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ETHNIC IDENTITY IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA: A CASE STUDY OF SOUTHERN NDEBELE IDENTITY IN THE KWAMHLANGA REGION IN MPUMALANGA PROVINCE.

BY

SIFISO NDLOVU



A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of Doctor of Philosophy (Political Studies) degree, Johannesburg, 2017.

Prepared under the supervision of:

Prof Ivor Chipkin

Prof Noor Nieftagodien

Declaration

I declare that this is my own unaided work submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of Witwatersrand for the fulfilment of the Doctor of Philosophy degree **(Political Studies)**. It has not been submitted before for examination in any other university.

Signature _____ Date 10-11-2017

Johannesburg, 2017

ABSTRACT

This thesis examines the inter-relationship between Southern Ndebele ethnic identity and the construction of a new national identity in post-apartheid South Africa as framed in terms of an inclusive approach. The articulation between Southern Ndebele identity and the idea of the nation was analysed through the case study of the culturally heterogeneous KwaMhlanga locale. In understanding the expression of Southern Ndebele identity as it manifests itself in the KwaMhlanga region in the context of the making of national identity, the thesis argues that there are interactions between these two identities (ethnic and national identity). The study shows how a sense of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity has been shaped by various changing power dynamics of internal and external factors in ways that allows one to understand how the production of national identity impact on the expression of belonging to Ndebele ethnic identity. The analysis is framed on the premise that like most collective identities, Southern Ndebele identity has been malleable, fluid, negotiable, complex, shifting and contested but it centrally argues that Southern Ndebele identity crystallises around certain key markers. These key markers reveal that there are moments when expressions of belonging to ethnic identity and national identity are profoundly connected and happen simultaneously. Through triangulation of archival research, observation and tracking of political-cultural activities in the KwaMhlanga region for four years and in-depth interviews, the thesis focused on the politics of the making of the KwaNdebele homeland, material culture, heritage and initiation as some of the primary aspects in understanding the production of Southern Ndebele identity historically and in relation to South African national identity. The thesis shows that even if the relationship between expression of Ndebele identity and national identity is mutually constitutive, it is not a static one. The study demonstrates and thus foregrounds the argument that the relationship is a complex one wherein there are shifts which indicate that the expression of belonging to Ndebele identity and national identity sometimes operate independently but never completely isolated in a fluid continuum as it manifests itself in the KwaMhlanga region. One of the key findings is that even if KwaMhlanga is a culturally mixed area, a level of an expression of distinctive particularism of Southern Ndebele identity has been maintained-albeit with key dynamics like gender, generation and class playing themselves out as they relate to diverse identities which are acknowledged as some of the foundational constitutive elements of post-apartheid South African national identity. In making a unique contribution to wide-ranging scholarship on ethnicity and the construction of national identity in South Africa, the study highlights the intricately balanced dialectical relationship between the sense of belonging to ethnic identities and the production of national identity as one of the entry points in nuancing our understanding of politics of identity in culturally diverse states.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my late father Jeremiah Ndlovu-Gatsheni whose selfless support for his children's careers never waned. He unwaveringly taught us that power resided in knowledge and encouraged us to value education. It is with sadness that he did not live long to see the fruition of my academic endeavours up to this level. His death taught me that it is not everything in life that can be explained and all I can say is that this thesis is as much his as it is mine.

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ANC- African National Congress

COGTA-Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs

CONTRALESA-The Congress of Traditional Leaders of South Africa

MEC-Member of the Executive Committee

SABRA- South African Bureau of Racial Affairs

SAHRC-South African Human Rights Commission

SAPS-South African Police Services

UDF-United Democratic Front

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction and background to the study

Background

The demise of apartheid ushered in significant changes in South African politics and society. The end of white minority rule and the consequent inauguration of a democratically elected government produced a radically new and challenging context for the reconstitution and rethinking about post-apartheid nation-building project and how this related to cultural diversity. Discourses around framing a post-apartheid social order hinged on overcoming or reversing apartheid's exclusionary articulations of belonging. This is an observation scholars like McEachern (2002:xi) aptly captured by stating that: "post-apartheid South Africa was faced with the challenge of construction of a new social order grounded in inclusion, democratic representation and unity, while still nurturing and valuing difference and diversity." More tellingly, McEachern's point captures how post-apartheid imaginings unfolded within a framework that was concerned with inclusivity as the core around which nation-building and accommodation of diverse identities should revolve.

In seeking to transcend apartheid's discriminatory and exclusionary articulations of belonging and nationhood, diversity was acknowledged as one of post-apartheid's nation-building's foundational principles. Consequently, the rainbow metaphor was pushed to the fore by political leaders to describe various identities cutting across race, ethnicity, class and generations. The use

of the rainbow metaphor was framed around the discourse that these multiple identities were part of the reality of South African socio-political landscape and could be harnessed and shaped into a consciousness of belonging to a common nationhood. This sets South Africa apart from most post-colonial African countries, which conceived diversity as antithetical and inimical to nation-building. South Africa provides an instance of how the relationship between diverse identities and national identity was conceived as mutually reinforcing and inclusive. This study therefore interrogates the South African exceptionalism- forging a rainbow nation in the wake of apartheid through cohesion of multiple ethnicities. At this point it is considered crucial to elaborate on how this study articulates the notion of South African identity. Multiple narratives are evoked by post-apartheid South Africa in ways that sets it as a critique of other postcolonial socities. Scholars like Moodley and Adam (2000) describe post-apartheid South Africa as constructed on liberal democracy that seeks to produce a South African national identity out of multi-racial and multi-cultural identities to validate and strengthen a South African identity.

My reading of post-apartheid South Africa's conception of the relationship between diverse identities and national identity has been reflected on by many studies (Carrim, 1997; Robins, 2000; Alexander, 2006; McGregor and Schumaker, 2006; Mhlanga, 2010; Vahed and Desai, 2010). While this study is related to this body of literature, it makes a contribution to our understanding of the articulation between ethnic and national identities by elaborating on the politics of simulatenoulsly belonging to mutually constitutive national and ethnic identities and the navigation of both identities.

In its attempt to shed light on the dialectic of ethnic identity and national identity in post-apartheid South Africa, it analyses the specificities and complexities surrounding the notion of

articulation of 'Southern Ndebele'[1] ethnic identity with the emergent South African national identity. It is important to point out from the onset that a number of studies have shown that the label Southern Ndebele has a modern history. Scholars like Lekgoathi (2003; 2009) trace the origins of the label Southern Ndebele as a colonial imposition that came through the state's Native Affairs Department's Ethnological Division's classification of Africans into tribal categories. His insights crack open some of the problematic ways in which the term Southern Ndebele has been used as a given particularly in academic discourse. Validating and corroborating Lekgoathi's observation was evidence from many interviewees who simply identified themselves as 'AmaNdebele' instead of 'Southern Ndebele'. While being cognisant of the term 'Southern Ndebele' as an official imposition that sometimes does not resonate with most Ndebele speaking people and is not commonly used by them, this study follows its use in academic discourse and uses it as imposed by officialdom but with critical awareness of how people identify themselves on the ground.

Prompted by the observation that ethnic identities, previously foregrounded as a regime of belonging to sustain an exclusive Afrikaner nationalist project that continues to feature prominently in the South African polity, the study explores how the myth of the 'rainbow nation' continues to legitimise ethnic mobilisation today. We will see that it is necessary to understand the meaning of such mobilisation in the context, no longer of the Apartheid project, but instead that of nation-building. 'Southern Ndebele' continues to be visible in parts of the former KwaNdebele homeland and beyond and it is articulated in the context of the nation-building

[1] The term 'Southern Ndebele' is an official imposition and in many instances does not resonate with many Ndebele-speaking people who simply identify themselves as AmaNdebele. Given its origins, this thesis problematizes it as a label that can not be used as a given. The study therefore uses inverted commas on the first use of the term but refrains from inverted commas in making reference to Southern Ndebele for the rest of the thesis without necessarily accepting the logic contained in the term as imposed by officialdom.

project, while manifesting itself through constitutive elements such as distinctive language, culture, dressing, beadwork and architecture.

The study by no means suggests that the assertion of belonging to a distinctively 'Southern Ndebele' identity is a case of the only unique ethnic identity in post-apartheid South Africa, as various other groups like the Zulus, Xhosas, Pedis, Shangaan and many others also express their distinctive sense of ethnic belonging. The study argues that the history of the establishment of the KwaNdebele homeland produced a distinctive experience of the assertion of being Ndebele and that; therefore, the end of Apartheid has placed the Southern Ndebele identity in an especially precarious position, even in one of existential crisis. The focus of this study is therefore on the Southern Ndebele identity forged in the throes of apartheid, to inquire both the historical and political context of its formation and its resilience in the current milieu.

KwaNdebele was one of the homelands established by the apartheid government supposedly for the Southern Ndebele ethnic group in 1979 (McCaul, 1987; James 1990, Ritchken, 1990; Phatlane, 2002; Lekgoathi, 2006). Bantustans were one of the mechanisms through which the state institutionalised ethnic configurations to divide and rule the black population. For Lekgoathi (2006) the political and economic expediency were the driving forces in apartheid's schema of mapping boundaries of belonging. He elaborates that this accounts for the initial exclusion of the Ndebele and the eventual establishment of KwaNdebele homeland. As the last homeland to be established in 1979, KwaNdebele caught media and academic attention when members of the royal family, young people who lived in the area demarcated as KwaNdebele and politicised sections of the people in KwaNdebele resisted what, in their view, was a Pretoria styled 'independence' in 1986 (McCaul, 1987, Ritchen, 1990 and Delius, 2007). The fulcrum of the resistance movement against the Pretoria-styled 'independence' was formed from Moutse

area-a predominantly Sotho-speaking area in ways that lay bare that KwaNdebele was ethnically heterogenous right from the beginning even though the apartheid state claimed that it was putting together those who ethnically belonged together. As premised on apartheid's homeland schema, 'independence' meant that: "Africans were to become 'citizens' of the 'homelands' to which they belonged ethnically and exercised political rights but they could never be permanent residents of 'white South Africa' (Lekgoathi, 2012:62). In a similar vein, Philips, Lissoni and Chipkin (2014) reflected on Bantustans and posited that 'independent' status by Pretoria meant stripping black South Africans of their citizenship.

The study foregrounds a hypothesis that the resistance to the proposed Pretoria-styled independence of KwaNdebele by some sections of the Ndebele ethnic group was a rejection of top-down articulations of ethnic citizenship and belonging to the broader racially divided South African identity. In other words the perverted notion of ethnic nation-building as premised on apartheid's Bantustan policy was resisted which culminated in the defeat of ethnic politics in the former Bantustans. But two questions emerge immediately from these observations:

Why is Southern Ndebele identity, which crystallized in the context of apartheid's politicization of ethnicity still distinctively visible in the post-apartheid milieu in the culturally and ethnically diverse region of KwaMhlanga, which served as the administrative centre of the former KwaNdebele homeland?

Secondly, how does the narrative of 'unity of diversity' as imbibed in the discourse of rainbowism impact on the articulation of Southern Ndebele ethnic identity and belonging to the broader South African identity being constituted in the democratic era? These questions emanated from the observation of the level of ethnic particularism displayed by some sections of

people who identify themselves as Ndebele in the post-apartheid era particularly in parts of Mpumalanga province and beyond.

The end of apartheid and the promotion of the ideals of inclusivity as foundational to conjure up a sense of belonging to a homogenised national identity set a suitable context to frame an analysis that interrogates the expression of Southern Ndebele identity in the context of the production of national identity. I specifically argue that the creation of national identity allows one a different understanding of the assertion of belonging to ethnic identities: there is a delicate balancing act between these identities, which constitutes a central dynamic shaping contemporary Southern Ndebele identity and calls for scholarly reflection. Apartheid's commitment to tribalisation politics was marred by contradictions, which shaped consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity and connected with the broader South Africa's chequered history of apartheid, which hinged on exclusionary notions of belonging. But the scholarship on how the production of Ndebele identity connects and diverges with the construction of post-apartheid notions of belonging remains uneven, and it is one of the hallmark concerns of this study.

