residents complained that they were not welcome in Mapetla "because we're Zulus". They made no secret of the fact that they did not want an ANC government "because we don't want to be ruled by Xhosas"' (quoted in Guelke, 2000: 246-247). Similarly, de Jongh argued in regards to the violence which spread from Sebokeng in 1990, that 'what was initially a feud between Inkatha and UDF-ANC affiliates has in some areas become a war against 'the Zulus'. On the ground people did not perceive it as a fight against Inkatha. Any Zulu qualified for attack, just as the Zulus would attack anyone who was not Zulu, but more particularly someone who was Xhosa-speaking' (2000: 86).

Such conceptualisations of South Africa as a 'deeply divided society' between innate and fixed ethnic categories, led to demands for the recognition of group rights, i.e. rights that one accesses by virtue of belonging to a minority group, within the new constitutional arrangement in order to avoid a 'winner-takes-all' situation said to be inscribed in majority rule. Ethnically-based non-majoritarian proposals led to advocacy of consociational power-sharing arrangements first proposed rather crudely by Lijphart in 1985 on the assumption '*pace* apartheid orthodoxy, that the Africans can be divided into ten ethnic segments and the whites into Afrikaners and English-speakers' (quoted in Dubow, 1994: 368). Giliomee's bi-nationalism argument led him to conclude that the struggle over self-determination could not be solved through allocation of common citizenship and equal access to resources (Degenaar, 1991a). Horowitz, who predicted the politicisation of ethnicity in a future dispensation, as a

consequence of the disappearance of a common enemy in post-apartheid South Africa's order, concluded that 'the political institutions should therefore be chosen to give expression and contain inter ethnic differences and competition' (quoted in Southall, 1993: 260). Horowitz's prescription entailed a number of complicated electoral arrangements and a strong confederal system of governance.

This conceptualisation of South African conflict both reflected and fuelled to various degrees the discourse of the political actors promoting the constitutional protection of groups in the future dispensation. From 1985, the NP started advocating a consociational model for a unitary South Africa, with single citizenship and universal franchise (Sommer, 1996), which later transformed into the defence of a strong federal dispensation of power. Former Afrikaner nationalist representations around notions of *volk*, which were first re-appropriated by the CP, led by Treurnicht, became the agenda of the Afrikaner Volkfront, an umbrella right-wing alliance, led by Viljoen, a former chief of the defence force, which demanded a self-governing *volkstaat* within a federal South Africa as 'a symbol of Afrikaner nationalism and culture ... and a place to which Afrikaners might choose to move' (Barber, 1994: 75). Viljoen played an important role in keeping a large section of the far right on the constitutional path, imposing his views on the wilder sections of the right-wing. The leader of the IFP, Buthelezi, mobilised its constituency around threats to the Zulu ethnic identity. The ANC was accused of wanting to 'eliminate KwaZulu entirely from South Africa. There is a campaign to smash the Zulu sense of identity in a desperate attempt to make you obedient to those who want to destroy Kwazulu.... We were born Zulu South Africans and we will die Zulu South Africans, and we have an historic responsibility to make our Zulu contribution to the emergence of a new, just, free, and prosperous South Africa. For this, we will die' (quoted in Barber, 1994: 73). While not advocating group rights *per se*, the IFP favoured a strong federal constitution with extended regional autonomy.

### 3.1.2. The class argument

According to Atkinson, 'by the 1970s, the prevailing 'liberal'... approach to South African political analysis was decisively dethroned by a materialist paradigm according to which



economic classes, not race ideology, was the motor of history, and classes were structured according to the relation of the members of society to the means of production' (Atkinson, quoted in Bekker, 1993: 34-35). Marxist analysis of South African society conceptualised ethnicity as an 'epiphenomenon for access to commodity' (Mamdani, 1998), or a 'false consciousness', positing that 'contemporary "ethnic groups" in South Africa are no more than administrative inventions, without historical foundations or living social identities' (Meillassoux, quoted in Bekker, 1993: 1).

Intellectuals from the left dismissed ethnicity as pure invention of apartheid social engineering, created with the academic support of *Volkekunde* ethnology (in codifying customary law for each of the 'tribes' (Sharp, 1997b)). It was deemed a process of 'invention of tradition' too obvious and pervasive in its allocation of socio-economic functions and rights to be accepted and therefore undeserving of further investigation and questioning. In this regard, Adam argued that 'the inhabitants of the townships and squatter camps could not care less about "culture", "national identity" or "heritage maintenance", if they could only get jobs, decent housing and equal pay through political equality' (1990: 234).

According to this conceptualisation, apartheid was a regime of internal colonialism and of economic exploitation which aimed to advance the interests of South African white labour and white capital. Race, therefore, was used instrumentally and purposely to forward these economic goals. Such objective socio-economic divisions between the haves and the have-nots, between those benefiting from apartheid and those who were discriminated upon, was said to turn an objective experience of destitution into subjective class awareness. 'The unity of South African whites is not, at the outset, cultural or ethnic. Instead, it is constituted by the full political membership that these people share and that the other groups lack and that gives them preferential access to state resources' (MacDonald, 1990: 34). Support of apartheid by the politically enfranchised expresses 'the fear of the possibility of competition, and not just from industrial workers. Bureaucrats, lower level supervisors, the subsidised middle class, farmers – members of all of these groups fear that they can be replaced by members of the subordinate community' (MacDonald, 1990: 45). While the instrumental use of racist ideology enabled whites to claim a disproportionate amount of resources, this acquired social status led

to the reproduction of notions of ontological difference, social distance and perceived superiority. Whites were given the means to be 'first world' and then labelled first world while blacks became 'the implicit backdrop', the 'other', by which whites developed the shared meanings and traditions that defined what it means to be 'white' (MacDonald, 1990).

Adam argued a similar point according to which control of the state for white South Africans was less a matter of identity than a source of 'blatant self-enrichment'. Concerns about identity expressed during the period of negotiation 'rank[ed] far below worries about inflation, pension and currency values.... The ruling settler descendants [were] now increasingly concerned with securing their material advantages from this history, rather than preserving their collective identity' (1990: 236-237). On the basis of the fact that 70% of white South Africans were considered to be 'middle class', Adam argued that ethno-nationalism could never have succeeded in mass mobilisation, which generally occurs within 'a threatened working class or a downwardly mobile petty bourgeoisie that compensates for denied aspirations with symbolic status. It has yet to be proven anywhere that a BMW-owning bureaucratic bourgeoisie with swimming pools and servants readily sacrifices the good life for psychological gratifying ethnic affinities. Racial sovereignty proves durable only so long as it can deliver' (1990: 236). Sharp and Boonzaier argued similarly that *volkstaters* could be compared to the followers of millennial movements in the Pacific region in the sense that 'the attraction of these prophetic statements and calls to arms and military-style activities is precisely their millenarian aspect – the fact that they promise a miraculous achievement to the desired goal' (1995: 67), a goal for which *volkstaters* would not be prepared to sacrifice their material security. Acceptance of the transition by white South Africans according to this interpretation obeyed rational choice motivations based on the detrimental effect ideological apartheid had on the capitalist economy, hindered as it had become by a narrow domestic market, industrial actions, international sanctions and foreign divestments. Increasing objection to compulsory conscription and the emigration of professionals were clear indications according to Adam of a weak commitment to nationalist sacrifice.

Similarly, Olzak and Olivier articulate conflict in South Africa through competition theory arguments and interpret the intensification of conflict after the mid-1970s to the introduction

of the first modifications to institutional apartheid. 'The breakdown of rigid economic or political hierarchies based on race or ethnic boundaries incites hostility, conflict, or violence among newly competing groups' (1998: 259) with the one group seeking to restrain competition and the other pushing for more reform. Fears of the decrease in living standards were especially strong amongst middle to lower middle class Afrikaners, the main beneficiaries of state largess during apartheid, according to Herbst (1994), who had become accustomed to a certain lifestyle and were the least likely to be able to purchase privatised services in a post-apartheid order. Accordingly, the lower economic strata constituted the main audience of right-wing radicalised discourse.

For Hyslop as well, irrespective of the growing internal and violent resistance from the opposition and elite imposition of change from above, the large majority of South African whites readily accepted the demise of apartheid because 'the subjectivities of whites changed between the 1970s and the 1990s in a way which made them much less available for mobilisation in defence of apartheid.... Subjectivities which were to a large extent organised around a modernist and racist project of state building were replaced by a more self-regarding, individualist identity' which in turn 'undermined the possibility of mobilising them for the much larger scale war' (2000: 36-37). While the state grasp on civil society institutions started to loosen up from the late 1960s, political, ideological and economic divisions grew significantly within the ruling alliance which 'made white society harder to insulate from global changes.... Middle and upper-class Afrikaners and English speakers were more and more exposed to globalising influences. Their "lifestyles" changed in ways which created new forms of self-identity; less solidaristic, more consumerist, and more hedonistic' (2000: 38). Global media (television was introduced in 1976 in South Africa) played according to Hyslop a distinctive role in deconstructing identities which were at odds with global accepted norms in representations of race, gender and sexuality and in the emergence of a middle class identity so that, he argues, 'whites were willing to accept residential and school desegregation, but only if it did not involve a change in the class identity of their neighbourhood' (2000: 40). Such individualised identities defined as they were in terms of self-interest and life-style choices were not only at odds with the collective racial project inscribed in Botha's 'total

onslaught' but were also threatened by the very continuance of apartheid, and the concomitant increases in internal and global pressures on the economy.

Within the opposition to apartheid, Sharp pointed out that 'the ways in which the solidarities – and therefore also the outsiders – were defined varied over time and between, as well as within, dissident movements' (1998: 249). Similarly, Marx (1991) contends that the relative importance of race, nation and class were disputed within the opposition, the three interpretations of collective identities in conflict taking precedence successively, following changes in the socio-economic context, as well as in state repressive policies. The Black Consciousness movement, which became popularised under the leadership of Steve Biko, emerged in the late 1960s within black universities and churches with the aim of 'changing individual self-image rather than with organising for overt action' (Marx, 1991: 314). It was a social movement focused on shaping a collective positive black identity. The focus on racial identity was influenced by similar development across the Atlantic (i.e. 'Black Power' movement in the States). 'By the early 1980s, popular support and the allegiance of many former Black Consciousness adherents had shifted to the local groups which affiliated with the United Democratic Front (UDF). This Front, non-racial and national in scope, was closely linked to the exiled African National Congress. It was a loose alliance of local civic and professional organisations with specific grievances, 'seeking to use organisational cohesion and resources to press for concrete gains' (1991: 317). The vagueness it displayed in terms of specific policies enabled the Front to attract followers across race and class. Despite long-standing references to Marxism by the ANC, mobilisation was based on the vision of united and inclusive South African nation and consideration of working class interests and socialism were deferred to the post-liberation era. Calls for national unity in that sense aimed to unite the opposition to apartheid, and fell neither on skin colour, ethnicity or economic status. While unionised black workers had increased in mass as a result of legalisation by the state in 1979 of black unions, the banning of the UDF in 1988 facilitated the emergence of the union movement as 'the leading form of popular organisation and expression' (Marx, 1991: 321), leading to the predominance of class analysis of the conflict, reinforced by the economic recession of the 1980s.

Conceptions of conflict in terms of class and South Africanism led to the defence of individual rights within a framework of equality of access to opportunities by the UDF/ANC and the labour movement. Large support for the ANC within the majority of the population led Adam to argue that ‘when in a divided society the overwhelming majority of the people favour a non-racial, non-ethnic constitution based on individual rights, the conflict is better conceptualised as the hold-out of a minority against the socio-economic implications of majority rule, rather than as a communal conflict with equal rights on both sides’ (1990: 233). The importance of ethno-nationalism within the opposition was dismissed on the ground of long-term lack of support of institutions of traditional leadership within the ANC, the inclusiveness inscribed in the 1955 Freedom Charter, and the fact that all opposition movements allowed access to the nation of whites, the nation being defined through voluntary affiliation rather than indigenusness (Nolutshungu, 1993).

In terms of this conception of conflict, so-called ‘black-on-black’ violence in Gauteng and KwaZulu-Natal in the late 1980s-beginning 1990s was the result of both material and political competition – i.e. the national and local political competition between the ANC and the IFP, with the IFP trying to extend its support base beyond KwaZulu-Natal. Sparks (1996) described the conflict in the homogenous region of Natal as a politically motivated Zulu civil war. According to Ellis, most of the violence was instigated by covert units of the state and its IFP ally in a ‘campaign of low-intensity warfare’ (1998: 286). Instigation by third parties – a ‘Third Force’ emanating from security and police apparatus arming IFP supporters in KwaZulu-Natal and the migrant-worker hostels on the Rand – was documented by the Goldstone Commission Report (1993). Growing social cleavages which derived from accelerated rural-urban migration, extremely poor living conditions in hostels and squatter camps, high levels of unemployment and subsequent competition over scarce resources in a context of widespread political patronage were the causes of violence according to many analysts (Taylor and Shaw, 1994; Zeleza, 2004; Guelke, 2000), who highlighted the tenuous border between political and criminal violence (Barber, 1994; Kane-Berman, 1993).

Clearly, both conceptions of the South African conflict – either in terms of class or ethno-nationalism – tended to reflect the view from above rather than that of ordinary people (Sharp,

1997b). Meanwhile, ‘the subjective angle’ (Mayer, quoted in Bekker, 1993: 90) and individual agency were neglected. Social identity was largely perceived to be uni-dimensional, and heterogenisation within groups according to age, geographic location or gender was paid lip-service. On the right, elite-driven political nationalism (Piper, 2003) was assumed to echo the feelings of their constituencies with little empirical evidence, thereby expressing a level of internalisation of apartheid’s myths by scholars. Apprehension of identities at national level led to a neglect of local divergences and dynamics, an argument advanced by Hyslop on the basis of his study of ethnic mobilisation in a suburb of Johannesburg in the late 1980s: local political actors, he argues, ‘are imagined [by scholarship] in the image of national level ideologues and leaders ... in the Krugersdorp case study, far from being propelled by such a unitary dynamic, Afrikaner ethnic mobilisation during the period of the decline of apartheid was unstable and fragmented, and liable to be displaced by considerations of pragmatic self-interest on the part of its constituents’ (1996: 373-374). The subjective and shifting nature of ethnicity was scarcely articulated despite the regime’s own historical vagaries regarding racial definition and the fact that the reality of identities was always more complex than the simple scheme of classification imagined by the apartheid state (Sharp and Boonzaier, 1995). Such weakness in scholarship has been aptly captured by Darbon who argued that ‘it is easier to presume that political choice takes place – exclusively or *in fine* – according to categories reified by law (blacks, whites, coloureds and Indians) ... than to think of political choices defined through a multiplicity of concepts, which have fluctuated historically and socially – income, housing, religion, language, history, ethnic community – including the use of individual strategies’ (1995: 131).

On the left, the necessities of the fight against apartheid conditioned the content of scholarship. In the words of Maré, ‘analysis in South Africa is littered with examples of attributing over-riding shared class consciousness to workers against such divisive identities and mobilisations as race or ethnicity, or even gender groups’ (Maré, 2003: 24). Barrell for instance argued that ‘the extremities of the national liberatory task at hand do not allow for the luxury of ... ethnic sectarianism within or between revolutionary organisations’ (quoted in Young, 1989: 523), to which Young responded ‘so now we know. No doubt such luxuries have already evaporated in the face of Barrell’s stern injunction. Who, in his right mind, could

possibly want to explain them?’ (1989: 523). Scholarship largely ignored the notion of multiple identities and the possibility that cultural denigration and racial discrimination may have promoted the emergence of reactive racial identities and solidarities within the majority group (Sharp, 1998a).

### 3.2. The multiculturalism debate

The 1990s saw a clear shift in focus of identity studies toward the process of nation-building in a united South Africa and newly renamed ‘cultural’ (from ‘ethnic’) identities. Such development took place within an international context of emerging legitimacy of ‘cultural rights’ both within Northern American academic discourse and in the international judicial sphere, with the 1992 UN Declaration on the Rights of Persons Belonging to National or Ethnic, Religious and Linguistic Minorities and with the growing recognition of indigenous peoples’ rights worldwide. While ethnic claims of South African intermediaries progressively rid themselves of racial/racist undertones, scholarly debate opened up to attract the interest of a wider range of scholars, thereby expanding beyond the right-wing traditional ideological territory. Scholars who had previously resisted the notion of cultural identities started to show interest in the politics of cultural meaning, and in the possible reproduction of ascribed identities within the new South African context. Debate shifted from an outright rejection of ethnicity ‘in itself’ to an interest about its possible uses ‘for itself’, as a meaningful social category and mobilising strategy for collective action especially in an unstable context of ethnically differentiated access to material and symbolical resources (Darbon, 1995). Many scholars started to adopt an approach to ethnicity that could be claimed ‘from below’ (ethnicity understood as a form of social identity that acquires meaning through a process of conscious assertion and imagining) rather than simply named ‘from above’ (conceptions of ethnicity in primordial, static, or essentialist terms) (Dubow, 1994).

In a major theoretical shift, Sharp argued that a mistake inscribed in *South African Keywords*, a book he edited with Boonzaier in 1988, ‘lay[s] in our simple presumption that South Africans were really all alike ... beneath the imposed differences ... and while it is true that all South Africans aspire, today, to the same kinds of goals, the goals that characterise life in an

industrial society – to better jobs, education, proper housing, and so on ... sameness like difference can never simply be taken for granted' (1997b: 6). While apartheid created differences discursively, through a process which glossed over dissensus within communities to serve the interests of the dominant minority, these differences reflected one section's of the autochthonous population shared interest 'in the differences that were imposed on them' according to Sharp (1997b: 6). While apartheid's representation of the society in terms of 'natural' differences of races and ethnic groups was a distorted 'representation of reality ... it is important to remember that (even distorted) representations are part of social reality – a level of reality which incorporates the ideas, beliefs and models that people hold about "what is real". However "mistaken" they may be, these ideas and beliefs can, and do, have significant material and social consequences' (1997a: 7). Accordingly, while denying differences was part of the struggle against apartheid myths, 'it is striking', he concludes, 'that the demise of the apartheid state should mean that there is new scope to take "difference" seriously in South Africa' (1997a: 15).

This shift in Sharp's conceptualisation of identity from mere instrumentalism to the acknowledgement that 'identity politics' as a process shapes identities, led him to reconsider his and Boonzaier's previous analysis of Nama identity in Richtersveld. This initial study portrayed the rediscovery of Nama identity and subsequent claims to indigenosity as an 'imaginary' identity, a strategic performance adapted to new economic and political circumstances in post-apartheid South Africa and aimed at instrumental claims to land (Sharp and Boonzaier, 1994). Drawing from Robins, Sharp now recognises that this newly claimed Nama identity in fact constitutes a 'recuperation of social memory' (Sharp, 1997a: 16) rather than an invention; the construction of a hybrid, subjective and reflexive identity which is as legitimate as any other hybrid culture. And, as any cultural construction, 'Namaness' is recognised as a representation claimed from below which constructs reality and is therefore meaningful, while being contested from within and divided along various class and gender lines.

Many identity studies written in the 1990s in South Africa focused on cultural belonging and the need to build a civic nation without nationalism, i.e. a nation based on consent rather than



descent, which would be respectful of cultural distinctiveness. On this basis, inclusive patriotism (Adam, 1990); civic patriotism; civic nation; constitutional patriotism (Liebenberg and Duvenage, 1996); hetero-nationalism (Comaroff, 1996); rational constitutionalism (Nolutshungu, 1993) were defended while a 'policy of symbolic multiculturalism such as propagated in Canada and Australia can reconcile heritage maintenance with patriotic loyalty to the multi-ethnic state' (Adam, 1990: 231). This followed earlier warnings by Degenaar against the construction of a nation based on common culture, which he deemed 'a form of Jacobinism according to which the dominant culture takes itself to be the common culture' (1991a: 12). Instead, Degenaar proposed a 'civic society', 'a constitutional pluralist democracy based on a sense of common citizenship with mutual respect for different cultural traditions. In this dispensation the important sense of belonging is catered for both by communal cultures and by a sense of common citizenship, and it can meaningfully take the place of a common national feeling' (1991a: 12). Adam in particular moved away from theorisation of race and ethnicity in rational choice terms to the recognition of the emotional power inscribed in ethnicity 'as the expression of the historically evolved specific memories by which the members of a collectivity interpret and give meaning to their worlds' (1995: 464); and as a potential problem for nation-building which needs to be 'addressed' rather than outright 'denied'.

Conception of South Africa as a multicultural society was clearly reflected in the following 1997 ANC Discussion Document in which the South African nation is defined in terms of an 'osmosis' between various cultures, articulating 'a healthy equilibrium between centrifugal and centripetal tendencies':

The ANC has always recognised cultural, linguistic and religious multiplicity of South African society. Individuals will have multiple identities: for instance being a South African with a specific mother tongue, class position, political and religious affiliation and so on. These identities do not necessarily disappear in the melting pot of broad South Africanism. Rather, they can all co-exist in healthy combination.... To deny the reality of these identities by the democratic movement is to create a

vacuum which can easily be exploited by counter-revolution (ANC Discussion Documents, 1997).

Concerns among scholars for cultural accommodation were paralleled by what appeared to be a domino-like chain of minority claims within the public sphere, which Comaroff deemed a 'political struggle fought with "cultural weapons"' (1996: 179) and McAllister called the 'manifestations of cultural exclusivity' (1996: 72). These 'recognition battles' were often formulated within the judicial language of the United Nations and First peoples' movements in America: claims for territorial and cultural self-determination of Afrikaners, similar claims by the KWB (*Kleurling Weerstandsbeweging* or Coloured Liberation Movement); emergence of The December 1 Movement, a cultural movement centered around the emancipation of the slaves on 1<sup>st</sup> December 1834; indigenous claims by San, Nama, Khoi and Griqua communities which were granted formal recognition within the UN Working Group on Indigenous Populations in 1997; and emergence of PAGAD (People Against Gangsterism and Drugs) whose public discourse at times drew upon the language of Islamic Revolution.

In 1996, a new constitution was adopted in South Africa, which interpreted society as 'United in Diversity' in its preamble and granted to a certain extent rights on the basis of cultural belonging. While the term multiculturalism is not used in South African policy-making circles (McAllister 1996), the constitution offers a number of protections to cultural communities (although subjected to individual rights) against cultural homogenisation. Minority political representation in the national government was included in the interim constitution (and gave birth to the Government of National Unity) but it was excluded from the final text. However, the constitution recognises eleven official languages and the state is obliged to take practical and positive measures to elevate the status of indigenous languages (section 6(2), SAC). PANSALB, the Pan South African Language Board has been established to that effect and Article 29 (2) of the Bill of Rights asserts that 'everyone has the right to receive education in the official language or languages of their choice in public educational institutions where that education is reasonably practicable'. A state commission for the promotion and protection of the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities which will recommend the establishment or recognition of relevant cultural councils for South African communities

(section 185, SAC) was established in 2003. Customary law is to be applied when it does not infringe on individual rights<sup>3</sup>. Religious pluralism rather than secularism is entrenched and Muslim personal law is in the process of being recognised. Traditional authorities have been given a role in the political system. Finally, Act 108, art. 235 provides for the right to self-determination (but not of secession) of communities sharing a cultural and linguistic heritage, and the establishment of a Volkstaat Council to investigate self-determination possibilities (Bekker and Leildé, 2003).

Simultaneously, multiculturalism in South Africa, exemplified by the metaphor of the Rainbow Nation led to renewed debate around the risk of reification and rigidification of former identities, of continued ‘mentality putting people into boxes’ (Pillay, 1999) and of the ‘constitutionalisation of ethnic politics’ (Alexander, 1999b: 24) purportedly inscribed in the constitution. Alexander for example argued that ‘we can choose between opting for an ethnically defined, so-called rainbow society in which the primary identity is the “own” ethnic group, or we can opt for what I called a Garieb nation in which the primary identity is the national, South African identity.... Our society is a multicultural society of a special kind. We do not want to perpetuate this or that particular identity as though it were some sacred and unalterable writ.... In my view, our primary identity should be that of being South African....’ (n.d.: 10-18). Rainbowism, Alexander argues, ‘popularises and entrenches the notion of coexisting colour groups and probably helps to create captive markets for ethnic entrepreneurs... Suddenly, a Griqua, a Bushman, even an Indonesian identity is being marketed and although all these purported groups refer to mere handfuls of people, the tendency [is] to exploit this dialectic of class and tribe’ (1999b: 21-23).

Clearly, in the debates over multiculturalism in South Africa, identity continues to be perceived as singular, as a process which involves being either one or the other (either a cultural or a national being). It is a process which is still understood as taking place within the political arena and analysed on the basis of various political agendas, thereby reflecting a view

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<sup>3</sup> The role of traditional leaders in the new political set-up remains contested as debate over the Communal Land Rights Bill and the Traditional Leadership Bill has illustrated (Looming Land Disaster, Cousins, B. and Claassens, A. Mail and Guardian, 31 November - 6 December 2003). A number of judicial battles over the application of customary law in inheritance and traditional practices led to varied and contradictory outcomes so far.

from above. Presumptions of deep differences and the absence of commonalities with South African society remain at the centre of studies on identity in South Africa while the multiplicity of subjectivities, and heterogenisation and contestation within ‘cultural’ communities are themes which remain unexplored. A case in point in this regard is the quick conceptualisation of PAGAD as a homogenous Muslim social movement, an assumption which neglects the very causes of its demise a few years after its emergence, as a result of both class and ideological variations within the movement.

### 3.3. The return of the class-race debate

#### 3.3.1. The post-ethnic era

Journalistic reports on the apparent persistence in South Africa of ‘substantive public perceptions of Xhosa Nostra’<sup>4</sup> sometimes emerge; and accusations of ethnic hate speech have been part of the public landscape since the transition (notably with the use of the slogan ‘kill the Boer, kill the farmer’ by the Landless People’s Movement and with musician Mbongeni Ngema’s controversial song *AmaNdiya* about South African Indians); change in street/city/airport names are often debated in terms of ethnic heritage; tradition is sometimes called upon as the trial of former Deputy President, J. Zuma, demonstrates. However, academic interest in ethnic political mobilisation – in the politics of ‘primordial convictions’ (Sharp, 1998) waned significantly since 1996.

This lack of interest was matched by a decreased visibility and vocality of ethnic claims within the public realm. While the end of the Government of National Unity did not wreak havoc, the IFP’s militant Zulu nationalist rhetoric and mobilisation had disappeared by 1996 in favour of a policy of cooperation with the ANC at national, regional and local levels (Piper, 2002). This trend was confirmed by the IFP’s decreasing results at elections from 10.5% in 1994 to 6.97% nationally in 2004 when it lost its hold in KwaZulu-Natal. While the NNP has disappeared from the political scene, the ideal of an Afrikaner state died with the dissolution of the Volkstaat Council in 1999 without having had any impact on government policy, its only

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<sup>4</sup> ‘We’re sowing the seeds of ethnic conflict’, D. Hlophe, Mail and Guardian, 31 May 6 June 2002.

concrete reminder being Orania, this mix of Amish/Kibbutz small 'private' town in the Northern Cape whose population of a few hundred residents has hardly increased since its inception in 1989. The party claiming to defend Afrikaner self-determination, the Freedom Front+ received 0.89% of the votes in the 2004 national elections (to its 2.2% in the 1994 elections). Similarly the PAC which scored 1.2% in 1994, received 0.73% of the votes in 2004 with AZAPO and the Minority Front showing negligible results.

