CHAPTER SIX

The construction, meaning and negotiation of ethnic identities in KwaZulu-Natal

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Introduction and background

In attempting to examine how ethnic identities are constructed, negotiated and maintained in any given context, it is important to define satisfactorily what is meant by ethnicity as a conceptual tool for the dismantling and understanding of societies. Ethnicity has provided ways of talking about a group of people without being precise about the criteria used to identify that group. For all its vagueness, in this paper, ethnicity refers to the way individuals identify themselves, or are identified by others, collectively, and act according to those identities. What remains unclear in social science studies is the nature of the material that holds these identities together; that is, what constitutes the ties that underlie ethnic groups, and how these ties work to include and exclude people from group membership. This paper is an examination of the ties that underscore Zulu identity in KwaZulu-Natal, as well as ways in which these ties are used to legitimise certain practices located in the social and political context of a changing South Africa.

I begin by examining, in general, the development of Zulu identity and the different ties of identification generally used to define Zulus. I examine the manner in which Zulu identity intersects with formal politics, encompassing the actions of political parties and other interest groups in competition for access to power in a post-apartheid state, and interpersonal politics, that is, the negotiation of relations of power and solidarity between individuals in interaction. The last part of the chapter presents a case study of youth experiences in the townships that surround the city of Durban in KwaZulu-Natal. The purpose of this case study is twofold.

The first is to demonstrate how people's sense of identity shifts despite legitimised group ties, and that the complexity of identity construction is a result of the juxtaposition of criteria used to define individuals and groups. In this way, I demonstrate sources and consequences of the processes and practices that violate normalised ways of constructing and negotiating ethnic identities. The second purpose is to illustrate that, while the doctrines of political organisations do have great

impact on people's lives, who people experience themselves to be cannot be dictated from above.

Issues discussed in the second part of this paper are substantiated by data collected in 1993 on youth groups from different townships in Durban. The data was collected over a period of eight months with a variety of participants who can be arranged into compressed circles by degree of acquaintance. From these townships, I developed about ten key close relationships with people who made up the first circle and whom I refer to as key participants. The second circle was made up of twenty or more people with whom I had regular relations. The data in this paper was drawn from the first circle of participants. The data varied from formal and recorded interviews and discussions, to brief comments people made regarding what was going on in the region at that time.

Specifically, I was interested in the way people spoke about the political conflict that engulfed KwaZulu-Natal during this period and especially how they situated themselves in the conflict. In this regard, I was interested in statements that indexed or displayed the identity of either speaker or others she/he knew. In addition to statements of identity, I observed everyday practices of the key informants, and of other people close to them. In these observations, I looked specifically at behaviour, particularly practices of language use and how these positioned people within the categories Zulu, Inkatha, or ANC whose meanings are explained in the following section. I also looked at social/cultural practices, and again the manner these positioned people within the three categories of Zulu, Inkatha and ANC.

In most of these observations, I asked people who were involved in these practices to clarify why they were involved in them and how such practices positioned them in the then ongoing struggle. In addition, I observed public political activities, specifically those of the ANC, which helped to inform me of the contradictions between what people said they did and their actual practices.

There is a vast amount of literature that analyses Zulu history, particularly the history of Shaka and the Zulu kingdom (see for example, Marks and Atmore, 1980; Marks and Rathbone, 1982; and Guy, 1979, 1980). Recently, some research and ideas have even led to a revision of the *Mfecane* story, and thus also of the relative 'greatness' of Shaka (see, for example, Cobbing 1993).

These resources are important for a conceptualisation of some of the historical issues addressed in this paper. Given space limitations, however, I have decided to focus more on the contemporary situation than the historical background to the events discussed here.
In cases where Zulu history is discussed, I have relied upon my own knowledge of this history which I learnt in a variety of ways and from a variety of sources while growing up in Zulu society. Similarly, discussions about Zulu social and cultural practices, as well as practices of political parties

stem from my own experiences and observation before, during and after data collection. The discussion in this paper is designed to stand as an illustration, as opposed to a model, of cultural resistance and group identification in changing political societies.

I am limited here to a comparison within a few townships in South Africa. While broader generalisations require broader bases of comparison, I hope that the framework I provide might be useful for future undertakings on youth, culture, and identity construction in South Africa and elsewhere.

1. Ethnicity and the politics of identity in KwaZulu Natal

I see ethnicity in KwaZulu-Natal as a boundary phenomenon constructed within specific and competing discursive sites and with competing and conflicting practices. One site where the ethnic boundary is constructed is within the political arena, where, as Bell (1975) has noted, ethnicity is now a central factor in the consolidation of groups for strategic purposes. Since ethnic groups are both expressive and instrumental, the ethnicity in KwaZulu-Natal has to be understood as one used to consolidate people in relation to certain political affiliations, at the same time allowing such consolidation to be expressed not just in political terms but in lifestyles and in everyday social practices. The latter are the second site where the ethnic boundary gets constructed. Therefore, the significance of ethnicity in this region, and that of the boundary that safeguards it, is both historic and contemporary, with the latter flowing from the kinds of political and social changes that are taking place. As a result, ethnicity has come to be the focus of group identity, mobilisation and action.

The nature of the ethnic boundary in KwaZulu-Natal has always been constituted of a multiply of markers including history, language and culture and birthplace. But, like all other boundaries and the ethnic markers that they safeguard, this boundary has two sides to it, and the way it is defined on the one side may be different from the way it is defined on the other. Each group selects a differentiating feature. Moreover, even within the boundary, competing notions of how that boundary might be understood and what it means exist. For instance, the history of the political consolidation of the Zulu kingdom under Shaka is one that is full of complexities and ambiguities that individuals who want to use history as a differentiating feature have to deal with. First, within the Zulu group, there are groups that were actually conquered by the Zulu under Shaka and were then consolidated into the Zulu Kingdom. Currently, the Zulu people are presented by the state, the Zulu monarchy, and some African nationalist leaders as a unified group, which, in itself, suppresses

or ignores the presentation of the history of other groups in KwaZulu-Natal (and elsewhere) who were dominated and destroyed by the Zulu warriors. What this means is that history as a differentiating marker is complex. As Barth (1969) points out, group boundaries are constructed and at the same time mystified. This paper, then, is an examination of ways in which youth dealt with the complexity of this ethnic boundary, as well as a demonstration of how ethnic identities are not static but change over time, depending on political and other consequences.

Zulu identity in KwaZulu-Natal centred around four criteria of identification: birthplace, descent, language, and history. In addition to these criteria, what I will call 'conventionalised' ways of identification, the familiar and understood ways of behaviour, existed. Conventional ways of being included the practice of *hlonipha* (literally, to respect) and of *ukukhonza* (literally, to worship) which are customarily associated with Zulu people. Operating alongside, and often in conflict with, these Zulu cultural practices were those commonly associated with western modernisation and industrialisation. The association of industrialisation with the urban sectors of the community, and with modernity and economic progress, resulted in Zulu cultural practices being associated with the rural areas, poverty and backwardness, creating a rural-urban or modern-backward dichotomy, which added complexity to an already diverse setting.

Moreover, the four criteria of identification, practices associated with industrialisation and western modernity, and the Zulu cultural practices were given meaning in and by practices in formal politics, which in turn created difficulty for individuals to engage in either set of practices without assuming or being linked to existing political organisations.

In addition, we know that the social identity bestowed on different racial groups in South Africa by the Nationalist government, which captured state power in 1948, was not acceptable to those groups. The Nationalist Party government's philosophy of apartheid was premised upon the nationalist belief that racial, linguistic, and cultural differences should be fundamental organising principles in society. According to apartheid, different types of people should be kept separate. Each 'group' should have its own national territory and infrastructure including schools, government, media, and cultural bodies. Apartheid policy divided South Africa into ten black 'nations' and three non-black nations. In short, since whites constituted a minority of South Africa's population, the most effective way to rule was to prevent the 75% black-African population from cohering into a unified group. A key means of achieving this was an active state-controlled and sponsored encouragement of African tribalism in South Africa.