Whereas the main focus is on the post-apartheid context, the exploration of how the past powerfully shapes the present is considered crucial as a starting point to unpack the genealogy of 'Southern Ndebele' ethnic identity formation. Moreover, a historically grounded framework enables the thesis to trace and understand the categorization of Ndebele identity into 'Southern Ndebele' and 'Northern Ndebele' ethnic identities. It is important to point out from the onset that the evidence that attests to the official impositions of the categories 'Southern Ndebele' and 'Northern Ndebele' abounds as shall be elaborated on in chapter three. Tracing the bifurcation of Ndebele into 'Southern Ndebele' and 'Northern Ndebele' as impositions of official discourse

allows us to understand the shifts, contestations, fractures and complexities shrouding the use of these categories in academic and non-academic cycles, which this study takes cognisant of as it uses Southern Ndebele identity as a case study.

Aims and objectives

Within the ambit of the contingent, complicated, contested and shifting nature of identities, the study seeks to specifically analyse the production of Ndebele identity (Southern Ndebele in particular) as it articulates with the imaginings of the broader post-apartheid national identity in the culturally diverse KwaMhlanga region.

Research Questions

How is the expression of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity as it manifests itself in the KwaMhlanga region impacted by the construction of a broader national-identity, which is foundationally hinged on embracing diversity as one of its over-arching principles?

In addressing the central thrust of the study, the thesis is aided by the following secondary questions/aims:

- To analyse the historical construction of Southern Ndebele identity under colonialism and apartheid and the key dynamics that were at play in this construction
- To examine why and how Southern Ndebele identity continues in post-apartheid South Africa in KwaMhlanga
- To critically analyse how the expression of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity crystallises around certain markers like beadwork, wall paintings, initiation rites and commemoration and heritage events in the ethnically diverse KwaMhlanga region.

- To explore the role of the specific actors in the discursive construction, negotiation and shaping of Southern Ndebele identity and its articulation with the rainbow national narrative

Rationale and Significance of the study

South Africa's claims of crafting a post-apartheid national identity that transcends apartheid notions of belonging in ways that embrace diversity presents a unique trajectory that departed from other post-colonial African states. South African exceptionalism derives from its project of forging a rainbow nation to enable the expression of ethnic identities, rather than repress it. In many postcolonial socities, ethnicity was deemed to be something that needs to die in the formation of nationhood. A corpus of literature has emerged as scholars have explored this unique trajectory and analytically engaged with how far this approach has gone in producing an uncontested and unitary idea of a post-apartheid South Africa. The articulation of multiple ethnicities which resulted from apartheid's politics of exclusion and discrimination as vital in validating national identity provokes questions such as: has this experiment been successful or not and in what ways might 'success' (or even failure) be characterised in this context. It is such questions, conversations and debates that have seen historians like Dubow (2007:72) reminding us that "...the struggle for South Africa has long been, and continues to be, a struggle to become South African." In arguing that it remains a puzzle to unpack what South African identity is supposed to constitute, Dubow (2007:79) poses the following questions:

> In the political catechism of the New South Africa, the primary enquiry remains the National Question. What is the post-apartheid nation? Who belongs or is excluded and on

> what basis? How does a 'national identity' gain its salience and power to transcend the particularities of ethnicity and race....?

Dubow highlighted the complexities surrounding identity in South Africa the same year Ivor Chipkin's (2007) groundbreaking study "Do South Africans exist" was published where he argues that the difference between ethnic groups and the nation lies in their relation to state power. He argued that when ethnic groups pursue state power, their ethnicity becomes nationalism. Chipkin's book was a reflection on the complexities and paradoxes inherent in post-apartheid South Africa's crafting of a national identity out of diverse identities. A careful reading of Chipkin's work reveals how the question of what constitutes South African-ness was at the centre of his analysis. On his terms one understands the identity of the South African people in the post-apartheid era by examining the ANC-led nationalist struggle. This study argues, however, that there have been competing and contending versions of nationalisms in South Africa which means that Chipkin's focus on African nationalist struggle has not gone far enough to capture what constitutes South Africa and various identities which emerged in the discursive contestations of belonging across space and time.

It has been a daunting task for scholars to draw a common thread on the subject of being and becoming South African. Attesting to this are interventions by Theron and Swart (2009:153) who commented that, "nowhere on the continent has this politics of identity been more prominent than in South Africa, during the pre and post-apartheid eras". Other scholars like Hassim et al (2008:16) criticise the rainbow as the metaphor of the 'new' South Africa and expose the limits of the post-apartheid notions of homogenised nationhood and belonging by arguing that:

> Now in the view of many South Africans, it seems that the rainbow has been displaced by the onion, a way of imagining degrees of national belonging, layered around an authentic core. In this view, the fragile outer skin is made up of black African immigrants: Somalians, Congolese, Zimbabweans. Beneath that fragile exterior-so easily exfoliated

> and discarded-lie the Tsonga, Shangaan, Venda and Pedi people with a firmer claim to inclusion, but on the periphery of the political heartland and therefore of dubious loyalty to the national project...

Hassim et al's (2008) position makes a contribution that reveals how South African-ness is not experienced in a homogenous manner. Scholars like Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Willems (2010:5) have contributed to this debate of the contestations on forging the South African identity by noting how the nation-building process invoked and presented different and contending articulation of histories as nodal points to construct a South African identity. They highlight that since the 1930s it "was imbricated in versions of imperial conquest, colonial dominion, English settler nationalism, Afrikaner nationalism and African nationalism." In light of these various interpretations, which raise questions about what constitutes South African-ness, the study is well positioned to make a contribution and significant engagement with ethnic consciousness in the context of the construction of national identity as anchored on the rainbow narrative in post-apartheid South Africa.

This approach was provoked by a realization of how ethnic identities emerged as intricately tied to the contestations over the idea of what constitutes South African national identity and belonging across space and time. This study's point of departure from a plethora of existing studies that have engaged with the subject of national identity and the concomitant sub-national identities like ethnicities lies in the premise that consciousness of belonging to ethnic identities is deeply embedded in the matrices of nation-formation. In other words, does the pursuit of a national identity preclude diversity, especially on an ethnic basis? Simply put, can the nation have multiple ethnicities? Chipkin has suggested that it cannot. This study endeavours to make a contribution to this debate. For this study the persistence of ethnic identities as expressions of belonging in post-apartheid South Africa raises a host of pertinent questions about the 'double

consciousness' of ethnic and national identities, and the ways we have come to understand and articulate them.

In tandem with my observation of how the Southern Ndebele ethnic group distinctively assert their belonging through beadwork, wall-paintings, architecture, distinctive language and ways of dressing, nowhere has the (re)assertion of belonging to ethnic identities struck me like at the University of the Witwatersrand. I have observed students asserting their belonging to ethnic groups through cultural societies with such brand names as "*Uma NgingeMzulu Ngingayini*" (If i was not Zulu, who else could I be", "100% Xhosa", "*Izizwe zonke zizwile ngoZulu*"(all nations have heard about Zulus"). Such observations reinforced the determination to explore the dialectic of ethnic identity and national identity in post-apartheid South Africa through a case study of Southern Ndebeles.

The case study of Southern Ndebele identity struck me as interesting precisely for its intriguing history of precarious existence and how apartheid's separatist agenda left the Ndebele ethnically conscious. Despite the unique experience of the Southern Ndebele, their history remains on the margins of scholarship on post-apartheid sub-national identities. This provides a good case to explore how then in the post-apartheid era, after apartheid's separatist ethnic politics has been discarded, Southern Ndebele identity is articulated and balanced with belonging to national identity.

The character of Southern Ndebele identity has a long pedigree, which is not divorced from South Africa's long history of contestations and struggles over imaginations of national identity. The writings of Lekgoathi on Ndebele identity from pre-colonial era to present cannot be understated in so far as it gives guiding insights to our understanding of how Southern Ndebele

ethnicity was made but this study focuses on the more recent history of the 'Southern Ndebele', especially as it relates to the formation of the KwaNdebele bantustan and in relation to subsequent expresssions of being Southern Ndebele in the post-apartheid period. We will see an important shift in the Southern Ndebele identity, from being articulated to the fortunes of the homeland (both as part of its elaboration and in resistance to it) to the expression of a cultural identity manifest in language, initiation rituals, beadwork and architecture. The thesis's focus on expression of Southern Ndebele identity through markers such as material culture, practice of initiation rites, commemoration and cultural events enables it to depart from existing studies on Ndebele identity of scholars like Ritchken (1990); Phatlane (2002) and Van Vuuren (2005) to make an empirically grounded approach that explains its constitutive relationship with national identity.

Delimitation of study: Rationale for using KwaMhlanga region.

KwaMhlanga is a region that forms part of the province of Mpumalanga in the present day South Africa. It is a peri-urban area, located about 72. 2 kilometers in north-eastern edges of Pretoria and about 300km from Nelspruit. Most people who reside in KwaMhlanga work in Pretoria and Johannesburg and use public transport like PUTCO buses and taxis to get to work. Falling under Thembisile Hani local municipality, which is located about 80km of the Tshwane Metropolitan area, KwaMhlanga is a multi-ethnic and culturally mixed region that formed part of the KwaNdebele homeland in the 1980s. As a multi-ethnic area, KwaMhlanga is inhabited by the, Ndebele, Northern Sotho, as well as small sections of IsiZulu, isiXhosa and IsiVenda speaking

people.[2] With an estimated total population of 7 123 people, KwaMhlanga continues to be predominantly inhabited by the Ndebele-speaking people today who forms an estimated population of 3476 people (Thembisile Hani Local Municiplaity, 2016:1). KwaMhlanga also served as the administrative centre of former KwaNdebele homeland under apartheid.

The overriding justification for the use of KwaMhlanga as a case study stems from the intriguing history that KwaMhlanga holds especially in the context of the struggle against the proposed Pretoria-styled independence of KwaNdebele when it became a frontline site for contestations, complexities and ambiguities in the consciousness of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity. Not only did this history make KwaMhlanga appealing to explore the research questions of this study but its multi-cultural character made it most ideally suited to explore how people identified as Southern Ndebele navigate their sense of belonging and negotiate the boundaries of their identity in a multi-cultural setting. Being part of former KwaNdebele Bantustan, which served as the administrative centre, KwaMhlanga was seen as a good site to allow for the analysis of continuities and impact of historical processes in the evolution of Southern Ndebele identity and how it has been shaped by a combination of external and internal factors across space and time. Whereas Babbie and Mouton (2001:166) argue that it is appropriate "to select a sample on the basis of one's knowledge of the population and its elements", I had never lived or been to KwaMhlanga when I started this research project, so the research site was relatively not well-known to me. While the merits of Babbie and Mouton's suggestion are not deniable and cannot be understated, this study heeded to Chilisa's (2012) arguments whose validity lie in emphasizing diversity in knowledge as her central theme in critiquing the domination of Western

[2] Preliminary interview with Khobogo Petros Mahlangu at Bonginkosi Pre-School Heritage Day Celebration in KwaMhlanga on the 24th of September 2012. His testimony was corroborated by evidence from Thembisile Hani local municipality 2016/2017 final IDP document and Statistics South Africa 2016 community survey quarterly results

ways of understanding the world. The selection of KwaMhlanga was not on the basis of my knowledge or understanding of the community but innovatively as an obvious outsider to decolonise conventional methods and analyse the intricate processes of production of Southern Ndebele identity and its constitution within the politics of the 'rainbow' nation. Following Chilisa's elaboration of the need to 'decolonise' research methodologies of knowledge production, I selected KwaMhlanga as the most suitable site. Despite its intriguing history, which connects with South Africa's 'chequered' history of apartheid which hinged on exclusionary notions of belonging there exist patchy academic work on how consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity has been expressed in a post-apartheid context at this multi-cultural site. This area was thus considered to well-situate the study that sought to explore how the production of national identity has shaped the expression of, and belonging to Southern Ndebele identity in a multi-ethnic setting.