While both the DA (e.g. the 1999 'Fight Back' campaign) and the ANC (e.g. Mbeki's 'two-nation thesis') have regularly accused each other of playing the 'race card', interpretations of electoral patterns in terms of race and ethnicity is contested. The first national elections in 1994, and the following local elections in 1995 and 1996 were largely analysed in terms of 'the continuing polarisation of South African politics along racial lines' (Guelke, 2000: 102) while victory of the National Party in provincial and Cape Town local elections in 1996 led to depictions of the city as a 'white/coloured laager against black control' (Cape Times editorial, reported in Guelke, 2000: 99). The linking of racial category and shared electoral behaviour is often left unproblematised, with the continued contiguousness of race and class in South Africa; of self-interest and collective belonging sometimes outright overlooked by commentators. Friedman argues that the fact that people continue to vote for the ANC (69,7% in 2004 from 66,4% in 1999), despite slow delivery, shows that 'South African parties are defined by, and draw their support from, identities – race, language and religion primarily among them. Casting a ballot is not an instrumental calculation but an expression of who a citizen is. And people will go to great lengths to express who they are' (2000, no p.n.). This is however questioned by Lodge who contends in regard to the 1999 elections that 'it is very difficult analytically to draw a clear distinction between "rational" material considerations and the more emotional preoccupations with social, historical or racial identity which might have informed voter decisions... but on the basis of their material interests, black South Africans had good reasons to support the ANC'<sup>5</sup>. Similarly, according to Habib, 'the neo-liberal model of accumulation has effectively pitted the poor of all racial groups against each other. This is the only way to understand the "Indian" and "coloured" vote'<sup>6</sup>, which in turn explains the

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<sup>5</sup> Quoted in 'Can Leon Blacken his alliance?' H. Barrell, Mail and Guardian 7-13 July 2000.

<sup>6</sup> 'Elites and our racial quagmire', A. Habib, Mail and Guardian, 20 December-2 January 2003.

difference in voting patterns between the middle class and working class members of these communities.

Since 1996, minority disgruntlement seems to revolve around language issues, especially in regard to the decreasing use of Afrikaans in the public sphere which led to the formation of the Group of 63 in 2000 and continues to fuel debate within Stellenbosch University (which was statutorily recognised as the only ‘primarily’ Afrikaans university in the country) about dual medium education at undergraduate level. This linguistic concern cuts across race according to Moodley who contends that the devaluation of Afrikaans to one of several indigenous languages ‘is experienced as punitive anti-Afrikaans action by many Afrikaans-speakers, including many of the Coloureds who form the majority – nine per cent – among the approximately seventeen per cent of the population who indicate Afrikaans as their first language’ (2000: 108).

Two exceptions to the waning interest in the politics of primordialism in South African scholarship may be noted. The African Renaissance project initiated by President Mbeki led to vigorous debate about the concept of African-ness in South Africa. Some view the initiative as emancipatory, a ‘relatively benign and potentially emancipatory expressions of cultural nationalism’ (Robins, 2004: 24) since it will launch a process of re-appropriation by Africans of self-authorship after centuries of imposed representation and promote the development of an Afrocentric scholarship (Makgoba and Seepe, 2004). These views, in turn, have elicited the criticism that the debate over ‘Africanisation’ of the South African society introduces a new form of essentialism and that this has not transcended the hoary issue of race, thereby reasserting patterns of inclusion and exclusion in post-apartheid South Africa that are antithetical to the democratic ideal (Sewpaul, 2004). Further criticism holds that the debate is confined to the elite and is a strategy aimed at deflecting attention from prominent class and gender cleavages. It has also been described as a state-legitimising discourse and a political strategy aimed at attracting ‘the Africanist’ section of South African voters (Crouzel, 2000), in spite of the fact that Pan-Africanism never figured prominently in South African Black Nationalism.

The Boeremag bombings in 2002 which targeted railway lines and various places of worship led to a number of inquiries regarding the persistence of primordial fears among Afrikaners, since members of the organisation articulated their grievances against the state in terms of ethnicity and religious fundamentalism, drawing indiscriminately from the 'Israel vision', the 100-year-old prophecies of Afrikaner mystic Nicolaas van Rensburg, and contemporary events such as farm murders and affirmative action policies. According to research commissioned by the Institute for Justice and Reconciliation, an NGO based in Rondebosch, 'the Boeremag's failed coup d'état served as a rude awakening to many that South Africa's transition to democracy is incomplete, and that for the time being this society remains vulnerable to destabilisation ... Fervent religiosity, combined with political disempowerment and cultural alienation, continues to feed religious extremism in South Africa....' (du Toit, quoted in Joubert, 2004: 4), which follows the FF+ MP Mulder's own assessment that bombings were just 'the tip of the iceberg'<sup>7</sup>. While the IRJ report argues that support towards the Boeremag may be limited, it infers that sympathy 'may be somewhat larger' since 'the Boeremag is acting on a sequence of historically entrenched myths and stereotypes with which most Afrikaners are deeply familiar.... Their military and organisational capacity as well as their religious fervour present grounds for taking them seriously as a social movement' (Joubert, 2004: 4-5).

Similarly, Schönreich and Boshoff of the Institute of Security Studies argue that while the white right largely chose to exit from the South African public arena, either through emigration or 'internal emigration' by 'withdrawing from public life and its civic responsibilities' (2003: 99) and living in gated communities, the Boeremag reflects to an extent, in the authors' view, broader concerns/grievances shared by white South Africans. 'It might have escaped an overconfident ANC government, but there is a substantial and growing feeling of alienation felt by many whites, especially Afrikaners... a substantial number of white South Africans feel threatened by their own government's ambiguity towards land seizures in Zimbabwe, violent crimes committed against white farmers in South Africa and the lack of official protection for the Afrikaans language and culture' (2004: 82) which, according

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<sup>7</sup> Reported in 'Is radical right a real threat to SA's democracy?', T. Cohen and C. Benjamin, Business Day, 7 November 2002.

to the authors, explains the fact that ‘since the late 1990s a number of discourses traditionally unique to the Afrikaner right have been taken up by the Afrikaner establishment. Over the last few years there has been a revival of Afrikaans culture and language, and a variety of Afrikaner civil society movements. The intellectual and cultural battle in defence of Afrikaans and Afrikaner culture, which was the preserve of the right wing in the 1980s and early 1990s, has been adopted by the broad Afrikaner mainstream... In defence of cultural and linguistic rights which are perceived to be under pressure, many cosmopolitan and modern Afrikaners are beginning to mobilise around ethnic issues. This mobilisation is taking place not only within rural and conservative communities, but also among traditionally liberal Afrikaner academics, Afrikaans authors and artists and in the editorial offices of the country’s largest Afrikaans-language newspapers’ (2004: 98).

### 3.3.2. The reproduction of racial subjectivities

While interest in cultural identities has waned significantly in the last few years, especially within academic research, a certain amount of studies have focused on the persistence of race as a ‘lived experience’, a form of identification articulated and claimed from below. As was the case 20 years ago, the persistence of racialised identities in South Africa (along the four ‘population groups’ which were used as the basis for apartheid legislation) has been interpreted through two theoretical frameworks. On the one hand, reproduction of former discourse from above is said to be taking place in a context of continued use of racial categorisation with public discourse and representations (such as census classification or decisions regarding the formation of sport teams), and the low levels of cross-racial socialisation due to continued patterns of spatial segregation (Moodley and Adam, 2000). On the other hand, racial identities are explained on the basis of competition over access to economic resources in a context of continued racialised distribution of wealth.

While Moodley and Adam speak of ‘heightened ethno-racial consciousness’ (2000: 54) in post-apartheid society, many South African scholars have argued that race continues to dominate ways in which South Africans speak of themselves and of others; that race thinking is embedded in ‘the minutiae of everyday existence’ (Maré, 2003: 14) in South Africa, that is



has taken on an ‘illusion of ordinariness’ (Maré, 2001: 75) so that it is ‘impossible not to have a racially fragmented society with eruptions and experiences that confirm race, and racism, as the first and sufficient explanation, justification and motivation for action, as evidenced in a multitude of cases that could be offered by way of illustration’ (Maré, 2003: 15). The ‘assumed facticity’ of race during apartheid according to Posel (2001: 63) created a lexicon according to which everyday dimensions and activity of life could be interpreted through a racial prism, from religion to food to sport and that race continues to determine ways by which things are thought about. ‘A thoroughly racialised society will continue to “demand” the race tool as common sense option [so that] “banal” race thinking and race action continues largely unchallenged’ according to Maré (2003: 30). Similarly Sewpaul argues that ‘while race is irrelevant and unreal, it is paradoxically one of the most important social categories in our lives as race has become inscribed into our collective consciousness and our individual psyches and its influence permeates all of our lived experiences’ (2004: 5). In sum, ‘racism as the everyday false consciousness of socially constructed difference, has not disappeared with the repeal of racial legislation’ according to Adam (1995: 468).

In regards to white identities, Steyn (2002) has argued that ‘the continuities in [white South Africans] racialised identities are still very strong; [they] still fit the world onto a template of “us” and “them”. For white South Africans, the ideological “other” (and this is of course a generalisation) is the African National Congress/Congress of South African Trade Unions/South African Communist Party alliance which represents a challenge to the ways in which the old society was organised to privilege “white” interests ... the social “other” is still overwhelmingly Africa and Africans with a secondary “not-us” consisting of members of the “other” white group ... there is still quite a strong tendency for English speakers to identify racism with Afrikaners, and for Afrikaners to see English whites as unsympathetic to their concerns’<sup>8</sup>. Similarly, Ballard argues in his study of reactions from white residents in the Berea area of Durban to informal settlements in close proximity to their area of residence that their negative reactions cannot be explained merely by material concerns about property devaluation but by the fact that the arrival of these newcomers ‘impact on residents’ sense of place and therefore on their self-perception as western, modern, civilised people...

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<sup>8</sup> ‘Whites still battling to find their place in Africa’, Cape Times, 25 November 2002.

[constituting] non-material threats to values, morals, norms, and a certain suburban sense of place' (2004: 49). Ballard ties those reactions to notions of whiteness, presumably because this is a discourse articulated by white residents and because discourse often takes on racist undertones as representations of squatters are couched in notions of 'African backwardness' and 'Kraal-type of living'.

Racism is both an experience inside the structures of power, and an experience that resonates widely with those who were historically marginalised according to Pillay (2003)<sup>9</sup> who continue to experience social distance in racial terms and on the basis of the experience of 'wretchedness' (Pillay, 2004). Mangcu argues that 'while the laws have changed, people cannot be expected to throw away their evolved identities and values... The struggle against racism has also been a source of cultural identity and pride even, for black people' (Mangcu, 2001: 18-19). Such cultural identity around values such as *Ubuntu* drawn from the experience of racism and built as a buffer against it continues to determine how black South Africans interpret social reality. In this regard, Mangcu contends that 'the political killings of the 1980s were denounced in terms of how much they detracted from black solidarity' while 'contemporary denunciations of black criminality are framed in terms of the impact of apartheid on black people or how those acts undermine the black quest for social progress' (2001: 19).

Finally, in regard to the formation of racial subjectivities within the coloured community, Martin argues that 'the South African usage of the terms "coloured", "culture", or the combination "coloured" and "culture" are not value free ... [and] illustrate the extent to which apartheid classification policies ... have impacted upon all aspects of social life and been interiorised by South Africans ... Usage of the term by people and others to talk about themselves shows that apartheid practices have 'cemented a distinctive community from heterogeneous elements' (Martin, 2001: 249). While during apartheid, the label 'coloured' and notions of coloured culture were rejected by some in the name of united struggle against discrimination (in particular cultural symbols perceived to be degrading such as the Coon carnival), 'to others, coloureds did create a unique culture whose manifestations are obvious, a

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<sup>9</sup> 'Why we must talk about race', Mail and Guardian, 3-9 January 2003.

culture they have the right to claim and be proud of' (2001: 250), a common life-style born out of the sharing of space in Cape Town, around sites of collective memory such as District Six. For others still, the stigma of racism was internalised and identity centred on 'recognition by white rulers' and 'civilisational' differentiation from the African majority. Transition to democracy, Martin argues, led to renewed interest in and process of claiming of 'in-betweenness' linked to 'the hopes as well as anxieties entertained about the "new South Africa" .... In the 1990s, more people may feel like emphasising a coloured identity, whatever content they put into it' (2001: 255) to the point that coloured identity has become a political stake. This coloured identity, according to Martin, contains both positive elements and negative and exclusionary elements as the discourse of 'people who claim that they would never vote for a terrorist who spent a long time in prison' illustrates (Martin, 2001: 261).

Simultaneously, the pervasiveness of race is explained by the fact that 'race thinking is located in real social conditions, and effectively makes sense of the way in which people have experienced, and continue to experience, that social reality, within a changing pattern of domination' (Maré, 2003: 14). Material factors therefore mitigate against new identities coming into being, and cross-cultural movement is hampered by the structural divisions in South African society. Sharp argues accordingly that 'racial or ethnic exclusivity may function, paradoxically, as a means by which the disadvantaged press for a proper deracialisation of society, and express their rejection of a limited desegregation that effectively excludes them' (1998a: 251). Racial identification, in other words, is said to be reproduced as a result of continued structural racialised allocation of wealth which maintains a condition of 'ranked ethnicities' (Horowitz, 1985). In the Western Cape in particular the perception of racialised access to employment and social services is deemed to reproduce racial affiliations because of the former Coloured Labour Preference Policy, the continued racial segmentation of the low-wage sector and the acute crisis of the regional economy (Taylor and Foster, 1997). According to Maré, 'there are countless examples of the way in which the tensions associated with social inequality, and resentment at measures to redress inequality, have flared up or resulted in the expression of racialised perceptions' (Maré, 1997: 7) between coloured and black residents.

Lohnert, Oldfield and Parnell have come to similar conclusions on the basis of the study they conducted in two disadvantaged areas of Cape Town, Retreat and Imizamo Yethu. They conclude:

The minimal impact of desegregation, plus the relative failure of state initiatives to ameliorate racialised poverty draws our attention to the coping strategies of the urban poor of Retreat and Imizamo Yethu. Government's intentions of integrating racially divided South African cities seem likely to fail, at least in the less affluent quarters of Cape Town. A racialised legacy, which post-apartheid state interventions barely ameliorate, underscores the significance of cultural networks as mediating mechanisms for survival among the urban disadvantaged.... Academic and policy analysts identify the transformation of local government structures as key to the transition to non-racialism, the social logic of residents however, centres on establishing links with people of common identity, reinforcing racial patterns inherited from the past ... the discussion about the waiting list for housing reveal that many aspects of urban life have become so racialised that the once pejorative label coloured is now seen by some as a legitimate primary identity... The overall picture that emerges is one of increasing social polarisation within racially homogeneous settlements, a vision far removed from the lofty ideals of equity and non-racialism (1998: 8-9).

Similarly, within the formerly advantaged population, issues of affirmative action policies, Black Economic Empowerment, and debates over land reform are said to lead to sharper racial polarisation<sup>10</sup>.

In regard to the continuance of former racial identities, two points may be noted. The first point revolves around methodological weakness. Conducting empirical cross-cultural research is difficult in South Africa, because of the difficulty for the researcher to build trust with interviewees beyond his or her own group. Accordingly, many inquiries around notions of 'whiteness' and 'colouredness' (Ballard, 2004; Puttergill, 2006; Erasmus, 2001) draw upon qualitative data gathered within a singular community. Such research, if it is able to

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<sup>10</sup> 'Land issue illustrates social rift', P. du Toit, Business Day, 5 May 2004.

underscore differences from within, cannot apprehend commonalities from without, i.e. shared discourses across communities. This methodological limitation was highlighted twenty years ago by Sharp who argued that monographic studies inherently tend to create themselves the object of their study: ‘it is illegitimate either to view ethnicity as a primordial bond of attachment or to take “ethnic” boundaries as self-evident limitations on the field of one’s study’ (Sharp, quoted in Darbon, 1995b: 128).

The second point regarding the continuance of racial identities is that a number of researchers have questioned the reproduction of racial identities in post-apartheid South Africa by pointing out the instability and heterogenisation of former categories, and focusing on popular and localised cultural forms and process of cultural creolisation and hybridisation resulting from globalisation and commodification of values (Nuttall and Michael, 2000; Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004). This emerging ‘colour-free’ culture is one of consumption, vehicled through mass mediation of global cultural habits in a country which is increasingly urbanised and urbanite (Cheru, 2001). Such process can take on positive aspects of identities which are both infra- (in their local form) and supra-ethnic/racial, of cosmopolitan subjectivities and agencies where ‘local meanings of personhood ... are being renovated and reconfigured by the male and female youth using the signifiers of global youth culture ... The emergent notions of personhood emphasise the individual’s familiarity with the cosmopolitan styles and spaces of the new South Africans whose bodies are no longer anchored in specific racialised spaces or marked with ethnic accents and dress codes’ (Salo, 2004: 19).

Simultaneously, scholars have recently focused on identity strategies which, while being infra-ethnic/racial, are said to continue to reflect the absence of social trust among the citizenry, and which are built to substitute state deficiencies in the field of poverty alleviation and the fight against crime. These identities which seem to point to the reinforcement of vertical social capital are understood to be expressing the ‘exit’ option of both the poor and the rich, through privatisation of space (gated communities, shopping malls) and of security (neighbourhood watch structures; para-military rural commandos, and the formation of vigilante groupings such as PAGAD and Mapogo). Studies have highlighted the exclusionary nature of these localised and territorialised identities, created in order to preserve or access material resources,

whether they occur within the boundaries of gated communities or the confines of a 'court' (bloc of flats) in the townships.

In her study of the marginalised youth of the Cape Flats, Salo argued that social networks reflect fragmentation not only within racial groups but also within neighbourhoods:

For the outsider Manenberg appears to be a homogenous racial township, a single geographic and social unit. However, for the residents of Manenberg, socio-spatial boundaries criss-cross the apparently continuous geographic unit, dividing it into multiple small communities.... Local communities may be limited to a single street, or cover a number of courts... Eleven male gangs exist in Manenberg, each associated with its own particular turf.... [The] turf boundaries represent the physical, social and moral limitations of the local community (2004:7).

While gangsterism is said to constitute a collective strategy for the poor to access both minimal resources and dignity in a context of renegotiated gender roles, albeit one which is situated beyond civil society, scholarship has also uncovered new strategies of mobilisation and collective action among the poor, which function within civil society, or at least aim to do so in the long term.

### 3.3.3. Class subjectivities from below: the emergence of social movements

For many scholars, the emergence of a 'redistribution-through-growth' policy based on 'the neo-liberal economic paradigm' (Alexander, 1999b: 5) is to be blamed for the decrease of living standards among South African poor. Inequalities in South Africa are deepening as a result of high unemployment among the low-skilled section of the active population, increased informalisation of the economy, privatisation of basic services in a context of limited welfare protection. According to Desai, most poor South African households, i.e. more than 13.8 million people in his definition, do not qualify for any social security transfers (Desai, 2003). While inequality continues to augment in South Africa, it increasingly cuts across race categories.

As a result, the South African poor are said to be feeling increasingly alienated culturally from the black middle class and the political elite which are deemed ‘strangers in their own country’ as ‘American habits and ostentatious consumption have become the desired yardstick by which South African progress is measured’ (Adam, 1996). Similarly, according to Harvey (2000), ‘the black middle class ... ensconced in formerly white suburbs... have appropriated the African Renaissance for their narrow interests and have rapidly imbibed the middle-class prejudices similar to that held by the white middle-class... they are still a tiny fraction of the black population, but in socio-economic terms there is a massive gulf that separates them from the masses of poor black people’<sup>11</sup>. In his study of South African poor, Desai (2002) argues that municipal officials have come to be seen by many as ‘sell-outs’ and ‘fat-cats’ that abandoned the township to pursue their own interests in the city. Finally, according to Nyamnjoh, ‘while a small but bustling black elite can today wallow in the conspicuous consumption of prized commodities such as houses, cars, TVs, cellphones and Jacuzzis, most ordinary South Africans who are still trapped in shacks, shantytowns, joblessness, poverty and uncertainty, can only marvel at the indecent speed and ... little visible exertion with which the black elite have come by their riches and prosperity’ (2000: 14). This in turn according to the author has given rise to various forms of alternative rationalisations, in particular to the belief ‘that it is only by magical means, by consuming others, that people may enrich themselves in these perplexing time’, which he links to a resurgence in accusations of witchcraft and ‘zombification’, and to the scapegoating of immigrants whose ‘readiness, like zombies, to provide devalued labour is seen as compounding the disenchantment of the autochthonous populations in the face of rapidly diminishing prosperity in South Africa’ (2000: 14).

While social alienation and marginalisation fuels frustrations among the marginalised, the incapacity of the poor to work through constitutional channels<sup>12</sup> and the focus of trade unions on ‘mobilising employed workers ... have left spaces in which new social movements have been built around issues such as service delivery, access to land, HIV/AIDS and the

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<sup>11</sup> ‘The curse of the black middle class’, E. Harvey, Mail and Guardian, 14-20 July 2000.

<sup>12</sup> While the 1996 constitution granted second-generation rights such as the state’s obligation to provide ‘access to adequate housing... within its available resources’, it is phrased in such a way that it is ‘of little use as far as constitutional litigation is concerned’ (Fagan, 1998: 259).

environment' (Alexander, 2006: 49). Ballard argues similarly that the limits of the ANC as the party of the poor, without a pro-poor manifesto, led to 'the emergence of social movements since the late 1990s [as] a crucial development on the political landscape' (2005)<sup>13</sup>, in a context where civics and unions are unable to champion the poor independently from government. These movements include the Anti Privatisation Forum, the Soweto Electricity Crisis Committee (which has had some success in challenging Eskom's service default payment recovery), the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign (which helped to initiate the establishment of the People's Power School in Khayelitsha), the Landless People's Movement, and the Treatment Action Campaign which had recent success in influencing government's policy regarding the HIV pandemic.

These movements according to Desai are a response to an 'economics of non-payment' (rather than a 'culture of non-payment') and constitute an emerging and alternative way for the poor to voice their concerns to government. They have focused on the local state, which is 'the entity that advances the water and electricity disconnections, evictions, and the loss of jobs through privatisation.... It is not surprising that it is at this level that the poor have challenged the neoliberal transition' (Desai, 2003: 24-25). In his study of 'the politics of the poor' in Chatsworth, Desai argues that religious and racial communities living in the area came together in their fight against evictions and the privatisation of public housing initiated by the city council. 'Immune' to the rhetoric of ethnic entrepreneurs, 'everyone thought of themselves as a community, as 'the poor' (2002: 18). While there may be lines of divisions within poor communities, they do not draw upon former political categories, he contends. Instead, these identities are those of the 'unemployed, single mother, community defender, neighbour, factory worker, popular criminal, rap artist and genuine *ou* (good human being). 'These constructs have all come to make up the collective identities of "the poor"' (Desai, 2002: 7).

The ability of the poor to take their destiny in their own hands and to challenge broader social norms and patterns remains however contested within scholarship. There is debate regarding the strength of this class awareness claimed 'from below' and its ability to transform from

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<sup>13</sup> 'An antinomy of new power for the people', Mail and Guardian, 21-27 January 2005.



spontaneous and local struggles or single-issue campaigns into a broader and lasting working class/poor movement able to challenge government's policies. Ballard (2005) argues that although dealt with by government as if they were political parties in the making, 'many participants are involved [in the movements] for... survivalist and essentially non-ideological reasons', while some movements have been 'hijacked' by the 'suburban left', and the label of social movement has been rejected by some community leaders. According to Bond however, 'popular movements, which are agitating both around conjunctural social policy decisions and against the structural conditions through which the political life of cities is reproduced ... have begun to transcend the traditional dichotomy between an inward-looking territorial identity and the rhetoric of a broader emancipation (2001: 6). Similarly, McKinley (of the Anti-privatisation Forum) contends that despite the near 70%-majority achieved by the ANC in the 2004 national election, this party only attracted 38% of the entire voting population (since non-registering and absenteeism led to only 56% of the eligible voters casting their ballots) which indicates a political vacuum where social movements can build 'a viable and radical people's power alternative to the ANC'<sup>14</sup>, a fact however which is questioned by Southall (2004) on the basis that it assumes that 'the poor – composed of the semi-formally and informally employed – are likely to automatically rally to a radical opposition party rather than being divided along lines of ethnicity, access to welfare possibilities, ANC patronage, region and what have you'.

Similar ambiguity regarding the potentiality for unity within and among social movements has been highlighted by Oldfield and Stokke in their study of the Western Cape Anti-Eviction Campaign, a social movement aimed at fighting evictions and water cut-offs in various areas of Cape Town. The two authors argue that:

What these experiences from different communities demonstrate, is unity in facing common struggles, despite a diversity of contexts. The modes of protest and traditions of organising vary considerably across former coloured and African group areas, as well as among organisations within neighbourhoods and sections of the city.... Many of the organisations combine diverse kinds of protests. At Campaign level, the diverse

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<sup>14</sup> Quoted in 'Is ANC's gain democracy's loss?', R. Southall, Business Day, 1 June 2004.

community organisations under its ambit produce a complex mixture of political strategy and ideology that is both a strength and identity of the Campaign as well as, at times, a source of intense confrontation and contestation.... The ideological, place and racial differentiation that characterises the community organisations that make up the Campaign is not an absolute obstacle to the development of political strategy and practice in the Campaign, however. Instead, it has at times provided energy and an impetus for innovation through which organisations learn from each other, and generate more effective local and citywide strategies, as well as stronger and more durable networks that underpin the Campaign itself (2004: 18-19).

### 3.4. Conclusion

One of the conclusions which emerge from this review of the literature on South African identities is the apparent reluctance of scholarship to apprehend the plural. Identities have largely been conceived of in singular mode by scholars, be they constructivist or primordialist. Partly as a result of global theoretical shifts (and changing 'mainstream' ideological positions) and internal developments, South Africans have been deemed successively, but rarely simultaneously, to be motivated by race or 'ethnos', class, culture, South Africanism, or race and class. Accordingly, heterogenisation from within and homogenisation from without have largely been ignored.

In large part, this is due to the fact that identity has been essentially apprehended within the national political context, as a mode of political action which is collective and vocal, and therefore visible. Scholars' interests have focused on the politics of identity, i.e. the use of identities for mobilisation and collective action (taking place either within civil society or beyond), a fact which is not surprising given that apartheid was the quintessence of identity politics. However, not all identities are political or publicly expressed; nor organised, vocal and visible. In fact, collective apathy or fragmentation may be as important as collective action, albeit more difficult to apprehend. The focus on the political context has certainly contributed to an overemphasis of certain identities and a quick dismissal of others – such as

gender and generational identities or identities articulated within the private/familial/neighbourhood/local realm.

Simultaneously, identities from below have often been assumed to be a reflection of identities from above – either formulated by the state, by the opposition, or by various cultural entrepreneurs. While discourse from above has had and continues to have an undeniable effect on the way South Africans identify themselves and others, dissent and negotiation are part and parcel of any process of identity construction.

While the literature on South African identities has given much weight to the structural determinants of identity formation, recent works from scholars such as Mbembe and Nuttall (2004) and Erasmus (2001) have highlighted the agencies and subjectivities inscribed in self-authored narratives of urban citizens in post-apartheid South Africa. As stated in the conclusion of Chapter 2, this thesis aims at accounting for both conceptions of identity – an identity which is a matter of autonomous choice and reflexivity, and one which derives from structural imposition and is experienced as inescapable. In sum, the study aims to reveal the multiplicity of determining factors of identity construction in post-apartheid Cape Town, and the ways these interplay differently as residents position themselves in a variety of contexts, from the interpersonal to the public realms, from the local to the continental scales.

The following chapter focuses on the selection of a research methodology which would illuminate such processes of identity construction from below and reveal the fluidity, contradictedness and multiplicity of identities individuals build for themselves to make sense of their lives and those around them.

#### 4. Epistemological premises, choice of methodology and limitations of field research

Epistemological premises and subsequent methodological tools are intrinsically linked to ontological assumptions regarding the subject of study. How to study a social phenomenon comes as a consequence of what the researcher thinks the nature of this phenomenon is and how it comes about. As exposed previously, this thesis takes the position that identities are constructed within a framework of time, space and relationality. Identities do not exist in an a-historical vacuum; they are processual. It may therefore be more appropriate to speak of identity formation or identification than of identity *per se*. In short, the identities individuals build for themselves are neither essential, nor singular but biographical narratives which are both situational and relational. This chapter addresses the question of how to access identity narratives, and the limitations inscribed in methodological tools used to study identities. The second section of this chapter describes the field research process, and its limitations.