Thus, the focal characteristic of apartheid was the creation of tribal political 'Bantustans', later known as homelands, each tied to a separate black 'nation' with its own language and bureaucratic

structure. All this was met with resistance from black political groups, and although the structures of apartheid were implemented, their implementation was not a smooth process (for details on black resistance to apartheid, see for example, Dlamini, 1996).

In the early stages of the struggle for socio-political independence, it was possible to define the struggle as one of blacks against whites, and to ignore, to a large extent, what being black actually meant. As the struggle intensified, and as it became important to define the character of the post-apartheid state, the groups that mobilised for action were drawn from a different grid. With the whites in the background, fuelling divisions between anti-apartheid groups with the hope of prolonging the life of apartheid, the struggle focused on conflict between Zulu and Xhosa people, or between the African National Congress (ANC) and Inkatha. But who exactly was involved in this conflict, and what were the criteria used to identify them?

Simplistically, it could be said that the conflict was between ANC and Inkatha supporters, the two leading political parties in the region, and involved youths who were believed to make up the majority of ANC followers in KwaZulu-Natal, and adults, who, it was believed, constituted the majority of Inkatha membership. The ANC and Inkatha differed in the strategies they employed to fight against white domination. This difference in strategies became increasingly articulated in the last stages of apartheid and, therefore, in defining the character of a post-apartheid state. To the ANC, a post-apartheid state meant a South Africa that realised equality for all groups, a 'non-racial' democratic state. Inkatha, however, envisioned a post-apartheid state organised according to ethnic constituencies, accommodating group rights and group vetoes.

For Inkatha, a post-apartheid state organised around ethnic constituencies ensured that the Zulus maintained control over the resources that they were allocated under the apartheid state through the KwaZulu homeland. As Lowe (1991, p. 81) notes: 'big capitalists and the state even now reward Inkatha's aspirant accumulators for their pro-capitalist stance with access to capital and joint investment schemes; ethno-regionalism would also allow Inkatha's chiefs to retain their neo-traditional authoritarian powers and means of accumulation'.

To the ANC, however, such a state would be a duplication of apartheid methods of governing which would divide people into racial/ethnic groups. To mobilise in the region, therefore, the ANC had to convince the Zulus that their rights both as Zulus and as South Africans would not be eroded if it came to power. Inkatha, on the other hand, went on a mission to paint the ANC as anti-Zulu, an agent of the Xhosa bent on the genocide of the Zulu.

The conflict centred around differences between ethnic politics perpetuated by Inkatha, as opposed to a pluralistic state politics of the ANC, in the struggle against apartheid and for control

over post-apartheid South Africa. It is these differences that were played out in the politics of identity in KwaZulu-Natal, influencing the ways individuals positioned themselves politically/linguistically and ethnically, and contributing to the formation of the political economic character of a post apartheid state. It was in such political conflict that, I will argue, the activities of youths can be understood as challenging normalised ways of being Inkatha, Zulu and ANC.

2. Criteria for identifying Zulu identity

2. a) History

There is a very complex history of political consolidation under Shaka, the great Zulu leader, who orchestrated armed resistance to British colonialism in the late 1800s, and the existence of the Zulu kingdom with its successful and continued resistance to colonial domination. As a result of this history, the name and the house of Shaka and the term 'Zulu kingdom' were historical concepts that individual Africans, as well as African politicians, continued to draw on as a way of constructing their own identity and of defining and legitimising their sociopolitical and economic struggles. However, within the use of this historic resource, complexities and ambiguities emerged that individuals had to negotiate.

Initially, the ANC was formed in 1912 as a political organisation looking after the interests of all black South Africans, while Inkatha originated in the 1920s as a cultural movement taking care of Zulu cultural interests that seemed to be depreciated by industrialisation and other socioeconomic changes of the early twentieth century. Although there was no direct nexus between these two organisations, both used the symbols of the Zulu monarchy and its history in legitimising their aims. These organisations also drew on the same membership, and had the same effect of fictionalising KwaZulu-Natal within Zulu nationalist and class-based movements. Later, beginning in the 1950s, the same symbols and histories used to construct the KwaZulu nation gave form to a new relation between the ANC and Inkatha, and were utilised by these organisations in the struggle against apartheid.

From the mid-1960s onwards African nationalist leaders focussed on gaining state recognition for the Zulu monarchy and territorial, political and cultural rights for the Zulu people. These nationalist leaders included Chief Buthelezi, whose leadership of the then Zulu Cultural Movement, Inkatha, was problematically recognised by both the South African state and liberatory organisations such as the ANC. It was to such nationalist leaders that the idea of the KwaZulu homeland appeared

attractive and worth embracing. To pursue and legitimise the existence of KwaZulu and their partici-pation in it, it became important for these leaders to present the Zulu people as a homogeneous and well-defined linguistic and cultural group.

To some extent, these politicians viewed KwaZulu as a strategy for the establishment of democratic political institutions to address the sociopolitical and economic needs of the population in the region, which could not be done within the larger South African structures. But KwaZulu was to respond only to the political and economic needs of the population, not to cultural reconstruction. To these politicians, a specific Zulu identity, centring around the Zulu monarchy and its history, was already in place. The presentation of Zulu history by these African politicians was, in itself, full of contradiction. The first contradiction had to do with the presentation of the Zulu people as a unified group, which ignored or suppressed the presentation of the history of other sub-groups in KwaZulu-Natal (and elsewhere) that were dominated and destroyed by the Zulu warriors. A second contradiction related to the issue of leadership. Were the Zulu king and the Zulu royal house the legitimate representatives of the Zulu people, or were politicians and their organisations - some of whom were closely related to Zulu royalty - the legitimate leaders?

The invention of KwaZulu added complexity in the use of this history by political organisations. First, it resulted in the claim by the KwaZulu authority that they were the legitimate 'owners' of this history. This, in turn, meant that only those political parties such as Inkatha, which supported and were simultaneously supported by KwaZulu, had the legitimate right to use this history. A second complexity arose with regard to individuals who saw themselves as inheritors of this history but did not belong to the KwaZulu supported political organisations, nor to any other political organisation for that matter. Did this mean that these individuals were no longer of Zulu heritage? Since this history was also used to distinguish Zulus from non-Zulus, to which historical group did such individuals belong?

2. b) Language

In addition to history, language was also highly idealised and controversial in KwaZuluNatal. Linguistic practices played a crucial role in the social and political organisation of the region, as well as in strategies for the restructuring of a post-apartheid South Africa. To begin with, Zulu is the native language of almost all black people in this region; that is, it is the language spoken in their homes and the first learned during childhood. In this sense therefore, KwaZulu-Natal has relative linguistic (and cultural) homogeneity. Owing to historical factors, particularly the history of the

consolidation of Southern Africa under Shaka, Zulu is also a language of the broader Southern African region, though it is associated paradoxically with a history of bravery and resistance as well as a history of brutality. It is not surprising, therefore, that most people who migrate to KwaZulu-Natal often come with a certain knowledge of the Zulu language and culture; however, they are viewed by local Zulus as 'not real Zulu', partly because of the way they speak the language and partly because of from where they have migrated. The association of Zulu language with a history of bravery was highly controversial in the late 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s. This controversy was due to the fact that Inkatha had claimed ownership of Zulu symbolic resources, including language, which then made it difficult for other organisations to use the symbols in pursuing their aims. The use of Zulu language (and history), therefore, in particular situations, was conflated with Inkatha politics, resulting in those who used Zulu in particular public spaces being labelled Inkatha members.