Methodology

This section provides an exposition of the research strategies that were employed to answer the research questions and achieve the major objectives of the study. Blaike (1993) sees methodology as the analysis of how the research should or does proceed. Creswell (2003:3) rightly advised that, "a general framework be adopted to provide guidance about all facets of the study, from assessing the general philosophical ideas behind the enquiry to the detailed data collection and analysis procedures". Being mindful of Creswell's articulation as a vantage point of departure, a consideration of research context and site-in this case the ethnically diverse KwaMhlanga region and post-apartheid South Africa, engagement with data during the process

of collecting, collating, data interpretation and analysis foregrounded the selection of what was deemed the most appropriate methodological framework.

Overall approach/Research design

This is a study on the expression of belonging to Southern Ndebele ethnic identity as it manifests itself in the context of the making of a post-apartheid South African national identity. Taking off from a premise that observes a relationship between the making of national identity and ethnic identity across historical epochs in South Africa, this thesis grapples with how identity as a social experience is given meaning and constructed. In justifying the rationale for the choice of an appropriate framework, it is apparent to point out the ontological position, which this study is anchored on. Blaike (1993:6) explains that ontology refers to "claims about what exists, what it looks like, what units make it up and how these units interact with each other." An analysis of the expression of Southern Ndebele ethnic identity in the context of national identity is articulated as a social reality, which is a product of people's (social actors being studied) views, subjective experiences and interpretations. I argue that in order for this study to get a comprehensive and in-depth analysis of this social reality, the social actors being studied (in this case the people identified as Southern Ndebele ethnic group) are at the core precisely because social reality is a product of the meanings they attach to it. In various mobilisations of Southern Ndebele identity different ontological claims are made, hence the study placed high value in getting data from the people being studied- who create, maintain and give meaning to Southern Ndebele identity as a social reality and this position directed the choice of a research framework.

The central question of how to tap into the processes of identity formation as social phenomena which is imbued with human interactions, actions of research participants, their subjectivity,

meanings and interpretations saw qualitative research design being considered as the appropriate framework. Contrary to quantitative research design whose central tenet lies in measuring, inferring and analysing patterns of causal connections between variables at abstract levels; qualitative research design grounds itself in capturing the deeper meaning and purpose of human action (Creswell, 2003).

A careful reflection which guided the choice of qualitative research design as the most appropriate lay in that this thesis is over- girded by the aim of tapping into the lived experience of a group of people identified as Southern Ndebele, the exercise and meaning of their actions which is ultimately defined as their identity. What this study set out to do lended itself to a qualitative character that is in line with Creswell's (2004:8) observation who noted:

> [they] are varied and multiple, leading the researcher to look for the complexity of views rather than narrowing meanings into a few categories or ideas. The goal of research is then to rely as much as possible on the participants' views of the situation being studied

Following Creswell's point, a glaring dissonance between qualitative and quantitative research design which mainly relies on data sets which cannot capture the interpretations, perceptions and definitions of the respondents as Babbie, Mouton and Provesky (2001) opined, a quantitative research design was then discarded.

The hallmark of qualitative research design is that it enables the researcher to study how realities are made and interpreted in the process of everyday human interactions. In order to uncover how consciousness of belonging to Southern Ndebele ethnic identity manifests itself in the context of the production of national identity, my research activity fundamentally entailed locating myself in the world of the researched. Following from this, varied arguments advanced by a number of

scholars to substantially undergird the strengths of qualitative research design were considered. For instance, for Creswell (2003:19) the crux of the qualitative research design lies in it being suitable to study the meaning and purpose of human action because knowledge claims are derived from the varied, constructed and interpreted perspectives of research participants. Maxwell (1998) also posited that qualitative methodology offers a detailed deeper understanding and interpretive approach to the researcher. Miles and Huberman (1994:1) then summed it all on the merits of qualitative research paradigm by arguing that:

> Good qualitative data are more likely to lead to serendipitous findings and to new integrations; they help researchers get beyond initial conceptions and to generate or revise conceptual frameworks. ...The findings from qualitative studies have a quality of undeniability. Words, especially organised into incidents or stories, have a concrete vivid, meaningful flavour that often proves far more convincing to a reader- another researcher, a policy maker, a practitioner-than pages of summarized numbers...

A consideration of the foundational principles of qualitative research design defended by some scholars as highlighted above rhymed neatly with this study's aim of embarking on an in-depth analysis of the different actors' practices which discursively shape Southern Ndebele identity and its relationship with national belonging in the culturally diverse KwaMhlanga region.

The strengths of a qualitative research design, which necessitated its choice as the most suitable approach for this study are not meant to gloss over its limitations, which were treated with caution. For instance, the widely held criticism about qualitative research design is that of the subjective position of the researcher, which may threaten the quality and trustworthiness of the research. This consequently called for me to reflect on my role as a researcher throughout the research process and handling research participants who carry with them a history, sense of themselves and the importance of their experiences. This necessitated reflexivity as a guiding process through which my role as a researcher in the construction of data and narrative was not

only acknowledged as an active process extending throughout each research stage but the researcher-researched relationship was centrally reflected on. I therefore heeded Denzin's (1997:27) reminder that in carrying out qualitative research our "subjectivity becomes entangled in the life of others." Grounded by the premise that it is impossible for knowledge about social reality which derives from peoples' experiences and interpretations to be value-free; the study comfortably grasps Berger's (2013:2) assertion that "the idea of reflexivity challenges the view of knowledge production as independent of the researcher producing it and knowledge as objective." I thus follow Berger's position to argue that as a researcher, I had to delicately balance my position as a social being and my analysis of relations and performances as they related to the production of Southern Ndebele identity and national belonging.

Whereas reflexivity does a great deal of service in acknowledging the researcher's impact within the research process, it has provoked contestations which has seen scholars taking divergent viewpoints as they ponder over the questions of when to be reflexive, how to be reflexive and what really is the substance of being reflexive. Reflexivity casts itself as a complex process which scholars like Pillow (2003:177) articulates in the following way:

> Is reflexivity a skill, a set of methods that can be taught? If so, what are the methods of reflexivity – is it keeping a research journal or the inclusion of a questioning researcher voice in the text? What should we be reflexive about? The other? Ourselves? The place? Who gets to be reflexive?

The questions raised by Pillow about reflexivity are foundational in so far as they highlight how reflexivity is shrouded in tremendous complexity despite being an indispensable component of a study that is methodologically positioned in a qualitative research design. It is thus considered crucial to point out that the study draws insights from a rich tapestry of different views from scholars such as Giddens (1991), Bourdieu (2003) and Lincolin and Guba (2000) and Creswell

(2003) among many others. These scholars cast the meaning of reflexivity and what it constitutes as a highly contested phenomenon and as such resisting an agreeable and easy definition. As such, this study chose not to delve deeper on the various debates on what exactly reflexivity entails as it is too broad and potentially constitutes a topic in its own right. Instead the study chose to consider reflexivity within the confines of being mindful of my positionality in line with the view that researchers are part of the world they study and my subjectivities in the process of handling the relationship between the participants as the 'researched' and myself as the researcher.

Drawing and building upon Chilisa's (2012) work that problematizes the vicious cycle of power in knowledge production my interpretation of research participants' experiences of the consciousness of both ethnic and national identity were underpinned by my social position as an active participant during certain phases and as a reflective researcher open to unique experiences. As a female budding academic, hailing from Zimbabwe my keen interest in embarking on this study largely emanated from the fact that I understand myself (and labelled by others) as of Ndebele ethnic origin that shares the same historical origins with the ethnic group that underpins this study. This practically shaped my ability to use my Ndebele language to negotiate access to the field, acceptability and insider status.

Although I regard myself as part of a group identified as Ndebele in Zimbabwe whose origins historically connect with the studied group, I consciously managed to step back as a researcher because I had a number of questions that had triggered my interest in undertaking this study. For instance, having studied in South Africa for my entire university education, I had noticed that belonging to Southern Ndebele identity (South Africa) was distinctively marked by beadwork, wall-paintings, architecture, distinctive ways of dressing and some cultural events which I had

not seen as signifiers of Ndebele identity in Zimbabwe. Secondly, in Zimbabwe the politics of belonging to ethnic identities has been mediated by some forms of marginalisation and privileges in terms of access to state resources in ways, which have witnessed belonging to Ndebele identity being articulated as a political identity. This essentially constituted part of my academic presumptions about the politics of belonging to ethnic identities which I was conscious of and hence constantly checked on to mitigate biases as I carried out this study. Thus, even though my identity as Ndebele who could conduct interviews in Ndebele language granted me an insider status which was akin to what Lincoln and Gonzalez (2008:795) capture as being a "living part of the study", I guarded against an insider status that could distort my analysis by preventing me from asking certain critical questions. In a nutshell, despite a plethora of arguments propounded by various scholars that complicates reflexivity, my own subjectivities as a researcher were taken cognisance of within a reflexivity gaze that was cautious of "bias, oversimplification, prior judgement and inability to separate observation from feeling" (Stephenson and Greer, quoted in Burgess, 1984:22) in handling collected data and research findings. Reflexivity was deployed in ways that found a comfortable place alongside a premise evoked by Mohanty (1993:2) who argued that if well handled, experiences "can yield reliable and genuine knowledge, just as it can point up instances and sources of real mystification."

The strength of a qualitative research design is that it allows one to analyse the evolution of Southern Ndebele identity in the context of making of post-apartheid national identity. But the study is cautious of its major criticisms such as its failure to guarantee validity and reliability. Validity and reliability issues raised against qualitative framework have seen scholars like Maxwell (2002) and Creswell (2007) arguing that validity becomes difficult precisely because certain values mediated by such dynamics as race, gender and class affects the interpretation of

the participants' perceptions and their construction of meaning of social reality. Hammersley (2008:99) like Maxwell and Creswell lays bare the challenges of ensuring validity in a qualitative framework and warns on the possibility of sharp disconnections between what participants say and what they do. As he puts it:

> In everyday life when people tell us things, we tend to take what they say on trust unless it conflicts with what we already believe, or unless we have some reason to doubt what they say. By contrast, the researcher must be less 'charitable' in this sense; in other words he/she must adopt a more skeptical attitude towards the information provided by informants. This is not just a matter of taking precautions against deliberate misrepresentations, though that is certainly part of it, but also recognising that people do not necessarily know what they think they know, that interpreting what they say is not always straightforward, and so on. Above all we need to recognize how both informants' accounts and researchers' interpretations of those accounts always depends on assumptions, some of which may turn out to be false....

Being mindful of the gamut of challenges to validity, which could compromise the choice of qualitative research framework, the study gathered data through various techniques that followed Beard's (1989:38) advice. For Beard, various data gathering methods such as interviews (in-depth and open), observation and written documents can be used in a qualitative study. As the study hinges on acknowledging reality as constructed by participants as they interpret their experiences and meaning of the surrounding world, it used various methods to triangulate data. Triangulation was indispensable for this study as it mainly centered on an analysis of the production of Southern Ndebele identity in ways that followed Fontana and Frey's (2003:99) warning that:

> Human beings are complex and their lives are ever-changing, the more methods we use to study them, the better our chances to gain some understanding of how they construct their lives and the stories they tell about them...