##### 4.1. Identity as narrative: ‘making’ identity, rather than ‘having’ an identity

Finding out about identity cannot simply be conceived of as an inquiry about the ‘what’; an appropriate methodology should also be able to answer questions about the ‘how’, and ‘from what’, ‘under which circumstances’ and ‘why’. According to Somers and Gibson, ‘people construct identities (however multiple and changing) by *locating* themselves or *being located* within a repertoire of emplotted stories.... People are guided to act in certain ways, and not others, on the basis of the projections, expectations and memories derived from a multiplicity but ultimately limited repertoire of available social, public, and cultural narratives’ (1994: 39, my emphasis). It is because identities are constituted through narrative or discourse (in the broader sense of the term, i.e. discourse as ‘human meaning-making process’ (Wetherell, 2001b: 390)) that they are historically specific and changeable. Identities are something we are always becoming rather than something we are.

Furthermore, since narratives are social representations, they are not neutral independent reports on a pre-given reality. They are shaped by an exchange and interaction process. As Moscovici aptly points out, ‘we must rid ourselves of the idea that representing something

consists in imitating by thought or language facts and things that have a meaning outside the communication that expresses them... When we move from representations as means of recognising things to representations as means of constructing reality, we move from thought about the world to thought in the world' (1988: 230). Since alternative accounts are possible, representations are always partial and selective. 'In the face of a potentially limitless array of social events, institutions, and people, the evaluative capacity of emplotment demands and enables selective appropriation in constructing narratives' (Somers and Gibson, 1994: 60). It is this selectiveness, i.e. the ability to make qualitative distinctions, which allows us to give meaning to a series of apparently unrelated events, to bring about a 'meaningful whole' (Czarniawska, 2004: 6).

Discourses therefore are not purely representational; they actively constitute reality, while drawing on broader societal and cultural constructions. But 'if we are arguing that discourse is constitutive and new identities emerge for people as new modes of representation emerge, then it is difficult to say if discourse is the governor or the servant of social actors' (Wetherell, 2001a: 25). Two interrelated levels, the socio-cultural level which structures everyday discourse and the interactional level at which meanings are negotiated in everyday communication, must be acknowledged in an attempt to navigate between the Scylla of a determining discourse (culture) and the Charybdis of a constructing discourse (agency) (Puttergill and Leildé, 2006). Striking a balance between these two levels prevents extreme positions, either characterisation of the subject as a product of the social structure or overemphasis of variability and agency (Shotter, 1993).

At the micro-level, 'narratives are created 'interpersonally in the course of social and structural interactions over time... Agents adjust stories to fit their own identities and conversely they will tailor "reality" to fit their stories' (Somers and Gibson, 1994: 61). At macro-level, discourse is constantly recreated through the web of interactions between people, which will build on and transform broader narratives over time. 'Discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially shaped: it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people.... Macro-social and discursive practices change and influence these constructions and re-formulations'

(Krzyzanowski and Wodak, *forthcoming*, n.p.<sup>15</sup>). As accounts and discourses become available and widely shared, ‘they become social realities to be reckoned with; they become efficacious in future events. The account enters the discursive economy to be circulated, exchanged, stifled, marginalised or, perhaps, comes to dominate over other possible accounts and is thus marked as the “definitive truth”’ (Wetherell, 2001a: 16). This is the process of objectification whereby human subjectivity which is embedded in social products is gradually turned into an element of the environment through narrative appropriation of the representations by social actors (Tsoukalas, 2005). Such process illuminates the multidimensional and multidirectional aspect of public discourse. While it is common belief, according to Moscovici (1988), that society simply reproduces and imitates the thought of its elites (or its avant-gardes), he argues on the basis of his metaphor of the ‘thinking society’ that processes of sociability within which individuals exchange and modify their thoughts, contribute to social representations which are then circulated back within the broader society.

A methodological approach based on narratives or discourse is appropriate when dealing with fluid concepts such as multiple and fragmented identities. Narratives are not purely reflection of an already constituted identity, they are ‘part of the longing to belong’, they are ‘constituted by the desire for an identity’ (Fortier, quoted in Krzyzanowski and Wodak, *forthcoming*, n.p.). While narratives appear to offer a much better way to apprehend identities than multi-choice questionnaires for example, this method of research contains a number of limitations. In the first place, identification does not derive purely from cognitive conscience. According to Calhoun, ‘even within a single cultural setting, interpretation of practical activity faces significant inherent problems, since most practical activity is not directly amenable to discursive rendering’ (1995: 59). Self-understandings can be implicit, even when constituted within and by dominant discourses. Identities, therefore, ‘maintain the possibility to exist and inform action without being articulated discursively’ (Brubaker, 2001: 78). Furthermore, results gathered via a methodology based on individual discourses should not be taken at face value: they need to be contextualised at both personal and broader cultural levels.

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<sup>15</sup> The abbreviation n.p. will be used for ‘no page number’ throughout the thesis.

#### 4.2. The research process: a contextualised narrative

The linguistic turn has had a large influence in epistemological assumptions over the past three decades. It has led to a shift in our understanding of research practices, from collecting accounts of objects or things in an objective ‘detached’ manner towards acknowledging an involvement in a social context of both researcher and respondent (Puttergill and Leildé, 2006). As Henning *et al.* argue ‘research is social action and interaction and is by its very nature discursive’ (2004: x). The notion that lived experience can be reported independently by a subject and directly captured in research has been problematised by researchers influenced by this epistemological position (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998). In these debates, the unparalleled powers of a knowledgeable subject providing authentic access to a pre-existing static reality and a neutral researcher who is a simple observer, detached from the context in which this information is dispensed, is questioned.

The act of research is a subjective encounter and should be perceived as a data making process rather than a data eliciting mechanism (Henning, van Rensburg and Smit, 2004). Data do not speak for themselves, they do not constitute a definitive overview of reality and shouldn’t be treated in a positivist manner or with ‘naïve realism’ (Henning *et al.*, 2004: ix). Language, in particular, should be considered as ‘a tool of reality construction rather than its passive mirroring’ (Czarniawska, 2004: 12). Language is constitutive of social life, it doesn’t merely reflect the world as we see it. ‘As we speak, think, act, communicate and interact, we do so within the constraints of language, terminology and conceptual boundaries that exist around us. How we interpret our social realities is restricted by the kind of language available to us, or the language we choose to use. And by means of terminology, a whole range of assumptions slip into our minds that do not normally come to judgment – unless we consciously analyse the particular meanings they carry’ (Sewpaul, 2004: 4). Accordingly, as people speak, the world as is described comes into existence for them and their audience at that specific moment in time.

Such turn in methodology is intrinsically linked to an acceptance of ‘post-modern sensibilities’ (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998), i.e. an acceptance of the constructed nature of knowledge, of its

historicity and cultural situatedness, and of the relativity of the research process as just one story to tell about the social world, or ‘one tale of the field’ (Van Maanen, quoted in Denzin and Lincoln, 1998: 22). Simultaneously, the linguistic turn, with its emphasis on the constructed nature of knowledge and on the notion of reflexivity, holds the potential danger of a retreat to abstract theoretical and epistemological debates in which researchers become trapped within a hermeneutic circle (Denzin, 1998), a point I will return to in the conclusion of this chapter.

#### 4.2.1. Contextualising the narrator

The assumption that interviewees are knowing subjects benefiting from full insight into their experiences and that they passively reveal their privileged knowledge to researchers has been questioned by Becker who argues that research subjects are not simply ‘carriers of the conventional world’s thoughts’, serving as a source of information (1998: 8). Subjects are not passive vessels of information but must be seen as being reflective since their accounts respond to an active intervention by a researcher and are constructed within an interactional context. Interviews are ‘complex cultural and psychological products, constructed in ways which make things happen and which bring social worlds into being’ (Wetherell, 2001a: 16). Through their interaction, a researcher and subject create and shape their understandings of the world. Accounts therefore construct, rather than merely describe social reality and knowledge is situated and open to contestation and revision (Puttergill and Leildé, 2006). Subjects are therefore active participants in the research process, in which they express and articulate positions, contributing to the complexity of the studied reality.

Interviews are not ‘free, naturally occurring conversations between partners who are talking as part of their everyday lives’ (Henning *et al.*, 2004: 66). An interview is a contrived and asymmetric interaction where elements of power, authority, social distance and control between respondent and researcher are at play. There is a ‘potential riskiness’ in face-to-face encounters, and actors take steps to make any form of social interaction safe, and to prevent ‘the possibility of the violation of personal space, embarrassment or loss of face and ... boredom’ (Cassell, 1993b: 14). Schegloff distinguishes two kinds of contexts within which



any interaction takes place: ‘the *distal* context which includes the social class and ethnic background of participants, the institution where discourse occurs and the broader ecological, regional and cultural setting; the *proximate* context which covers the immediate features of the interaction such as the genre of interaction the participants take an event to be (an interview, a family meal-time, etc.)’ (quoted in Wetherell, 2001b: 388). Both contexts condition the form (i.e. the selected narrative or discursive ‘genre’) and the substance of what is being said and should therefore be taken into account when studying how people negotiate between various social representations to construct specific narratives.

Since accounts are ultimately self- (and self-serving) representations, they attempt to project a positive image, a ‘preferred self’, constructed within parameters of self-deception and self-protection, expectations, pressures to conform, and fears of embarrassment. They constitute one version of social reality that has been selected within a repertoire of possible representations. Indeed, discourse is functional and aims at persuading an audience. As ‘people treat each other as having vested interests, desires, motives and allegiances’, they construct tales while working to appear as presenting an objective view (Wetherell, 2001a: 21).

Narratives cannot be treated in a simple referential way with subjects unproblematically knowing, remembering and telling. Memory is not a passive store of facts and discourse does not provide a simple description of experiences in an unmediated fashion (Klandermans, 2005; Puttergill and Leildé, 2006). Changing contexts may lead to a reinterpretation of the past. Accounts provide a hearable description of experience revealing what a narrator is willing to share with others. It is a social practice in which accepted and familiar modes of telling are appropriated from a repertoire and a lexicon of culturally accepted modes of representations and moulded into personal stories. According to Sacks, accounts are ‘worked up for the occasion’ (quoted in Lepper, 2000: 110), and may be told differently to different persons and in different occasions, according to which version is the most ‘socially desirable’, given the specific audience (Fontana and Frey, 1998). In this regard, discourses which in the past were considered legitimate and normal might now be considered unacceptable as the ‘politics of representation’ changes. Subjects may be careful in the way they express themselves since

social change brings about new norms regarding what is deemed acceptable practice and discourse. Such influences function within the public domain, and may reflect what is permissible and impermissible discourse, what is politically correct and what is not.

Accordingly, 'it is mostly the logic of representation, the dressing up for visitors, which is exhibited during research interviews' (Czarniawska, 2004: 53). Accounts are constructed retrospectively and contain justifications to make them credible, especially with interview-based research where they are displayed for public consumption. As Michael points out there is always the concern to appear as 'good accountable persons whose actions are warrantable' (1996: 22). Subjects have certain preconceptions about what researchers do, what is expected of them, and what role to play (which 'identity' to take on). This affects their responses. Thus identities are publicly occasioned and socially negotiated, both in interaction with others and adaptation to specific contexts. The fluidity and incompleteness of narratives do not imply distortion of a 'true' identity. People live in changing contexts and the narratives they develop about their lives provide structure and meaning for these changing contexts. Lives are narrated within a particular context, taking both past experiences and future orientations into consideration (Puttergill and Leildé, 2006).

#### 4.2.2. Contextualising the researcher

The notion of the researcher as a neutral and silent observer has also been questioned. The researcher is an active participant in the research process because of his engagement in an historical period. Researchers need therefore to be reflexive about the impact they have on their research, and about their role in creating meaning. Being reflexive implies probing the relationship between the researcher and the subject, and showing particular sensitivity to the multiplicity of identities and the relationships and assumptions associated with them (Puttergill and leildé, 2006). The researcher influences the research process both during field research and during the analysis/interpretation process.

'Research is an interactive process shaped by [the researcher's] personal history, biography, gender, social class, race and ethnicity, and those of the people in the setting' (Denzin and

Lincoln, 1998: 4). During field research, subjects categorise the researcher as belonging to particular groups in society and embedded in collective social relations. In particular, the gender 'of the interviewer and of the respondent does make a difference, as the interview takes place within the cultural boundaries of a paternalistic social system in which masculine identities are differentiated from feminine ones' (Fontana and Frey, 1998: 64).

Sharing some characteristics with subjects may facilitate initial access and offer a veneer of objectivity and neutrality. However, in spite of establishing a relationship full access seldom is attained as the self is carefully guarded within the public realm (Kram, 1988). Punch (1994) argues that a researcher's category inscriptions both opens up and closes down particular lines of inquiry. There is fluidity to insiderness and outsidership with each position holding benefits and costs as far as research is concerned (Visser, n.d.). While the latter can cause feelings of cultural and social distance from the respondent, raising the possibility that a researcher may be misled by a subject, strangeness may be an advantage, in the sense that subjects may be more willing to discuss matters with researchers they are not likely to meet again. Furthermore, outsiders may have a greater degree of objectivity and ability to observe behaviours without distorting their meanings, offering researchers access to different levels of information (Visser, n.d.).

When discussing sensitive topics, one of the difficult decisions confronting a researcher concerns the degree of self-disclosure, of participation or reserve. In a context of extreme inequality and injustice, it might be difficult for the researcher to maintain a neutral stance. Partisanship in fact might become essential to establish trust. It was certainly the case during apartheid in South Africa as Schutte aptly argues: 'during the heydays of apartheid... under conditions of oppression the fieldworker, more than in any other situation faces the question: "whose side are you on?"' (1991: 127) and this, to a large extent, remains true today. The question of identity remains politicised in the South African context, making it sometimes difficult for South African field researchers to maintain neutrality when interviewing on these issues. De la Rey and Prinsloo, for instance, reporting on a workshop held in 1997 on the study of identities in post-apartheid South Africa, argued that 'the papers provoked numerous questions about the role that researchers play in actually constructing the subjects of their

research in particular ways, through... the researcher's assumptions about identity'. Often 'the ideological passions' made field workers engage with respondents in 'subtly persuasive ways' as their belief and value systems came to the fore (1999: 78).

In interviewing, there is 'no intimacy without reciprocity' according to Oakley (quoted in Fontana and Frey, 1998: 65), hence the need to develop a rapport with individuals by revealing personal information and thoughts in order to bridge distance and build trust. Since the researcher expects openness from the subject, some reciprocity is expected. Letting the balance of power to shift by allowing subjects to ask questions may also be a beneficial strategy. Simultaneously, Weiss (1994) warns that extensive disclosure by a researcher shifts attention away from the subject. Similarly, demonstrations of empathy (verbally or through various signs) may help in establishing rapport and make people open up more readily, leading to more informed research (Fontana and Frey, 1998). However, it might also jeopardise objectivity as the researcher may be seen as a spokesperson for the community studied, losing necessary distance (Fontana and Fry, 1998). 'Fake' empathy can lead to implicit deception that not only carries ethical consequences for the research but often distorts the quality of the data collected (Nyamnjoh, n.d. (b)).

Denzin and Lincoln (1998) argue that each researcher is historically, socio-culturally, politically, ideologically and academically located and therefore speaks from within a distinct interpretative community. There are no 'views from nowhere' argues Calhoun, no such a thing as unbiased or unprejudiced understanding. Every culture generates for itself its own 'thinkability' and 'unthinkability' (Nyamnjoh, 1999: 23). 'We are always shaped by our origins, our thought is always situated, we are unable to think without taking some things for granted. What we take for granted is determined by our own cultural backgrounds.... We have difficulties in interpreting social life that is differently constituted from our own. Our resources for making sense of it, for giving meaning to what we can observe of it, derive from our own culture (including intellectual traditions) and from previous experience. These are the only resources we have, but in applying them, we necessarily run the risk of failing to grasp meanings operative in other contexts while constituting for ourselves meanings that were not

at work there' (Calhoun, 1995: 49-58). Such a difficulty is clearly increased when the object of research is set in a comparative or cross-cultural framework.

Researchers therefore all tell stories about the worlds they have studied. These narratives, or stories, that researchers tell are framed 'within specific storytelling traditions, often defined as paradigms' (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998: 4). Even when research aims to be exploratory, it cannot be conducted within a theoretical vacuum and 'since to theorise is to open up vistas of understanding, it can never be altogether neutral; it is necessarily perspectival' (Calhoun, 1995: 10). It offers one form of understanding and interpretation of social reality. Theories according to Calhoun remain multiple 'not because we are confused or have not yet reached correct scientific understanding of the problems before us, but because all problems – like all people – can be seen in different ways' (Calhoun, 1995: 8). Furthermore, a theory is not simply explanation of facts and data, it constitutes our access to the social world and in the process becomes part of the world we study. This is the basis of the notion of 'double hermeneutic' used by Giddens. Understanding human beings is not just a matter of interpreting their action, but also of understanding the ways in which their own interpretations and constructions of meaning shape their action. In that sense, social life can neither be accurately described by a sociologist, nor explained causally if the observer does not master the array of concepts employed 'discursively' or 'non-discursively' by the individuals. The concept of 'double hermeneutic' is aptly captured by Cassell in the following extract:

All social research has a necessarily cultural, ethnographic or 'anthropological' aspect to it. This is an expression of ... the double hermeneutic which characterises social science. The sociologist has as a field of study phenomena which are already constituted as meaningful. The condition of 'entry' to this field is getting to know what actors already know, and have to know, to 'go on' in the daily activities of social life. The concepts that sociological observers invent are 'second-order' concepts in so far as they presume certain conceptual capabilities on the part of the actors to whose conduct they refer. But it is in the nature of social science that these can become 'first-order' concepts by being appropriated within social life itself (1993: 153).

Researchers, in sum, not only describe, but also construct social life, by engaging in a dialogue between theory and empirical evidence. Within this process, the researcher will select facts and report on the parts of the data that ‘speak to’ him or her, therefore de-contextualising the interviewee’s ‘truth’ and rationalising his or her thoughts. The challenge then is to report on the content of narratives while relocating accounts in their context – conversationally, historically and socially.

#### 4.2.3. Contextualising the topic

Since research, as a public activity, is not conducted independently of a political context, research findings have political implications (Denzin and Lincoln, 1998; Hammersley, 2000). It is nowhere more evident than in apartheid South Africa where ‘the boundaries between academia and government were there to be crossed’ (Mouton and Muller, 1995: 176). Social inquiry during apartheid was either used to provide scientific legitimisation for government policy or to denounce it (Schutte, 1991). Anthropology in particular (at least in its apartheid variation of *Volkekunde*) aimed less at theorising ethnicity than at fuelling ‘apartheid conceptual rhetoric to justify the marginalisation and distortion of African cultures through bantustanisation’ (Nyamnjoh, n.d. (b): n.p.). Although political democratisation lifted those boundaries within social inquiry, there is still resistance among certain academics to studying ethnic identities or any identity that might distract from what they perceive as a progressive agenda.

A researcher certainly needs to attend to questions from research participants about whose interests are served by conducting the research and how the data can be used, but the openness and flexibility of qualitative research make it impossible to anticipate research outcomes fully (Puttergill and Leildé, 2006), and researching sensitive topics often requires some ambiguity about the purpose of the study in order to gain access. The guidelines of informed consent and confidentiality assist researchers in negotiating questions and dilemmas that research as an intrusive activity poses. Managing risk and avoiding harm is crucial where research intersects with alignments and/or tensions in society (Puttergill and Leildé, 2006). In societies under authoritarian regimes, talking about sensitive issues (such as social conflict) carries risks both

for the research participant and the researcher. Suspicions about the aims of the researcher and the researcher's 'real' functions and fears of retaliation may influence the level of dissent expressed and therefore the truthfulness of responses. Thus a degree of self-censorship in communicating with the participants might become necessary on the part of the researcher (Schutte, 1991).

An additional concern is how to deal with reporting 'treacherous data', discourses which flatter either the research subjects or those 'othered' by it (Fine and Weis, 1998: 20). Such data potentially solidifies stereotypical perceptions. In this regard the politically charged context in which research is conducted and the way findings may be used should be taken into account with a view 'to pursue research in a way that neither harms nor flatters, debases nor privileges one group or the other' (Nyamnjoh, n.d. (b): n.p.).

#### 4.3. Research methods

There are numerous research techniques that have been used with varied success to study identities. Selecting a method requires careful reflection on the purpose of research and type of analysis envisaged.

For practical reasons, many researchers use quantitative methods to investigate identity from a comparative perspective and/or on a large scale. Often, identities appear fixed and singular rather than fluid and multiple in the conclusions of these studies. McAllister has been particularly harsh in his critique of survey research, arguing that questionnaires have a descriptive rather than explanative value and 'disguise... the assumptions and presuppositions of those who design them' (1999: 181). He further posits that 'the answers are always predictable because the questions are based on current knowledge, categories and understandings', hence 'we can never learn anything totally new from questionnaire studies' (1999: 182). In the absence of explanatory accounts, the quantitative researcher studying identities will often use an imputative approach: correlations between categories are made on the ground of pre-existing causal explanations or 'what makes sense' to the researcher. Quantitative research in the field of identity studies doesn't allow for the unpredictability, the

irrationality or the apparent contradictedness that derive from people's belonging to multiple communities, and which can only be restored in the variability of accounts.

Many works on identity are written on the basis of secondary source material. These tend to infer identity from events that display 'identity in action', such as ethnic riots or episodes of 'identity-based' violence. They account for an *a posteriori* snapshot of social events often recorded in newspaper reports. While secondary sources should be used to complete field based information and are often crucial when the study involves a vast 'macro-political' phenomenon (Horowitz, 2001), they can only account for events; non-events cannot be apprehended in such analyses. The dilemma posed by such premises is adequately captured, yet unresolved, by Horowitz: 'to study [ethnic] violence implies the need to study [ethnic] quiescence. Some have gone further and asserted that, since peace is more prevalent than violence, it is more important to focus on peace than on violence. This carries things too far. Like violence, quiescence needs study, although not more study than violence. *Because of the difficulty of proving negatives, however, quiescence is hard to study apart from violence*' (2001: 32, my emphasis).

In the field of social sciences, a significant proportion of identity studies are based either fully or partially on qualitative data generated by individual or collective interviews. In line with the arguments defended by social constructivist perspectives on identity, a qualitative approach relying on account-centred methods provides an appropriate way to study processes of identity formation. It is indeed a truism to argue that qualitative research investigates the 'qualities' of identities rather than the 'quantities', thereby uncovering not only the 'what' but also the 'how' and the 'why' or 'what for' of identity construction.

#### 4.3.1. Sampling, representativity and generalisability

Sampling decisions determine boundaries for research. The immense amount of data generated in qualitative research necessitates a restriction of sample size. Accordingly, qualitative studies do not conceptualise representativity in a statistical sense. Goodwin and Horowitz argue that 'qualitative research is said to suffer from an alleged "small-N problem", failing to



examine a sufficient number of cases for building solid generalisations or good theory' (2002: 36), which is particularly problematic when the issue discussed deals with a broad social phenomenon that involves practically everyone (such as 'identity formation in Cape Town'). Representativity is further undermined when respondents are not selected randomly, which is often the case in focus group research (Fern, 2001). The challenge then is to balance an attempt to portray 'as much of the world as possible' (i.e. as many 'varied contexts' as possible) while acknowledging the specificity of each account and the relativity of the data generated (Goodwin and Horowitz, 2002).

#### 4.3.2. Focus group (FG) interviews

Methods are not self-validating. Interrogating the relationship between a method used and the data generated by it reveals both contributions and limitations (Puttergill and Leildé, 2006). The term FG will be used here although the method used is very distinct from traditional FG methods used in marketing for instance, in which very specific questions about a topic are generally asked (Fontana and Frey, 1998).

Focus groups interviews generate collective accounts that emerge from interaction between subjects within a social context. To facilitate communication participants need to become acquainted with each other and should be selected, to a degree, on criteria of homogeneity. Indeed, 'meeting with others whom they think of as possessing similar characteristics or levels of understanding about a given topic, will be more appealing than meeting with those who are perceived to be different' (Gibbs, 1997: 4). Prior knowledge of each other can promote ease in discussion between participants. Simultaneously, a degree of diversity of opinions is paramount to discussion.

Focus group interviews provide the researcher with an opportunity to observe interaction between subjects sharing, negotiating and socially constructing their viewpoints within a group context. The interviews provide subjects with an opportunity to draw comparisons, reflect on what others say and re-evaluate their own understanding of their specific experiences. Since FGs rely on interactive group discussions, 'by its very nature focus group

research is open ended and cannot be entirely predetermined' (Gibbs, 1997: 3). While this deflects attention from the researcher, it introduces other dynamics. 'The group interviewer must simultaneously worry about the script of questions and be sensitive to the evolving patterns of group interaction' (Fontana and Frey, 1998: 55). In this regard, the researcher takes the role of a moderator, keeping the discussion on track when it deviates toward private conversational mode and trying to prevent a person or small group from dominating the discussion while encouraging everybody to speak. Gendered and age-patterned interactions pose specific problems in collective discussions. Honest opinions might also be more difficult to gather when discussing sensitive topics, since full confidentiality is impossible.

The main inconvenience of FGs is the same as their main advantage, at least in the study of collective identities, and constitutes the primary reason for the selection of this methodology in this study. While the predominance of one position, one voice advocated by one individual or a coalition of persons might interfere with dissenting or anti-conformist opinions as peer-pressure and 'group-think' unravel, it allows the researcher to observe how identities are negotiated during the process of interaction with others; how individuals navigate between personal and collective representations; and how these result from a process of 'contest and competition' (McAllister, 1999: 185). Indeed, 'the FG not only provid(es) information about the participants' experiences ... but also show(s) what happens when people take differing individual experiences and attempt to make collective sense of them' (Morgan and Spanish, 1984: 259). Group discussions 'reveal how opinions are created and above all changed, asserted or suppressed in social exchange'. On this basis, they have been compared to a 'quasi-naturalistic method for studying the generation of social representations or social knowledge in general' (Flick, 1998: 121-124). They can provide important information on the relationship between self identity and collective representation, and therefore on ways in which collective action is made possible. In the regard, the researcher needs to pay particular attention to the impact of the group processes when analysing FG data.

Although group influences lead to collectively shared discourses, these are not more or less authentic than narratives produced in individual interviews. Yet, FGs provide insights that otherwise would have not been accessible. 'In essence, the strengths of focus groups come

from a compromise between the strengths found in other qualitative methods. Like participant observation, they allow access to a process that qualitative researchers are often centrally interested in: interaction. Like in-depth interviewing, they allow access to the content that we are often interested in: the attitudes and experiences of our informants' (Morgan and Spanish, 1984: 260). Since interaction and experience are the two pillars of identity formation and of the creation of shared meaning, focus group methodology constitutes an adequate methodology for the subject at hand.

#### 4.4. Describing the field research

The choice of the FG methodology in this study followed two considerations. In the first place, the use of focus groups aimed at studying *in situ* how collective meanings were constructed, negotiated, allowing for a possible 'primary identity', or a primary discourse to emerge. Secondly, it aimed at collecting as many views as possible within and between various communities on the subject of the research. In this regard, a cross cultural study based on in-depth interviews would have been practically impossible, given the material limits, in terms of available time and monetary means, within which I operated.

##### 4.4.1. Selecting the FGs

As the title of the thesis indicates, the research aimed at studying processes of identity formation in the city of Cape Town. Selection of FGs attempted to ensure diversity, rather than representativity of Cape Town's resident population. Selection, however, tried to reflect as much as possible Cape Town's demographic and socio-economic profile. FGs were selected on a number of criteria such as race and ethnicity, language, religious affiliation, together with area of residence. Selecting several FGs within similar contexts (e.g. racial, language, or religious commonality) allowed for the exploration of commonalities and differences in accounts. A broadly defined assessment of class was inferred from neighbourhood, type of dwelling and profession. Profession and age were only used once, as a unique criterion of selection (in the 'Business' FG with members of the Cape Chamber of Commerce and Industry; and in the 'Youth' FG, with a group of teenagers gathered at the

Cape Town Quaker Peace Centre). In line with principles of anonymity in the research process, very few personal indicators were asked to respondents: names in particular were not requested (although offered spontaneously by many participants). The FG sessions started off with the researcher completing a form listing the age (or age category), the employment and professional status, as well as the mother tongue of respondents. In the FGs which were organised on the basis of religion, religious affiliation was a predetermined parameter.