Such an interpretation in the use of Zulu was legitimate if applied to areas where the Zulu language was not dominant, but instead operated alongside and in competition with other languages. These were areas such as the Transvaal province and other homelands. In KwaZulu-Natal, however, the conflict that existed set Zulu speakers against Zulu speakers, and yet each side attempted to discredit the other by projecting malevolent pictures of another linguistic group onto its Zulu brothers. Zulus aligned with the ANC were called agents of the Xhosas, and Zulus aligned with Inkatha were seen as agents of apartheid. Taken together with other cultural materials, language accent became important. Those who spoke Zulu with a slang dialect known as 'Tsotsitaal' or 'Johannesburg Zulu' were suspected of being supporters of the ANC, whereas those who spoke Zulu with a 'deep' or 'rural' Zulu accent were marked as Inkatha. In different provinces like the Transvaal, people simply reverted to other languages besides Zulu to avoid being labelled Inkatha. For ANC oriented events, English, as we will see, had long been the language of politics. The use of English then became an ANC idiom, carried across the country even where speakers were linguistically homogeneous. Behind this action was the ANC desire to stay away from ethnic terms; that is from referring to groups of people as Zulus, Xhosas, Tswanas and so on, but rather referring to all groups as South Africans.

Another interpretation of the use of the Zulu language comes from its association with illiteracy and ignorance. This interpretation was historic, and a typical example of how British colonisation and a British education system impacted on language use. With colonialism, African languages were downgraded, and the language of the colonising country, English, became the language of commerce, education and an instrument with which to measure knowledge. In South

Africa, English and Afrikaans were the two official languages. Each of these languages, however, occupied different positions in black communities. In KwaZulu-Natal, as in all other black areas, English was the language of schooling, and from the point of view of the ANC and its affiliates, of politics. Afrikaans, on the other hand, was viewed as the language of oppression, of the Nationalist Party government with its most resented structures of apartheid. In this paper, by contrast, I argue that the dominant perceptions about the use of these languages were not always in tune with individual practices, nor with what operated in groups in the townships. For example, the dominant (ANC) notion that black students hated the use and study of Afrikaans was in contradiction with the practices of the dominant group of ANC students in this study. These students studied and used Afrikaans because it provided them with alternative places of employment.

More importantly, these students saw Afrikaans as a potential language with which to fight international linguistic domination, and argued that other countries would be more inclined to learn Afrikaans than an African language such as Zulu for communicating with South Africa, since these countries considered Afrikaans a white language, and, therefore, a language of power. Moreover, they argued that since Afrikaans is 'indigenous' to South Africa, 'we would be the only ones to tell the world what is wrong or correct Afrikaans, whilst with English, the British are the ones who set the standard'. It is worth noting that this interesting and new viewpoint was not well received by those people still interested in the ANC's version of students' attitude towards Afrikaans. During the data collection period, I was invited by the linguistic department of the University of Natal, Durban campus, to speak about my research and the kinds of data I was getting from the townships. When I spoke about this viewpoint, some white professors expressed disbelief, and demanded to know the names of the schools these students attended, because, as they stated, they themselves had been conducting research in township schools for a number of years, but had never received such responses. It is perhaps my own position as an 'insider' that is to be credited for the nature of data this paper presents. But it is most likely that the sociopolitical changes that were taking place in these townships and in South Africa as a whole were, to borrow from Gal (1988), mirrored in the views that people had about language and also in patterns of language use. To what degree these views were 'realistic', as some of these professors rightly pointed out, is beyond the scope of this paper.

The politics of language and identity, therefore, can be understood to have centred around the different and often contradictory positioning or valuing of languages. First, Zulu was positioned as:

-a 'neutral' local language

-representing ethnic, Inkatha politics and

-indicating ignorance and illiteracy.

Second, English was positioned as:

-colonial

-'neutral' and

-a language of politics and education.

Third, Afrikaans was positioned as:

-apartheid and

-an instrument for accessing economic resources.

The multiple linguistic practices of individuals were hallmarks of the formation of their identities within this highly linguistically politicised region. The use of language then resulted in emergent, rather than conventional, associations with political organisations, and therefore, individuals redefined their lives through language use.

As I will demonstrate in this paper, individuals were not ready to give up their ethnic identities, irrespective of whether or not they were AN C supporters. I argue that ANC Zulu youths were proud of their Zulu heritage, despite its association with Inkatha politics, and that their use of the Zulu language was in many ways in contrast to the ANC political agenda of a non-racial post-apartheid state. This paper, therefore, is an assertion of their linguistic, ethnic/ cultural Zulu autonomy, and is critical of the practices by political organisations aimed at creating political and economic unity out of linguistic, ethnic/ racial disparity. The practices of the youth in this paper demonstrate that Zulus in the ANC did not want to move away from their Zulu cultural/ ethnic identity, and that language and other cultural material were used not to escape the label Zulu, but rather to affirm it.

2 .c) Birthplace and descent

In its essence, this criterion requires one to have been born and raised in KwaZulu-Natal, or to have parents who were born there and had maintained ties with the region in quite undefined ways. Descent refers to the manner in which individuals trace their ancestry to the region, even if they were

not born in KwaZulu-Natal. For instance, it was possible for individuals to use oral history and get information that linked their ancestry to the region of KwaZulu-Natal, and if they desired, to re-establish ties and eventually settle with their tribes through the chiefs. People were, and are, able to trace their Zulu ancestry because the tribes of Zulu-speakers are mostly known by the family or clan names *(izibongo)* of their chiefs. A few exceptions may occur - for example, *amaNgwane* - which embrace the whole tribe.

Tribal names consisting of *izibongo* do not necessarily reflect the actual composition of the tribes (just as the name Zulu did not and still does not reflect the actual composition of those people identified as Zulu). For example, while a tribe might be known as *abakwaMpanza* (Mpanza's people or Mpanza's descendants) there may be twenty or fifty different clan names *(izibongo)* represented within that tribe. What this actually means is that it was Mpanza who at one stage consolidated that tribe and his descendants, and who came to inherit the leadership role. Mpanza, however, would be referred to as the 'father' of these people and be used as proof of the profundity of these people's (Zulu) identity. This was basically the method used to categorise people. Furthermore, the process of *ukukhonza,* 'passing', allowed for people coming from other parts of (southern) Africa to take up Zulu identity through among other things laying claim to the clan name. Integrating into the clan did not result in the loss of one's *isibongo,* which largely reflected the person's place of origin and, often, time of integration. In pre-colonial society, the process of being integrated into Zulu society and keeping your *isibongo ('sP =* singular; *'if' =* plural) did not present a problem, as long as one participated in the cultural practices of that clan and subsequently of the Zulu kingdom. This process of clan-tribal-kingdom association was maintained by colonial powers, and even though its purposes and structures were significantly changed it continues to date.

In addition to the knowledge of one's ancestry, generally, Zulu children are brought up with information about their descent, and the roles their ancestors played in the Zulu wars of conquest and struggle against British colonialism. Thus, phrases like *uwuZulu Zu, uZulu woqobo* (you are Zulu Zu or you are a real Zulu), are commonly used in KwaZulu-Natal to define those Zulu of 'historic' origin from those who migrated into the area, especially after 1879. Thus, those who can trace their ancestors to the period of the Zulu kingdom acquire some high status (Zulu Zu) and, indeed, long descent lines are used not only to demonstrate the profundity of one's Zulu identity but also to disqualify others from claiming full Zulu identity.

Using the aforementioned criteria of identification (history, language, and birthplace/ descent), the state, Inkatha and the ANC were able to construct and formalise certain practices as Zulu, and by so doing, define the Zulu people.