As defined by Neuman (1994/1997:141), triangulation entails the use of two or more 'data collection techniques, in order to examine the same variable'. Bryman (2004) defines triangulation as the use of various data gathering techniques to ensure complementarity, aid reliability and confidence in the use of ensuing findings to answer the research questions. Creswell (2003, 196) adds credence by noting that the evidence gathered is then used "to build a coherent justification for themes." Burns (2000:419) then consolidates this point and sums it all by arguing that the use of triangulation aims at guaranteeing the validity and reliability of the study's analytic generalizations by checking consistencies of "findings generated by different data-collection methods and/or of diverse 'data sources within the same method."

The centrality of triangulation as one of the vital mechanisms that can be used to circumvent validity challenges foregrounded a vantage point for this study to utilise a combination of in-depth interviews, observation and tracking development of political-cultural activities in the KwaMhlanga region for three years, archival research and continuous and iterative use of published material such as books, journal articles and newspapers throughout the research and writing process to ensure methodological triangulation of data. The use of various data gathering methods does not only facilitate comparison, cross-checking and contrasting of data but it also resonates neatly with the need to capture various actors, deciphering key dynamics that play themselves out in the relationship between Southern Ndebele identity and national identity and analysing the contingency and contestations in the evolution of these identities.

Case Study

Because this thesis is based on examining the mutually constitutive relationship between Southern Ndebele ethnic identity and national identity as it manifests itself in a specific setting, it employs a case study approach. A case study is captured by Gerring (2007:20) as "the intensive study of a single case where the purpose of that study is-at least in part-to shed light on a larger class of cases..." Elucidating this further is Yin (1994: 13-14) who argued that a case study "relies on multiple sources of evidence" and a "prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis." From Yin and Gerring's definition, the case study approach was deemed appropriate for this thesis, which primarily focuses on exploring how Southern Ndebele identity is expressed in KwaMhlanga and intersects and/diverges with the broader nation-building narrative of democratic South Africa. By so doing it delineates the geographical area to be covered. Moreover analytic generalizations, which are useful in unpacking what ethnic identities mean for the process of forging national identity in societies like South Africa, which as late decolonisers came up with the discourse of accepting diversity will be derived from this case study. Furthermore being mindful of Yin's (2003:13) observation that a case study investigates a contemporary phenomenon within its real life context; especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident" the study fully grounds itself in a case study approach to explore issues of ethnic consciousness and its relationship with national identity which has a bearing on current topical issues of citizenship and challenges of social cohesion in South Africa. Since this study is broadly premised on analysing the nuanced politics of belonging to ethnic and national identity in a culturally diverse unitary state, a

consideration of a case study is the most practical and suitable to "discover new relationships of realities and build-up an understanding of the meanings of experiences rather than verify predetermined hypotheses" which Riege (2003:3) sees as the foundational aim that undergirds case study approaches.

Getting an in-depth understanding and deeper meaning of the object of this study, which is entangled in a particular context- that is the culturally diverse KwaMhlanga region necessitated a framework that is placed within a case study. It is useful to mention some of the limitations of this methodology. In particular, can a case-study be generalised to other cases and contexts beyond the confines of the particular case? (Bryman,1988). However, Yin (2003:38) problematizes and exposes the limits of the issue of generalizability, which is often pinned against case study approach by revealing that; "the problem lies in the very notion of generalization to other case studies. Instead, an analysis should try to generalise findings 'to' theory analogous to the way a scientist generalises from experimental results to theory." In light of Yin's clarification, this study argues that the strengths of case study outweigh its limitations. The strengths therefore justifies its use in ways that a deep exploration that will throw some light on very pertinent social and political processes broadly relating to politics of belonging in post-apartheid South Africa and possibly "assist in refocusing the direction of future investigations in the [same] area' (Burns, 2000:461).

Methods of gathering data

Secondary sources such as published books and journal articles were used to inform the conceptual framework, provide the foundation of this thesis and constitute the niche for the researcher's own intervention. Reviewing a large corpus of published literature formed the initial phase, which situated the study within existing scholarship. From a continuous process of review of a rich body of existing literature cutting across disciplines such as anthropology, sociology, politics, international relations and history, a most suitable theoretical framework was selected to illuminate the arguments. A review of secondary literature also provided insights, which formed guiding blocks in locating the ontological position of the study. The process of reviewing literature was a continuous one throughout the research and writing process as the insights derived were richly informative and were combined with data empirically collected from research participants.

Interviews

Data was also gathered through the use of qualitative interviews as Neuman (1997) argued that the data collection methods are often of a qualitative nature in a case study. The study followed Denzin and Lincoln (2000:645) who observed that interviewing is one of the most common and powerful ways in which we try to understand our fellow human beings. More open oral interviews were conducted in KwaMhlanga region to capture "people's experiences, inner perceptions, attitudes and feelings of reality" (Fontana and Frey, 2005). Interviews were appropriate in accessing how meaning to Southern Ndebele identity as a form of social existence is expressed and understood by social actors under study. Interviews can be divided into categories of structured and unstructured in ways that do not lend to strict dichotomization between these two types, hence this study settled for semi-structured in-depth interviews.

A number of scholars who have defined in-depth interviews converge on the observation that the formulation of key questions and or themes allows the researcher to be flexible on condition of the direction of the interview. This, Babbie et al (2001) cogently captured by stating that in-depth interviews are essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent. Following Babbie's point, in-depth interviews became one of the critical data gathering techniques, which allowed me to engage in "conversations with a purpose" (Burgess 1984:2). As shall be demonstrated in the entire thesis, it was through these interviews that contestations, ambiguities, contradictions and complexities shaping Ndebele identity and how it is impacted on by national identity were brought out. Moreover, I managed to probe and elicit much information that spoke to constitutive elements of Southern Ndebele identity and how the construction of post-apartheid national identity is received in the KwaMhlanga region. Babbie et al (2007) rightly argued that qualitative in-depth interviews allow the object of the study to speak for him/her/itself and also give room for probing for further specific information hence generating new revealing data on a subject. All this was made possible by the use of an interview guide consisting of key questions, which could be adjusted to engage in conversations on the creation, nurturing and expression of Ndebele identity. To guard against the risk of straying away from key themes, an interview guide was used as per Arthur and Nazroo's (2003: 115) recommendation that it "ensures that relevant issues are systematically covered with some uniformity, while still allowing flexibility to pursue the detail that is salient to each individual participant." My key questions and themes were formulated in such a way that additional questions could be added and without restricting interviewees to specific responses. Such is a key feature of in-depth interview that Robson's (2002:270) points by asserting that they have predetermined questions, which can be modified,

re-worded, explained to the interviewee, or omitted if the situation is deemed necessary. It is for these reasons that semi-structured in-depth interviews were used as a tool to glean on the intricate manifestation of Southern Ndebele identity and how it relates with national identity.

In my selection of in-depth interviews, I was aware of its limitations like all data gathering techniques. For example, Mikkelson (1995:105) noted that due to his/her preconceived viewpoints about the subject of research; the researcher may misinterpret data given by informants. Creswell (2003:186) and Legard et al (2003:154) add credence to Mikkelson's argument by postulating that the validity and quality of research can be compromised when the researcher asks leading questions and this risk is prevalent in semi-structured interviews. As it heeded to Patton (1990) who cautioned that interviewing skills are key, the study settled for semi-structured interviews, which met the needs of exploring how the research participants subjectively interpret their experiences to construct social reality and consciousness of belonging to national identity. This would never have been possible through the use of rigidly structured interviews, which were discarded for their failure to provide room for probing and rephrasing of questions as per the flow of conversations. In stark contrast, semi-structured in-depth interviews could be revised to flexibly allow room for incorporation of issues that emerged from the direction of the conversations and experiences.

Sampling

Given that it was virtually not feasible and an unattainable goal to interview all the subjects of the population of KwaMhlanga region, which constitute the social actors being studied, sampling became an indispensable aspect to consider in this study. In light of Ritchie et al (2003) who point out that a researcher cannot study all cases or units that make up the study population, the

study used a combination of purposive sampling and random sampling. Purposive sampling aims to ensure that "sample units are chosen because they have particular features or characteristics which will enable detailed exploration and understanding of the central puzzles which the researcher wishes to study."(Ritchie et al, 2003). The question of who has a stake in the construction, preservation and maintenance of Southern Ndebele identity was one of the over-arching questions, which necessitated the use of purposive sampling in the early phases of the research. As Ritchie (2003) further elaborated that sampling entails identifying and selecting sources of data and discussing the rationale for choosing the (cases) and for rejecting others, chiefs were perceived to be key players in the construction of Ndebele identity hence were purposively selected in the initial phases of the research. Although I had aimed to have balanced interviews in terms of gender ratio, this was not the case as all the traditional leaders I interviewed were males whose reference to females' position was largely fragmented but this opened a window into tapping some gender dynamics in the expression of Southern Ndebele identity as shall be elaborated in the course of the thesis. Neuman (1997) explained that the widely held criticism against purposive sampling is that they are not statistically representative but are suitable for the selection of specific cases that are especially informative. For this reason the selection of chiefs as the first cohort of the sample population was deliberately done to elicit information about their role in the mobilisation of a consciousness of belonging to Southern Ndebele ethnic identity and the historical origins of Southern Ndebele. Personal reminiscences of their life histories revealed rich information on migration history, kinship ties and nuanced history of the Southern Ndebele community that variably fed into broader written historical narratives about this ethnic group.

Interviews were also conducted with former KwaNdebele homeland politicians who were purposively selected to reflect on their first-hand experiences on the establishment of KwaNdebele and some of their discussions with the apartheid state leaders. I garnered vital information, which revealed the dynamics of power, gender, generation and circumstances that shaped and underpinned the consciousness of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity in the context of the homeland politics and establishment of KwaNdebele homeland. Information obtained from former KwaNdebele homeland politicians was read more critically alongside archival and written sources to push to the fore a broader understanding of the contestations, complexities and shifting meanings of expression of Southern Ndebele identity in the context of KwaNdebele homeland.

In trying to understand how Ndebele identity shifts from being a political or national expression in and through KwaNdebele Bantustan to an ethnic/ cultural identity rooted in material practices the study shifted to fieldwork amongst those who self-identify as Ndebele, beyond traditional leaders.

As the research process progressed and guided by the desire to gather extensive, diverse and in-depth information from a cross-section of people cutting across generation, class, rural-urban divide and generation, the study employed random sampling. After randomly making initial contacts with a man who warmly welcomed me and became my research assistant, the study was guided by Polkinghorne's (2005:139) argument which is seen to be illuminating in stressing that qualitative research design aim less of achieving representativity, objectivity or replicability of findings or guaranteeing generalisability but more of "provision of full-saturated descriptions of the experience under investigation." Whereas scholars like Ritchie et al (2003:84) have recommended that a sample "much larger than fifty start to become difficult to manage in terms

of data collection and analysis that can be achieved" my random sampling saw me conducting more than fifty interviews that were underpinned by the aim to reach saturation. At the core of this phase was the assumption that in the context of the culturally heterogeneous KwaMhlanga area, consciousness of belonging to Southern Ndebele ethnic identity was not constituted by an easily identifiable predefined social group, thus it was vital to aim for diversity in exploring multifaceted interpretations, experiences and expressions of Ndebele-ness and assertions of belonging to national identity. With the assistance of my research assistant, who though untrained, we employed the snowballing technique, which enabled me to access research participants by way of introduction by those already interviewed. Such an approach was enriching in so far as enabling the study to identify emerging themes on the intricate dynamics, complexities, contestations and ambiguities that played themselves out in asserting a sense of belonging in a culturally diverse region. Interestingly, there were instances when random informal interviews were carried out as they emanated in the fieldwork from unplanned chats, and these also became part of the random sample. Rich data that fed into emerging themes was generated as the researcher remained open to entertain such informal conversations and it saw the study being able to delineate whether or not there was new data generated, hence reaching a point of saturation in terms of determining sample size. A central point to emphasise is that given the complexity of the subject of identity which grounds this thesis, a sampling framework aligned to probability sampling technique was not appropriate to capture the meaning and analyses of people's expression of belonging. It is for this reason that a combination of purposive sampling and random sampling were used at the initial phases of the research and the rest of the research phase respectively.