Practically, FGs are difficult to assemble and most of the FGs which constitute the empirical material used in this thesis would not have taken place without the help of many of my personal friends or acquaintances, and the generosity of many participants who provided a place, their home, for the meeting. Selection of participants obeyed the logics of 'snowball sample' whereby an intermediary was selected and asked to organise a FG within his or her social network, his/her neighbourhood or/and his/her faith or/and linguistic community. Intermediaries were mostly selected among my own personal and academic contacts. This method considerably lessened the amount of organisational difficulties and lowered the potentially high absentee rates that a stranger's attempt to organise a meeting would have entailed. Simultaneously, relying on an intermediary carries risks in terms of the research product since 'the intermediary may act as an unwanted screening device, selecting out certain members of the group from participation' (Bloor, Frankland, Thomas and Robson, 2001: 32). Furthermore, the intermediary's personal relationship with potential participants may have led to pressures whereby they felt they had to attend the meeting. Since FG recruitment didn't follow a similar rule and pattern (since they were organised by different intermediaries), levels of acquaintance between participants differed from one FG to the other. In general, people were familiar with each other, either as friends, close neighbours or members of the same religious institution.

Intermediaries were given directions in terms of FG composition. They were asked to gather 6 to 8 participants, of mixed gender and preferably adults. While most FGs reflected these prerequisites, there were a number of exceptions. The most obvious occurred in Khayelitsha.2, where the FG took place after a religious service and was attended by almost the whole congregation, i.e. about 25-30 members. Intermediaries were also encouraged to select the

venue to ensure facility of access for participants. These ranged from private residences, to community halls, religious facilities, *shebeens* and coffee shops.

32 FGs were organised from August 1999 to November 2005.

Table 1 provides a classification of FGs according to race, socio-economic status, mother tongue and religious affiliation (when available). Socio-economic status as used in this thesis is a broadly defined category, inferred on the basis of employment status/profession and type of dwelling.

Table 2 provides a description of each FG according to date; numerical and gender composition; employment status and profession of participants; location in the city; language used during the interview and whether translation was simultaneous or deferred; the place where FGs took place and my attendance of the meeting or not.

9 FGs were conducted in historically coloured townships, 3 in historically black townships, 10 in historically white suburbs, 5 in suburbs developed after 1994, and 3 in the inner city area of Cape Town. In the remaining two ('Youth' and 'Business'), area of residence was not specified.

All but two of the FGs ('Business' and 'Youth') were racially homogenous, which is indicative of how personal networks remain to a large extent racially determined in post-apartheid Cape Town, including within desegregated residential areas.

Since the intermediary was present during the interview, respondents were given a choice in terms of the language to be used during the FG. While only 7 FGs indicated that English was their mother tongue, 20 FGs were conducted in English, and another 4 FGs were conducted in both English and Afrikaans/Xhosa.

**Table 1: Classification of FGs according to ethno-racial affiliation, socio-economic status, first language and religion<sup>16</sup>**

	<b>White</b>		<b>Black</b>	<b>Coloured</b>		<b>Mixed</b>	
	Afrikaans	English	Xhosa	Afrikaans	English		
<b>Poor</b>	Ruyterwacht (DRC)		Jo Slovo Park.2 Jo Slovo Park.3 Khayelitsha.2	Eersterivier Lavender Hill Tafelsig, Mitchell's Plain (P) Westridge, Mitchell's Plain (P) Beacon Valley.1, Mitchell's Plain (M) Beacon Valley.2, Mitchell's Plain (P)		Youth	11
<b>Middle class</b>	Brackenfell (DRC) Strand.2 Panorama	Oranjezicht Sea Point (J) Durbanville Kraaifontein.1	Khayelitsha.1 Jo Slovo Park.1 Gugulethu (AIC)	Strand.1 (M) Summersgreen Phoenix Pinelands Atlantis Bo-Kaap.1 (M) Bo-Kaap.2 (M)	Punts Estate Kraaifontein.2 Rondebosch	Business	21
	4	4		13	3		
	<b>8</b>		<b>6</b>	<b>16</b>		<b>2</b>	<b>32</b>

<sup>16</sup> Religious information is provided for FGs organized on the basis of faith.

DRC: Dutch Reformed Church; J: Jewish faith; AIC: African Independent Church; P: Pentecostal Church; M: Muslim faith.

**Table 2: Description of FGs**

	Area	Date	Number of participants and gender composition	Employment	Location	Language used during FG	Place	Author's Attendance
1	Ruyterwacht	August 2003	7 4M, 3 W	2 housewives 2 unemployed 2 blue collar 1 pensioner	Suburb	Afrikaans Translation (T) afterwards	Home	Y
2	Brackenfell	April 2003	11 5 M, 6 W	2 housewives 4 pensioners 5 white collar	Suburb	English	Home	Y
3	Strand.2	May 2004	5 1 M, 4 W	1 housewife 1 pensioner 3 white collar	Suburb	Afrikaans T. afterwards	Home	N
4	Panorama	August 2001	7 3 M, 4 W	7 white collar	Suburb	English	Home	Y
5	Oranjezicht	August 2001	7, 1 M, 6 W	2 housewives 2 pensioners 3 white collar	Suburb	English	Lutheran Church	Y
6	Sea Point	June 2003	7 3 M, 4 W	4 housewives 3 pensioners	Inner City	English	Community centre	Y
7	Durbanville	April 2004	5 2 M, 3 W	2 housewives 3 white collar	Suburb	English	Home	N
8	Kraaifontein.1	February 2004	6 2 M, 4 W	6 white collar	Suburb	English	Home	Y
9	Jo Slovo Park.2	October 2003	8 6 M, 2 W	4 unemployed 4 blue collar	New development	Xhosa T. afterwards	Home	N
10	Jo Slovo Park.3	December 2003	5 5 M	5 unemployed	New development	Xhosa T. afterwards	Home	N
11	Khayelitsha.2	August 1999	3 1 M, 2 W	3 white collar	Township	English	Home	Y
12	Khayelitsha.1	August 1999	25	Unspecified	Squatter camp	Xhosa	Church	Y
13	Jo Slovo Park.1	November 2001	3 2 M, 1 W	3 blue collar	Suburb	English/Xhosa Simultaneous T.	Home	Y
14	Gugulethu	July 2003	4 1 M, 3 W	2 pensioners 2 white collar	Township	English	School	Y
15	Eersterivier	March 2004	4 1 M, 3 W	1 housewife 3 blue collar	Township	Afrikaans T. afterwards	Home	N

16	Lavender Hill	August 2001	7 2 M, 5 W	3 housewives 2 blue collar 2 unemployed	Township	English/Afrikaans Simultaneous T	Home	Y
17	Tafelsig, Mitchell's Plain	May 2003	7 3 M, 4 W	2 housewives 1 Pensioner 4 unemployed	Township	English/Afrikaans Simultaneous T	Home	Y
18	Westridge, Mitchell's Plain	May 2003	8 4 M, 4 W	1 housewife 1 blue collar 6 white collar	Township	English	Home	Y
19	Beacon's Valley.1, Mitchell's Plain	November 2005	6 6 W	6 housewives	Township	Afrikaans T. afterwards	Church	N
20	Beacon's Valley.2, Mitchell's Plain	November 2005	3 2 M, 1 W	1 housewife 2 self-employed	Township	Afrikaans T. afterwards	Mosque	N
21	Strand.1	August 1999	7 5 M, 2 W	1 pensioner 6 white collar	Township	English	Home	Y
22	Summersgreen	September 1999	6 5 M, 1 W	6 white collar	New development	English	Home	Y
23	Phoenix	October 2000	4 2 M, 2 W	1 housewife 3 white collar	New development	English	Home	Y
24	Pinelands	August 2001	6 3 M, 3 W	6 white collar	Suburb	English	Home	Y
25	Atlantis	February 2004	11 3 M, 8 W	2 blue collar 9 white collar	Township	English/Afrikaans Simultaneous T.	Home	Y
26	Bo-Kaap.1	September 2001	4 4 M	1 pensioner 3 white collar	Inner city	English	Community Centre	Y
27	Bo-Kaap.2	April 2003	7 3 M, 4 W	2 housewives 2 white collar 3 self-employed	Inner city	English	Home	Y
28	Punts Estate	August 2001	3 3 W	1 housewife 2 white collar	Suburb	English	Home	Y
29	Kraaifontein.2	February 2004	7 3 M, 4 W	1 housewife 6 white collar	Suburb	English	Home	N
30	Rondebosch	February 2004	3 1 M, 2 W	1 housewife 2 white collar	Suburb	English	Home	N
31	Youth	August 1999	7 4 M, 3 W	Schooled	N/A	English	Quaker Peace Centre	Y
32	Business	August 1999	10 7 M, 3 W	Entrepreneurs	N/A	English	CCCI	Y



#### 4.4.2. Describing the FG process

Each FG started with an introductory phase during which the research topic and aims of the research were exposed, the selection process of participants was explained and participants were introduced to each other (if necessary).

Each focus group was requested to discuss:

- How do you feel about living in this area/neighbourhood?
- How do you feel about living in Cape Town and the Western Cape?
- How do you feel about living in South Africa?

Discussions ranged from 40 to 90 minutes and were recorded and subsequently translated (when necessary) and transcribed. After discussion, an informal gathering took place around tea and coffee, during which respondents had the opportunity to ask questions of the researcher.

FGs were largely unstructured and non-directive since additional questioning by the researcher only occurred on the basis of what had been said by interviewees. Questions did not aim at raising new issues but were used to clarify various points raised by respondents and to encourage others to elaborate on these themes. People were free to discuss whichever prompt they saw fit and were not 'forced' to discuss all prompts equally. In this regard, discussions regarding the Western Cape Province were very limited. Generally, discussions were free-flowing. The use of very broad prompts seemed to be well received and did not create major misunderstandings. On the contrary, people seemed at ease with the fact that there couldn't be 'wrong' answers to the questions asked. For purpose of comparison, this methodology (the use of the three prompts followed by unstructured discussion) remained unchanged throughout the field research phase.

## 4.5. Underscoring the limitations of field research

### 4.5.1. Contextualising the researcher/candidate

As explored previously, research in South Africa poses specific challenges in terms of the researcher's positionality. Cross-cultural research is difficult in societies marked by deep class, racial or cultural cleavages, since the researcher will often be identified as a member of a specific group. Cross-cultural research highlights the fluidity and contradiction in the 'insider-outsider binary' (Visser, n.d.) which leads to the researcher being perceived differently by different people. Being foreign constitutes a distinct advantage in this regard: it labels the researcher as neutral among diverse communities. Being foreign also lowers the distance between researcher and interviewee, since the latter assumes that knowledge gathered prior to the interview is limited. On several occasions, participants started a sentence by saying 'you might not know because you were not here at the time but let me tell you...'. It clearly provided participants with a sense of security, and a feeling that whatever answer they may provide, it would have some validity, given my lack of 'knowledge' or familiarity with the South African society, thereby reducing the fear of being incompetent or insufficiently informed, which often occurs during qualitative research. Such feelings of self-confidence among participants were further promoted by the fact that my English is clearly foreign and of lower standard, decreasing potential perceptions of asymmetrical power relations.

Simultaneously, being foreign carries a number of disadvantages. Some participants suggested that foreigners are quick to judge, without having a clear understanding of the reality of life in South Africa. Furthermore, personal opinions were often sought out during interviews, in particular regarding possible comparisons between France and South Africa on a number of issues. This certainly had a disruptive effect on the interview process. Finally, as many researchers have pointed out, being foreign poses challenges in terms of both 'communication' and 'language in use'. In twelve FGs, the use of a translator was necessary, bringing a new parameter into the relationship between researcher and interviewees, and changing the dynamics of interaction, particularly in regard to the outsider/insider element within FGs. Beyond my lack of knowledge of the various South African languages, being foreign prevents familiarity with the broader cultural and metaphorical lexicon that constitutes much of the narratives. This seems to validate to a

degree the classical anthropological debate on ‘how possible is it for a researcher to understand fully a given culture, when he/she is neither of that culture nor commands mastery of the language’ (Nyamnjoh, n.d. (b): n.p.).

Besides the issue of nationality, other characteristics might have influenced respondents’ reactions to me. They may have seen me as ‘white’, or as a student ‘affiliated to Stellenbosch University’ or as a woman. While these factors could have influenced respondents’ accounts, undertaking a systematic evaluation of their impact on the research process would only be influenced by my own frame of reference of what it means to be ‘white’ or a ‘woman’ in South Africa and therefore interpretative and speculative in nature. An important indication of my influence (or lack thereof) on the research process was the fact that the FGs where I was not present (9 FGs), or where I was not the main interviewer, did not produce distinctively different narratives.

#### 4.5.2. Relativising the data

There are a number of limitations to the selected methodology of research. Firstly, as previously mentioned, FGs were not selected randomly but on the basis of my personal and professional networks. Lack of representativity was further augmented by the fact that although black residents amount to 32% of the population of Cape Town, only 6 FGs were organised with Xhosa speakers.

Secondly, one of the main disadvantages of this methodology is the one-time nature of the interviews. Contrary to the anthropological research process which generally combines interviews with participant observation and thorough immersion within the community investigated, the selected methodology in this thesis did not allow for depth familiarisation with participants and their social setting. The fact that no follow-up interviews were organised to verify data constitutes a major limitation of the study, preventing any true assessment of the integrity of the data: the degree to which responses were ‘worked up’ for the occasion and may not have reflected an unbiased representation of respondents’ assessment of themselves and their environment; and the degree to which choice of discursive topics by respondents were predetermined by a potential agenda.

Participant observation would have shed light on the performative nature of interviews and the possible discrepancies between what people say, and what they do, without having 'reflected on it'. Triangulation of data through the use of in-depth individual interviews could have provided additional data not accessible through the FG methodology. Indeed, the collective nature of conversation in FGs means that respondents are more likely to adopt views and assessment of their personal situations which are accepted within a social setting. Furthermore, while FGs provide a clear advantage in gathering multiple viewpoints in a single setting, and in allowing members to build on one another's ideas and positions, they also promote expression of gregarious participants. Other factors which explain the reticence of some participants to engage in discussions were gender and professional status. My role in the FGs was therefore very much one of facilitator of discussions, and of attempting to limit the time allocated to those among the respondents who tended to take over conversation and direct exchanges around their opinions and experiences. Holding another FG within the same community would have allowed for the researcher to verify the accuracy of the first FG, thereby ensuring better representation of participants' positions and validating/invalidating my own interpretation of the data gathered on the first occasion.

The fact that no participant refused to be recorded seems to indicate that the subject at hand and the ways in which it was broached did not arouse the sensitivities of most participants. This view seems to be confirmed by the fact that respondents didn't express any concerns about the confidentiality clause and often offered to tell me their surname. This tends to give credence to the veracity of accounts and the sincerity of interpretations offered by respondents about themselves and their environment. Simultaneously, unrecorded conversations held at the end of proceedings suggested that offensive comments were deliberately avoided during the taped interview. While providing a valuable broader context for interviews, these comments will not be reported in this study for ethical reasons. There was also some evidence that respondents' discourses were influenced by current events as reported in the news at the time of the interview (e.g. the Boeremag bombings, the situation in Zimbabwe), especially among those respondents whose access to printed and TV news was readily available. Furthermore, poverty creates a context of deep expectations regarding the aims of research in South Africa. While in only one case in my research experience in South Africa, did interviewees refuse to participate in a non-paid research interview, FGs within poorer communities often included questions such as

‘what will be the impact of the research on our situation?’ Such expectations may have impacted on the orientation given to accounts, which focused largely on the local material conditions of respondents and the absence of responses to their grievances from local state institutions.

#### 4.6. Conclusion

This chapter has argued against the notion that empirical data reflect an external reality, unproblematically. Researchers acknowledging that their work is socially situated often advocate the use of the term ‘data generation’ rather than ‘data collection’. Simultaneously, an overemphasis on the researcher’s influence on the research process has been cautioned. Czarniawska, for instance, argues that ‘while each one of the accounts will be unique in the way every interaction is, it would be both presumptuous and unrealistic to assume that a [respondent] will invent a whole new story just for the sake of a particular researcher who happened to interview him or her. The narratives are well rehearsed and crafted in a legitimate logic’ (2004: 49).

Furthermore, the view shared by many discourse analysts that research is a ‘creative adventure’ whereby results are not found... but narrated into being, creates ‘a potentially infinite interpretative regress’ whereby analysts take on the analysis of their own analysis, and then the analysis of their own analysis of their own analysis (Wetherell, 2001b: 396-397). There is therefore a need, as Calhoun points out, to find a compromise between extreme relativism that makes any empirical research and scholarly discourse meaningless, and a culturally insensitive Enlightenment universalism of decontextualised truths. Balance is required to avoid being trapped in a hermeneutic circle where the study of the various layers of interpretative construction takes precedence over the study of what has been communicated about social reality by respondents.

Since it is argued throughout this thesis that identities are neither essential nor immutable, but a matter of social context, the following chapter presents the changing national and urban environments within which identities have been and are constituted, articulated and negotiated in post-apartheid South Africa.

## 5. Contextualising the study locally and nationally

Chapter 2 argued that identities are constructed within a symbolic-discursive and material-structural framework. Changes which have occurred within the symbolic order since transition to democracy in South Africa, were explored in Chapter 3. In this regard, particular attention was given to the advent of a new politico-legal context described as ‘a habitable hybrid, an acceptable mixture of group and individual identities and rights’ (Zegeye, 2001b: 3) and to the emergence on the public scene of new discourses and national metaphors (e.g. the African Renaissance project which replaced the Rainbow Nation imaginary). Accordingly, this chapter will focus on material structural changes within society and in particular on the ‘emergence of a market-driven social order’ (Sharp, 1998a: 245) at both local-urban and national levels, characterised by growing socio-economic inequalities both between and within former ascribed categories.

### 5.1. The macro-economic national context

While the decade since democracy was characterised by significant service delivery in terms of formal housing, running water, electricity and sanitary facilities, South Africa remains a middle income country where unemployment has doubled since 1995, where the poorest 20% of the population spend less than R100 per person a month, and where almost half of the population falls below the national poverty line, with about a quarter of all households trapped in long-term poverty<sup>17</sup>.

Analysts have highlighted the widening chasm between rich and poor in the country (Comaroff and Comaroff, 1999) as South Africa’s Gini coefficient of 0.58 makes it only second to Brazil, which has the worst inequality among similar middle-income countries (Cheru, 2001). This gap has led Terreblanche (2002) to argue that South African society is so deeply divided that it actually consists of two worlds, a third-world periphery and a first-world enclave, with little and increasingly less interaction between the two.

The growing distance between these two worlds has been attributed to deindustrialisation and tertiarisation of the economy (the growth of financial and service sectors which

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<sup>17</sup> ‘Creative solutions needed to tackle South Africa’s chronic poverty levels’, A. Johnson, Cape Times, 18 June 2003.

contribute two-third of the economy), growing unemployment and informalisation of the economy. Tertiariation promotes both un-employability of blue-collar workers and growing income inequalities between the skilled and the unskilled<sup>18</sup>, with the top 20% of earners getting almost half of the total income earned while the bottom 20% earn just 4%<sup>19</sup>. The unemployment rate has risen from 16% in 1995 to 26.5%<sup>20</sup> in 2005, affecting mostly people under 30 who represented nearly half of the unemployed in 2005. In parallel, the informal sector ballooned from an estimated 200000 in 1995 to 1.7 million in 2001<sup>21</sup>. Simultaneously, the living conditions of the poor have worsened by every measure (life expectancy, access to basics services, health indicators) since 1994 (Desai, 2002), constituting a quasi-permanent huge underclass.

Broadly-speaking, many scholars have blamed the exacerbation of social polarisations on the replacement of the ANC's 1994 election manifesto, the RDP (Reconstruction and development Programme) by GEAR (Growth, Employment and Redistribution), said to constitute a return to a 'redistribution from growth' policy, a policy of economic austerity initiated by the last government of apartheid to attract investors (Cheru, 2001). According to Maharaj for example, 'the transition to neo-liberal GEAR orthodoxy encountered an aberration with the basic needs oriented RDP' (2005: 134). Economic restructuring, state's withdrawal and shifts in policy orientation follow similar trends worldwide, and have been linked to globalisation, as explored in Chapter 2. Indeed, as Beall, Crankshaw and Parnell argue, 'in circumstances where national states, let alone local governments, have limited control over their economies and citizens over their polities, commitment to social investment is sorely tested and contested, even when the benefits are widely recognised' (2002: 14). Accordingly, while South Africa seeks to become competitive in a globalised world, and positions itself favourably on the social cost competition scale, a tightly controlled macroeconomic balance – deficit reduction, privatisation, tax cuts and phasing out exchange controls – has taken precedence over redistribution – subsidies reduction and introduction of user charges for services. While recent reformulation of GEAR, the Accelerated and Shared Growth Initiative (ASGI) attempts to reincorporate

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<sup>18</sup> One in three South Africans aged 20 or older has not completed primary school or had no schooling according to Census 2001. Access to education reveals deep racial inequalities with almost 30% of whites, nearly 15% of Indians, 5% of coloureds and just over 5% of blacks having had higher education qualifications.

<sup>19</sup> 'Getting SA rich won't be quick', T. Manuel, Mail and Guardian, 17-22 September 2004.

<sup>20</sup> This rate refers to 'strict' unemployment according to *South African Survey 2004/2005*, while the 'expanded' figure reaches 40.5%.

<sup>21</sup> 'The great GDP myth', J. van Zyl, Mail and Guardian, 6-12 June 2003.

poverty alleviation and public works programmes, growth remains essentially jobless and investment has been disappointing in recent years (Nattrass and Seekings, 2001).

Inequalities in South Africa continue to exhibit strong spatial and racial biases: according to Census 2001, 50.2% of black South Africans are unemployed in contradistinction to a figure of 6.3% for white South Africans and racial income inequalities between white and black households have increased from a ratio of four times in 1994 to six times in 2001. Yet, the nature of inequality has shifted considerably in the past 30 years in South Africa as declining inter-racial inequality was matched by rising intra-racial inequality, especially within the majority population, leading Nattrass and Seekings to argue that ‘in post apartheid South Africa, inequality is driven by two income gaps: between an increasingly multiracial middle-class and the rest; and between the African urban working class and the African unemployed and marginalized poor’ (Nattrass and Seekings, 2001: 473). The deracialisation of the upper class echelons is particularly salient in the urban context, which comprises both the business sector and the bulk of state employment opportunities.

## 5.2. Urban policies and the city of Cape Town

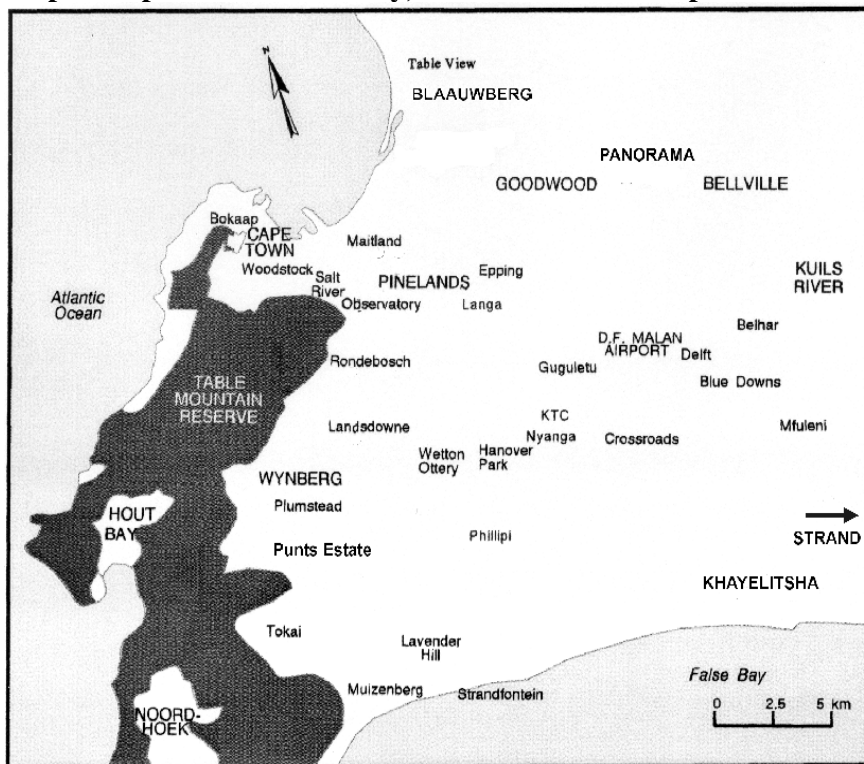
The history of South African cities is a history of racial segregation. Spatial segregation started before the official policy of apartheid, with the ‘scheduled black areas’ stipulated by the Natives Land Act of 1913 (Wolfson, 1991) and the Native (Urban Areas) Act of 1923 which entrenched the principle that defined black South Africans as temporary sojourners in the white cities of the Union of South Africa (De Jongh, 2000). On the one hand, spatial segregation aimed at demarcating ‘spatial distancing’ between the coloniser and the colonised, a ‘necessary, symbolic demonstration of “otherness”’ which has been a central element to colonial systems of political domination (McCarthy, 1991: 259), and on the other hand segregation obeyed an economic logic of securing and controlling ‘a cheap and divided labour force’ while clearing land for industrial purpose through slum removals (Mabin, quoted in McCarthy, 1991: 259). Racial zoning was aggravated by the promulgation of the Group Areas Act in 1950, which required the strict residential segregation of the four ‘population groups’ recognised by the 1950 Population Registration Act, and by various influx control measures which limited black migration to urban areas. While most African, coloured and Indian workers found themselves in accommodation in



townships, ruled by separate and unequal governing institutions, ‘whites were the only citizens to qualify for urban citizenship’ (Swilling, 1991: ix).

Racial planning shaped South African cities according to a polycentric pattern, with a white core where wealth, amenities and services were concentrated, surrounded with black satellites, which were essentially dormitory townships. In Cape Town, it divided the city spatially between the City Bowl and two developed north-south and east-west urban spines, on the one hand, and coloured and black townships (generally known as the Cape Flats), located on the south-eastern periphery of the city, on the other. The developed portion of the city has had, and continues to reflect, a more centralised physical form than other cities in South Africa (Turok, 2000).

**Map 1: Cape Town – inner city, suburbs and townships**



Source: adapted from Saff 1998.

Transition to democracy led to a flurry of urban policy initiatives aimed to correct inequalities flowing from former national ideology. Integrating South Africa’s cities became an urgent priority for the new government. The urban vision of the new

government is succinctly summarised in the following extract from a 1997 policy document:

Government is ... committed to ensure that its policies and programmes support the development of urban settlements that will be spatially and socio-economically integrated, free of racial and gender discrimination and segregation, enabling people to make residential and employment choices to pursue their ideals (Urban Development Framework, 1997).

Accordingly, the main challenge of post-apartheid urban policy formulation was 'the development of urban areas away from dispersed and racially divided urban growth patterns, towards more compact, integrated, accessible and productive urban systems' (Donaldson and van der Merwe, 2000: 46). Substantial institutional reform and policy changes have taken place in Cape Town since 1994 (Watson, 2002). The primary underlying aims of these changes were to integrate the city spatially and to reduce inherited inequalities. 'The demarcation of new local authorities mandated as 'non-racial,' marks national government's most explicit act to desegregate the institutions of urban power' (Lohnert *et al.*, 1998: 3). The various racially-based local authorities have been merged into a single-tier metropolitan authority, known as the Unicity Council, with a single tax base, better able to overcome localised interests and undertake programmes of city-wide reconstruction and equalisation of infrastructures. According to Pieterse, 'the political intent behind the creation of single-tier metropolitan government is to facilitate economic competitiveness and effective redistribution across the urban system, which is essential given the dramatic spatial divisions and inequalities that characterise the apartheid city' (2002: 6). However, despite consolidation from thirty five municipalities to seven administrations to a single centralised unicity over the past decade, political reshuffling and resulting tensions between the DA and the ANC 'have obstructed attempts to achieve policy coherence in the city and between different tiers of government' (Turok, 2001: 2365).