3. State definition

At the beginning of the twentieth century, alternative patterns of government, labour and economic distribution, and land occupation were established and were to be given extreme expression under apartheid. Apartheid brought about massive population removals, racial separation, political exclusion, labour exploitation and concomitant repression of the vast majority of the country's people. Under apartheid, a legal definition of Zulu was constructed. The South African Nationalist Party government instituted a legal structure that divided people along racial lines, and allocated these state-defined groups resources depending on the race to which they belonged. Official segregation under apartheid also included geopolitical areas, allocated along racial and linguistic lines.

KwaZulu was one such geopolitical structure within the apartheid state, created as a home for those people defined by the Nationalist Party government linguistically and racially/ethnically as Zulu and therefore as making up a Zulu 'nation'. The legal definition of Zulu at this time referred to those black people who inhabited the region of KwaZulu-Natal and whose first language was Zulu.

4. Inkatha definition

The creation of KwaZulu, however, added another dimension to this state-defined 'Zulu' identity. It meant that being a black Zulu speaker and resident of KwaZuluNatal was not enough for people to qualify as 'Zulus' in the region. On top of these defining criteria, people had to show allegiance to the KwaZulu 'state' and to Inkatha for them to be identified as Zulus. Showing allegiance to KwaZulu and Inkatha involved, *inter alia,* participating in Inkatha political activities, as well as in Inkatha based/ organised cultural events such as the celebration of Zulu ethnic symbols, including Shaka Day. This added criterion of identification was an important one because it became a prerequisite for individuals who wanted to access those economic resources controlled by KwaZulu homeland authority. The focus of Inkatha-defined Zulu identity was on a politicised ethnic nationalism.

5. ANC definition

Operating alongside this Inkatha defined and controlled 'Zulu' identity was the ANC version of a 'non-racial/ethnic democratic' South Africa. Within this version, politicised ethnic nationalism was viewed as dangerous, a threat to the imagined non-racial South Africa. To the ANC, therefore, Zulu

ethnicity became constructed as an imagined concept: a creation of Inkatha politics. Yet the position that Zulu ethnicity was imagined did not mean that it was not socially real. During this time, ethnicity involved visible local communities based on signals of dialect, kinship, status, religion and magical practices, and the more powerful forces of intimacy produced by fear of poverty and rural isolation. Also, economically, three and a half decades of 'separate development' had created ethnically-based networks of patronage and resource distribution, of coercion and control that were not to disappear with the arrival of democracy. A more pressing issue for the ANC, then, was how to deal with the issue of a politicised ethnicity in the face of an imagined non-racial community, without the binding forces of ethnicity and language.

6. Conventionalised Zulu practices, urban cultures and formal politics

Like the Zulu history and its symbols, Zulu cultural practices became valuable resources for politicians to use in pursuing their goals. Cultural practices that had previously been shared and understood were re-examined, questioned and given new meaning. One such practice was *ukuhlonipha.* In general, *ukuhlonipha* refers to any practice of respect, be it performative or linguistic. Most often, *ukuhlonipha* applies to situations where verbal practices may shift from being respectful to confrontational and argumentative or to practices where a young person has to let a person older than herself know that she is wrong. Usually, in Zulu households, children are brought up with a strong emphasis on *ukuhlonipha abadala* (respect for adults) and on non-confrontational ways of disagreeing with adults.

It is, first, important to note that in Zulu there is no distinction between the concept of 'elderliness', such as in 'an elder sister' (one year older than me), and that of 'adulthood', meaning a mature individual. Both are referred to as *badala* (adults). Thus, in Zulu, a six year old is an adult to a five-year-old, and therefore an element of respect is always expected from the five-year-old, even in cases where the six-rear-old is wrong. If a conversation develops into an argument, it is expected that where two people of different ages are involved, the younger person will back off and the older person's statement will be the last. Being the last to speak does not necessarily mean that the older person is right, but is simply interpreted as *hfonipha.* In fact, what normally happens is that the younger person would remove herself from the scene, as a way of demonstrating her disagreement. Situations where the younger person argues with the adult are interpreted as disrespect *(ukungahlonipht),* no matter how correct the younger person might be.

Political organisations were at the forefront in defining that which was Zulu culture, how it

had to be practised and by whom. For example, questions were asked with regard to how and to whom the conventional Zulu practice of *ukuhlonipha* applied, and, more importantly, what happened to those who refused to embrace this practice. Interpretations and applications of this practice varied in formal politics as well as in interpersonal politics. With regard to formal politics, Inkatha was at the forefront in the practices that legitimised and conventionalised the redefinition of *ukuhfonipha*. To Inkatha, *ukuhfonipha* was a culture that had to be observed by youths with regard to elderly people as well as people in positions of power. The structure of Inkatha was such that people in positions of power were mainly chiefs and their electives. These were the people viewed by Inkatha as deserving of *hfonipha,* and whose views, according to *hfonipha,* could not be openly challenged by any subordinates, whether they were subordinate in terms of age or status. Also, as stated earlier, Inkatha had always maintained a negotiation approach in dealing with the apartheid government, and viewed the leadership of the organisation as the mouthpiece for such negotiations.

This leadership was also above challenges, and those who openly questioned it were reminded of this Zulu practice. Besides Inkatha's stance on respect for authority, in general, Inkatha, as in *ukuhlonipha,* privileged the views of elderly people over those of the young, such that very often the people who were in its top leadership came from anywhere but the youth brigade. In a nutshell, to Inkatha, the practice of *hfonipha* applied to youths first, who were subordinates mainly because of age, and then to those who did not have any status within its structures. Those people were to follow and not question what Inkatha planned, such as celebrating Shaka Day at designated Inkatha spaces. Those who questioned the structuring of Shaka Day celebrations around Inkatha's activities (mainly because they had other ideas about how and where to celebrate) were often told that they were not Zulu because they had questioned authority. They did not have *hlonipha.* Inkatha's interpretation of *ukuhlonipha* was in contradiction to the teachings and the practices of the United Democratic Front (UDF), and later the ANC. There is a particular history here: UDF strategies of the 1980s focussed on acts of defiance against the apartheid state and its structures, including KwaZulu.

It is also important to remember that because of the strategies of defiance and ungovernability, the UDF was able to nurture the militant interests of the youth. For example, the UDF promoted situations whereby youths were actively involved in destroying government property, stopping people who insisted on going to work during UDF/Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) workers' strikes, and many others. In instances where youths stopped workers from going to work, many of the people stopped were in fact adults, who, because of their age, deserved *inhlonipho.* Those youths who forced adults out of their cars and back to their homes were often told by these adults *'anisahlonipht'* (you no longer respect [adults]).

The UDF's strategies of defiance were interpreted by Inkatha to mean that those youths who were in defiance against Inkatha were not only challenging its practices, but Zulu culture itself, which meant that these youths were no longer Zulu in practice. The result of these differences in political practices was that those who did *hlonipha* were associated with Inkatha, and those who did not *hlonipha,* but instead challenged and questioned authority and adults in general, were associated with the UDF. Consequently, since Zulu culture primarily took meaning in Inkatha practices, those who embraced them were labelled Zulu and therefore Inkatha, and those who did not were thought of as UDF/ANC and not Zulu.