Observation

The democratic dispensation has seen the over-arching objective of nation-building utilising culture as one of the useful and appropriate spheres to articulate and push the projects of forging national identity. This reality was taken into consideration to track and observe the development of political-cultural activities as one of the areas in which national and ethnic identities are constructed and reproduced. Observation of key cultural or heritage celebrations formed an indispensable data-gathering tool mainly because KwaMhlanga is located in Mpumalanga Province where heritage industry is quite vibrant[3]. Borrowing from Goffman (1989) who posited that through observation, research participants' actions can be captured in detail, I employed an attentive gaze and looked carefully as a critical outsider who had the privilege of attending heritage celebrations as an invited guest. As a critical outsider, I had the opportunity to take full account of the messages scripted through in these events and how these celebrations were mobilised for Southern Ndebele identity formation. The inter-relationship between Southern Ndebele identity and the construction of national identity in a democratic era was gleaned in an in-depth manner for a period of three years (2012-2015) wherein I made several visits whenever there were major heritage celebrations or commemoration events. This was adequate time which did not only afford me an opportunity to identify recurring patterns of intricate dynamics, contestations and interpretations of pulling an appeal to a sense of shared Southern Ndebele identity and national identity as they played themselves out but better exposed me to understand multiple realities of how Southern Ndebele identity articulates with other cultural identities in a multi-ethnic setting.

[3] In my initial visit to Ndzudza Mabusa Heritage Celebration and Commemoration on the 29th of September 2012 I I observed the articulation of Ndebele identity in various ways. I observed that greater part of the audience was dressed in distinctive traditional Ndebele regalia and isiNdebele language dominated as the medium of communication in this event to preserve Ndebele identity.

In tracking and observing the political-cultural activities in the KwaMhlanga region, particularly in the heritage month (September), I constantly reflected upon my position as a researcher with the aim of collecting rich data about all the activities of the day on these events. It was thus apparent that I engaged in informal conversations with the people I was sitting next to, to understand how they perceived such events as they spoke to harnessing a consciousness of belonging to ethnic and national identity. For instance, as shall be elaborated in Chapter four in some events like the Ndzundza-Mabusa Commemoration where I had the privilege to attend as an invited guest, I was ushered to the VIP stand. This was an opportunity that did not only enable me to observe the proceedings of the day from a less destructive position. It most importantly enabled me to tap into informal chats, which related to the events, which took place among the members of the royal family who flanked the King Makhosonke Mabhena of the Manala group also officially classified under 'Southern Ndebele'. [4]

It should be clarified that the observation technique that was employed in this study did not entail immersing myself in day-to day activities in ways positioned in line with principles of ethnographic studies. For ethnographic studies, attention is mainly cast on immersion into research participants' everyday experiences and social practices for extended periods. However observation was utilised in ways that owe debt to Yin's (2003:92) proposition that "making a field visit to the case study ''site'', you [the researcher] are creating the opportunity for direct observations. [...] some relevant behaviors or environmental conditions will be available for observation". Commensurate with Yin's argument, observation was utilised in such a way that

[4] Nhlapo Commission on Traditional Leadership: Disputes and Claims (2003) which was established in terms of section 22 of the Traditional Leadership Disputes and Claims officially embraced and dertemined Makhosonke Enock Mabena of the Manala group as the only King of the Ndebele. In its mandate to resolve disputes and legally endorse traditional leaders in line with its understanding of customary law and practice, the commission established that AmaNdzundza were a junior house which did not have a kinship.

even if I could not immerse myself in everyday lives of the people of KwaMhlanga area in an ethnographic strictest sense, informative insights were gathered from observing certain striking practices by social actors in families I had established ties with whenever visited the research site to conduct interviews. This kind of observation took a quasi-ethnographic form. In some families where I had developed a relationship I was able to spend overnight visits and to have informal conversations. In this way I observed how consciousness of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity is articulated in everyday lives. As we read from Patton's (2002) work that informal unstructured interviews inevitably constitute part of observation, relevant data was generated through informal conversations in ways that laid bare some of the social realities and dynamics of expression of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity. Additionally, I observed social relations by volunteering to do household chores. This was in line with Robson (2002:310) who described observation as "a 'technically in-built' process that occurs concurrently (conscious or unconscious) with other data collection methods such as interviews..." In this way entering and observing the world of the participants became inevitable in ways that afforded me the opportunity to listen to, observe striking actions, interactions, social roles and recurring patterns of behaviour which spoke to everyday expressions of Southern Ndebele identity.

A visit to a cultural village also generated useful data, although it was not the mainstay of data gathering techniques of this study. Cultural villages are purpose built structures, which are purported to represent officialised inflexible versions of African ethnic identities that exist in South Africa. The idea of displaying the supposedly ways of life of indigenous people lie at the centre of cultural villages hence they are seen as "purpose-built complexes intended, with the help of cultural workers, as a simulation of aspects of the way of life of a cultural grouping, as it was at a specific period (or several periods) of time." (Vueren, 2001:139).

Although cultural villages are constructed in the context of imagination of identity (ethnic) construction and nation-building in South Africa, I only visited Kghodwana cultural village which enabled me to glean the place of Southern Ndebele identity and belonging in this cultural village. Despite their capacity to generate enriching data that relates to representation of identities and culture, a decision was made against using them as one of the main data gathering techniques in light of the intellectual stampede that has been provoked on cultural villages. The wide-ranging scholarly criticisms against cultural villages in South Africa largely questions the way they represent cultural identities. For example, Van Vueren (2003:74) said:

> The question arises to what extent the product of cultural villages consists of indigenous/traditional culture products. Based on observation, it would appear that the cultural village often is built to a larger extent, on an understanding of what Western tourists want, and how best to provide this. Cultural villages as such, are not a form of hospitality or sharing of culture, which exists in indigenous culture, but a construct of Western culture....

Such criticisms have been variably echoed by scholars like Marschall (2003) and Ndlovu (2015) in ways that accentuate and lay bare how cultural villages superficially represent the imagination of belonging to ethnic identities. In light of such criticisms, cultural villages could not be used as a main data gathering technique. Nonetheless they represent a certain idea of being Ndebele that this study needed to consider.

Archival Research

Capturing continuities and changes in the consciousness of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity and how the production of national identity has impacted on the evolution of Ndebele as an ethnic identity was one of the central tenets of this study, which necessitated archival research. Analysis of archival sources from the National Archives of South Africa illuminated

the politics around the creation the creation of KwaNdebele homeland, especially discussions between apartheid state leaders and KwaNdebele politicians.

I engaged archival material to provide a window through which I could empirically capture the particular moments that shaped the consciousness of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity particularly during the politics of the establishment of KwaNdebele homeland. Concerns about documentary sources being a reflection of power dynamics have been commonly held as one of the major limitations of archival research but Hamilton et al (2002:12) have rightly advised that "archives are often both documents of exclusion and monuments to particular configurations of power, the traces of marginal lives are by no means absent from mainstream archives." In my case, however, that served my purpsoses well, for I sought to understand how the Ndebele identity was invoked and represented in a process of establishing the KwaNdebele homeland. Following Hamilton's advice, archival research was used alongside other sources in ways that went a long way in providing insights about the contradictions and tensions that played themselves out in the establishment of KwaNdebele homeland.

I also consulted the University of the Witwatersrand's Cullen Library-Historical Papers section. In a nutshell, archival research was very vital in identifying key events and connections in the production of Southern Ndebele identity.

Reflections on navigating the entry into the research site

In carrying out this study, I fundamentally saw the need to negotiate an 'insider' status as a vital starting point. I anticipated difficulties and acceptability challenges in gaining entry into a

community located in a province I had never visited as female researcher pursuing PhD studies. However, my Ndebele ethnic background permitted easier access in ways I never imagined because I was perceived to be an insider when I negotiated my first point of entry during the heritage month of September in 2012. I phoned Kghodwana Cultural Village with the intention of using it as an initial entry point and this is where I met Petros Mahlangu[5] who expressed great interest in my study and invited me to observe heritage celebrations which were happening in KwaMhlanga region and beyond in that particular year.

I managed to visit and observe two heritage celebrations as an invited guest. These visits were vital as they afforded me the opportunity to explain my research project in informal conversations with the assistance of Petros Mahlangu who became my research assistant throughout the fieldwork phase. At this phase my identity as a researcher from an Ndebele ethnic background recast me as 'being part of us" by the would-be research participants. Expression of interest in my study was widely revealed in such statements as "*kwaze kwakuhle ukubona umntwana wesiNdebele, ophuma kumaNdebele aseZimbabwe efuna ukubhala ngathi amaNdebele, imbali yethu singaMaNdebele incindezekile kuyasijabulisa ukubona umuntu ofuna ukubhala ngathi...*" (It is a good thing to see a Ndebele hailing from Zimbabwe expressing interest in doing research about us as Ndebeles, our history as an ethnic group is marginalised and has not been captured adequately in written records). Such utterances were variably echoed in various formal and informal conversations in ways that reinforced my insider status and lifted some barriers I had anticipated, thus permitting easier access to research participants. Part of my easy access was made possible by the similarity of my *isiNdebele* language, which only slightly differed from my participants'. Most of the interviews were conducted in *isiNdebele* language as

[5] Petros Mahlangu is a tour guide at Kghodwana Cultural Village

per respondents' preference in terms of comfort and fluency. This proved very useful as a majority of participants saw me as an 'insider' displaying sensitivity to the preservation of *isiNdebele* language as part of Ndebele identity.

Following from the assumption that getting an insider status is fundamental in building trust with research participants, I constantly reflected on my position as a researcher and cautiously guarded against letting the research participants' expression of interest in my study obscure my analytic lenses. At many points during my fieldwork, there were constant references by research participants to my study being the most welcome and well situated to free Southern Ndebele identity from the shackles of marginality and best poised to preserve Ndebeles 'rich' history as part of the broader South African history. Such utterances highlighted some widely shared feelings of marginality, particularly by the elder generation. But the continued expression of interest to my study indexed to me the fundamental need to be wary of an insider status that will misconstrue my study as leaning towards providing an opportunity for people identified as Ndebele to unburden their experiences of marginality as they relate to Southern Ndebele identity. For this reason, I constantly altered my researcher posture in ways that did not compromise an analysis of the narratives of participants as actively imbued with their own subjectivities in making and attaching meaning to Ndebele identity and articulation of national belonging.

My insider position was temporarily put in a complicated position from the period April to June 2013. This was the time of male initiation rituals in parts of KwaMhlanga region and beyond when Ndebele identity was put under media spotlight. Whereas the insider status that I was bestowed with at the beginning of fieldwork had practically enabled me to build rapport with a majority of research participants, during the initiation rites phase my researcher status took a precarious position as I was sometimes suspected to be camouflaging my position as an

academic researcher while in actual fact I was representing media. In other words, I could not be trusted as a 'neutral' researcher during a period when the state and media were seen as invading the privacy of a culturally grounded practice, which is integral to Ndebele identity. This was understandable, given my position as a relatively young female researcher who could not escape cultural prohibitions, values and beliefs about the secrecy surrounding initiation rites in a society that is patriarchal and strongly adheres to traditionalism. There was a general feeling of betrayal, disrespect, accusations and suspicions against each other amongst some members of Southern Ndebele communities who sporadically hinted that some members of Southern Ndebele community were to be held responsible for death of initiates and attracting media coverage. Such tensions ethically challenged me to keep my personal views and understandings about the deaths of initiates and the role of state to myself and stick to the sincerity of my motives. I therefore listened to the informal conversations on initiates' deaths without judging as I negotiated entry into the research site. I had to constantly reflect on my position as a researcher who was not out to make any judgements but to understand initiation as a culturally embedded process through which some aspects of Southern Ndebele identity can be asserted. Thus in the midst of tensions and suspicions, my 'outsider' status was rendered more productive as I was reminded of Geertz (1999) suggestion that being an outsider enables a researcher to "discover who people think they are, what they think they are doing....".