Parallel to structural and financial changes to city government, planning strategies have been designed and implemented to foster residential densification and promote urban sustainability. The Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework (MSDF, 1996), a planning initiative involving a participatory and inclusive process was designed to

reintegrate the divided city. 'The MSDF embodies proposals which contrast sharply with past policies, including using well located vacant land to house poorer people; linking neighbourhoods together through nodes and corridors (instead of separating them via buffer strips and freeways); and promoting mixed-use, higher density developments of residential, employment, retail and recreation land-uses (rather than low density, monofunctional suburbs and townships)' (Turok, 2001: 2354-2355). 'The framework is based on a vision of a well managed, integrated, metropolitan region in which development is (to be) intensified...' (Eva, 2002: 5). However, 'it does not have the authority of an approved statutory plan to regulate private investment, nor the resources or influence over other organisations actually to instigate development' (Turok, 2001: 2355). More broadly, while cities are tasked with a major developmental role in post-apartheid South Africa, to be implemented on the basis of extensive public participation and consultation (through IDPs – integrated development plans), lack of control over expenditures in health and education, and dependence on private-public partnerships in a context of global economic competitiveness have impeded municipalities' ability to fulfil this role.

Accordingly, despite such policy and structural changes at municipal level, most analysts believe that the 'market' has replaced the 'state' as primary urban development driver in South Africa. Their views may be summarised by identifying three market-driven processes that are believed to lead to continuing social and spatial polarisation. The first process is located within the labour market: traditional manufacturing sectors in cities have been shrinking as the tertiary sector strengthens. This encourages an expansion of a highly skilled labour force while employment for blue-collar workers diminishes. As a consequence, wage differentials rise. The second process is located within the land market. The state appears unable or unwilling to intervene in the process of land acquisition. Rising land prices in middle class residential areas are accompanied by well-orchestrated middle-class opposition to state interference in their land market have led to planning practices reminiscent of apartheid days. As a consequence, most low-income housing development continues to be located in the periphery of cities where land is cheapest (Turok, 2000; Bremner, 2000). As Pottie puts it, 'in the end, the market sanctions inequality, and, as market rationality has structured housing policy in South Africa since 1994, this rationality has generated important limits to the transformative potentials of political and economic restructuring of South Africa' (2003: 141). The third process is the suburbanisation of new economic activity (Mabin, 2001). This suburbanisation is explained in terms of a simple

push-pull model in which attractive suburbs reflect attractive locations close to wealthy neighbourhoods as well as to the location of a skilled work force while the City Bowl and townships reflect deteriorating security, traffic congestion and few residents with the necessary skills (Turok, 2000).

This general pattern can be observed in Cape Town. Cape Town is South Africa's second largest city in terms of economic output (after Johannesburg), and had the highest overall growth rates of any South African city in the 1990s (Wilkinson, 2000). The economy of the city has been marked by the growth of the tertiary sector, which reflects broader national trends, especially in finance and IT, trade, catering and accommodation, and transport while traditional manufacturing sectors, the clothing and textile industry in particular, have been in constant decline over the last ten years as a result of the abolition of protective tariffs and increased exposure to international competition. The unemployment rate rose from 16.5% in 1999 to 23.2% in 2003 (Labour Force Survey<sup>22</sup>), and is unequally distributed among the various communities of the city. While the unemployment rate reaches 50% among black residents, it is 24.5% among coloureds and 4.7% among whites. This variation is also reflected in terms of monthly incomes, reported to be R 2 144 for blacks, R 5 630 for coloureds, R11 312 for Indians and R16 147 for whites in 2001 (Smith, 2005). Estimates indicate that the informal sector employs 22% of the labour force and contributes 12% to economic output (Smith, 2005).

The spread of poverty flowing from these trends is considered an important influence on the increase of both criminal activities as well as gangsterism, which has been reported to attract up to 70% of young men in certain areas of the Cape Flats such as Manenberg (Pieterse, 2002). Cape Town has the highest level of violent crimes per capita among South African cities, with coloured residents being twice as likely to be murdered as any other citizens and having a disproportionate portion of its population in prison<sup>23</sup>. The impact of criminal activities on the (dis)functioning of local institutions has been aptly captured by Pieterse: 'the most uncertain aspect of realising a working [municipal] model is the dense institutional layers of informal, criminal and illicit survivalist networks in poor communities ... which present a formidable challenge to the credibility and authority of

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<sup>22</sup> The unemployment rate is 29% according to the 2001 census, a difference which Smith (2005) explains by the fact people employed in the informal sector are more likely to classify themselves as unemployed during census whereas the labour force survey questionnaire includes more prompts to identify such workers.

<sup>23</sup> 'The high price of being coloured in SA', C. van Gass, Business Day, 24 May 2004.

local government ... because they render entire communities inaccessible and out-of-reach if they perceive a municipal intervention to counteract their interest and livelihood streams' (2002: 202: 29).

Simultaneously, the security strategy implemented in the city of Cape Town is one which further segregates rather than integrates, one which manages and cordons off 'space' rather than focus on 'offenders' according to Robins (2002a). Various measures taken against crime focus on Cape Town's city centre (such as those initiated by the Cape Town Partnership – a Section 21 Company owned by council and private business, financed by a monthly levy on property rates accounts). This led Samara to argue that:

The example of Cape Town's urban renewal is a microcosm of developments nationally, where affluent areas are cordoned off with police and private security. While shoppers and tourists see the friendly face of urban renewal and visible policing, the majority of South Africans see quite a different one ... The war on crime in Cape Town has meant that increasing resources are being diverted to sanitise commercially viable parts of the city centre by keeping the poor out of the Central Improvement District. The emphasis by the media, police and city elites on crime, criminality, gangs, and urban renewal is leading to a practical understanding of the townships not as areas in need of development but as areas that pose security threats to the successful renewal of the city. This conception of the poor as security threats to a more affluent, predominantly white local and tourist population provides a context shaping both social development and criminal justice reform (2003: 280- 282).

Similarly, Robins argues that 'the militarization of city life through an architectural semiotics of "defensible space" is increasingly transforming Cape Town into a smaller version of 'Fortress L.A' (Robins, 2002a: 673). In this process of fortification, control over defensible space becomes the major concern for both rich and poor but while 'those who live in South Africa's urban ghettos find themselves socially and spatially imprisoned in repressive and bloody war zones where their security and safety can no longer be guaranteed by a state financially hamstrung by cutbacks brought about by neo-liberal fiscal austerity measures ... given this privatisation of the policing of public places, it is only the

wealthy who are able to afford the services of private security firms, while the poor remain easy targets of gang and criminal violence' (Robins, 2002a: 673).

In terms of investments, there have been significant shifts in public expenditure to poorer areas of Cape Town but private investment has largely remained focused on the established areas of the city, thereby sidestepping employment demand in the populous but poorer Cape Flats and reproducing inherited spatial inequalities. According to Smith (2005), an analysis of spatial economic patterns, undertaken as part of a review of the Metropolitan Spatial Development Framework indicated a level of decentralisation of formal business from the CBD and the traditional corridors of Cape Town towards the northern parts of the city, in particular to Bellville/Durbanville and to Milnerton/Blaauwberg while the Cape Flats and South East section of the city have produced smaller 'islands' of development (Mitchells Plain Town Centre, Athlone, and Airport Industria) but on the whole it remains an area which is avoided by larger, formal commercial and industrial concerns (Smith, 2005).

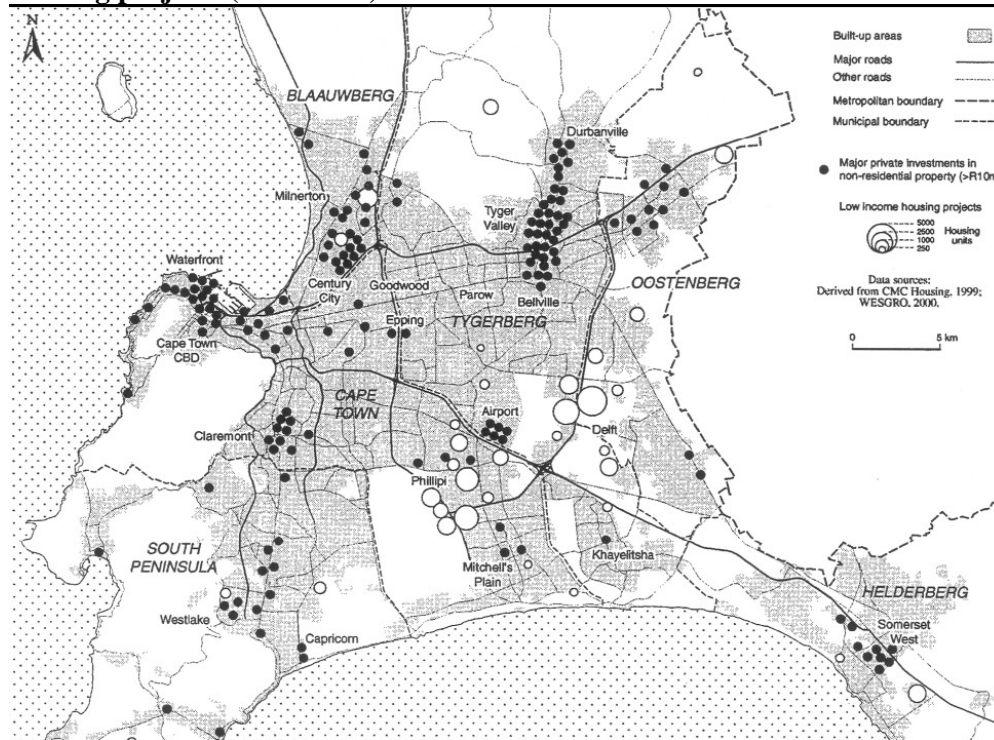
Similar spatial polarisation has been observed in the sphere of residential developments. Setting itself the goal of building one million houses during its first term, the new National Government in 1994 developed a government housing subsidy for households qualifying in terms of income as the main policy instrument to achieve this ambitious goal. Consequently, large RDP housing schemes were built in the 1990s, overwhelmingly in the peripheral areas of Cape Town (Pottie, 2003). According to Tomlinson, 'it is ironic ... that the urban dimension of the government's subsidy and grant programmes has had the unintended consequence of exacerbating isolation ... an obsession with delivering a million houses in five years has led to the neglect of development considerations and exacerbated urban sprawl, taking the poor even further from economic and social opportunities.... If things are to be different, we need to reshape the way in which the cities are being built, how government grants are delivered and the way the property market works. In particular, we need to link the location of low-income households with the location of jobs, education and health facilities'<sup>24</sup>. Most low-income housing developments in Cape Town continue to be located in the south-eastern periphery of the city where land is cheapest. The vast majority of subsidised formal housing has been built on low-cost

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<sup>24</sup> 'How to make our cities work', R. Tomlinson, Mail and Guardian, 11 May 2000.

peripheral land in places such as Philippi and Delft (Turok, 2000). Such a process furthers urban sprawl and reinforces residential segregation.

**Map 2: Location of private sector investments (1998-2000) and low-income housing projects (1994-2000)**



Source: Turok 2001.

Such developments have a clear impact on residential desegregation, largely left to private developers, bar the few instances where low-income squatters have been relocated in high-income, formerly white suburbs. In the latter case, space has been deracialised, but not desegregated (Saff, 1998) since squatters do not have access to the facilities of these areas, nor do they integrate socially. According to Mabin (2001), urban segregation, which was never complete, began to dissipate in the 1980s. While the majority of the urban population has not moved since the repeal of the Group Areas Act in 1991, it has been argued that residential desegregation is higher in provincial capital cities due to the desegregation of the labour market (Christopher, 2001), and that the most significant areas of racial integration are the new middle class developments of the urban periphery and selected affluent old white suburbs (Lohnert *et al.*, 1998: 3).

In Cape Town, 'desegregation de facto, through the formation of "grey areas", preceded by a few years the abolition of the Group Areas Act. The first residential districts concerned were those of Woodstock, Salt River and Observatory. In fact this whole area was close to the centre of town and was traditionally inhabited by coloured people who, in fact had been evicted from it shortly before' (Houssay-Holzschuch, 1999a, no p.n.). Desegregation of the labour market led to the emergence of a new middle class whose choices in terms of neighbourhood first focused on the Southern suburbs and then started into the Northern suburbs traditionally inhabited by working class and middle class Afrikaans-speaking whites (Houssay-Holzschuch, 1999a). This process in turn weakened class differentiation within townships, both in terms of occupational positions of its residents and types of dwelling which could be found. In Cape Town, a level of integration has taken place in poorer, and therefore more affordable, suburbs and new suburban developments where all residents arrive together, such as Summersgreen and Phoenix, discussed in this thesis. In a few instances, the state also has played a direct role in urban desegregation, fostering the development of new low-income areas in proximity to established suburbs (e.g. Jo Slovo Park). The relationship between physical desegregation and racial integration in these cases remains however 'an empirical question' (Oldfield, 2004).

The general pattern of spatial development in Cape Town fuels the process of polarisation both within the labour market as well as residential patterns. Locating economic opportunities in traditionally well-off and well-serviced areas, in a context of poor public transportation, prevents social mobility by preventing spatial mobility. Such a process leads to reproduction of inherited polarisation: 'poor education leads to a low skills level, which deters investment, which slows growth, which aggravates unemployment, which increases the crime rate, which deters investments and so on'<sup>25</sup>. Both objectives of providing low income housing closer to established employment centres and developing an economic base in the townships, inscribed in the national and local urban policy, seem to be failing. Consequently, the overall pattern of spatial development across the city can be characterised as polarised (Turok and Watson, 2001), leading to further residential segregation (and urban sprawl), a situation far removed from the MSDF objectives and from the policy ideal of the 'compact' city, leading planners, urban geographers and anthropologists to identify Cape Town as a dual city.

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<sup>25</sup> 'In search of the rainbow nation', A. Sparks, Sunday Independent, 8 June 2003.



‘Income, social class and market forces have replaced race and state control in shaping the pattern of urban development leading to increased economic, residential and social segregation’ (Turok, 2000). ‘The urban form which emerged in Cape Town, as a result of the spatial effects of apartheid and the application of a particular set of planning approach, is a form which has to a large extent been perpetuated in the post-apartheid era by market forces and by the nature of past and current low-income housing policy’ (Watson, 1998: 339). The inherited geography of the middle class parts of the city is reproduced, though in ‘a colour-altered way’ (Mabin, 2001). Racial segregation has been replaced by social segregation, in effect by ‘deracialised apartheid’ (Saff, 1998). Finally, in the words of Marks and Bezzoli:

Released from the grip of state control, our cities are now at the mercy of that most nebulous of conceits (sic) – the free market.... Released from the grips of the Apartheid State, the “free market” has been set loose on existing inequitable urban conditions, consolidating our cities into evermore divided and segregated spaces. No longer only along race but along class lines as well (2001: 27-29).

Cape Town has a population of 2.9 millions according to Census 2001, which represents almost 64% of the Western Cape population. It had a demographic growth rate per annum of 2.5%, between 1996 and 2001, mainly from the Eastern Cape and Gauteng. Nearly two-thirds of the population is younger than thirty five. Levels of inequality are high with 30% of the population living below the Household Subsistence Level and 265 000 families living in informal settlements. In this regard, the Comprehensive Sustainable Human Settlement Plan released by the Minister of Housing in 2005, aiming to resolve the 2.4 million housing backlog and fixing for objective slum eradication by 2014, is doubtful considering the slow progress of government’s lead venture, the N2 Gateway Project<sup>26</sup>. Between 1998 and 2005 the HIV Antenatal Prevalence for the Western Cape rose from 5.2% to 13.1% (Smith, 2005).

On the basis of census’ classification, Cape Town’s largest group is coloured (48%) followed by 32% black and 19% white. Furthermore, Cape Town is dominated by three

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<sup>26</sup> ‘2005 Cabinet report card’, Mail and Guardian, 23 December-5 January 2006.

home languages which represent the three provincial official languages: Afrikaans (41%), English (28%) and isiXhosa (29%). While 90% of the black community is isiXhosa-speaking, 57% of the white community is English-speaking and 67.8% of the coloured population indicates Afrikaans as their mother tongue. According to Mongwe (2006), Afrikaans retains its position as medium for primary and secondary communication in Cape Town. Three out of four of the population designate a Christian denomination as their religious affiliation, while 10% are Muslim, constituting the largest Muslim community in South Africa (Mandivenga, 2000).

### 5.3. Conclusion

This chapter offered a descriptive analysis of the socio-economic and policy context within which identities are constructed in post-apartheid South Africa in general, and in Cape Town specifically. While demographic data reflecting the multicultural nature of the city were provided, factors deemed of particular relevance to the (re)construction of identities by both international and domestic scholarship received most attention. In particular, the chapter focused on elements of change and permanence in the distribution of economic opportunities and in access to residential space which characterise post-apartheid South Africa.

The following chapter reports on identity narratives gathered during focus group interviews conducted in Cape Town between 1999 and 2005. FG selection reflects the geographic and demographic diversity of the city, as detailed in this chapter. Interviews were conducted within the three major linguistic groups (Afrikaans, Xhosa and English) and among five faith communities (Dutch Reformed Church, Islam, Jewish community, African Independent Churches and Pentecostals). Residents of the Northern/Southern suburbs, of townships and of squatter camps and of the central part of the city were interviewed.

## **6. Interpreting the results: identity narratives in the city of Cape Town**

Identities are both situational and relational, and exist ‘in different historical and geographical spaces and at different societal levels’ (Sewpaul, 2004: 10), made more or less dominant as one crosses local and national boundaries. The aim of this section is to give an account<sup>27</sup> of how residents of Cape Town speak of themselves and others within different ‘scales’ – their neighbourhood, their city and province, and their country, thereby allowing them to situate themselves differently depending on context and contingency.

Diversity of focus groups in terms of composition aimed to reveal the variety of meanings emerging both within and across formerly ascribed social categories. The three prompts used during discussions, while not directly linked to the political arena, point to ‘locales’ where power is generated and concentrated in the form of municipal, provincial and central governments, allowing for the expression of satisfaction/dissatisfaction, loyalty/apathy towards various spheres of government.

Analysis of data did not use computer assisted qualitative analysis software. Data were classified manually into shared categories of meaning (or ‘coding’ in computerised language) with an emphasis on content, recurrence and variability. The extracts which make up much of the following section were selected with a view to represent ideas shared by many respondents and/or FGs and to quote as many interviews and FGs as possible.

Although issues such as order of responses, time spent on discussing certain issues and questions asked by respondents were taken into consideration, no systematic discourse or conversation analysis of the ‘text’ was conducted. Without deep knowledge of the immediate or micro context of interaction such as the dynamics of specific neighbourhoods and participants’ degree of familiarity with each other (due to the one-time nature of the FG), conversation analysis would veer toward speculation. However, narratives were analysed under the broader cultural, political and socio-economic changes that took place in South Africa in general and in Cape Town specifically over the past decade, as explored in Chapter 3 and 5.

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<sup>27</sup> For details about FG organisation, discussions and prompts, see Chapter 4.

Presentation of urban citizens' narratives will follow the three prompts used during field research: it will start with discussions which arose around neighbourhoods, proceed with discussions around Cape Town and end with narratives on South Africa. Sub-categorisation in these three sections derives from analysis and interpretation of shared discourses within these groups. In this regard, the categories of 'poor' and 'middle class' as used in the following sections draw upon elements which are both objective (i.e. type of dwelling, employment status and professional category) and subjective, i.e. based on the expression of shared interests by both groups and overall commonality in discourse focused on either concerns with social exclusion or with middle class status.

### 6.1. On neighbourhoods

Since preliminary interpretation of narratives within focus group discussions around areas of residence or neighbourhoods demonstrated systematic differences between middle-class and poor respondents in these groups, accounts were classified in two sub-categories, between those who can afford to choose where to live and those who cannot.

#### 6.1.1. The middle class

While middle class residents actively seek out homogeneity and identification with their fellow residents, sameness is rarely articulated in racial terms. In a limited number of instances, the racial prejudices held by respondents emerged in a covert way:

You've got a lot of coloured people moving into this area as well. Your more affluent coloured group, I mean, you're in a one diverse [neighbourhood]. Too diverse (Panorama).

As was mentioned in Chapter 5, residential desegregation in urban South Africa occurs mainly in new suburban developments and historically white suburbs. In the latter, a level of unease and social distance with long-term residents has been expressed by new residents, albeit one which does not preclude moving into said areas:

Why do we spend such a lot of money giving to white folks, when we could have stayed in our own communities? I mean if I think about it, you know the older you get, you need.... I mean we go to Pinelands groups, to some of the church groups and it's all good and nice and

everything, but I don't bond as easily as I would have bonded with my coloured brother. I mean I don't want to talk politics now, but we've got our own culture, you know, we talk a certain language (Pinelands).

Now people live all over ... you don't know one another, when you have a person, a white person living next to you.... White people here are very individualistic, there's no way that you are going to knock next door and ask for some sugar, they wouldn't understand, they are just living next door and that's it... (Bo-Kaap.2).

In one case, the multiracial and multicultural nature of the neighbourhood was clearly the main factor of influence regarding choice of residence. This takes place in a lower middle class 'greenfield' suburb which was created after 1994, in Summersgreen (SG):

In our environment, I never grew up with the black or white kids, I never experienced it. Like my daughter, today kids grow up with a multiracial, a multiplicity of cultures. I call Summersgreen the new South Africa. It's the only area where there is no racial tension. We live in total harmony. Summersgreen to me is a melting pot of people. I didn't know who I was going to live next to. I didn't care who I was going to live next to. You don't want to run around (with) this business of 'whities', of coloureds anymore. This is old stuff. To me that is pre-94 stuff. Here, people choose SG for that specific reason, because we have been denied (it) as kids.... we would be willing to allow our kids to grow up with all races, creeds, colours and I think people make a conscious choice. I made a conscious choice that I'm going to stay here. (Summersgreen).

In the large majority, residential choice among middle class residents appears to be motivated by the socio-economic status of the neighbourhood. In these suburbs, class identities appear to be constructed around common interests and concerns such as property values, neighbourhood tidiness and crime.

In the following quote from a FG with upwardly mobile residents of Pinelands, issues around the value of investment clearly take precedence over any possible feelings of social alienation derived from social mixing:

Why are we all migrating to Pinelands? Investment purposes, what feels good. You have to think of a place where your children grow up and it's sort of, how can you say, up market. It's

nothing to do with whites, something that is more up market that you can afford to come in at the level we did. You have to think of a place where your children grow up and you can possibly leave something behind for them that is going to be of value when they are adults ... I see us as pioneers in a sense, in order for us to ... for different races to get along with each other you've got to get involved with each other and obviously move into areas and live with each other ... For us, because we've got no hang-ups, you know, it's done, it's passed, let's move on basically. You know, we are actually moving towards class distinction, whereby whatever you earn basically, pretty much dictates where you stay. And I think if we cross that racial type of divide, where we still look over our shoulders and still say 'hey, you know, I don't think I quite belong in an area like this', and you are still a bit hesitant about thinking, 'hey am I going to mix' ... so what if the neighbour doesn't greet me, it doesn't matter. You are obviously living your life, because you believe that you deserve to be here and that's it. So, you are starting to think along class lines, not racialistic lines. But [this racial divide] is not that continuing anymore, because it has become fairly cosmopolitan, I think, especially on the English or on the other side of the sausage curtain. (Pinelands).

In many instances in post-apartheid South Africa, middle class urban residents have lobbied against the development of low-income housing complex in the vicinity of their suburbs. Protection of property value is of particular importance for the lower middle class or/and first time property owners, a group for whom housing often constitutes their main investment. The following quote is extracted from a FG with residents of Phoenix, a neighbourhood situated in the historically white suburb of Milnerton in Cape Town's Northern suburbs, and adjacent to Jo Slovo Park. Jo Slovo Park is one of the few instances of housing developments created within city limits to re-house former squatters who had settled in the area at the beginning of the 1990s. Planning initiatives in Jo Slovo Park which aimed to create 'proper' citizens based on the suburban property model through manipulation of space and housing, failed to take into account the chronic poverty of most residents who, largely unemployed, reproduced informality in their new area of residence, both in terms of economic activities and dwellings (Robins, 2006). This led Phoenix residents to demand the construction of a wall to separate their area from Jo Slovo Park. Such request was legitimised the following way by a resident of Phoenix:

Every cent came out of our own pockets and went into these houses ... The shacks and those things as far as Jo Slovo Park is concerned will affect our valuation. That's the main reason people can't get their houses sold. The wall has nothing to do with racism. It's to do with

valuation. You can't expect a group of people coming from all walks of life to just now say 'hey wake up the sun is shining and we can all live together'. It doesn't work that way. What made them [the developers] realise that they could do this to people? (Phoenix, October 2000).

Class identities are also constructed around shared values and a shared 'way of life'. In the following case among white middle class residents, the sharing of class status is said to foster social integration:

I mean there is a difference between, you know, the squatter camp outside and us, let's face it, and that is the class, that is not because they are black, it is because of the way they live, and then you get a ... like a Goedemoed area or somewhere where the people are young, they don't have as much, you know where the people are starting out, their finances are not ... I think, you can more easily associate with somebody who has the same education as you do, the same economic strata, you socialise with people whom you meet at business and then you have things in common.... It does not actually matter if they are black or pink, or Indian or whatever. Race ... we ... I think we have matured ... none of us are thunderstruck if black people move in or coloured people live next door, so that is not a race thing. (Durbanville).

Simultaneously, as new class identifications arise, ties and bonds within communities created 'from above', and imposed during apartheid, unravel:

I think in a big way, we've become a country of cash.... Before it was everybody was in the same boat, we all knew that our mothers struggled, either worked at factories or whatever but everybody was the same. Nowadays, the country has developed in a way that you have money, you can live in Constantia and you can send your kids to really good schools ... (Bo-Kaap.2).

As a human being, you aspire to something better in life. So, when everything changed in this country the first thing that coloured people did who could afford it, was to say now I want to go for better because where I'm currently living is second best or third best. So, I want to go for the best, I want to give my kids the best, I want to give my family the best. So maybe now we can use the word migration to better areas. And that is I think sad in a way, because it breaks up that social bond in certain cultural groups like the coloured community. (Pinelands).

Middle class identity is connected by respondents to both neighbourhood tidiness and a number of behaviours often associated with the nuclear family set-up. Discourse on the need to take pride in one's belonging and assume personal responsibility to maintain social

order is a recurring theme, especially among residents who are either in downward or upward social mobility. The first example is extracted from a historically lower middle class white suburb:

There are many new residents, how can I say ... different races and so on, moving in here, which I see everyday but in any case for me it is not a problem, definitely not. I also believe that it is a better class that moves here, that flees here, from other areas, away from gang areas; it is a better class of persons. I enjoy living here, as long as my neighbours don't disturb me, I am friendly with them, it is not about colour, it is about tidiness. You have got to keep your place clean in general. (Ruyterwacht).

The following two extracts from Summersgreen and Jo Slovo Park offer similar concerns:

I think it is really good [to be next to Milnerton]. You know the way of the middle class, they always look to themselves and look at their protection and their properties. They don't care about a person. Just like Jo'burg, if you live in Jo'burg, no one looks at you, if you clean your house, the other person is also cleaning their house. The white people of this place [Milnerton] are like that. They don't provoke anyone ... (Jo Slovo Park.1).

Why the crime level is where it is today, it is because good men do nothing. We in Summersgreen want to be recognised as someone who wants to do something. But we need the men to stand-up in those areas, in their own homes ... I'm probably the biggest pain in the butt for many residents in the area who make too much noise or who drink too much.... These houses don't come cheap to the average South African. You have to be in a certain wage bracket to get a house here, before the bank can approve your bond. There is obviously a different quality of person here. We [the people present at the FG] seem to have an identical outlook on our families and our communities, which we actually want it to spread like a disease to fathers and households because South Africa and Cape Town, the fathers have always been involved in 'boozing' and alcohol and the mother played a more dominant role. We want to achieve something and we are going to achieve it, not by the Pagad/Vigilante style but by peaceful means. Simple fathers coming forward and bringing the pride back into the homes, into the families. (Summersgreen).