Alongside Zulu cultural practices existed practices that were associated with urbanisation and industrialisation, practices that took form as a result of new economic and social conditions. What was important though was not necessarily just any everyday practices, but the ways in which urban practices were evaluated against Zulu cultural practices, and were simultaneously associated with political organisations. For example, *ukungahloniphi,* to disrespect, was basically viewed as an urban practice, not necessarily because this didn't happen in the rural areas, but mainly because disrespectful practices were nourished during the UDF era, whose main base was the townships. The UDF strategies of challenging authority developed into a discourse where youths questioned and verbally confronted not just authority figures such as teachers and politicians but also ordinary adults in the streets. The latter actions were in opposition to the Zulu practice of *ukuhlonipha.*

I have already pointed out that, to Inkatha, youths who engaged in the UDF strategies of defiance against the apartheid state and its structures, and who actively destroyed government property and forced adults out of their cars in attempts to prevent them from going to work during strikes, were thought to be disrespectful. Other general practices of disrespect included the use of language, and the manner in which these uses were connected to the practices of political organisations. For example, the use of Tsotsitaal and not Zulu was considered disrespectful. Tsotsitaal was associated with the urban areas mainly because it is an urban invention, used only by those who align themselves with the urban centres. It is often claimed that in practice Tsotsitaal is a language that is usually used to mark off those considered to be urban from those considered to be rural. The associations of Tsotsitaal are nevertheless wider than this simplistic description since they are tied up with age, gender, network, and ingroup language practices. That is, Tsotsitaal is mainly used by young men who see themselves as belonging to the same social group. It is uncommon for Tsotsitaal to be used in a conversation with adults, this is considered to be a rude practice. Basically, the use of Tsotsitaal in the presence of adults is considered to mean that the speakers view themselves as more urban and therefore better than the (rural) non-Tsotsitaal speaker.

During this era, however, the use of Tsotsitaal also came to be associated with nonZulu speakers. In other words, the use of Tsotsitaal was taken to mean that the speakers did not know Zulu, were not Zulus, and therefore were most likely not to be Inkatha but ANC.

Given this complex interconnection between the 'official' policies and histories that underlined who the Zulu people were and continue to be, how were these boundaries that signified and defined social identities managed, transcended or negotiated? In the following section I use youth groups to illustrate the ambiguous and complex nature of Zulu identity.

7. Youth, identity and politics

7. a) Tsatsatsa

The name *tsatsatsa* was invented by the youths because the name sounded 'cool', and different from any other group names they were aware of, including *amasinyora* or *amampansula,* which were also invented names, but ones that used the Zulu inflectional affixes. For example, the Zulu affix 'nyo' (as in *amasinyora)* is mainly used to construct names that have associations with snake-like-behaviour. Therefore the name *sinyora* illuminates the nature of the practices of this group. The name */sa/sa/sa,* on the other hand, does not indicate any semantic relation nor any grammatical information about the group itself. In fact, I was told that, for a long time, *tsatsatsa* had to explain this term to those who heard it but failed to determine or guess its meaning on the basis of any of the languages they knew. In this paper, I use */sa/sa/sa* to indicate a single group culture, and use *matsatsatsa* to refer to the individuals who made up the group. *'Matsatstatsa'* is actually the term that group members use to refer to themselves. Others referred to them as well by this term. I suspect that the use of 'ma' to prefix *tsatsatsa* was borrowed from the Zulu way of referring to groups of people. For example, in Zulu, you do not talk about the Zulus, Swazis or Vendas to indicate plurality of the people who make up these groups, but rather talk of *amaZulu, amaSwazi* and *amaVenda* respectively. But it is common to find in the written form an's', similar to English, used to indicate plurality. Also, the use of *'ma'* to indicate the 'groupness' of people seems to suggest an absence of a singular state of being. I say this because *'ma'* as a plural prefix is used only with uncountable nouns such as *amanzi,* water, *amasi,* yoghurt, *amafinyila,* mucus, etc (a = the). Thus, it is possible that they used *'ma'-tsatsatsa* simply following the Zulu way of referring to a group of people.

Tsatsatsa are comprised of groups of boys and girls whose lives were affected by the UDF/Inkatha conflict which had erupted into violence by 1985. Many of these individuals had lost

their families and friends during this era, and were living with relatives. The members of the *tsatsatsa* group who participated in this study, at one stage had been involved with the UDF and some had been at the forefront in organising UDF activities. At the time of the study, however, these *tsatsatsa* participants were now members or supporters of the ANC, mainly because the UDF had disbanded. It does appear, however, that before the UDF disbanded, some *tsttsatsa* participants had left the UDF mainly because they did not agree with some of its vigilante practices. The unbanning of the ANC in 1990 rescued those individuals who were already critical of some of the UDF practices but had no other political parties with whom to associate themselves. (I am not sure whether I could say that the formation of *tsatsatsa* served the political 'vacuum' that individuals experienced after leaving the UDF, but before joining the ANC, since it was still in exile).

During the UDF era, most *tsatsatsa* participants had changed schools during their secondary education, and some had even dropped out of school for a number of years but later decided to go back. All *tsatsatsa* participants had a strong commitment to finishing high school and to going into post-secondary education. Therefore, coming from broken families, participation in party politics, and a strong commitment towards education are but three of the features that characterised *matsatsatsa*.

7. b) Tsatsatsa: general social and political practices

Generally speaking, *tsatsatsa* social practices are most often compared with and indeed understood in relation to the social practices of *mampansula.* (Like with the *tsatsatsa* and *matsatsatsa,* I use *mpansula* to refer to the group culture, and *mampansula* to refer to the members who formed the group.) *Mpansula* is a long established culture that dates back to the 1970s, while *tsatsatsa* culture is still emerging, dating to the beginning of the 1990s. In fact, it is safe to state that at the time of the study, to be *mpansula* was somehow outdated and was considered by *matsatsatsa* to be old-fashioned. *Mpansula* presented a version of what it meant to be a black youth in the 1970s, but this version has been challenged by other groups such as *tsatsatsa,* and no longer enjoys the status it had in the 1970s. The distinguishing characteristics between *mampansula* and *matsatsatsa* centre around political ideologies that govern the groups' ways of socialising and of doing (or not doing) politics. The governing philosophy *of tsatsatsa* is that of the ANC, which puts emphasis on the integration of all races and their cultures as a way of resolving or dealing with the changes in society. This philosophy influences the sociocultural practices of *matsatsatsa* which include, for example, physical appearance, ways of spending free time, and so on. *Matsatsatsa* are said to listen to what is

known as cool music such as jazz and some pop, keep their hair short, and engage in what are considered by many people in the townships as unusual recreational activities such as modelling and weight lifting. Such practices indicate a desire on the part of *tsatsatsa* to surpass racial categories which manifested themselves even in activities such as sports. Moreover, *tsatsatsa* recreational activities are marked by the presence of other races, particularly the presence of white people.

This in itself is symbolic of the ANC ideology of cultural integration and 'nonracialism'. Also, *matsatsatsa* are very careful about their physical appearance, especially the way they dress up, and ensure that it is acceptable to society. In fact, *matsatsatsa* are usually dressed in what is considered fashionable at the time, and therefore, as one *tsatsatsa* stated, are seen to adapt to modern times.

The philosophy of *mampansula,* on the other hand, is that of 'black consciousness' based on Steve Biko's teachings of the 1970s. Of these teachings, *mampansula* emphasise the revitalisation of black history and cultures as a way of dealing with changes in society. Basically, *mpansula* is premised on a belief that traditional African practices of pre-capitalism and pre-colonisation are the answer to existing social problems. Precolonial practices are viewed as communal in orientation; that is, there is a belief that in pre-colonial communities Africans were economically dependent on each other, and shared most of what they had. *Mampansula* argue that the revitalisation of these practices will instil in the youths a sense of pride regarding themselves and their history. Who they are is portrayed in practices such as dress and talk. *Mampansula* listen to 'Rasta' (reggae) music, for example, and grow dreadlocks because such practices are defined as black culture. There is also an element of struggle and defiance against certain kinds of state-controlled social practices found among *mpansula*. For example, the state practice to control who and how marijuana is used is not accepted by *mpansula,* who argue that pre-colonial societies owned and used 'dagga' (marijuana) and viewed it as a healing rather than as a poisonous grass.