As shall be elaborated in chapter six, the increasing number of the deaths of initiates in 2013 became a peculiar moment which did not only expose some of the undercurrents in the relationship between traditional society, Ndebele culture and the crafting of national identity. The consequent public attention and intense political debates surrounding the tragic events of the deaths of the initiates made it extremely difficult to visit KwaMhlanga and undertake research.

This experience confirmed to me that a researcher can never be totally an insider and the insider-outsider position bestowed to researchers is always in a state of flux, complex and is always negotiable throughout the research process. Although conducting interviews became a daunting task during this phase, my research journey was not totally halted as I was able to attend- as an invited guest, some initiation phases in some households, which did not require me to visit initiation schools. This rendered the research exercise more useful as I did not only observe the proceedings of these events to get informative data but engaged in informal conversations which intriguingly threw some light on the importance of initiation in the production of Southern Ndebele identity.

Data analysis

Because this study is positioned within a qualitative framework, the study dealt with rich detailed data that was generated by observing key political-cultural events and talking to research participants. It is for this reason that the study engaged in a cyclical, continuous and iterative engagement with data throughout the research process as it heeded to Bryman and Burgess's (1994:217) advice that "research design, data collection and analysis are a continuous" feature of a qualitative study. As some of the collected data was recorded; transcribing constituted a vital part of this study, which occurred concurrently with data collection as the research progressed, particularly after working hours during fieldwork. This became useful in so far as enabling me to get close and familiar with the data in ways that enabled me to remain open as I noted striking insights, recurring patterns and persisting issues which even raised some questions which determined the need to collect additional data, seek clarification and depth of issues relating to the study as I continued with the research.

As I did not consider data analysis as a particular distinct phase, the iterative and continuous analysis of fieldwork data from interviews, observations, fieldnotes, archival research and secondary literature cast a clearer picture of emerging patterns. It is through these emerging patterns that I was able to identify key signifiers of Southern Ndebele identity and dynamics that play out in the expression of Southern Ndebele identity and its relationship with national identity. The frequency of what the participants stated as well as negative cases, which offered divergent experiences or views and particular issues that were germane to answering the research questions were identified, organised and built into thematic meanings. Patton (1999:1192) enlightens us that negative cases are "cases that do not fit within the pattern." Because the study is primarily anchored on exploring how Southern Ndebele identity is evolving as it manifests itself distinctively in the context of the making of a national identity in a culturally diverse society, thematic analysis was used. Heavily borrowing from Braun and Clarke (2006:10) who posited that "a theme captures something important about the data in relation to the research question and represents some level of patterned response or meaning within the data set", the themes were then interpreted to foreground and explain linkages between the theoretical premises of this study, collected data and secondary literature. Braun and Clarke (2006) have comprehensively described thematic analysis to the extent of seeing it as flexible enough to allow the researcher's own interpretations of actors' experiences, subjectivities and context. Braun and Clarke's work was very useful in providing guidelines in using emerging themes, observable variables and weave threads of meanings from generated data into findings through which chapters and sub-titles were constructed to make visible the object of study with the aid of participants' own words as direct quotations to provide evidence.

Ethical Considerations

Given the recurring challenges and conundrums that post-apartheid South Africa grapples with in its nation-building processes, the topic that explores how ethnic identity of an under-researched group of people at the local level manifests itself and engages/diverges with national identity is timely and important. This entailed that I work with human subjects in ways that necessitated intimately delving deeper into their lives, experiences and interpretations as they related to the study, which required adherence to ethical principles. Dowling (2010) convincingly captures the need to adhere to ethics by stating that qualitative methods often involve invading someone's privacy and asking personal questions.

Because my study was primarily taken to fulfil the requirements of an award of a doctoral degree by the University of the Witwatersrand, I accorded due regard to the institution's requirements and ethical conduct in research. I applied and was granted ethical clearance by University of the Witwatersrand's Faculty of Humanities' Ethics Committee.

In South Africa, a country in which the issues of politics of belonging, identity and the question of who constitute the 'authentic' subject of the nation continue to occupy the centre stage and forging stable citizenship is challenged by sensitive issues of nativism, xenophobia, tribalism and racism, such a topic risked being a politically charged one that entailed protection of participants. Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2012) work highlights how the continuing salience of colonially inherited narratives of belonging and identity make it hard to resolve toxic questions of citizenship, ownership of resources, entitlement and belonging in post-apartheid South Africa. Ndlovu-Gatsheni's observations powerfully speak to some very pertinent social and political challenges of articulations of belonging in post-apartheid South Africa in ways that augmented the centrality

of heeding to ethical considerations and seeking respondents' informed consent to participate in the study. I procedurally sought informed consent in a manner suggested by McMillian and Schumacher (2006:143) that it is "....achieved by providing subjects with an explanation of the research, an opportunity to terminate their participation at any time with no penalty and full-disclosure of any risk associated with the study". The study was introduced to participants by stating my position as a doctoral student, full description of the study's purpose, various data collection techniques, right to participate and not participate and how the information gathered will only be used for academic purposes. I also sought consent to record interviews. I made it clear and emphasised from the onset that there were no costs or any material or monetary benefits tied to participation.

After giving as much information as possible to would-be participants about the study, I further explained the use of participants' consent form, which I had drafted in consultation with my supervisors. Some participants had no reservations in signing the consent form but a majority expressed discomfort in signing as they emphasised that they deemed verbal consent as adequate. Except for a few participants, the majority did not object to the use of an audio-tape recorder for interviews which was occasionally played back upon the participant's request. Interviews were conducted in places best suitable and comfortable enough for participants as per their suggestions and proposals.

It was considered vital to protect all participants' privacy and confidentiality even if participants had agreed to participate voluntarily. Babbie and Mouton (2001:523) rightly warned that "....subjects can be harmed by the analysis and reporting of data" in ways that indexed the need to take measures to protect collected data and participants' confidentiality. To this end, the

researcher sought participants' permission to use their names to which the majority of participants acceded to.

Limitations of the study

Positioned in the qualitative research design, exploration of the expression of Southern Ndebele identity as it intersects and diverges with the construction of a post-apartheid national identity is a cross-cutting theme that necessitated a greater focus on how assertion of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity crystallises around certain markers. In seeking to depart from existing studies, particularly the pioneering work of Lekgoathi (2006) on expressions of Ndebele identity, it focuses on mechanisms of invoking Ndebele identity in post-apartheid South Africa. It however cannot be read as exhaustive of all forms of Southern Ndebele's claims to particularism in the context of the production of a post-apartheid national identity. It in fact only focused on how notions of Southern Ndebele identity and culture is articulated, represented and promoted through specific events, memorialisation, performances, initiation rituals and material culture. Important to emphasise is that these signifiers of Southern Ndebele identity were not arbitrarily selected but instead were derived from themes, patterns and similarities that emerged from data and pointed to some key mechanisms in the expression of Southern Ndebele identity. The study thus attempts to make a contribution to scholarship on the assertion of belonging to ethnic identities and construction of national identity in South Africa through the empirical case study of Southern Ndebele identity without purporting to be exhaustive of all the particular ways of manifestations of Southern Ndebele identity. For these reasons, the thesis aims less of producing 'facts' about the ways in which Southern Ndebele identity is constituted but more of an empirically grounded in-depth understanding of the constitutive relationship in the expression of Southern Ndebele identity and national identity. Pertinent to the overriding aims of the study is

understanding the dynamics, contestations and mutations in the evolution of Southern Ndebele identity as it manifests itself in the culturally heterogeneous empirical case of KwaMhlanga region as impacting on and impacted upon by the context of post-apartheid nation-building.

Organisation of the thesis

This thesis is divided into seven chapters. The first chapter has provided the background to the study, briefly outlines the trends in existing literature to foreground the research gap and provide a niche for this study's own intervention. Also covered in chapter one is the discussion of the study's research objectives and questions, the rationale and the study's research design and techniques of data collection. I also discuss my positionality as a female researcher hailing from Zimbabwe and how my position influenced my fieldwork experiences and the reflexive positions I adopted as I collected and analysed data. I explain how I handled ethical challenges, analysed collected data and provide limitations of this study.

Chapter Two: A critical review of related literature is presented and the theoretical premises from influential thinkers on nationalism and ethnicity from which useful insights were derived that constituted the conceptual toolkit for illuminating the study's arguments.

Chapter Three: A genealogical historical evolution of Ndebele identity is discussed. It presents several theories that have been propounded to explain the origins of Ndebele identity and historical details and description of what distinguishes 'Transvaal Ndebele' from Mzilikazi's Ndebele with whom they are confused. The chapter also analyses the role of 'Native experts' in the creation of 'Transvaal Ndebele' and their bifurcation into 'Southern Transvaal Ndebele' and 'Northern Transvaal Ndebele'. The chapter covers key developments and numerous issues

which surrounded the definition of Ndebele as an identified group, its shifts and transformations under the weight of changing power dynamics across space and time. The politics of the establishment of KwaNdebele is also covered as a core aspect of this study. The main purpose of this chapter is to detail the different intricate historical and political processes that have combined to shape the evolution of Southern Ndebele identity to provide a nuanced understanding of at what point the people known as Southern Ndebele (who constitute the subject of this thesis) came to define themselves and also defined by others as such. The key argument foregrounded by this chapter is that Southern Ndebele identity like most identities has been fluid, malleable and shifting as it emerged in the context of the broader discursive-historical continuum from which consciousness of belonging to ethnicity crystalized.

Chapter Four: Examines heritage, commemoration and mobilisation of history as a constitutive element of Ndebele identity, which reveals the expression of Southern Ndebele identity in the context of the production of a post-apartheid South African national identity. The chapter primarily discusses what the post-apartheid government does in terms of heritage programmes, projects and policies to foster the idea of nation-building. The objective of this chapter is to show how consciousness of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity has been expressed through mobilisation of heritage and history in ways that render visible correspondences with the way heritage has been mobilised by the post-1994 South African state as part of nation-building. What emerges in this chapter is that in overlapping ways, mobilisation of belonging to Southern Ndebele revolves through heritage, which embodies the strands of the history of precariousness and heroism in ways that push to visibility its complex constitutive relationship with national identity.

Chapter Five: Focuses on discussing how material culture expresses a sense of belonging to Ndebele identity and how this relates to the articulation between Southern Ndebele identity and an evolving post-apartheid South African national identity. The discussion further provides an analysis of how the production of a South African national identity has appropriated aspects of Southern Ndebele material culture. Conversely, it examines how the modern and colours of the post-apartheid South African flag have been integrated in wall-paintings and beadwork as constitutive elements of Ndebele identity. The chapter thus pushes to the fore the argument that in the production and use of material culture such as beadwork, architectural designs and wall-paintings notions of Southern Ndebele identity are evoked in ways that reveal appropriation, adaptation and integration with modernity and consciousness of belonging to South African national identity.