Contrary to what is often claimed regarding middle class individualism, and the frequent assumptions that suburban living is a way of life centred on the home and family (Puttergill, 2006) and that the middle class do not need street-level interpersonal relations



and neighbourhood networks in order to meet their basic needs (Robins, 2002), a close-knit community or a sense of 'neighbourliness' is actively sought out by middle class residents:

It's quite a nice community. I liked the area, and I thought it's quite a safe area, nice and green, big houses and what have you. So, that was the motivating factor for me. When I came here, I got the feeling that it's like a small town, in a sense that we live in Pinelands, we work in Pinelands, and the children go to school in Pinelands. So, it gives that almost community, close-knit feel. Here we feel like you are part of the neighbourhood. We've got lovely neighbours. (Pinelands).

If you go in live in another place you might be just as happy but because you settled here, your kids have grown up here, you have joined tennis clubs and this club and that, so you've got your whole infrastructure. (Durbanville).

The quest for community, and for strong social ties at neighbourhood level, has been connected to the protection against crime by a number of respondents. In general, the middle class has little to say about the level of services in their area. Though dependent along with everyone else on local services, middle class residents appear either satisfied with their delivery, or able to privatise a number of them if this becomes necessary. This is particularly the case in the field of security. While crime is largely imputed to a deficient judicial system by residents, the role of police in crime prevention was not raised by any affluent FGs. Many respondents state as a matter of fact their use of individual solutions and self-defence mechanisms such as erecting fences around houses to protect against crime. Communal initiatives at neighbourhood level were often sought out as well:

A positive thing of staying in Panorama is that we don't know everybody but we are quite close knit, everybody checks out on everybody else. Somebody sits in a park too long, somebody will speak about it or someone will just walk over and tell him 'listen, get lost'. Our legal and our justice system is the biggest problem in South Africa. You get a criminal that is apprehended and is having ... in a couple of hours or in a day or two. It is basically the legal thing because they are not getting punished and they sleep under the bushes here ... (Panorama).

We fitted in quite well. There's actually a nice community spirit. I think in terms of crime in the area, there seem to have been a great pull together and people are generally nice. I joined

up the neighbourhood watch and all those type of things ...If you look at security, if you can't provide security for your community, I mean it just breaks down and you have anarchy. Now at the rate we are going it's almost kind of heading in that direction, because your criminal gets away with murder. (Pinelands).

There is a lot of crime in Cape Town. You are not even safe in your own house ... I think the problem is that the law is not as tough as before because it is a democratic country: there is a right for a criminal, there is a right for a victim, that is our problem ... I've long been wanting to move to Rondebosch but my wife wouldn't agree because in those areas, there is a lot of crime, house-breaking, people break into people's houses. Here, I know, when I'm at work, my neighbour is looking after my house. Other than the neighbours' watch (sic), here we have *Ubuntu*. (Khayelitsha.1).

Simultaneously, along shared class identities and ways of life, aspiration to neighbourhood homogeneity is often connected with common cultural traits by middle class residents of Cape Town. Accordingly while class appears to play a major role in the choice these residents are able to make, choice of residential area appears also to be based on cultural features – linguistic, cultural and religious – purported to characterise various neighbourhoods. Culture is associated with social trust, with 'feeling at home' in the neighbourhood, and with cultural and religious continuity through the schools present in the area.

The following quotes from FGs with Afrikaans- and German-speakers emphasise the importance of shared language at neighbourhood level:

I feel good here [in Strand], I feel at home. It is very peaceful here. It is traditionally an Afrikaans speaking town.... Yes, it is predominantly Afrikaans, Somerset West is very English and German. It is very nice to live here because it is more homely and friendly people that stay here, and not cold people like in Somerset West. Somerset West is, I mean you don't even know the neighbours living next to you. Because of the fact that most of the people speak Afrikaans or are Afrikaans speaking people, it makes you feel comfortable. You can express yourself easier and it plays a role at the end of the day. (Strand).

Invariably around the German schools, you will also find a lot of German-speaking parents, so we moved for instance closer to the German school and therefore you tend to congregate more

with Germans. There is a large German community in Cape Town. I lived in Pretoria for 29 years and it was very Afrikaans and I felt actually not at home there (Oranjezicht).

The two following quotes extracted from FGs with Afrikaner residents highlight the importance of a ‘close knit Christian community’ to these residents:

A good thing in our area is the schools that are here because until three years ago one of our children was still in primary school and we think it was a very good primary school because the Christian element is very much alive and that is very important for us. You’ll find that the Christian element here is stronger than in lots of other places and for us it is very important (Panorama).

I’m very happy in this area I live in. We have a very enjoyable church environment, nice people, we have moved here from Stellenbosch, we enjoy it here, we connected very quickly, and automatically we started interacting with our church, the NGK, and its activities, and immediately you find a connecting point. We immediately joined a bible-study group, and this is very important for me, religion is very important for me to feel comfortable where I live. The church is the first contact point, immediately you find out where the nearest NGK is, and you get connected to the activities and the people, and through that, the community. (Brackenfell).

In the ‘Malay’ quarter of Cape Town, religion rather than income status is expressed as the criterion of selection of place of residence:

We have people who, even though they can afford to go and stay between people who are not Muslims, prefer to stay here, in a Muslim area. This preference is not because they are anti-white or anti-black, it is simply because they feel that the environment in which they are living is conducive to religious culture. They prefer to stay where there is a Mosque nearby and they will look for that. In so far as residential integration is concerned, I think a lot of it is because of established customs and culture within an area and then moving (from) that, perhaps into a much more sophisticated or grander house doesn’t compensate for the loss of *Ubuntu*, you know, the community spirit... so you are staying in a very beautiful palace up in Constantia but you’ve lost track of your roots, of who your neighbour is, who was a Muslim, the Madressah down the road where the children go to school, the Mosque which you can walk to, you know those kinds of things we cherish. That just reflects our prioritisation of us being Muslims and that we are not that class conscious. (Bo-Kaap.1).

Such cultural concerns may lead, as Martin (1999) has argued, to identity narratives reflecting peaceful interaction between groups thought to be different, or to narratives emphasising conflict and closure between groups. At times, selection of place of residence is determined by fears of prejudice, drawing on both cultural/linguistic and racial registers. In the formal area of a former black township, for instance:

Another reason (not to move) is that here in townships, in the Khayelitsha area, we love one another but I don't think if I go to Rondebosch, I'll make friends easily but maybe because I'm black, the people in Rondebosch will have attitudes towards me and I will also have attitudes towards them because our cultures are not the same and I won't be able to do what I do here in Khayelitsha. As an example, Christmas time or New Year's time, I slaughter a sheep, now coming to Rondebosch, people would start looking at me. Because this is our culture, during Christmas, I have to slaughter a sheep ... Here, I easily do that but there, people would stare at you. (Khayelitsha.1).

Similarly, the following respondent in Pinelands (who himself is originally Afrikaans-speaking) associates language (English) with greater tolerance for racial integration:

I think the other thing (about) moving to Pinelands was that, we've lived in other areas ... we found it's a safer area. Safe but not behind the (Afrikaner) 'sausage curtain' (*boereworsgordyn*). If I had to move to, say for example to Parow, there would be a level of unease because you just relate more to the English side than the Afrikaans side. In Pinelands, it is cosmopolitan and it's more English as well, and you see more colours. We relate more to English style than to Afrikaans style. (Pinelands).

Finally, in the following example, language differences within the neighbourhood are said to create difficulties of integration for these English-speakers:

It is predominantly Afrikaans here ... It is not like we are exactly socialising, unfortunately, we're English in an Afrikaans suburb ... you don't socialise that much with your neighbours, really. There is definitely prejudice, I mean we get called what, 'Souties and ... 'Laitie' and 'rooinek' and ... Yes there is definite animosity from neighbours, and purely based on the fact that we speak English. I just think it is a cultural difference, the way we get brought up, your traditions and things. (Kraaifontein.1)

Conversely, residents of the Bo-Kaap clearly expressed sentiments of threat posed to the cultural and religious character of their neighbourhood by new residents. This in turn leads to exclusionary feelings towards these newcomers:

The Bo-Kaap is predominantly Muslim and it's predominantly Malay... There's been like a harmonious living here which is not guaranteed with other people coming in. Like we had a case where we have the call for prayer and some people see it as noise and say why is that so early in the morning and it's noisy. That is coming, people with completely different views.... I think the problems is, because we have a certain way of living and we've got certain values, what's happening is that people who come in are not part of this community, they don't understand it.... They will have modelling sessions in front of a mosque and people will stand naked. There was a couple of years back an advertisement that they wanted to do in the area on liquor.... It's just not on. Or during Ramadan ... because what's happening is that most of the houses in Wale Street have been sold, they would have big parties on their roofs when people go to mosque. So that level of respect has just broken down and most of our children are just picking up those ways. Because Long Street was Bo-Kaap, the Waterkant ... has become the affluent white yuppie area and that was where the residents of Bo-Kaap have been pushed out. They are becoming smaller and smaller because of where we are situated, this is just prime land for those people but it's not just all about the nice view and prime land, it's also here for us about a way of life and a culture. They must respect our religion and culture, it's in our constitution. But that respect is just breaking down and it just shows the big differences between our community and the rest throughout Cape Town. I mean that's an accepted thing out there but here we believe in our morals and values and we are trying to maintain that. And with these outside influences coming in, it's just not on. (Bo-Kaap.2).

In the following extract, similar reluctance towards religious integration has been expressed:

There is a piece of land next to the tennis court. It was bought by the Muslim community and they are going to build a Mosque on it, which means that: a) we are going to have lots of traffic in and out, which we never really had before. And they would park up all the streets, because if they have a wedding or whatever they have. And then of course, when they call people to prayer, that would be a big thing, the noise. And the school as well. So, we did sign a petition against it (Punts Estate).

The feelings expressed above point to an identity which is stronger than the cultural instrumentalism aimed at global tourists that some analysts have observed in post-apartheid Cape Town, with the Malay quarter sometimes being presented as ‘a particularly graphic example of the new “rainbow” tourism in action ... caught up in an expanding tourist industry that packages Malay identity in terms of the history of Cape slavery and exotic Oriental spice (Robins, 1998: 280). In fact, this preference for religious homogeneity at neighbourhood level leads in the following example to claims that transcend neighbourhood boundaries and flow into the public domain at city level:

If you look at the demographics, nationally we represent 1.5% of the population but ... I mean the Muslim community make up easily 20% of the Cape Peninsula.... it's a sizable proportion. In other words Muslims are concentrated, that is now the areas which one would consider the Cape Flats generally, the point is it is a quarter of a population in Cape Town and yet we don't exert the clout which a quarter of a population should be able to enter at the level of the Unicity. If you take very grassroots issues like for example, restaurants for example, I mean an old hobby horse is the alcohol versus smoking dilemma. I'm just saying if we could have that 23% properly represented we could exercise greater clout in those very small areas and then build up from there. I mean another question for example could be, say, teenage sexuality. Those problems, we feel if we tackle it at local level, which is where our strength is, our strength is not in national level, 1.5% of the national population, so there's going to be no impact. But if we can create a situation where at least there is a sizable impact upon city council decisions... (Bo-Kaap.1).

These narratives differ sharply from accounts collected in similar middle class areas of Johannesburg, where narratives about community at neighbourhood level appear to be based more on a ‘shared lifestyle’ than on common cultural features, and where cultural ties appear in fact to have been domesticated and privatised, practiced with family and friends, and not playing a decisive role in the choice of residential neighbourhood (Bekker and Leildé, 2006).

Recent studies on ‘whiteness’ in South Africa (Puttergill, 2006; Ballard, 2004) argue that while white South Africans accept the changing racial demographics in their suburb, class based concerns remain central to the way in which white residents perceive and exclude others. In other words, such studies highlight the reproduction by the white middle class of the essentialist premises which were at the cornerstone of the policy of

separate development, according to which race, culture and class were coincidental. Prejudices based on the presumption of civilisational differences amongst the South African population emerge, at times, in the narratives of the white middle class:

I don't mind if my neighbour is black or coloured as long as we live in harmony, according to the same standard. Let's say in two-bedroom flat, there would be twenty people in there. Therefore, the social standards go down because there are a lot of people and they're not actually made for this. If that happens, I would mind it but otherwise I wouldn't mind if it's a normal amount of people for a flat. That I have decent people next to me, this is what matters to me. The colour doesn't bother me. But the sort of crowding, and breaking things off ... (Oranjezicht).

Such stereotyping discourses, built upon a mixture of cultural and class assumptions, are not the exclusive terrain of white residents. They are shared by many urban residents revealing patterns of identification and differentiation which cut across former ascribed identities. The following quote was extracted from discussions with middle class coloured residents:

I think the problem is the attitude of the people. I mean you won't see in Rondebosch east ... that used to be a white area before ... You drive through it now, it looks disgusting. Because it's like Muslim area and the fences look terrible. People park their cars outside on the pavements in the road, and it makes it look ugly. The gardens are also unkempt. Everybody wanted to be in Rondebosch east, years ago. All the coloureds wanted to flood the area. Now, nobody wants to go there, because there are Muslims. (Pinelands).

Finally, the following quote from a focus group with Xhosa-speakers reveal stereotypes anchored in the rural/urban divide and local cultural affiliation:

This area is very dirty. People must keep their houses clean even if it is a shack, a person can have a hokkie but it must be a wendy house, it must look neat. Because if the municipality cleans today, comes the week-end and the area looks dirty again...The difference between this place and Du Noon, is that most people there come from P.E (Port Elizabeth). Here it is the Transkei ... There is a difference between a township person and a rural one. A rural person is used to heading cattle. I don't want to talk bad, I am also an African, but you know how is rural life ... the life of the village. A person will have this attitude that my home is in the rural areas,

I have come here to work. A person says I am not going to do this in this place because I have my own property. A person will say I am not going to waste my money here. When he has bought something, he will see those things in a truck. As that truck drives, you will see that he does not care about 'cleanliness' (sic). So, us we are used to town life, you look after your property, you look after your yard, you look after everything. And then because of that, people would not like you. They will call you a 'missus', just like me. Why? Because they say I act white. Why? Because I sweep outside. I clean my house. (Jo Slovo Park.1).

#### 6.1.2. The poor

Middle class residents expressed sentiments of pride and satisfaction anchored in their ability to select both financially and culturally their place of residence. In opposition, the poor spend little time discussing location, possibly because these residents are able to exercise little choice over what area to live in. When living area is in fact raised, the narratives tended to point to spatial exclusion rather than neighbourliness:

Khayelitsha is one of the townships which is not close to Cape Town. Cape Town is the nearest city but it is not so close and we have to spend a lot of money on transport to go to Cape Town. (Khayelitsha.2)

Among coloured marginalised residents, lack of identification with area of residence can be put in perspective with meanings attached to District Six, an area from which thousands of people were forcibly removed in the 1960s and 1970s, which resulted in the break-up of both extended families and neighbourhood social networks (Steinberg, 2004):

We are born and bred Capetonians. We are also very different because we used to live in District Six.... So there is a lot of difference between city people and suburb people, like here ... We will always be from Cape Town, we come from the heart of Cape Town both of us, we were staying in District Six. That time was much better. The old regime is the best, it doesn't matter what they did, but it was the best. They can bring in the coal stove again because it's got more respect....You don't sit at the table and eat anymore, there is no more gathering of the family. Cape Town is completely changed.... District Six was a place where each and everybody knew one another, you could have walked the streets at night. Police, there was the police. District Six was a beautiful place ... but after they demolished the whole of Cape Town or the whole of District Six, the atmosphere, everything is gone. This is the left over of that



beautiful District Six, the atmosphere has just been torn apart, everybody has gone his own way. (Lavender Hill).

In many ways, the urban poor appear as a community ‘perpetually divided against itself’ to use an image employed by Wacquant (1993) to depict social life in the American ghetto. Struggle over residential turf within living areas reflects the fragmented nature of the poor spatially:

I see there are different areas ... there are areas here that are very good where they respect grown ups a lot and then you get the areas where the sellers are, that’s the busy areas ... They’re rude.... They don’t even care what their children do in front of you. Then you come in another area, in the same Mitchell’s Plain, in the same Beacon Valley, then it differs. (Beacon Valley.2).

In parallel to spatial divisions, social differentiation and stigma attached to downward mobility foster social segmentation within neighbourhoods:

Go to Nyanga, Khayelitsha, the *k...* (sic) support one another, they support one another. Here we don’t want to support one another. If I get evicted we laugh about it, our water gets cut, the one laughs with the other, they rejoice. It is just because ... right now at this very stage in life or how things are, it is that there’s not enough work for everybody, there is hardship if there is no labour and if there is no labour, there is no food, but then where there is no food there is also pride. I don’t want to ask you, because I’m afraid you would talk about it, you see ... The problem is communication.... With this household to the next household, they don’t communicate. I think that the feeling for one another, the friendship, it just isn’t there... It’s like this, in one block of flats, these people will stand together but they all have their own little community around the head of their block of flats ... it differs from one block to another block. But the community don’t come together and stand together as one ... to fight these gangs, now the community looks and stands when they shoot, they rejoice it. Here we don’t want to support one another. (Lavender Hill).

While the ‘culture of terror’ instituted by gangs in these neighbourhoods is a source of constant fear to residents, and takes on a major role in the poor’s accounts, reactions to crime differ significantly from those of the middle class. Where middle class residents blamed crime on a dysfunctional justice system, the poor link crime to unjust social

conditions – to the remaining strategy of economic survival and dignity available to the deprived youth:

That is the reason the children live like gangsters when they see the other gangsters shooting guns, rob the people, break in the people's houses and all the things and they got nothing ... no games, no park ... the children haven't got a sports ground here ... (Lavender Hill).

If there would be more rugby and soccer for the youth, there would be less crime .... There is nothing that keeps the youth occupied, that is why there are vandalising. Because there are no men doing that crime, it's only young people. (Khayelitsha.2).

What happens is that if you're a young man, you want to have some things, you want to have this car or whatever that you can be proud of ... that's why you end up robbing people. The main reason is because there is no work. And also there are different kinds of criminals ... there are people who earn a lot of money in the government that steal, then you got the man who has nothing and steals to feed his family. (Tafelsig).

The relationship between gangs and the communities they prey on has been described as ambiguous<sup>28</sup>, with gangs playing a role in housing allocation, in the fight against evictions, and as employment providers. Residents of historically coloured townships often assert that gangs have been in the areas for a long time, but that violence is a recent phenomenon, and express a degree of peaceful cohabitation with gangsters, which they link to religious affiliation:

It is unsafe but I am now ten years at this church working as the caretaker and nothing has happened. Even though they've shot, they've never hit one of us. They have a lot of respect.... This I can truly tell you because if I come to church, then I pass by the gangsters then they greet: 'Sister, how are you?', 'Sister, pray for me'. Sometimes they come in here when they are hungry, then we'll give them a piece of bread and some soup and they will sit in the ministry and then tomorrow, they again do their own thing but they know that we love them dearly and they always come back and we have buried hundreds of them out of this church. Mongrels even said that this is their church. (Beacon Valley.2).

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<sup>28</sup> 'Gang members seek respect', E. Hugo, Cape Time, 29 October 1996.

If you are a Muslim, they'll always have respect for you ... whether it's a *skollie* (gangster) or whatever, they'll have respect for you. Especially if a man has got a Kufi on ... even a lady too, they'll respect us. You will see how they respect a woman wearing the hijab. (Beacon Valley.1).

In contrast to middle class residents who rarely mentioned the role of the state within their neighbourhood either in regard to services or in the fight against crime to which they found both individual and communal private solutions, the poor feel neglected by local institutions. The police in particular are either seen as inefficient or corrupt, leading residents to consider alternative 'vigilante' solutions to protect against crime:

The thing is ... the police, I must say, they don't work with the community, they ask you to work with the community with any information to come forward, but that I know for myself, I phoned to the police station and I gave them some tip-offs where they must go and whatever, but they never responded.... I think the police are afraid of the gangsters, that is the reason they don't want to be in the community. (Lavender Hill).

And you see the biggest problem is the government is corrupt.... Because you're a drug dealer, the police come now today it's 3 o'clock. They get hold of you, all the drugs and whoever's in the house and tonight you're out. There's one guy here, Mr Davis, he just paid R500 and his docket disappeared. He's there every night, here by Mitchell's Plain police station. My son had to do 50 hours because they caught him with a knife in his pocket but they catch these gangsters with illegal guns and nothing happens. They say in the townships, if they catch you raping somebody or whatever, just now it's a night court. They sort you out immediately ... in all these black areas they've got the Kangaroo courts, they call those Kangaroo courts. (Beacon Valley.1).

People end up taking the law in their own hands because that's the only solution. (Tafelsig).

While discourse of the middle class revealed strong meanings attached to language and religious affiliations, the cultural exclusivity which often emerged in their narratives around neighbourhood homogeneity is absent of the poor's narratives. On the contrary:

You get a variety of religions, but that shouldn't be a problem because religion has been like that all the years now, through the ages. But it is not a matter of you being Muslim and you being Christian and you being Hindu or ... We must help one another. (Lavender Hill).

While religious affiliation provides both spiritual support and a degree of respect to residents of neighbourhoods where social trust is hard to achieve, the functional uses of religious institutions is a recurrent theme within discussions. Churches and mosques are said to provide poverty stricken residents with much needed social and economic support:

The mosque serves as a central point in an area, in various aspects of life.... I mean whoever needs help can knock on their door and they are prepared to give you a hearing whatever your problem is, whether Muslim or non-Muslim. It depends on whoever needs help, a helping hand, so it serves a very big purpose in the community because in this place, there are very big problems ... so the mosque ... it is not just for the five prayers that we go there or whatever, there is the Madressa for the children, there's a soup kitchen... Whether we're Muslim or non-Muslim, we're all human beings. You'll feel the hunger the same way as I'm feeling the hunger, so what difference does it make? Come and fetch your bowl of soup! (Beacon Valley.1).

We get people in to come and give life skills [lessons] and to teach us creativity because we are unemployed and we all struggle and then Sister Dolly decided to bring in life skills to equip us in raising our own money so that we can provide for our homes. (Beacon Valley.2).

The Muslim people, they also give soup.... In the Baptist church, in Retreat, the pastor gets a lot of bread in his boot, and Sunday evening after church, before the church closes he says anybody who wants a bread, just stand by my car ... and Sunday night, many people have no bread and then they will come to church Sunday evening. The church will grow, the people will come because that's why the church is here for. (Tafelsig).

Race is largely absent of narratives held by the poor on their areas of residence, possibly because these areas remain racially homogenous. The loosening of ties within former communities, as a result of social mobility has however been stated:

Everybody's got an attitude. Now they got a little furniture and money, now they have an attitude. We used to understand one another, we loved one another because we came from Cape Town, we didn't forget about that, we know where our roots are planted. But some of them ... they just forgot about who they really are, what they are. Money, money do change people that's one thing, it does change people a hell of a lot. (Lavender Hill).

In that sense, townships in urban South Africa are increasingly comparable to what Wacquant (1994) termed the American ‘hyperghetto’ or the ‘vertical ghetto’, doubly segregated on the basis of race and class. These areas, marked by both growing unemployment and the departure of the African American middle class, have become areas reserved to the dispossessed according to Wacquant; they are ‘despised and stigmatising locales’, and places ‘of stunted hopes and blighted aspirations, a city of limits in which the reach of realistic ambition is to survive through unreported and un-reportable sources of income’ (1994: 245).

## 6.2. On Cape Town

While narratives on the city of Cape Town vary to a degree according to the socio-economic affiliation of respondents, views expressed about the city differ according to racial affiliation as well. Categorisation and sub-categorisation of discourses in this section will reflect this pattern of differentiation in accounts.

### 6.2.1. The middle class

Middle class residents share a common discourse on the beauty of the environment in Cape Town and the type of ‘lifestyle’ associated with its geographic location. In this regard, a level of identification to being Capetonian is inferred:

Lifestyle is obviously a factor for the Western Cape... Cape Town is right up there in the top fours of the most beautiful places in the world to live. And you can do any kind of business now with the computers and internet and so on... I personally tend to be more conscious to be a Capetonian than a South African (Business).

Cape Town is the scenic... we’ve got a beautiful scene here. The sun, the sea and the braai... and the mountain. The thing is that the quality of our lives is actually good because we’ve got such a beautiful area that we live in and that seems to make up for the negative things. And that is something you can’t actually pay for and we are thankful for having that. (Panorama).

We feel lucky to be living in Cape Town, because it is very beautiful... There is so much beauty... We take a lot for granted. The mountains, the sea. It is one of the beautiful cities in South Africa, and then having gone overseas as well, even though Europe is beautiful, you still

feel that this is a beautiful city, and it compares to the best in the world, just because of its natural beauty, so ja, Cape Town is a lovely place to stay in. (Pinelands).

Furthermore, discourse of middle class residents points to the mental map they carry of spatial distinctions, of places one visits and places one avoids, in Cape Town. In this regard, the CBD often emerges as a place of urban decay and crime and therefore a 'no-go' area:

Cape Town has become a cesspool ... with all its beauty, it is now becoming filthy, it's become well obviously ... Would you say it's the crime capital? If I remember Cape Town when I was a child, you know. It was a pretty picture in your mind. My mom used to take me into town and there we used to do our shopping. But it's just gone. The streets are filthy, the drivers they just ride any ... they ride you off the street if they can. It's very spoilt. The only nice place to go to in town is the Waterfront now. You know, when you want to say you are going to shop and you want to shop nicely and you can find underground parking. (Punts Estate).

There never used to be break-ins in the City-bowl before, I never used to worry but now so much has changed, it's so filthy. The young people are certainly not coming here, they would go and stay in Milnerton. (Sea Point).

Accordingly, the deployment of police resources within city limits and to sites visited by tourists and public-private initiatives taken to 'clean up' the city such as those taken by the Cape Town's Partnership (whose employees have been compared to a private army which allegedly used excessive force on street kids and informal parking attendants<sup>29</sup>) are supported:

I am afraid we are in a way very close to a chaotic state through lack of will inside the government, to put muscle into the police as a lack of will. Visible policing, I think, is so important. I never know what to say to tourists when they say why don't you bring your house in order: if you reduce crime, you will get more confidence, confidence to get investments and investments bring employment and employment brings immediately a crime-rate decrease. (Oranjezicht).

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<sup>29</sup> 'Row over approach to city policing', G. Thiel, Cape Time, 9 January 2003.

The core of the city is crumbling because that is now for vagrants again, you know the people are living in the city, street people are living in the city, the same thing in Jo'burg, yes like Hillbrow, the same is happening in the middle of Cape Town so they're trying to get that up again so yes, they're trying to establish more businesses again but.... What they also need in Cape Town is more police, policing. Policing, yes that's the trick because it's unsafe. One of the biggest positive points of Cape Town is the tourism. And policing is absolutely essential (Panorama).

Cape Town obviously has taken the initiative in terms of cleaning up. What they did was, all businesses contributed a levy to actually making sure that Cape Town is actually kept clean. So, at night for example, after everybody leaves Cape Town, you get the workers moving in, so when you hit Cape Town early in the morning, you'd have everything clean. It's a good initiative which has obviously now been inherited out in Jo'burg and Durban. So, I think we've been at the forefront. I think there are a lot of things actually in Cape Town we are doing well in order to ... Cape Town is dirty in what you could see, but compared to the rest of SA, it's not that bad. I remember going to East London and Port Elizabeth, and I couldn't believe it. It was ten times worse. It's changed now, recently ... the back streets of Cape Town used to be so dirty, use to be so full of *bergies* (vagrants). I don't know where all the *bergies* have gone to, but our streets are clean. (Pinelands).

However, narratives of middle class residents vary in regard to the image of Cape Town as a tolerant city. White middle class residents often argue that Cape Town has a history of good racial relations and of religious and cultural tolerance which compares positively to the rest of the country, in particular to the province of Gauteng:

One of the things in terms of quality of life, moving to the Western Cape, I found there was more tolerance amongst the race groups than elsewhere in the country. And this was a real plus to me in being proud that I live in Cape Town. (Business).