It is common to find groups of *mpansula* youths sitting and smoking dagga, partly as an act of defiance against the state, and partly as a social habit. Another characteristic that distinguishes *mpansula* from *tsatsatsa* is social space. While it is common to find *matsatsatsa* in predominantly white social spaces forming social relations with people of different races, and to find them involved in white-oriented leisure activities such as weight lifting, *mampansula* social practices are predominantly black. That is, *mampansula* do not socialise across races and avoid those social spaces where whites dominate.

In a nutshell, the differences between *mpansula* and *tsatsatsa* are black space vis-a-vis pluralism; ways of retreating from dominant (white-defined) society, vis-a-vis ways of entering mainstream society. It is important to note further that the dichotomy between these two groups is

not necessarily the past versus the present, but rather two different stances towards the present. For instance, in many cases when I asked if, by saying that *matsatsatsa* adapt to modern times this meant that *mampansula* do not, the response I received from *tsatsatsa* was that they do, but not in any significant way. It is correct to conclude then that the differences between the two are that, on the one hand, *mampansula* (re)present one version of a non-rural, 'hip', sophisticated black person, which gets expressed in politics through the activities of the PAC (pan African Congress) and the BCM (Black Consciousness Movement); while *matsatsatsa,* on the other hand, (re)present an alternative world view of what it means to be a black person (male or female), highly influenced by the ANC ideology of a non-racial South Africa. It is also important to note that it is common to be *mpansula* or *tsatsatsa* without necessarily belonging to the BCM or ANC. All participants involved in this study were members of the ANC.

What further distinguishes *tsatsatsa* from other groups in the townships is a strong sense of purity: a desire to stay away from all kinds of criminal activities. These criminal activities may be politically-motivated, such as forcing people to stay away from work, or economically-oriented, like stealing food. To this extent, *matsatsatsa* are sometimes referred to by their peers as *abangcwele* (the holy ones). Most *tsatsatsa* participants come from economically-deprived families. However, the majority try to assist their families by getting part-time jobs such as working as a packer in a department store or working as a car washer in a garage. These economic practices are in many ways connected to *tsatsatsa* ways of socialising. Through work, *tsatsatsa* participants are able to learn more about and sometimes participate in 'white' culture; to go, for example, to places where the young white boys, with whom they work, go. A boy named Lunga, for example, works as a packer at Pick 'n Pay, one of the largest food shops in the region. At the shop he made friends with one of the supervisors, a white boy called Nick who is almost the same age as him and also works part-time. As Lunga and Nick got to know more about each other, Lunga learnt about an athletic club that Nick belonged to. Lunga had always been interested in weight-lifting, but had never been able to do it because of the lack of sports centres in the townships. After making his interest known, Nick agreed to take Lunga to the club. (It is important to remember here that the late 1980s was also a period in which the state attempted some constitutional reforms. Among these reforms was the opening up of white-designated areas to other races.) When Lunga became a member of the club, he introduced other *tsatsatsa* members also interested in weight-lifting.

That *matsatsatsa* participate in white-defined social areas is not coincidental, as might be suggested by Lunga's case, but is in fact encouraged by *matsatsatsa. Matsatsatsa* encourage each other to establish friendships with their white co-workers, in order to find out other possible areas of

socialisation. Sizwe, for example, plays in a jazz band to which he was introduced by a white co-worker. Thulile often helps her aunt (who is also her guardian) with some of her duties in a white-owned boutique on weekends. Thulile does not get paid by the owner of the boutique but by her aunt, since she is helping with her aunt's duties. For this reason, Thulile does not have to work every weekend: going to the boutique is dependent on the amount of housework she has. The owner of the boutique has a daughter (Zee) who works in similar conditions as Thulile: she is not an employee at the boutique and is not obliged to come to the shop every weekend. Thulile mentioned this white teenager to her *tsatsatsa* friends who immediately encouraged Thulile to establish a friendship with her (which was consequently going to result in a possible friendship with the whole group). However, Thulile was not interested in a friendship with this girl, and had in fact turned down an invitation to go to a lunch-hour music concert with her. Thulile's friends did not support her decision and reminded her of how she had benefited from their own friendships with white co-workers (Thulile had auditioned for and eventually got a role in a white-owned play which performed at the Playhouse, Durban's most popular theatre). Finally, not being able to withstand the pressure she received from her friends, Thulile became friends with Zee. Despite her perception of it as boring, Thulile has maintained her friendship with Zee so as to keep smooth her relationship with *tsatsatsa.* Thulile is highly dependent on *matsatsatsa* for support, and talks of her friends as her family. To explain this dependency, Thulile stated: *Anginamuntu phela lamhlabeni ngaphandle kwabo. Bangabantu abayaziyo impilo yami. U-anti uyasebenza futhi unezinto eziningi ezihlale zisenqondweni yakhe. Angifuni ukumhlupha.* (I do not have anybody, and these are my friends who understand my life. I can talk and be with them at any time. My aunt is always working. She has a lot of things on her mind and I don't want to worry her.)

Matsatsatsa do not participate in township events such as soccer, or watching movies in a community hall, but rather they spend their free time in the newly-opened (multiracial) amusement or recreational places such as 'The Wheel'. The Wheel is a huge casino-like amusement place with movie theatres, restaurants, shops, and games. It is by far the largest of such places located at the heart of Durban, by the beach front, and away from the townships. People of all races come here to spend time, to meet with each other and just to hang out, as most teenagers do. Such places are very attractive to *matsatsatsa,* possibly because they provide opportunity for wider/international interaction and represent the dominant society's values.

The fact that *matsatsatsa* distance themselves from social activities of the townships is in part motivated by the desire to stay clean or uncorrupted. Often, community organised events get polluted and disrupted by criminal and political thuggery. For example, some people attend local

events in townships not because they are interested in soccer or a movie, but because they want to hunt down political enemies. Although soccer groups are supposed to be neutral, their existence makes it possible for people to disguise their agendas and gain popularity as soccer players. As popular soccer players it then becomes easy for these individuals to recruit for certain political organisations. Even weddings and funerals are not immune to politics. In a wedding party, for example, the host would ensure that she or he invites guests of the same political orientation as a way of avoiding confrontation.

Besides the desire to stay clean or uncorrupted by political and criminal elements, *matsatsatsa* are strongly influenced by the AN C vision of a non-racial democratic South Africa, in which South Africans of all races will be able to live together in harmony. But this 'non-racial' vision comes with the baggage of elitism; it means being able to participate in places where whites are, spaces that are therefore considered elitist. The fact that *matsatsatsa* are interested in weight-lifting, for example, speaks to the desire to improve their status, since weight-lifting, like golf and tennis, is considered a white (and by implication), elitist sport.

Matsatsatsa would rather travel a half hour distance to lift weights than jog around the township as other residents might do. This is despite the fact that jogging is considered a safe activity in the townships, especially since people do it in groups. Some people are even known for belonging to identified jogging groups. Asking one *non-tsatsatsa* participant why he thought *tsatsatsa* do not like jogging, he said *'Bacabanga ukuthi yinto yoZufu, buka bangenza ngisho eyabo i club'* (They think it's a Zulu thing [meaning 'backward']. Look, they can even start their own *[tsatsatsa]* jogging club). It is safe, therefore, to say that on the one hand *tsatsatsa* are identified as a group of individuals symbolising 'purity': models of how one can live a respectable life in a period of total chaos, of political and criminal thuggery. On the other hand, *tsatsatsa* (re)present elitism: an idea of what blacks might be if given a chance to be like whites.