Chapter Six: Discusses initiation rites as a form of expression of Southern Ndebele identity. Primarily focusing on the initiation rites of 2013, the chapter demonstrates that the deaths of initiates that occurred in KwaMhlanga region and beyond attracted media attention in ways that created tensions on issues of non-interference of the state in cultural rites and the state's obligations to constitutionally regulate the moral dilemmas of rights to life and rights to cultural practices. These tensions ruptured the prevailing functional relationship of Southern Ndebele identity and the production of national identity as was discussed in chapter Four and Five in ways that rendered transparent the thesis' argument that whilst there are interactions between expression to Ndebele identity and national identity there are times when they operate independently as revealed by initiation rites of 2013.

Chapter Seven: Provides the conclusion of the thesis, which zooms in on the idea that there is a complex articulation between Southern Ndebele identity and the idea of a nation in post-

apartheid South Africa. The chapter focuses on summarising how all chapters contributed to the thesis' over-arching objective of framing the precise nature of the articulation of Ndebele-ness and national identity. The summation of key arguments also wraps up on how the expression of Southern Ndebele identity has evolved in historical contexts where the meanings of Ndebele identity and the nation have changed quite significantly. Research contributions and recommendations for further research are offered.

CHAPTER 2

Literature Review: Nationalism and ethnicity.

Introduction

This chapter reviews the main debates in the study of nationalism and ethnicity internationally. These debates provide a useful basis for analyzing the articulation of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity and its convergence and or divergence with the crafting of a post-apartheid South African national identity. Overlapping and converging points of reference in theories of nationalism and ethnicity are a feature that dominates the academic field of unpacking the collective identity formation processes. In light of these overlaps, this chapter will consider identity construction as located in the sometimes, conflated theoretical debates of nationalism and ethnicity albeit taking cognizance that these concepts are not the same.

The question of what exactly is identity is central insofar as it undergirds this study's conceptual foundation. It is from this premise that it was considered appropriate to consider insights from scholars who have dealt with identity as an analytical category before pushing to the fore the theoretical debates on ethnicity and nationalism. In illuminating identity as it empirically plays out in the everyday expression of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity, it benefits to consider works of scholars like Calhoun (1994) who opined on the contestations between similarities and differences as the primary concerns in defining identity. According to Calhoun (1994:9) "there is no simple sameness unmarked by differences, but likewise, no distinction is not dependent on some background of common recognition." We learn from Calhoun's proposition that identities are made and embedded through processes of difference, exclusion, inclusion and relations with

the 'other'. Similarly, Jenkins (1996:6) further enlightens us by revealing that, "the human world is unimaginable without some means of knowing who others are and some sense of who we are." Calhoun and Jenkins's work are amongst a plethora of literature that attempts to make sense of identity and the processes through which identity is formulated, which lays the base for understanding the centrality of social relations in the production of identity.

Other scholars have added a dimension that is set to enrich the study's theoretical lenses by critiquing the use of the term 'identity' for its conceptual limitations. Geschiere (2009:31) illustrates the limitations of identity by arguing that it "has unfortunate tendency to fix what is in a constant state of flux and it often acquires teleological implications, suggesting that there is a basic need for the group or a person to produce a clearly outlined and unequivocal identity." Geschiere then brings to the surface the merits of using belonging as an analytic category precisely as a process that dually constitutes claiming acceptance and differentiation from others in ways that fundamentally help this study to explore how belonging to Southern Ndebele identity has been shaped. Brubaker and Cooper (2002:2) also made contributions that made visible the ambiguities and conflicting use of identity as an analytical category by noting that "it is too ambiguous, too torn between 'hard' and 'soft' meanings, essentialist connotations and constructivist qualifiers...." Theirs is an expression of concern with the observation that if identity is fluid, malleable and shifting, it becomes difficult to work with it as an analytical category precisely because of the dangers of reification inherent in it and contradicting attributes. Brubaker and Cooper (2002:8) then redeem us by suggesting the use of identification as it captures identity as a "contingent product of social and political action and as a ground or basis of further action." This study heeded Brubaker and Cooper's warning to enable it to reflect on the production of Southern Ndebele identity from processes of social interaction, the context

within which it is produced, the dynamics and the processes of mapping of boundaries of sameness and other which are made possible by the use of identification.

In mitigating some of the dangers that underlie the use of identity as propagated by Brubaker and Cooper (2002) the study follows their richly instructive reference to identity as "processual, interactive development of the kind of the collective self- understanding, solidarity or groupness that can make collective action possible." Such an understanding emboldens this chapter's foregrounding argument that ambiguity and ambivalence surrounds the relationship between ethnicity and nationalism. The relationship between ethnicity and nationalism is revealed in some scholarly reflections, which have highlighted the ways in which ethnicity was handled in many African countries in their nation-building projects and how South Africa uniquely embraced ethnicity in its attempt to achieve nationalist cohesion. The chapter also fundamentally notes that the rich corpus of academic debates and conversations on the study of nationalism and ethnicity have tended to polarize their view points along primordialists-modernist spectrum or what is sometimes referred to as essentialist –constructivist /instrumentalist perspectives. Drawing from various scholarly reflections and debates on nationalism and ethnicity, the chapter is underpinned by the intention to show how these perspectives bear on the analysis of the production of Southern Ndebele identity in the context of the making of South African identity across space and time.

Primordialist articulation of collective identities

Scholars who endorse a primordialist view of nations posit a view that nations have existed since time immemorial. Primordialists resign to an organic view of nations, which upholds national belonging as a natural given for people hence nations are to be seen as expressions of belonging rooted in language, ethnicity, or territory. The nation is cast as an identity which is inherently ethnic in character and the idea that pre-existing cultural traditions and histories form a convincing foundational myth for the construction of identities is at the centre of primordialists' insights. For Geertz, who is one of the leading voices of scholars who proffered a primordial theorization of collective identities argued that feelings of belonging derive from pre-existing cultural traditions and histories which create bonds. These ethno-histories and ethno-heritages are reconstructed and reinterpreted by communities at different points in history, with past history of a priori ethnic bond being of great significance for the survival of the nation. Primordialists' position assumes that "claims to authenticity and right of collective national self-determination" (Brown, 1999: 282), derive from a plethora of cultural and historical commonalities such as common language, myths of common ancestry, common religion and common language which forms an emotional imperative around which national belonging crystalizes as pre-determined and natural. Thus in Geertz's view a nation derives from:

> ... the "givens" - or, more precisely, as culture is inevitably involved in such matters, the assumed 'givens' - of social existence: immediate contiguity and kin connection mainly, but beyond them the givenness that stems from being born into a particular religious community, speaking a particular language, or even a dialect of a language, and following particular social practices. These congruities of blood, speech, custom and so on, are seen to have an ineffable and at times overpowering coerciveness in and of themselves... (Geertz 1973: 259)

Nations as emanating from perennial ethnicity is a view that scholars such as Anthony D. Smith referred to when he emphasized the rootedness of nations in antiquity, ethnicities and myths. Arguing for primordial connection of national belonging and identities which existed within parameters of distinct pre-modern ethno-heritages, Smith (1986:15) saw "myths, memories, values and symbols" as essentially the core around which the formation and shape of a nation is sustained. He then defined a nation as "a population sharing a historic territory, common myths and historical memories, mass, public culture, a common economy and common legal rights and duties from all members" (Smith, 1996:447). For Smith, nations have taken different shapes at different points in history and the past history of a priori ethnic bonds is of great importance for the survival of the nation. Primordial theoretical frameworks provide useful insights that go a long way in understanding why historical foundations are used as an anchor to claims to nationhood especially in the African context. Primordial articulations even ring true when one considers South Africa's long history of contestations and struggles over imaginations of national identity. For instance "a deeply rooted Afrikaner identity (Hofmeyr, 1987:95) was propagated by the apartheid governments as they used events such as 'Great Trek', Anglo-Boer war and development of the Afrikaans language among others to project and awaken primordial attachments and historical claims to nationhood. The authenticity of the historical foundations propagated by Afrikaner nationalism were however heavily challenged by African nationalism which sought to define, enforce and maintain a non-racial articulation of nationalism which accommodates diverse cultures and identities.

Primordialists' perspectives threw the study of nations, nationalism and national identity into sharp relief and provided a rich tapestry of insights, which serve as a toolkit in enabling us to

understand how struggles over imagination of national belonging in South Africa drew from myths and primordial connections.

Modernist/constructivist perspectives

Primordial theorization triggered a robust debate from intellectual voices that rebutted primordialists' claim by taking a modernist position. Modernists saw nations as constructs, which are invented or imagined as an expression of the will of individuals. Hence Benedict Anderson's (1983) famously cited seminal work, which defines a nation as 'imagined community'. Representing modernist articulation in his widely cited and ground-breaking work, Anderson (1983:15) elaborated that the nation must be imagined because it is impossible for members of even a small nation to know, meet or even hear of most of their fellow members yet in the mind of each lives the image of the communion". McClintock's (1997:89) work adds credence to Anderson's conceptualization when she posited that "as such, nations are not simply phantasmagoria of the mind, as systems of cultural representations whereby people come to imagine a shared experience of identification with an extended community, they are historical practices through which social difference is both invented and performed." In this sense, the psychological imperative of identifying with and belonging to a national community constitutes a nation. McClintock's position is germane in understanding how nation-building projects in South Africa nurtured a consciousness of belonging by inventing social differences through foundational myths. For instance, as chapter three will show, South Africa's apartheid past shows clearly how legitimization of exclusion and discrimination was used to engineer imaginations of belonging and nationhood. The thesis arguably locates the crystallization of

Southern Ndebele identity into an ethnic mode within this context of the politics of exclusion, discrimination and prejudice.

Modernist scholars saw French and American revolutions and the shift that ensued from agrarian to industrial capitalist societies as propitious for the emergence of a nation as an ideal, necessary and legitimate form of social organization of modern politics. For scholars like Gellner (1983), societal re-organization ensured from the shift from agrarian/feudal societies to industrial/capitalist societies, which necessitated the rise of nations as a higher order of solidarity. In dismissing the naturalness of nations as primordialists' claimed; Gellner elaborated that nationalism contingently emerged as a functional response to the needs of industrialization. Thus nationalism revived cultures which are "often its own inventions, or are modified out of all recognition and are necessary to satisfy the needs of industrialization (Gellner, 1983:55). As represented by the leading voice of Gellner (1983) and Anderson (1983), the modernists further elaborated that the advent of modernization necessitated the grounding of political units in a specific culturally defined unit as an appeal to the functional needs of an industrial society and the logic of capitalism. The hallmark in Gellner's argument on how nationalism emerged from modernity lies in his analysis of the industrial society's needs such as a literate homogenous population and development of a common language as conditions, which necessitated political units to be grounded in a culture that offered opportunities to mobilise on imaginary belonging to a nation. Industrial capitalism, Gellner opines, primarily mediated national consciousness. Gellner's position neatly resonated with that of Anderson (1983) whose modernist account on nations centred on how written vernaculars emerged from the logic of capitalism. Anderson demonstrates how printed languages proliferated to larger societies through technological

innovation, which came as a result of the emergence of capitalism. A common consciousness of an imaginary belonging to the nation was then made possible through this print capitalism, which as it thrived, standardized common languages and essentially created cultures that were crucial for building an "image of antiquity so central to the subjective idea of the nation" (Anderson 1991:43). It is through print capitalism that boundaries of inclusion and exclusion were discursively set as people became aware of their linguistic kinships.

The central tenets of modernist perspectives rested on the view that nations come into existence through an act of imagination when people come to believe that they share an experience of identification with a particular extended community. Anderson (1983:15) elaborated that "the nation must be imagined because it is impossible for members of even the smallest nation to know most of their fellow members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" The nation, therefore, as Anderson argues is primarily constituted in the mind as people acquire meaning and a sense of unique belonging that is distinct from 'outsiders'. This act of imagination so central in Anderson's approach dovetails neatly with Gellner's (1964:168) proposal which holds that "nationalism is not the awakening of nations to self-consciousness: it invents nations where they do not exist." Embedded forms of inclusion and exclusion are then primary points through which national identity is discursively constructed. Citizenship then becomes a significant 'signifier of membership within a national and sovereign collectivity' (Davies, 2009:76).