Cultural wise I think Cape Town has got a lot of cultures from all over the world basically and I think the people are living together without any hassles as such, the different type of cultures being congregated in Cape Town, but is not easy sometimes with some of the people coming in (Panorama).

If we are talking white on, or English, Afrikaans to the black cultures ... I would say it is more liberally minded here, than it is there. We are more liberal here. We are far more accepting of

the other culture and we see the need for their upliftment, in Johannesburg, it is just a no-care attitude ... (Kraaifontein.1).

This discourse contrasts sharply with the way black and coloured middle class residents experience the city of Cape Town, which is often presented as more segmented and 'racist' than Johannesburg in the accounts of these respondents:

I think we tolerate each other, but socially there is no mixing... There is lot of racism. There is no social interaction between Xhosa-speaking people and coloured people. Everybody stays in his or her comfort zone, nobody is prepared to venture out. Compared to Johannesburg, when we were up in Jo'burg for that few hours, when I went in Sandton City, the affluent black people and the Indians, mix much more there. And Cape Town appears to be very white, that's what I think. And that's why they say we are very racist. We are very European centric. It's very white, unfortunately. It's certain areas like basically like Blaauwberg, Constantia, Camps Bay, you do get to stand out.... The racism in Cape Town is much more severe than in Johannesburg. It's so Euro-centric, it's almost like it's a separate place from South Africa in terms of its cultural mixing. Over and above (it's) race, I think it's colour, creed and religion. I think we are also very intolerant about other races as well as religions. We are very polarised here ... (Pinelands).

I find Cape Town to be quite far off in terms of reconciling and being inclusive to one another. At the end, it's just a matter of ... one sees that ability on surface. You scratch beyond the surface, you find that there are deeply rooted racist attitudes still intact from white and coloured communities toward blacks. My impression is that there's no love lost between the different races. (Gugulethu).

### 6.2.2. The poor

A significant proportion of the poor's accounts focus on discussions about the city of Cape Town, and in particular on access to jobs, housing and services in the city. At this 'scale' of discourse, race appears to be an important line of cleavage, a boundary between 'us' and 'them', since social exclusion is experienced, in both coloured and black townships, on the basis of race.



Among Eastern Cape migrants, there is a shared belief that economically, the city of Cape Town specifically and the Western Cape province in general offers opportunities which aren't found elsewhere, and that Cape Town is 'cleaner' and provides a nicer environment aesthetically than Johannesburg. However, in the word of one of the respondents, 'Cape Town is smart, but it is not right for a black person'. Most FGs with Xhosa-speaking marginalised residents share this belief about the persistence of racial discrimination in the job market:

Cape Town is difficult. We don't get jobs. We are told that we must go to Thabo Mbeki to ask for jobs ... Here you find that as you move around looking for work, they set dogs on you. They ask you what do you want here? (Jo Slovo Park.3).

There are a lot of places where I would not go in Cape Town, because apartheid is still around. Africans who live in Cape Town don't get jobs. Our people are isolated. This province is different from the other provinces. We come from provinces where Apartheid is gone. There are a lot of places where I would not go in Cape Town, because Apartheid is still around but the tourists come here to South Africa because of Cape Town. Gauteng is better. Here African people have problems. Here in Cape Town, only coloureds and whites get better jobs. But if you are African, it's like in apartheid a long time ago. The Western Cape is still a white place, where whites ... their jobs are reserved and the second group that get jobs are coloured people and then for blacks to get jobs, it's hard. (Khayelitsha.2).

Here in the Western Cape, I feel that they are racists because people who are employed are coloureds. If you go to factories in coloured townships like Kensington when you get there you will never find a Xhosa person. Even here in Jo Slovo there are places in which you have to be Coloured. If you are a Xhosa person they will not take you. You have to be Coloured, even though you qualify for a job. Most of them are coloureds, and you have to understand Afrikaans. (Jo Slovo Park.2, October 2003).

In the case of the FG which took place in 1999, when the province was still NP-dominated, racial discrimination against Xhosa-speakers was associated to this fact:

The people who used to govern the country are still objecting to the aims of the government, especially this province, the National Party in this province. (Khayelitsha.2).

Language affiliation, which was never mentioned in the neighbourhood context, is experienced as a stigmatised identity in the context of Cape Town by Xhosa-speakers. It is perceived as an impediment to access the job market, dominated by Afrikaans according to these respondents. Rather than pride potentially associated with linguistic affiliation, language is carried as an imposed and limiting identity:

There is a problem about speaking isiXhosa in Cape Town because nothing has changed, the Boers are still in control and they speak in Afrikaans. And people who get opportunities are Coloureds. So if you want a job it can happen that you may not get job even if you qualify for that job, it can happen that you may not get it because of your inability to speak Afrikaans. So those of us who come from the Eastern Cape where English and isiXhosa are spoken become disadvantaged here. So that is one of the problems that we get, that of not being able to speak Afrikaans. They say that isiXhosa-speakers like *toyi toyi*. So we struggle to get jobs with our isiXhosa. They say we are difficult. (Jo Slovo Park.2).

You see if you go to look for a job, at work, you are not amongst your own black people, you have a problem. At work you find that people of ... have perceptions about Xhosa people. Sometimes you will find that you are working in Cape Town, but you do not originate in Cape Town. I feel that Cape Town is a place that was meant for whites and coloureds. As a black person you are expected to be Afrikaans-speaking. Even if you are proud [of your language], you will do so in the township. (Jo Slovo Park.3).

The prominence of Afrikaans in Cape Town is put in perspective with the use of various languages and frequent code switching practices associated with other South African urban areas such as Johannesburg and Durban:

In other places like Durban, it's a mixture of languages that are used. In KwaZulu, isiXhosa and isiZulu are closely related. I did not encounter problems there. But there were in the beginning because if you were Xhosa you were associated with the ANC and so on. Not now. That thing does not occur any more. In Jo'burg, they have communication skills. I was once in North Gate. There a person speaks isiXhosa and Sesotho with his manager. So other places are nicer because people do make an effort to understand you. In Jo'burg, when I was there people were speaking in isiXhosa, there was no problem. Even the languages that are spoken in Jo'burg, one speaks in Sepedi, isiXhosa, Sesotho, isiZulu, different languages. People also present themselves in English. But here it means that you won't work, you won't have anything because of your language. (Jo Slovo Park.2).

This feeling of linguistic discrimination does not lead however to claims for further recognition of isiXhosa within the public sphere. Instead, residents advocate the promotion of English as the vehicular language of Cape Town:

You know if you are in the company of white people especially in work situations you are compelled to change from your language in order to speak English because the whites do not speak isiXhosa. And basically you do that because whites cannot speak isiXhosa. You do that so that you can have something to eat. You know the language that combines different nations is English. It is a language of the world. All other nationalities from other countries that enter South Africa enter through English. No one will come to South Africa from Egypt only to speak Afrikaans when he arrives here. At least you must know your own language, isiXhosa, and then have some English. Even if am Xhosa, Zulu or something else I must have some English, that is the thing that unites us. (Jo Slovo Park.3).

Among marginalised coloured residents, social exclusion is experienced in racial terms as well, in particular regarding competition over access to services, rather than jobs. Myths of free services and housing in historically black areas are widespread, couched in a language of provincial autochthony:

Now look, at first, in former years, it was only Langa, that was the only black area, Langa. Now it's Nyanga, it's Gugulethu, Khayelitsha. Where do all the 'Bantus' (sic) come from? They said that you don't have to pay [rent] because the government said you can have a house free because the native people in Khayelitsha, and those places there, live for free. What they pay is maybe next to nothing for the house they've got ... So then all the other communities tried to live free and then they found out that it doesn't work like that. (Lavender Hill).

Look how children are struggling to get work and they have matric.... For me basically, this is now precisely the opposite of what happened in the white man's time. But now the black man is trying to fix what the white man did wrong. But now they are attacking each other. Now I have a question, we coloured, where are we, still in the middle. Right or wrong? Still in the middle ... no, we're not even in the middle. Those who were first, is now second and those who were third, is now first. (Eesterivier).

### 6.3. On South Africa

While class and race seem to condition to a large extent the content of discourse and processes of identification at neighbourhood and city level, discourse on South Africa calls for more nuanced categorisation.

#### 6.3.1. Discourses on the post-apartheid order

Apartheid propaganda vehicled by the Department of Information sought to project an image of ‘white civilisation constantly threatened by African primitivism’ (Morris-Hale, 1996: 228). A number of South African scholars have argued that ‘racism as the everyday false consciousness of socially constructed difference, has not disappeared with the repeal of racial legislation’ (Adam, 1995: 468). Discourses reminiscent of apartheid ideology, whereby ‘othering’ is informed by race essentialism and based on the assumed existence of deep civilisational differences between South African ‘population groups’ continue to influence, at times, the narratives white citizens hold about themselves and others. Sometimes, racial convictions are couched in a language reminiscent of the myth of the ‘chosen people’:

The whole situation of the way the country is going at the moment, now I’m not saying that the country is going the way it is going because of the blacks, that is not what I am saying, I am just trying to say that it is the whites that brought Christianity into South Africa with the ‘Groot Trek’ and then they asked God to help them and He did and He will still help South Africa, things will get better here, but for us to sit and look at it at the moment, you can not foresee that, you can not see anything coming out positive at the moment. (Panorama).

Simultaneously, and although white South Africans tend to evade the subject of apartheid, the following quote which is extracted from a FG with lower middle class white Afrikaans-speaking residents, living in an area formerly under ‘community care’ management, shows the limits of internalisation of past discourse:

The South African people, specifically the white people, they are very thick, that is a Afrikaans problem and they are not like the other.... English people for example are more open than Afrikaans people, and that is where the problem lies. I think, a Christian person must be a balanced person, he can stand his man but he does not have to be so radical, you know like the

AWB types. In the first place, you have to be humble as Christian, and accept the authority appointed over you and pray for the people, but it seems to me as if they can't accept it, they want to stay in control, why? Rather pray for the one that is in control, because the lord has appointed him as well ... I don't know, it seems to me that they always want to ... they cannot possibly be subordinates. I can understand why they do it but I don't agree with what they do. And not all of us... we were not all raised the same. This *Boeremag* or whatever you call them, I just can't see, I mean in what direction are they now going again, it just can't work. Look, I say ... that which happened in the past, look maybe I did in that time, before apartheid ... when apartheid was there ... look I must probably accept that I grew up in that era. But after apartheid fell away, I also did realise, that it is only the best, I just cannot believe that there was a thing like apartheid. There were many people that suffered there under and today still suffer under it. Everyone must be equal. I can't believe that we just thought it was right for all those years. For all those years ... it was actually very stupid. People would ... you know how this town was then, this is now years ago ... if a coloured walked here, in this town ... guys just for no reason, would just go and assault him ... you know ... For no reason. (Ruyterwacht).

Furthermore, many residents assert that a level of social integration is taking place in South Africa through the sharing of residential space, work relations and schools. In this regard, many admit that their views on race differ from those of their children's:

I think our kids have a lesser problem with that, than we had because we were brought up with that thinking but for them it's fine.... They don't even talk about it anymore. For them, it's just a matter of fact. It's like it is. I haven't ever heard my kids speaking about a problem ... somebody being a different colour and ... being a hassle to them. They even have big friends. (Panorama).

A shared discourse which emerges from FGs with white middle class citizens articulate an instrumental view on race, derived from feelings of discrimination on the job market as a result of policies of affirmative action and Black Economic Empowerment. These are generally the first issue these respondents mention when discussing 'how do you feel about living in South Africa'. Lack of support for governmental policies of redress is legitimised on the basis of the fact that they purportedly neglect the vast majority of South African poor and target young people who were too young to vote during apartheid:

When the young people go to look for work, they just can't find work whether they are the best for the position or not. The firms have to take on blacks ... to every 12 people, you can take 3 non-blacks, one white, one coloured and one Asian. They're always talking about racism, they bring it up all the time and apartheid and whatever. Now they call it equity, now to me that's racism. I argued with my son, he says it's equity but to me it's still racism because first you have to be ... The top one is the black female, then you get the black male, then you get the white female and then the white man. (Sea point).

95% of European South Africans feel threatened in their own country. Future wise, and for our children. And I think the whites, the biggest part of the whites are getting poorer because you work yourself like people have 2 and 3 jobs to be able to survive and trying to keep the standard and you can't actually.... There is a big thing going on in South Africa with regards to redistribution of wealth. They say that white people have been advantaged all those years and there is a big drive with regard the redistribution of the money. The money must go away from the white people and must go to the disadvantaged. Unfortunately what is happening with the whole redistribution of income or wealth is unfortunately it is not reaching the people it is supposed to reach. And we are just creating a new super power at the top. The people that are really the needy they don't get anything, they are even worse off than what they used to be with apartheid. The only thing the political change has done is it created a new black elite. (Panorama).

Many white people's feelings towards those of colour have changed in the last few years, because their family-members could not get jobs, or lost their jobs, as a result of affirmative action. I have noticed this about some people, people that used to be very liberal, but still strongly Christian. They have rebellious feelings, and have a lot of critique towards the government. (Brackenfell).

I think there is discrimination against whites now. I think what is happening now, is that children that had nothing to do with apartheid years are starting to build it up again, you are now starting to get race stuff because children that are going to university now, are not eligible for bursaries because a previously disadvantaged person now has to get priority while the other person has better merit and if you take the last ten years, I mean educational opportunities for them did not start in 94, for the last twelve years there has been equal opportunities for everyone. So why do they still have to be advantaged? (Strand.2).

As a white male South African, we are prejudiced. It is reverse apartheid, it does not matter if you are Afrikaans, English, French, German, Spanish, Italian, whatever, you're white, and you are male, no jobs. Look at all the guys driving BMW's, they don't need tinted windows any more (sic). It is true, they just, they get all the jobs, and it does not matter, it's actually, it is sad because, it is not about your academic, or whatever, your proficiency in the job, it is just actually about quotas now. But it's still a class distinction, because you've got black guys in business that are making money and you get black guys that are not making money, that aren't working so it is the same, the only difference is that your previously advantaged communities are becoming currently disadvantaged. (Kraaifontein.1).

Reactions to the wide-ranging sense of discontent with state policies of redress expressed by respondents were electoral apathy as well as emigration which, though distasteful, emerged as an implicit alternative:

I've got a kid that is 16 years old, and if it keeps on deteriorating the way it is going now, I mean where are all our qualified young kids going? 85% of them are moving away, they are going across to other countries to get money to come back here and start their own thing and they don't have to work for any government or any company as such where being white and being male is one of the worst things to be. (Panorama).

SA has changed a lot, the youngsters now if they want to find a job must go overseas, they must leave to another country. The coloureds are in the same position as we are, they don't have jobs either and they are also immigrating. And it is sad because South Africa was a lovely country once. (Sea point).

Let's face it, however optimistic and positive you are about the country, a great country to live in, the sunshine... it is becoming more and more difficult for even qualified white kids to find work. I am the ultimate optimist but those are the issues that are potentially driving a lot of professional people out of the country. (Durbanville).

The only exception to this discourse was advanced by the following participant in the Durbanville FG:

We are staying, we are happy, it is a nice place to live at the moment as far as I'm concerned, the work is well ... It is not first world, but things do get done. And there is a lot of good will. Reasonable services, and it is a nice enough place to live. And we live well, we lead a lifestyle.

You would battle to lead the same kind of lifestyle overseas because it is more populated, it is hard to get things done, because more people want to get them and it is more expensive ... in what we have, like the size of our houses and properties and our cars and ... (Durbanville).

These narratives contrast with those articulated by black and coloured middle class residents. Support for the post-apartheid government among these respondents is derived from newfound dignity and freedom, as well as access to economic opportunities. In this regard, pride in South Africa's achievements, and loyalty to the government, have been expressed:

There is a big difference in how we accepted the former government and how we accept the present one. The most important thing in the life of somebody is that you want to be part and to be recognised as a citizen in the country where you live and as a person who truly represents that country. Before 1994, there was no representation on an equal basis for everybody in sports, work place.... Everything was done according to the statute books ... The same law would allow white people to do whatever they wanted but a person of colour was restricted by the law. Now, this government, everybody is supposed to be the same. It's up to you personally what you want to be or what you want to make of your life, or how you want to be a South African. Today we have equality. The constitution says you are free ... because this country with all its civilised people ruling this country was the damnest of uncivilised people, these whites, because they only looked after themselves. (Strand.1).

I am happy, very happy in South Africa. It is nice to feel free in South Africa. And there are a lot of opportunities here ... I believe things are coming. This was the land of my father and I am living here and free. (Jo Slovo Park.1).

In terms of the monetary and the financial, I think we are doing ok. We are seeing the benefit or the fruits, otherwise we wouldn't have been in management positions ... Look at the fundamentals, you've got to take your hats off to the guys that's obviously made it work here. Really, you know, somebody is doing something right. Basically we cannot complain. It only happened 5 years ago and look where we are now, we have a nice house.... This government did this for us. (Pinelands).

I'm proud to be a South African. I'm proud of the achievements we've made in this country and I'm proud to be a part of that achievement. (Summersgreen).



Narratives from this group of citizens call for both caution and patience towards the pace of socio-economic changes in the country:

We need to be a little bit more realistic with the time frame and how long things do take within a new government.... I think that the ungodliness of telling a black man or a non-white person that they are not from God because of their colour, I think that's more ungodly than what is happening in our country at the moment. (Westridge).

We have adopted a 'victims mentality' saying 'before we were not white enough, now we are not black enough' on which the government plays in this province ... We have a part of responsibility for the past, we were as bad as whites because we also considered black people as *k...* (sic) before. Why would we blame them now to try to favour blacks? We should always ask ourselves what we do to improve South Africa instead of constantly criticising the government, especially coloureds. (Strand.1).

While emigration is a possibility mentioned by a number of these respondents, it is connected to crime levels in the country rather than to governmental economic policies:

A lot of people obviously from rural areas come for work, it must be. There is no place ... there is no work. So the crime rate increases and the respect for life decreases, and things like that. Respect for life and for each other is just ... it's not. But with all that, I suppose it could be a good country but personally I don't see much light.... I would strongly advise a young couple, young couples who still have got the energy, who can get overseas, who are able to get that kind of security over there to leave. (Punts Estate).

We are not safe. There has been one killing here and lots of attacks.... We can't live like that, always on the edge, you must be able to appreciate what you have. I don't want to live in South Africa. I want to take my children away. (Pinelands).

As a general rule, FGs held in poor communities spent little time discussing South Africa. Expressions such as 'it's ok... I am still thinking' were common. This could be the result of lack of access to broader narratives veiled by the media. When discussions arise around the country, they focus on issues of access to jobs, social welfare and housing rather than dignity or symbolic and political accommodation.

As was the case in discussions on the city, narratives around South Africa are articulated in racial terms among coloured marginalised residents. While the indignity of petty apartheid is mentioned, discourse focuses on lack of employment opportunities which is blamed on the new government:

There is no work... they said there was going to be a lot of work, but no work. It's been 10 years now, almost 10 years. The government broke his promise. The *native* [sic] man, he goes more away than former years. The president used to go once in a while, you will see him on a plane. But this government here he goes everyday... he goes on a plane. No, the old regime was the best. It doesn't matter... we knew when we must get in a bus, you must sit upstairs, because of our colour. They are trying to break the apartheid, but they broke it wrong. They want all the black states of Africa to sort of come together and almost become one as an African country. (Lavender Hill).

Nothing changed for our coloured people, except the acceptance to social, not social, to sport... but in the social life at our homes and so on. Basically there's only opportunities for the black man. One of my friends went for an interview, the first question, can you speak an African language. She said no, sorry you didn't get the job. Now isn't that discrimination? That is wrong. (Ersterivier).

Narratives of underprivileged Xhosa-speakers focus on socio-economic issues as well. However, in this group views navigate between loyalty to government and sentiments of political exclusion, articulated in class terms and around the lack of care of political leaders about 'people below':

Not much has changed here. There are community centres and we have electricity in the house but we are still living in shacks, so the government has not managed for us all. We cannot blame the government ... the problem is that most companies have retrenched workers. The government is trying. It provides certain things. Even small houses are better than shacks but there are still no jobs. (Khayelitsha.2).

The concept of affirmative action is good but they don't implement it the right way, they don't choose the right people to take the jobs, to particular positions.... The problem is honesty, certain people are fine when they start their jobs, but as time goes on, they become corrupted, they do not deliver at all ... (Jo Slovo Park.2).

What the government is doing, instead of bringing money to build old-age homes for our fathers and mothers, they give the money to those who are playing soccer, those who already have money. They don't think about those who are suffering on the lower ground. They only think of the middle ground. (Khayelitsha.2).

### 6.3.2. Discourses on multiculturalism

While discourse on cultural (religious and linguistic) accommodation at neighbourhood level was often couched in exclusive terms by middle class residents, in the South African context, tolerance toward differences is praised. In this regard, South Africa has been presented as a model of multiculturalism to the rest of the world:

You have to be realistic, especially political-wise, nothing happens in a short period of years. It takes many years especially the way the country worked before. As a South African, I am very proud. We are an example for the world, I believe that, especially where our politics are concerned. We are a great example of how peace and change and reconciliation can be achieved with so many different cultures. (Bo-Kaap.2).

When I look on television, then I still prefer South Africa. I think every country has its own problems. And what you see on the television and in the news ... they always think bad things of us, there are many things you don't hear about America. They also have racism there in their country, which you never see. We are perhaps a model country in that regard. With all our cultures, different cultures, working together relatively well. We have at least eleven official languages ... I don't think it is any country that's got something like this. (Ruyterwacht).

Across faith communities, participants are aware of the rights protecting religious freedom in South Africa and acknowledge the state's respect regarding religious practices, such as the accommodation of religious school holidays, SABC religious programmes, religious radio stations, and so on. The South African state is regarded as neutral and as being even-handed in its treatment of the different faith communities as those extracts from discussions with members of the Dutch Reform Church, an African Independent Church, a Pentecostal church and with Muslims clearly show:

I have no problem that the government is not overtly Christian, I think in many aspects it is good that the government is secular by nature, personally I don't feel it is the duty of the

government to impart specifically Christian values onto the SA population, in order to promote Christianity, and to protect it... (Brackefell).

One can understand the predicament as far as the government is concerned because if you lean towards any particular kind of church, then you are opening a can of worms, you see.... I think the more secular, the better as far as the government is concerned especially for a society like South Africa. With the strings and the strains of religious sectors in South Africa, you simply can't get the government leaning on either way, otherwise that would raise the competing priorities of the different religions so the more secular the better. (Gugulethu).

I think having something like the 1<sup>st</sup> of May at the Newland Stadium, it once again shows that our country and leaders are prepared to allow people to have freedom of religion and the masses uniting, different denominations to go out there and have religion honoured as freedom, as a democratic country to go and worship God in the open which about 70% of the world don't have this kind of freedom. (Westridge).

I think despite 9/11, for us as Muslims in SA, we are in a big way untouched ... Because I read in a newspaper just yesterday about Holland, now Muslims are getting up and saying this is racism now the way they are being treated in one of the most supposedly liberated country and I think it's all over, whether it's France or Australia ... people are scared, they look at Muslims, they think.... Here people carry it as South Africans and I think that democracy helped that, to actually give each one a right and to say we should be tolerant. At the moment being Muslim and going out in the world is scary, it looks like Islam has become the enemy now to the world. South Africa is probably the most tolerant, the safest country and we don't have people looking at us strangely. Our political leaders aren't saying anything against the Muslims or the other countries. That's the politicians that instill that fear in people and that didn't happen here, that's why there isn't that here. The government are very ... they see the Muslims ... they are tolerant, they see the Muslims as a people and as a minority grouping in South Africa, I think we can flourish, there's room, there's space for us to move... (Bo-Kaap.2).

The only reservation regarding religious accommodation in the post-apartheid order was found in the following Muslim focus group:

In the pre-apartheid era we made our contribution to the anti-apartheid struggle and as such, in the growth of the New South Africa, I certainly believe that most of our people really want to

stay here and contribute to the development of this country ... I found that we are happy, in many ways we have gained, we have our own radio station, ... one cannot deny that the Muslims as a whole have gained a lot in that respect. On the other hand, obviously there are areas where we feel, where I certainly feel we are losing out by being too closely aligned with the governing party. I would like to see a situation where we are part of ... but we are a separate entity as Muslims. We are supporting the government all the way, but where it comes to a situation like recently with the abortion question. I mean there were Muslims sitting in parliament on the ANC front, and they were forced to vote by caucus, they were forced to support the abortion law. I mean, which I find incompatible with Islamic doctrine and Islamic belief. (Bo-Kaap.1).

While language appeared to be an important source of meaning at neighbourhood level for middle class residents, and linguistic homogeneity was said to promote social ease, discourse on language in the South African context is one of accommodation towards linguistic diversity. The following views were expressed by Afrikaner respondents:

If you've asked me ten-fifteen years ago, I would have added a bit of '*ons en julle*' (us and them), in the sense I would have said, ja my family is very Afrikaans, culturally Afrikaans ... But the thing is we, that I have undergone that change, we have all undergone that change, in ten-fifteen years we're less language conscious, less culture conscious ... More comfort conscious. Politics, I think we are more politically tolerant as well of one another cause fifteen years ago, straight out of 'Stellies' (Stellenbosch), twenty, thirty years straight out of 'Stellies', if you were ANC, you were a communist. Now I could join them literally, but I still have a '*haak*' (clash) here and there with their policy, but it has all become, kinder, the politics have become more tolerant, and it has become just generally, more gentler I think. (Durbanville).

Languages ... I don't have a problem, like I say ... One would only feel it if you are in a conference among different people ... and you have to express yourself. Ok, then you know you have to speak English, and if you can speak English with each other, you know, then, it's fine. I'm also not afraid that Afrikaans will go extinct, I don't have a problem with English. To survive, one has to adapt, either you have to speak English or you have to learn to speak Xhosa. I personally feel I would have liked to speak Xhosa. It is an advantage to work with the people, you could better communicate with a person, they also have more respect for you if you can speak their language. (Ruyterwacht).

The following two quotes are extracts of conversations with coloured Afrikaans-speakers which reflect similar sentiments:

I think since 1994 there has become a greater tolerance ... firstly an awareness of all the other languages that are present in South Africa and then a tolerance of the languages, because I think we are cultivating a culture amongst this generation that's coming through.... They're more tolerant of other languages also, they have subjects now like Xhosa you know... that is helping to bridge the gap between the different racial groups, so I think there's definitely more tolerance... (Kraaifontein.2).

Before 1994 there were only two languages recognised, Afrikaans and English ... but after 1994, I think there are about 11 or 12. The TV, the textbooks are also more English ... The universities are more English. The University of Stellenbosch was plain Afrikaans, but now they are English ... To accommodate all the other races. As long as they accommodate me as well.... I think we are moving or we are in a democracy so, democracy is in all the playing fields, languages, whatever. It's fair ... I think ... A lot of Afrikaans parents put their children in an English school because they know at the end of the day, their children are going to benefit ... they will get better opportunities, because it's more English now. (Atlantis).

The only exception to sentiments of linguistic accommodation and tolerance was expressed by the following respondent:

The Afrikaans language is under threat at the moment. If you think from the politics, not from the people, from the politicians, trying to put their pen down on the Afrikaans as a language. I know, and I think 99% of Afrikaners know, nothing will get the Afrikaans language down. That's to say it doesn't matter what they are trying to implement or whatever law they will try and put down, it is not going to get us down. I mean this language has started from nothing and it has grown, it has become the lead power in Southern Africa, it is going to stay there. We aren't going to give our language away. Even if we are forced to speak English or whatever language, but we will still be Afrikaners, nothing will take that away from us. (Panorama).

### 6.3.3. A common discourse on South African exceptionalism: citizenship by default?

The only discourse which is shared by black and white, poor and rich citizens of South Africa is a lack of identification with the continent in which they live. Though it is

often stated that ‘many South Africans [are] still largely ignorant about other African countries and this has fuelled the current xenophobia in the country’ (Hendricks and Whiteman, 2004: 8), it appears that an evasion of identification with Africa is due less to ignorance than to rational choice, a choice based ‘on a fair assessment of the cost of being African’ (Sichone, 2004).