8. Specific representations / statements about identity

In addition to what the *tsatsatsa* do, we can also consider specific statements about the ways that these youths view themselves. These statements illuminate the manner in which *tsatsatsa* viewed themselves in relation to Zulu identity, and also in relation to political activities in the township. To begin with, *tsatsatsa* understood themselves as Zulu, and use Zulu history to define and legitimise their practices as Zulu in the making. For example, history as a criterion was used through the calling up of historic names as illustrated by the following example. At the time of data

collection, the South African Congress of Teachers' Union (SACTU), an ANC affiliate, called for a teachers' strike to protest against salaries and general work conditions. At Umganga, the school where the *tsatsatsa* study participants attended, the first week of protest was characterised by, on the one hand, students who were in the last level of high school and were concerned about the time without teaching, and on the other hand, classes with students who saw this as sort of a holiday, a break from teacher authority. Some classes went on as usual, because some teachers did not participate in this strike, either because they were Inkatha and therefore belonged to a different teacher organisation, or because they simply did not agree with the concept of strikes. Students who were in the last grade of high school took turns teaching each other, and also negotiated, together with the principal and with those teachers who did not participate in the strike, to help them with some of the subjects.

In one of the conversations I had with *matsatsatsa* they expressed concern about the strike and the way it was going to hinder their ability to do well in the final examination. Present in this conversation were Muzi, Sizwe, Lunga, Vukani, Thulile and me. Nombuso: *Siniphethe kanjani lesiteleka?* (How is the strike affecting you?) Vukani: *Hayi mina ngithi ziqhudelene Nkombose kababa. Kade sasiteleka basibone kungathi asiphili emakhanda. Ake bazabalaze nabo bezwe ukuthi kunjani.* (I say let them fight each other. We [students] have long been struggling on our own and they [teachers] have been looking at us as though we are crazy. Let them struggle and feel how it is.) (Nkombose kababa, literally, my father's Nkombose, is a name of a bird in a Zulu legendary story about a kind family who used to share even the last of their dinner with strangers. It is said that one day the family had to go without dinner when a bird flew in and demonstrated its magical powers and produced the most delicious dish of *amnii* and *uphuthu* [a traditional dish made out of sour milk and corn flour]. The family named the bird Nkombose, and believed that the bird had been sent by the god of harvest. The story goes on to relate how, because of greed and evil deeds, the family lost this bird, and how it was later retrieved because those who had committed the evil acts repented and were therefore forgiven by the gods. Overall, the phrase *Nkombose kababa* came to symbolise life and survival. So in general this phrase is used to indicate good intent, or the power of the gods, or the relationship between good and evil.)

> Lunga: *Noma kunjalo,yithi esizofa ekugcineni. Sengithi nje kungcono kulokhu ngoba noma ngingafeyila, akungenxa yami.* (Even if that's the case, we are the ones who will eventually suffer. I sometimes console myself by thinking that even if! fail this year, at least it won't be my fault.)

Muzi: *Mina ngisovalweni. Ngithi uma ngicabanga iMaths, kuthi mangikhale. Ngizibona kulotryaka ozayo ngiphinda iclass sengimdala kangaka.* (As for me, I am in fear. Whenever I think of maths, I feel like crying. I picture myself repeating the same class next year, old as I am.)

Sizwe: *Awu mina ngeke ingehlule. Angihlulwa yinto engakhulumi. Ngimfunge uCetshwayo vuke, ngizophasa /onyaka.* (Not me, I won't fail maths. I have never been defeated by anything that doesn't talk. [This is a Zulu saying which expresses the power of individuals over non-linguistic objects, or, precisely, over non-living things]. I swear in the name of Cetshwayo, I will pass this year [literal translation: Cetshwayo will rise from the dead, if I do not pass this year].)

Thulile: *Kusho ukuthi eyangonyaka odlule i-Maths yayinomlomo, yikho nje wayifeyila?* (Does this mean that last year's maths could speak and that's why you failed it?) We all laughed.

Sizwe: *Ngiyanibona nje nina nicabanga ukuthi ngiyadlala. Ngiwuzulu mina, angihlulwa lutho. Nomangingayifeila in maths, kodwa ngizophasa lonyaka.* (I see. You think I am joking. I am Zulu, nothing defeats me. Even if I fail maths, I will not fail the entire exam).

Sizwe's highlighted statements above indicate that to swear in the name of Cetshwayo is to vow to do the right, impossible, heroic and valued thing. Yet the victory won by the Zulu under Cetshwayo in 1879 was short-lived as the British staged another battle of Ulundi in which they claimed military victory and exiled Cetshwayo. But *tsatsatsa* participants do not talk about this battle because it is of no significance to them, and after all, as they -reminded me, *'leyompi eyalelandela i-Sandlwana yayekwa ngoba uZulu ethembiswa izwe,hayi ngoba ehluleka'* (the peace that followed Ulundi was only attained by promising the Zulu people that they would retain possession of their land if they laid down their arms).

Tsatsatsa also spoke about their birthplaces to define themselves as Zulu or not Zulu. For example, in classroom discussions, *tsatsatsa* participants, when directly asked if they are Zulu, unanimously used the birthplace to identify themselves as Zulu. In the other informal discussions they shifted tacitly to other criteria of identity or to a different identity. In one of our classroom discussions about the Zulu language, I asked the question: why is it that Zulu people do not learn Sotho even when they work in places such as Johannesburg where Sotho is dominant? The discussion started in English, but later developed in Zulu. Vukani was first to respond to this question (this discussion was recorded and the English language mistakes are those of the speakers):

Vukani: Zulus don't want to learn it because they think they are big.

Muzi: Not that they think, *sibakhule vc/e. Asifuni ukukhuluma njengamazizimbane.* (Not that they think, we are real big. We don't want to speak like *mazizimbane* [a term that implies that someone is not real human/is animal like].)

Some people in the class laugh.

Vukani: *uyabona, abantu abafananani abahambe beshaya abantu ngezagila ngo nithi bangamazizimbane.* (You see, it's people like you who go around beating people up with knobkerries because you say they are *mazizimbane.)*

Nombuso: *Awusitshele Zethu. AmaZulu ababizelani abantu ngamazizimbane.* (Tell us Zethu, why do Zulu people call non-Zulus *amazizimbane* [I directed this question to her because she was among those who had laughed at Muzi's statement] .)

Zethu: *Phedula MuZi. Wuwe loqale lendaba yamazizimbane.* (Respond Muzi. You are the one who started this whole *mazizimbane* issue.)

Muzi: *(ecabanga) Hayi angazi. Yinto nje yoZulu leyo. Mina abazali bami baqhamuka eSwazini. Angizazi ei/trye izinto zoZulu.* ([Thoughtfully] I don't really know. That's just something that's for Zulus. I don't know because my parents migrated from Swaziland. So I don't know such Zulu things. [But Muzi, who is *tsatsatsa,* had earlier identified himself as Zulu because, as he said, 'I speak Zulul) Nhlanhla: *Awusho Mbongi Zulu omkhulu.* (Tell us Mbongi, the [real] Zulu. [Mbongi was well known in the school because of his ability to recite the praise songs of the Zulu kings from Shaka to the present king. He became popular during the school arts week where students chose projects to present to the entire school. In this class, the students had decided to perform the Zulu drama *'ukufa kukaShaka'* [the death of Shaka] which was also part of their syllabus. Mbongi had assumed the role of Shaka's praise singer known in Zulu as *imbongi.)*

Mbongi: *Hqyi nami angizai/ izinto zoZulu ngoba umawami owaseMalawi. Kusho ukuthi ngiwumZulu nganxatrye ngiwumMalawi.* (No, I do not know Zulu things because my mother is Malawian. This means I am partly Malawian and partly Zulu.)

In earlier discussions, some of these youths had identified themselves as Zulu because of their knowledge of the Zulu language, even though some later mentioned that at home they used a different language, usually that of the place of their parents' origin. Some were also known as Zulu because of their behaviour, such as Mbongi, in the above example. However, in discussions that

were critical of Zulu social practices, these young people categorically refused to be identified as Zulu, and uttered statements like: 'my parents came from Swaziland' or, 'my father is Zulu but my mother is Malawian, so that makes me partly Zulu and partly Malawian', as indicated by the above example. In fact, at one stage of discussing symbols in politics, the discussion ended with all participants having systematically denied their Zulu heritage, a heritage that, in other contexts, is the pride of most.

Another available criterion of identification was descent, and this criterion made it possible for *tsatsatsa* to view themselves not just as Zulu, but Zulu Zu or Zulu of historic origin. For example, Lunga told us about how his great-grandfather had participated in the wars that led to the Zulu people taking over control of the land around Bergville which borders Lesotho and South Africa in the north east. He therefore considered himself as *'Inzalo yamaqhawe'* [a product of heroes] because of his ancestors' involvement in these wars of conquest. But like all other criteria, descent also has its own complexities. An interesting case is that of the *tsatsatsa-border* study participant nicknamed 'Ndabezitha' [one of the words of praise and respect used to acknowledge loyalty to Zulu royalty].

This was a name given to him by his classmates because he had been in the habit of demanding respect for himself as royalty since his great-grand father was Sibiya, who was Shaka's chief minister. Because the events that had resulted in the nickname were actually humorous, 'Ndabezitha' didn't mind the nickname and, in fact, liked it so much that he marked all his school books Thetha NDABEZITHA Sibiya. He could easily have refuted its use if he had not liked it.

In another session, we shared ideas about how other groups might feel about the use of Zulu as a national language, especially in the light of the ongoing Zulu-Xhosa conflict which characterised the Transvaal province at that time. Some participants stated that they had felt uncomfortable using Zulu in the Transvaal because the language singled them out as Zulus and therefore Inkatha, and made them open to attack by non-Zulu speakers. 'Why is this so?' I asked.

Lunga: *angithi uGatsha (Buthelezi) ufuna sonke sibewoZulu sithathe amawisa stJolwa nabantu bakithi ukuze sitshengise ukuthi singamaqhawe.* (It's all because of Gatsha who wants us to be Zulu. He wants us to take up knobkerries and go and fight our own brothers to show that we are brave.)

Sizwe: *Uthini Ndabezitha? Uthi ungakhuluma nje nabakini ebukhosini brqtJeke lento?* (What do you say, Ndabezitha? Do you think you can approach your relative in royalty to stop this?)

We all laughed.

Ndabezitha responded by telling us that in actual fact he was not royalty:

Ndabezitha: *empeleni ukhokho* [in reality my great-grandmother] came from Cape Town, and married Sibiya *owqyryi* [who was a] Bushman, and *wqyengeke abe induna kaShaka* [could not have been Shaka's Chief minister] because we all know that the Zulu had minimum contact with the Bushmen.

What we also knew, but did not talk about, was that many of Shaka's chief ministers and advisers were commoners who had come to the fore through their exceptional military ability rather that through royal birth. It is also interesting to note in this conversation Ndabezitha's shift of identity through denying his Zulu descent, and also shifts in language use.

Because of the homogeneity of the region, language on its own did not always play an important role but was always used in conjunction with other criteria. Thus, the question remains: how was it that a distinction existed between Zulu and non-Zulus if, depending on the situation, one could either be a Zulu of high status (Zulu Zu), or not Zulu at all, as demonstrated by Ndabezitha?

Conclusion

The above examples inform us about a number of things. The first is that *tsatsatsa* used history, birthplace, language, and descent as criteria for identifying themselves as Zulu, and in fact, uttered statements to this effect. The second is that the situatedness of these statements and criteria were dependent on context, place and also involved in the conversations. In fact, from these examples, it is clear that *tsatsatsa* used Zulu history and symbols to identify themselves, as well as to legitimise some of their practices, such as determination to pass an exam. In instances where Zulu practices were called into question, *tsatsatsa* either denied being Zulu or denied being engaged in these practices. In sum, therefore, the character of these youth groups, together with their everyday practices, can be understood to challenge institutionalised meanings of Zulu identity. Despite the official political attempts to place people into neat categories, the practices of youths in this paper indicate that identities are complex since they are constructed from everyday, changing and often contradictory practices.

This paper posits questions about the uniformity of cultures and practices that constitute the ethnic boundary and the position each of these cultures, and the individuals who participate in them, occupy within broader state institutions. It is clear, for instance, that while the Zulu group was considered by the state and political organisations as a well-defined homogeneous group, the

cultures of those who made up this group pointed otherwise. At the same time, it is clear that it was institutionalised cultures of the Zulu, as defined by Inkatha, that had legitimacy in the eyes of the state with respect to defining who the Zulu people actually are. It is also clear that youth cultures were not viewed as part of the features that made up the Zulu nation and that youths, in general, occupied marginal positions within the state. Yet despite this cultural marginality youth were a strong force in defining the character of post-apartheid South Africa and of who the Zulu people are. Strong participation in political activities and in socio-cultural events made it difficult for the state and political organisations to ignore ways that youth wanted to be defined.

An interesting source of research, especially for education practitioners is, to investigate the ways in which ethnic boundary shifts as demonstrated by, for example, Ndabezitha, might impinge on the education of these youth. It is clear, for example, that while these youths have knowledge of and embrace part of the history of the Zulu kingdom, there exist moments wherein they have to disassociate themselves from it. How, for instance, such moments might influence classroom participation and critical pedagogies remains to be uncovered. Similarly, given the nature of educational constraints on and concerns about youth practices, it would be interesting to examine why, in the face of the social and political upheaval (that resulted in the murder of many of the *tsatsatsa* parents and guardians) some youth remain pure while others become criminals.

The foregoing discussion impacts our understanding of collective identity and of the concept of nationalism and liberation. Looking at the construction of nations, Anderson suggests three paradoxes of nationalism:

1. The objective modernity of nations to the historian's eye vs their subjective antiquity in the eyes of nationalists.
2. The formal universality of nationality as a socio-cultural concept - in the modern world everyone can, should, will 'have' a nationality, as he or she 'has' a gender.
3. The 'political power of nationalisms vs their philosophical poverty and even incoherence.

1991, p.5

Anderson captures the way in which the construction of nations has assumed self-evidential proportions, and has lost its historicity. National identity, national allegiance and nation have become central parts of everyday lives. This paper posits questions about the myth of the nation and how it has played a major and sometimes positive role in liberation struggles. Liberation movements,

such as those addressed in this study, are very often dominated by nationalist leaders who premise their practices primarily on an unquestionable nation as the unity of liberation. Assertions of other loyalties are often considered disruptive and disloyal to the cause of liberation and unity.

Indeed, liberation struggles, especially in Africa, have been framed in terms of the nation, such that struggles that threaten the construction of a nation are seen as random or contrary, biased and disruptive. They are viewed as not involving national loyalty and as addressing a construct other than that of the nation. It is also common to find these struggles referred to as regional, that is, not nation-wide, and subversive or threatening the fundamental national spirit.

One of the issues raised in this paper remains an interesting source for research centres in terms of representation in liberation struggles. At the first level of representation, this paper has raised points for discussion about some of the conflicts that result from the use of ethnicity to frame liberation struggles. In the South African struggle, for example, it is clear that part of the conflict was a result of the failure to deal with the multiplicity of ethnicities that made up this nation state, and the ways in which each of these ethnic groups viewed it as legitimate to define themselves in order to fight apartheid. Underlying questions remain about the position each of these ethnic groups occupied within the broader South African state, and about the ways in which such positioning enhanced or limited a liberation struggle whose foundation was an unquestionable black nation. This paper demonstrates that issues of diversity within a nation state can no longer be ignored in liberation struggles. Liberation movements cannot continue to refer to these groups as random, disruptive and subversive. These groups are, in fact, the core of liberation itself. How and when liberation movements will begin to deal positively with the issue of nationalism and lack of uniformity in the face of 'imagined' liberated nations remains to be seen.

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