Discourse on Africa and Africans figure prominently in the way South Africans speak of their country, of themselves and of others. However, Africa is rarely perceived in essentialist terms, as a black continent, but in instrumental terms, as a continent in disarray which in turn impacts negatively on the national economy and labour market. In these narratives, ‘Africa’ often emerges as the polar opposite of what South Africa should be striving for, both politically and economically:

I am proud because I am South African. And South Africa is the one state where there is development and democracy in Africa. (Khayelitsha.2).

I believe politics have destroyed many countries and still is, we can look at Africa, but fortunately for this country, we have a healthy balance of opposition parties... (Summersgreen).

Narratives on Africa express a shared belief in South African exceptionalism. This belief is rooted in South Africa’s perceived economic and political advantages in Africa, and in the conviction that ‘South Africa is hope for Africa’ in the words of one respondent. Conversely, South Africa’s location in Southern Africa is seen, particularly by middle-class focus group respondents, as disadvantageous to the economy of the country. In particular, proximity to countries which are politically unstable is said to discourage foreign investments:

The problem is that foreign investors are all scared. We are lying between Zimbabwe and Angola and Namibia, they are trying their best to sort of survive in a way and we are right down here, so I mean ... we are surrounded by countries where nothing is happening economically. (Panorama).

Across FGs, evasion of identification with Africa is rationalised through two narratives, both clearly instrumental in nature: the first focuses on the government's policy towards Africa and the second on South Africa's immigration policy. Though aware of government's African Renaissance discourse, of its economic initiatives on the continent such as NEPAD (New Partnership for Africa's Development), and of its military involvement, South African respondents were generally not supportive, for a variety of reasons. South Africa's role tends to be perceived in an altruistic light, as provider of finances and support (rather than as investor) and as costly for the South African taxpayer. Accordingly, there is a widespread belief that state resources for combating South African backlogs of inequalities ought to be given priority over external demands:

Nepad ... I think it is a waste of money. To me if it is using our money, it should have been used better in this country to get the ... we have too much to pay in this country. I am cynical about it, I don't think we are getting much, we are not getting very much success, you are not getting value for money, so ... It is always on our expense, the South African tax-payers ... There is the danger, that we send the odd couple of guys out to the Congo, or Sierra Leone in a couple here, a couple there, and in the end we quietly run tens of million Rand a day on keeping troops in Africa, we can build a hell of a lot of houses with that. (Durbanville).

The government wants a relationship with the rest of the African countries. We should first look at our own people. You know, most of our people are still struggling; the struggle is not over yet ... struggle against poverty and discrimination which is still big. (Atlantis).

They have to fix their own country first. They have to look after themselves. Clean your own house first. There are more than enough things here that need attention and I don't think we are capable of helping them on the right way. What is here, we haven't fixed yet... (Strand.2).

On an economical level, I do not think things are going well for us because South Africa wants to help too many other countries. They want to help Zimbabwe, Mozambique and at the end of the day, their own population is living in hardship. (Khayelitsha.2).

Narratives on African immigration to South Africa express similar conviction regarding the country's advantaged position within Africa, and absence of strong identification with citizens of the continent. Perceptions of South Africa as a 'land of milk and honey' contribute toward the image of African migrants as economic migrants, rather than



political refugees, of people who entered illegally in search of a better life or of an 'easy buck' and who benefit immensely from their stay in South Africa:

They come because they see us as prosperous. South Africa, compared to their countries, our streets are paved, we are light-years in advance.... We are an organised society, even in our squatter camps we are actually better-off.... Six Nigerians can live in my flat, pay me two thousand a month, that to them is first class accommodation ... they can go down, get a job at the Waterfront, get a job as a parking attendant. What they earn, coupled with the weather, coupled with relative law and order ... living in a nice flat at a reasonable rate, is better than being in a township in Sierra Leone. (Durbanville, Cape Town).

This image of the foreign migrant as an economic migrant undermines what remains of the belief that South Africa ought to remain mindful of past support by African countries for the ANC in exile:

In the Apartheid years, there was what they called exile and a lot of people used that and there was a lot of sympathy for certain groups in those days and there were a lot of those people there that side wanting to help this people over here. I see nothing wrong with that, but I'm saying now that everything's changed ... don't come in and don't try and take over, I mean they know the situation, 35 million blacks and there is X amount percentage of them without work. They've been there to help. Why do they want to take it away? (Kraaifontein.2, Cape Town).

The question is just how many people did actually leave? Because you get that thousands of that people are now here. They think it's the land of opportunity and South Africa has his fault also with the incomers of other countries. They buy the people for cheap labour, that's why South Africa keeps them cause why, if I run a business and I see here is a guy that I can get for R30 a day, I take him. So they just actually come, the people that come in, just actually come to take away our opportunities. (Eersterivier).

Many people are coming to SA, especially after 1994 and some of them claim that the freedom fighters used to get places in their countries, they used to be given political asylum in their countries so that is why they want to attempt to get a place in South Africa now. I think they demand it but it creates problems because there is no employment here. If you go to places like the town centre in Mitchell's Plain, Cape Town, most of the vendors and hawkers you find, are Nigerians, people from the African states, more than South Africans. (Khayelithsa.1).

Xenophobia appears to be widespread in South Africa, and openly expressed. Narratives regarding immigrants, Nigerians in particular, are infused with stereotypes and prejudices. African immigrants are accused of a variety of social ills and criminal activities – drug dealing, arms trafficking, contract killings and prostitution. Such sentiments have been expressed by South Africans from all socio-economic and ethno-racial backgrounds, and in all settings, from townships and informal settlements to suburbia:

You must remember one thing, that being in a relative affluent area, this is an expensive area ... but unfortunately there is a lot of elements from outside that is buying up properties there that is, outside I am talking about outside of the country and they are foreigners. We've had a lot of cases of gangsterism, the gangsterism didn't happen here but the main offices were up in Platteklouf. (Panorama).

They just come here to make money ... taking over our jobs. But do they pay tax? They bring in drugs and receive a lot of money. (Atlantis).

They have a tendency that if they have a business they corrupt everybody. If I were to criticise them most of them like to have an acceptable business using it to camouflage. That is why our sister says we have problem with these guys. Truly I do not have a problem with these guys. I have problem if he uses an acceptable to disguise for dealing in drugs. In many cases these people are corrupt. We see when those people are phoning in that phone at that phone. They phone for the whole night without a card. That phone has two cables that have been cut in two so that they can phone the whole night. They are damaging the economy of South Africa. (Jo Slovo Park.2).

While African migrants are conceived of as overloading South African scarce economic resources by most respondents, middle class residents focus their narratives on the impact of immigration on basic infrastructure and on the unskilled and semi-skilled job market:

They are contributing towards unemployment, crime ... the jobs, you name it. I mean look at everything, our housing, education, they can't even accommodate Africans, South Africans... with all these, whether it be legal, or illegal immigrants coming into our country, how are they going to cope with that in two three years time, they can't even cope with it now. The sewerage plants. (Kraaifontein.1).

Our government, I cannot help to think that it comes from them, this free crossing of our borders. The result is that a lot of our own country's people go through hardships and not having food to eat, and there weren't any squatter camps and these kind of things before these people could get freely across the border. And you know ... these people come and learn in our country, they get cheap/free medical care on very lowered tariffs and then they still don't pay their account. And that is your perception of them, they are crooks and criminals and finish. (Strand.2).

I'm just looking at the percentage of people that's without jobs and I think you have all these guys coming in and taking all the work that could have been given to or done by our local boys.... I don't mind hearing a French-speaking guy in the parking area, but then again that could have been one of our blacks doing the job, especially on the different flea markets. (Kraaifontein.2, Cape Town).

The government doesn't have a very good policy as far as the immigrants are concerned. There is no place for them, we can't even look after the South African people that are living here.... there is no work. Muizenberg is infested with immigrants, Nigerians and the works and people are so unhappy about it, you know, but there's nothing they can do about it. (Punts Estate).

Among the poor, resentment about migrants was openly expressed regarding competition over job opportunities and scarce resources:

This is the problem, because these people occupy spaces for our people to sell things in Cape Town. But our people are not having a chance to sell, because Cape Town is full of these people, they are everywhere. There are the foreigners from Zaire who ... because if a company wants people to work, then they offer a wage of R50 per day, then our people will say R50 is not enough to cover our basic needs. Then those people from Zaire or wherever will say, no, it is Ok for me. That is the main problem, because it causes us not to get better jobs. So maybe if the government can do something about these people, maybe it can give us a chance to find jobs. (Khayelitsha.2).

An alien comes tomorrow from wherever he is ... this afternoon he's got a cell-phone, tonight he's got a flat, tomorrow he goes with a box of chips, he goes sell. Where did ... you just walk around and you see all the aliens have got cell-phones and they've got a flat. They are all over town, all over, in Muizenberg, the Nigerians... (Lavender Hill).

Discourse on immigration reveal strict notions of rights and obligations that respondents perceive to be attached to citizenship. By failing to implement stricter immigration policies, the government is seen by many respondents to be reneging on its obligations towards citizens and voters.

The problem here in South Africa, there are a lot of foreigners. They take the jobs but they don't give any votes. The people who put the votes for the government are the people who are suffering and the people who are benefiting from the government are the ones who come from outside South Africa, the ones who are not born here in South Africa. The foreigners come here and they commit crime. I appeal to the government to tighten the law. (Jo Slovo Park.2).

These representations of Africa and Africans implicitly reveal 'expressions of personal and national identity and are a reflection of the local political context' to use an argument articulated by Nyamnjoh (2002: 632) in another context. Through the construction of a 'Them', an 'Us' is defined, revealing a shared discourse among residents which points to a level identification with South Africa, an identity which is rooted in perceived rights and entitlements attached to citizenship.

#### 6.4. Conclusion

This chapter presented identities *in situ*, i.e. identities narrated 'into being' by urban residents on the basis of their living experience within their suburbs, their city and their country. Meaning is derived from residents' perceptions and interpretations of the changing context in which they live – of what they know or think they know, on the basis of which they infer representations and categorisations of their social world.

Theoretical premises to this thesis argued that identities were neither singular, nor immutable but a matter of social context. As such, the identities individuals construct to make sense of their lives and environment are multiple and fluid. Secondly the thesis has argued that identities could not be understood as a mere matter of individual agency and subjectivity; they may be experienced as the result of forced circumstances, of collective imposition or of necessary commitment. Accordingly, identities are constructed within a framework of both autonomous choices and structural forces – be these articulated within

the discursive and symbolic arena, or the material world. Thirdly and deeply interconnected with the preceding point, a distinction in the study of identities is often made between aesthetic/symbolic/emotional and instrumental/utilitarian communities; between abstract attachments and functional attachments; between the politics of dignity and the politics of interest.

Narratives explored above reflect such complexities and the illusiveness of the concept of identity. Furthermore, variations in discourse express the contradictedness, situatedness and multiplicity of the identities residents of Cape Town build for themselves. Apparent lack of cohesion of residents' discourses emerges as individuals raise different issues, concerns, and subsequent forms of identification when the scales within which they situate themselves vary, from their local affiliation to city-wide perceptions to the national and continental arenas.

There is little doubt that changes have occurred in the politics of identity of South African urban citizens, from when access to political as well as socio-economic opportunities and to urban space were constructed around race in the apartheid period. New experiences have promoted the emergence of new interests, and new allegiances. Simultaneously, the social categories of race, class, religion, and language take on different meanings, depending on the scale at which discourse occurs, and according to focus groups. This variety of meanings reveals identities which function in both the symbolic and instrumental worlds. While the politics of interest emerges clearly in discussions with middle class and poor residents, and seems to generate shared concerns and discourses, its link to collective mobilisation remains unclear at both local and national levels. In this regard, context and situation are significant for whether class interconnects with other affiliations – be they racial or infra-racial in nature. While faith is experienced by some as the basis for sociability within neighbourhood, and for cultural reproduction, for others, religious institutions organise social support and conditions solidarity in a context of state failure. Where language is a matter of choice for some, it is experienced as a stigmatised and imposed identity by others. Finally, while race tends to express material grievances, cultural meanings associated with race have not totally disappeared from the South African lingo, be it in order to articulate expressions of ontological differences, or to (re)claim indigenusness to the Western Cape province. Yet, resistance to internalisation of 'a discourse from above', and in particular that of an African Renaissance, reveal the

situatedness of race identification and the absence of a continental loyalty it may generates under certain circumstances.

The thesis set out to investigate changing identities in the city of Cape Town against the backdrop of two contextual parameters: a post-apartheid order marked by growing socio-economic polarisations, a policy of multiculturalism, and new national metaphors; a urban context, characterised by socio-economic and cultural developments which have been associated with the dual city model. The conclusion will reflect on the impact of these changes on South African identities.

## 7. Conclusion

What emerges clearly from the preceding chapter is that the ‘context’ within which identity discourse occurs dictates the content of identification. It isn’t therefore sufficient to speak of identities as a matter of class vs. race, ethnicity, religion or language: the ‘when’, ‘how’ and ‘to what purpose’ matter as much as the ‘what’ of identity construction. This largely explains the two entry points which were used in Chapter 6 to interpret commonalities and variations in discourses in this thesis: this chapter rendered residents’ narratives in subsections organised around the ‘scale’ of discourse (neighbourhood/interpersonal; urban; national and continental) and the traditional categories of race, class, culture and nation which were drawn upon by urban residents, at various times, to interpret their social world. Both these entry points serve to illuminate the landscape of identification in post-apartheid South Africa. In this regard, while race, class, and culture continue to be of meaning to residents of Cape Town, the meanings attached to these categories not only have changed over the past 20 years, but vary significantly when used within the interpersonal and political spheres and various spatial settings.

The conclusion to this thesis will consider the various identities that scholars have found (as explored in Chapter 3), at various times, to be primary among the citizenry in the light of the empirical evidence gathered from focus group narratives. Separate consideration will be given to identities related to race, class and space; to culture, language and religion; and to national sentiment – three of the major clusters of issues that been subjected at different scales to considerable scholarly attention in urban South Africa recently.

### *On race, class and space*

De Klerk argued in the aftermath of South Africa’s transition from apartheid to democracy that ‘the path to transition was not the symptom of any Damascene conversion’ (quoted by Waldmeir, 1997: 111). Racial and racist assumptions continue to permeate urban residents’ narratives and to serve to differentiate between an ‘Us’ and a ‘Them’. Simultaneously, racial meaning plays out differently depending on whether discourse takes place at neighbourhood, national or continental level, denoting the situational and instrumental nature of such identification.

At neighbourhood level, narratives seem to confirm Hyslop's argument on the transformation of these residents from the 1970s onward from 'race warriors to class warriors' (2000: 40) once the potential breakdown of class boundaries at neighbourhood level became more threatening than the prospect of residential desegregation. In post-apartheid Cape Town, those for whom choice is available in terms of both residence and identity, meaning is increasingly constructed around shared class identities and multi-racial social networks. As citizens start sharing neighbourhoods, schools and workplaces, belief in the existence of deep differences with others fades away. Residents adhere to global middle class values, defined by 'international norms of urban consumption and culture' (Beall, Crankshaw and Parnell, 2002: 7) and a shared 'lifestyle', a popular word in the middle class lingo. For these residents, 'the colour of one's money [has replaced] skin colour as the currency of showy success' (Mbembe and Nuttall, 2004: 359). Simultaneously, bonds inherited from apartheid lose significance once cut from their historical context and former social networks dilute.

Furthermore, middle class residents of Cape Town share an attachment to place, from which sentiments of pride are clearly derived, which seems to confirm Marcuse's argument that neighbourhood has become more than a source of security, that it has become a source of identity, a definition of who a person is and where she or he belongs in society (1994). One of the oldest debates in urban sociology, argues Castells, 'refers to the loss of community as a result of urbanisation first, and of suburbanisation later.... People socialise and interact in their local environment, be it in the village, in the city, or in the suburb, and they build social networks among their neighbours.... [They] resist the process of individualisation and social atomisation and tend to cluster in community organisations that, over time, generate a feeling of belonging and ultimately, in many cases, a communal identity' (1997: 60). For the middle class residents interviewed during this research, neighbourhood emerges indeed as more than a place in which to live or invest. A close-knit community and a sense of neighbourliness are sought out as residents appear to participate actively in the institutions of the neighbourhood: church or mosque, sport clubs, and neighbourhood watch.

These residents join together around shared interests and concerns, in order to maintain the homogenous class character of their suburbs, and to keep outsiders and undesirables out – the criminals and the squatters swept together under the euphemistic expression of 'the



elements'. While these communities may be deemed inclusive, at least in racial terms, since money is the main access point, and able to foster horizontal social capital, they are also exclusionary. Identities which emerge from these residents' narratives conform to the pattern of defensive identities highlighted by Castells (1997), built around the strict conservation of their space and immediate environment, leading to a NIMBY syndrome directed against anything conceptualised as remotely threatening to the homogeneity of the suburb and its inhabitants. Social capital (the social bonds and norms of reciprocity which are embedded in networks of civic engagement (Putnam, 2000)) which emerges in these communities is 'turned inwardly' (Beall *et al.*, 2002), dissociated to a large extent from local state activities or city-wide concerns.

It is often argued that racial identification among the poor is 'embedded in and made material through everyday practice' (Oldfield, 2004), and reproduced in 'the thick social ties and patronage networks' (Robins, 2006) upon which these residents rely. While it is true that social networks and institutions remain racially segregated within marginalised areas of the Cape Flats, dignity as well as solidarity or social capital appears to be found elsewhere, in neighbourhood micro-institutions and local organisations that are typically infra-racial and infra-ethnic. Growing class divides within communities means that race matters less than the situations of exclusion which create new sources of bonding (Castells, 1997). The neighbourhood, which is a source of identity and homogeneity for middle class residents, emerges as a fragmented entity, both spatially and socially, in the narratives of the poor. Fights between gangs over 'turf' – the spatial boundaries of criminal activities – encroach on both private and public areas of the townships, dividing the neighbourhood in spaces to frequent and spaces to avoid. In a context of increased poverty, unemployment, social exclusion and stigma, social trust and dignity are hard to find. The story which seems to emerge in the narratives of these marginalised residents of Cape Town is one of individuation, segmentation and failed attempts at organising against council evictions and gangs' activities.

It has been argued that the 'aspirations of the poor and of the rich differ widely. Those with little power are less able to choose and shape the institutions within, and through which, they live. People find ways of opting out and seeking what they need on their own account, when neglected by government or failed by policy' (Beall *et al.*, 2002: 9). Violence, crime and 'uncivil' activities are strategies said to be available to powerless individuals in their

quest for resources. According to Khosa for instance ‘individuals deprived of resources and citizenship are likely to opt for other forms of identity affiliations ... the poor have more to gain than lose in engaging in criminal practices or other anti-social behaviours’ (1999: 292, my translation). In Cape Town, analysts have argued that gangs constitute a strategy of both economic survival and of dignity for the marginalised male youth. Gangs provide meaning on the basis of a history/mythology started with prison gangs (Steinberg, 2004), a specific language, laws and rites of passage and transgression, as well as various symbols, which are often imported, along with the names of the various gangs, from the American ‘gangsta’ rap culture (Tupac, the East Coast/West Coast feud). These symbols are then used to mark gang territories, as graffiti on the walls of the courts highlight. The fact that there are an estimated 100 000 members and 137 gangs on the Cape Flats, and the public support displayed toward gang leaders in the marches they organised against PAGAD in the late 1990s have led some researchers to argue that gangs have largely replaced council authority and filled the vacuum left by the lack of jobs, social services and recreation facilities in these areas. Gangs, according to Standing, provide ‘the rudiments of an alternative welfare system’ and operate a form of ‘organised counter-government’ during an era in which the state is ‘retreating’ from certain areas of society (2003: 14-15).

It is clear in the narratives gathered in this research that the state is not perceived as a resource by the poor. While these urban residents feel neglected by their local institutions, traces of the legacy of the activism which characterised the fight against apartheid are hard to find. While a level of understanding towards crime and vigilante reactions has been expressed, and age-old cohabitation with gangs stated, residents regard themselves first and foremost as potential victims in the crossfire between gangs. No support towards these organisations or glorification of their leaders were expressed. Spiritual relief, respect and dignity as well as social support appear to be found in religious institutions, which may be the only source of positive identification available to the residents interviewed, a situation which contrasts sharply with the numerous sources of positive affiliation which emerged in middle class residents’ narratives. The poor’s dependence on religious institutions, both emotionally and materially, seems to translate into practices of ‘church-shopping’ which were mentioned a number of times.

While it appears that the poor are able to make identity choices beyond inherited and imposed patterns of identification within the areas which they inhabit, when access to jobs

and services in the city of Cape Town is discussed, race becomes an essential source of differentiation and categorisation. The perception that there exists racialised privileged access to resources such as jobs and public goods (services and housing) must be understood in the context of former Coloured Labour Preference Policy in the province, continued segmentation of the low-wage sector, recent cuts in the levels of welfare and education spending which previously favoured coloureds over blacks, and deracialisation of the waiting lists of accommodation in public housing estates (Lohnert *et al.*, 1998). Meanings attached to race under these circumstances are based on fears, rather than pride. They derive from situations of extreme social inequality, which lead in turn to the need for scapegoating the Other, confirming Todorov's argument that it is 'when one lacks positive elements to build his or her identity upon ... (that) the temptation is to resort to negative elements and one's identity is then constructed around the rejection of the "other"' (Todorov, 1996: 12).

#### *On culture, language and religion*

While discourse pointing to the 'primordial battles over sacred turf' (Appleby, 2003: 3) is scarce in South Africa, religion remains an important source of local affiliation for urban residents. It influences the selection of area of residence for middle class residents, offers an entry point to the community and the basis for sociability within neighbourhood. At local level, this identity is sometimes articulated in exclusionary terms, especially when narratives mix class, race and religious registers.

Discourse on religion in the national context reflects sentiments of religious accommodation. The South African state is either conceived of as a secular state or a pluri-religious state which respects the multi-religiosity of its citizenry. In this regard, an environment promoting respect for, rather than mere tolerance of, religious beliefs and practices appears to have been established in post-apartheid South Africa, which compares positively to other countries according to respondents. Feelings of religious discrimination were not expressed, either by those whose faith had been declared state religion under apartheid or by those whose beliefs were deemed 'primitive'. Perhaps the most telling element regarding the absence of theocentric views (i.e. perceptions rooted in orthodox doctrines and practices posited in opposition to other belief systems or to secular values) among respondents was the lack of support or even of sympathy for groupings which have

been associated with religious fundamentalism as defined by the focus groups, such the APK (Afrikaans Protestant Church), the Boeremag, or Pagad. Mobilisation on these issues seems unlikely, all the more so that the sentiments of religious leaders interviewed during another research project (Bekker and Leildé, 2004a) express little dissatisfaction with government's policy and practice, thereby coinciding with those of rank-and-file citizens.

While language emerges as an important source of meaning at neighbourhood level, especially for Afrikaans-speaking white middle class residents, discourse on language in the South African context expresses tolerance towards multilingualism. While a number of respondents have palliated the decrease of programmes in Afrikaans on South African public TV channels through access to private channels such as Kyknet on DSTV, many appear to adopt a pragmatic attitude toward language. In this regard acceptance of English as the language of the business sphere seems widespread.

For the poor, language matters when it is perceived to be a source of discrimination on the job market, as in the case of Xhosa-speakers in Cape Town. Such feelings are not reproduced at country level where 'there is a possibility that speaking Xhosa can count in your favour' in the word of a respondent in Jo Slovo Park. Multilingualism and code switching are positive characteristics associated with Johannesburg by Xhosa-speakers while similar code-switching, and even mother-tongue shift within families, from Afrikaans to English, constitutes a strategy associated with access to economic opportunities by a number of marginalised coloured citizens.

The politics of symbolic cultural accommodation seems to be of particular importance to middle class residents of Cape Town, which contradicts to a degree the representation of the 'generic citizen of postcolonial South Africa [as] the rights-bearing individual typically urban and cosmopolitan' (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2004: 3). Simultaneously, the likelihood of cultural extra-constitutional claims appears slim both because cultural affiliations have been domesticated and are increasingly lived out in the private domain, and because cultural minorities have been accommodated in the new South African order. Indeed,

'It would appear that multiculturalism both as a policy and an outcome has had a measure of success in the new South Africa.... Minority groups demanding

recognition of their identity, and accommodation of their cultural differences continue to use civil society institutions to challenge the state in search of such identities and of accommodation. In urban-industrial South Africa and much of commercial agriculture, the new institutions of state and of corporatism have provided policies the implementation of which have accommodated both the new and the old elite, particularly in terms of cultural differences. Neither need to mobilise rank-and-file on ethnic terms' (Bekker and Leildé, 2004b).

### *On South Africanism*

National sentiments are difficult to assess on the basis of the narratives gathered during this research, not the least because the brunt of residents' accounts focuses on the local context, on meanings of pride or exclusion derived from place. Beyond the sentiments of cultural accommodation which have been expressed by middle class residents, what emerges regarding the post-apartheid order is a discourse focused on access to material resources. Grievances in South Africa are articulated within the economic sphere by both middle class white residents and marginalised coloured citizens who convey feelings of discrimination on the job market. While it promotes the reproduction of racial categorisations, the connection between this process of categorisation and social action remains tenuous, beyond the possibility of emigration which has been stated as an unpalatable option by a number of respondents. Conversely, the 'politics of interests' fosters feelings of pride in the country and loyalty toward its government among upwardly mobile residents, i.e. those for whom life has changed in post-apartheid South Africa and identity has become a matter of choice. For the remaining section of the citizenry, the impoverished Xhosa-speaker residents of Cape Town, social exclusion is interpreted in the local context and discourse on South Africa is often limited.

Perhaps the best indicator of residents' sentiments toward their country – and of the situatedness of racial identification – can be found in discourse, shared by all urban citizens, regarding Africa and its inhabitants. Once South Africa (re)-emerged as a legitimate actor on both African and international forums, the 'Africanisation' of the country became a fundamental element in the South African state's policy and projected foreign image. It underpinned the African Renaissance project initiated by President Mbeki, a project aimed at political, economic and cultural renewal of the continent as it

enters the twenty-first century. While it has been argued that default of identification with the continent is a consequence of apartheid's propaganda and subsequent ignorance of other African countries among the population, absence of internalisation of an overarching African identity emerges as a choice rationalised in instrumental terms by residents. It is rejected on the basis of perceived negative impact such identification may have on the national economy and the labour market. In this sense, a common belief in South African exceptionalism and default of solidarity with other African countries and with African immigrants settled in South Africa reflect significant identification with rights derived from South African citizenship.

It seems appropriate to conclude this thesis with a reflection on the notion of Capetonian identity. Cape Town emerges in residents' narratives as a 'dual city', a city where class divides inscribe themselves into both space and identities, and where the urban contract is of little meaning to city residents (Mollenkopf and Castells, 1991). While the middle class takes pride in the life-style choices they are able to make in Cape Town, and in their residential and career opportunities, the poor express feelings of frustrations towards their exclusion from economic opportunities and consequent social stigmatisation. The experience of 'citiness' or urbanity for these residents is one of separation from the city, or one drawn from recollections of life in District Six. Accordingly, sentiments expressing, and supporting, social and spatial distance or 'containment' between middle class and poor residents are widespread. Such sentiments find expression in the increase of applications for access control on Cape Town's streets<sup>30</sup>, a fairly new phenomenon in this city in comparison to Johannesburg, and support expressed by middle class residents towards initiatives taken to control vagrancy and informality within the CBD. Living in Cape Town clearly carries very different meanings for middle class and poor residents, and the gap between the worlds of the townships and of the suburbs does not appear to be decreasing, diminishing further the chance that urban residents will develop a sense of shared space and identity. City-wide reconstruction and development in this context seems an uphill task, bounded by strong localised interests and the absence of city wide social capital, a situation at odds with the lofty post-apartheid ideals of 'one city for all'. Simultaneously, further segmentation along cultural lines contributes to an urban space where linguistic and

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<sup>30</sup> 'Privatisation of security must be tackled before it hits development', K. Mayhew, Business Day, 30 April 2003.

religious communal affiliations cut across race and class cleavages, thereby deflecting the potential for mobilisation and conflict inscribed in these cleavages.

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### **Methodology**

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