The significance of the state in relation to the nation and nationalism has been examined by some strands of thought under the modernist paradigm in a way that at this juncture is deemed

necessary to give attention. Early modernists like Kohn (1945) stressed that the state is essentially bound up with emergence of nationalism, Breuilly (1993) took a modernist position which did not deny the imperative of industrialization and capitalism in stirring nationalism but slanted towards giving a political explanation that sees the state as central. Breuilly (1993:15) thus postulates: "the key to an understanding of nationalism lies in the character of the modern state, which nationalism both opposes and claims as its own." It is through the state's power that nationalism is constituted and defined. In elaborating how national identities crystalize in the context of the presence of the modern state, Breuilly argued that attributes of the state such as notions of sovereignty, territorialisation and presence of a civil society lays the ground for arousing the consciousness of belonging to a national group. At the centre of Breuilly's analytic position is the notion of power wherein nationalism is a form of political action. As Breuilly elaborates, the presence of nation trenchantly ensures the survival and legitimacy of the state in a way that dovetails neatly with Bloom's (1990: 56) observation that "power politics create a state, but its endurance is guaranteed only if the psychological nation is built."

The boundaries between the state and the nation can be delineated and T.K Oommen (1997) throws this distinction into sharp relief when he viewed the state as a legal entity that is embedded with authority and power and the nation as a:

> territorial entity to which people have emotional attachment and in which they invest a moral meaning: it is a homeland-ancestral or adopted. Nationality is the collective identity which the people of the nation acquire by identifying with the nation" (Oommen, 1997:33)

As viewed by Oommen, people are emotionally attached to the nation through a psychological imperative-a view that dovetails neatly with Kohn's (1945) observation when he wrote that:

> nationality is a state of mind corresponding to a political fact or striving to correspond to a political fact. This definition reflects the genesis of nationalism and modern nationality, which was born in the fusion of a certain state of mind with a given political form.....

This distinction depicts "the state as a legal entity and the nation as a psychological entity" as Britten (2005:34) rightly observed. This opens a room for giving further attention to the question of the relationship between the nation and the state. Harris (2009:58) rescues this question by suggesting that:

> The relationship between society and the state is institutionalized through citizenship in the form of the nation state. The individual, the state, the legitimacy of the state and the identity of the political community, and thus the ability to pursue the interests of the people and legitimize the actions on their behalf all merge into the politics of the nation-state....

From the modernist angle, the formation of the modern state was propitious for the emergence of nationalism and this got tied up in the idea of the nation-state.

Early modernists advanced viewpoints, which undeniably counteracted some of the yawning gaps left by primordialists. This theoretical breakthrough is credited for providing invaluable insights, which are mostly relevant as a gaze for the analysis of the emergence of nationalism in Africa and South Africa in particular which is the focus of this thesis. In particular modernists' reflections have served a great deal in providing a framework through which the emergence of nationalism in Africa can be traced to changes brought by ideas of national self-determination, industrialization, modern state and education. This has received enormous attention in the works

of Coleman (1954), Martin (1958), Rolland and Fage (2005) and Carr (2008) among a plethora of scholars who have articulated decolonization as imbued in national liberation terms and by extension an expression of African nationalism. Coupled with the modern state structure, which was modelled on European state, the elements of modernization captured by modernists as necessary for the emergence of nations in Europe contingently impacted on nation formation in Africa. The values embodied by the state and cultures within its borders became encapsulated in the sense of nationhood and belonging to a nation.

As it borrows heavily from the modernist paradigm, the scholarship which sees the struggle against colonialism as an expression of African nationalism speak powerfully about the role of education and how it directly led to the crystallization of nationalism. Access to education for some Africans enabled them to be imbued with ideals of the coveted national self-determination and democracy as they mobilized masses in expressing disillusionment with European colonial government and imperialist oppression. In the period 1960s-1970s, this became a body of thinking couched in self-defining 'sovereign' nation-states terms rested in clamoring to recover their legitimacy from the European state through a decolonization process that became associated with broad African nationalism. In its analysis of the production of Southern Ndebele identity in the context of the making of South African identity, this thesis greatly benefits from modernist approaches as it parallels some reflections on broad African nationalism by exploring South Africa as a last decoloniser. The study notes that as a last decoloniser, South Africa came up with another discourse on nation-building which saw diversity as indispensable for crafting an all-inclusive national identity and social cohesion. Insights from modernist approaches which frame African nationalism as located in resistance to colonialism will by extension go a long way in

enabling the analysis to tease some of the complexities about articulation of belonging to Southern Ndebele ethnic identity in the context of the crafting of the rainbow nation which is foundationally underpinned by accepting multiple identities.

Perennialists/Ethnonationalists

In endorsing their views, early modernists scholars gave little or no attention to how pre-modern historical roots impinge on the formation of nations. In attempting to fill the gap that plagued the early modernists assumptions, scholars like Anthony Smith and Walker Connor casted the net wider by advancing a modernist conception of nations which took cognizance of pre-modern ethnic communities as essential. Placing a high premium on the crucial role of primordial past in the construction of the present led Smith (1995:13) to convincingly allude to a niche, which claims that, "a nation maybe a modern social formation, but it is in some sense based on pre-existing cultures, identities and heritages." A pre-modern ethnic core trenchantly lies at Smith's position on nations. Without necessarily resigning to the idea of primordiality of nations, this theoretical position stresses that nations are modern phenomena with primordial ethnic attachments. Theirs is then a theoretical debate that is usually captured as an ethnosymbolic articulation in the plethora of studies on nationalism precisely because their position sees a continuation, interfacing and interlocking of "pre-modern and modern forms of social cohesion, without overlooking the changes brought about by modernity" (Conversi, 2006:21). The analytic categories and views propounded by ethnosymbolists immensely enables this thesis to congeal its understanding of how the South African state works through history as it harnesses myths, memories, symbols and traditional values to lend meanings to its formulations of a post-

apartheid national identity. Nowhere has the use of selected historical narratives and memories become more conspicuous than in the heritage discourse, which is utilized as an indispensable conduit in forging a compelling myth to awaken and configure a consciousness of national belonging in post-apartheid South Africa. As shall be elaborated in chapter four, belonging to Southern Ndebele identity has been expressed through heritage and commemoration discourses in ways, which lend credence to ethnosymbolists' position on the crucial role of pre-existing heritages in arousing a consciousness of belonging.

Ethnicity

Analyzing how belonging to Southern Ndebele ethnic identity is constructed and its intersections with the crafting of national identity, which is predicated on acceptance of diversity warrants an examination of key theoretical position on ethnicity. Scholars like Smith and Connor take a standpoint, which sees ethnicity as crucial and a causative factor for the emergence and discursive formation of nations in ways that elicit some curiosity in terms of examining theories that have been propounded to explain the formation of collective identities like ethnicity. Such an examination will not only help in affording a framework for the analysis of the process by which groups become ethnically defined (Southern Ndebele ethnicity in particular) but will go a long way in providing insights that will help clarify some of the narratives on how belonging to ethnic identities as they relate and overlap with articulating belonging to post-apartheid South Africa's national identity are debated. In making sense of the production of Southern Ndebele identity in the context of the politics of crafting of South African national identity across space and time, this thesis defends a position that sees the relationship between ethnicity and

trajectories of African national project. Following arguments of scholars like Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a), Msindo (2012), Mhlanga (2010) and Muzondidya and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2007) among many others who posited that the imperative of nation-building in Africa could not afford to ignore ethnicity as a phenomenon which proliferated much of Africa's socio-political landscape, it is deemed necessary to engage with how ethnicity was dealt with in nation-building projects. The following section therefore embarks on exploring the nation-building processes in Africa and national identity formation as it related to ethnicity in Africa.

Nationalism and ethnicity in Africa

The genesis of modern nation-building in Africa is normally traced to the colonial period when it was used as a road map to dislodge colonial administration. As captured by Young (1975) national feelings of shared experience of oppression and colonial subjugation were generated during the colonial period. Young's observation finds great purchase if one pays close scrutiny to how decolonization and struggle for independence were deeply- embedded and expressed in national liberation terms. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a) has argued that as African nationalism took various trajectories, the years from late 1950s to 1960s could be characterized as marked by discontent against colonial administration policies and the colonial state hence the manifestation of nationalism. In the same breadth, Welsh (1996:477) noted that, "in the heydays of independence, [beginning] in Ghana in 1957 and accelerating in the 1960s and beyond, "nation building" was assumed to be the priority of all the newly emerging African states." However such an observation leaves one hard pressed with the question of why the anti-colonial struggle argued to have been couched in the rhetoric of nationalism happened in this particular period? It

is here that scholars like Coleman (1954) have thrown this question into a sharp relief by summarizing some of the factors, which could be argued to have led to the rise of nationalism in Africa. Education, which lends much credence to Anderson's theoretical reflections on the study of nations has been seen as one of the fundamental factors that led to the rise of African nationalism. With particular reference to western educated elites, Coleman captures that education produced the kind of Africans who led and expressed African nationalism because they were literate enough to read and embrace Western ideas of democracy, pluralism and national popular sovereignty, which then acquired mass appeal. He emphasizes that most nationalist movements were led by educated elites who had acquired western education.

Colonial encounter and formation of ethnic identities in Africa

As this thesis is primarily anchored on an analysis of the evolution of an ethnic identity which has continued to be a visible and distinct marker of belonging in the context of making of South African national identity, it is considered vital to engage with how ethnic identity formation were constructed in the context of colonial encounter in Africa. This forms a necessary angle that will ultimately enable one to make sense of how the phenomenon of ethnicity was engaged with in Africa's nation-building projects.

It has become commonplace that arguments put forward by constructionists theories still command a great deal of influence, which cut across many disciplines on the study of ethnicity. Contrary to formulations of primordialists who have been mainly challenged for relegating ethnicity to the fringes of a primordial bond through which group solidarity mainly find its meaning; a burgeoning literature on ethnicity in Africa rests on articulating it as socially

constructed. It is in this light that the role of colonialism in shaping the formation of ethnic groups in Africa is considered vital.

The African people's organizational systems and how they structured their social interactions prior to colonial encounter is primarily used as a locus of reference in the plethora of studies, which see ethnicity as a colonial invention. It is in this terrain of thinking that scholars like Eriksen (1993:88) advanced the argument that:

> categorical labels with no social significance are likely to be unimportant, and in pre-colonial times groups were politically organized along lines of kinship and personal loyalties and usually did not require categorical labels of greater scope.

The political formation and social organization within pre-colonial African societies forms a critical base from which to argue that this socially reality was altered in the arbitrary labelling process that did not dovetail neatly with how African people saw themselves or were described by others. What were assumed to be pre-existing, clearly defined ethnic lines were at the centre of the colonial state's administration process of codifying and reworking cultural tradition of pre-colonial indigenous structures. Drawing attention to this widely held perspective of how African ethnic labels emerged as colonial creations, Ardener (1989) for example vehemently argued that the labelling process impacted on self-identification and gave African people identity appellations. In his view, the labelling process entailed the classification of people through a 'cognitive map' which allowed the colonial administrators to set parameters through which groups could distinguish themselves from others. A further related argument is advanced by Bayart (1993:51) who posited that "the precipitation of ethnic identities becomes incomprehensible if it is divorced from colonial rule".

How African people came to claim ethnic allegiances and affiliations within colonial administration's set parameters which didnot reflect the nature of social realities of pre-colonial African societies is a question that provokes a need for further engagement with how colonialism shaped ethnicities in Africa. Hobsbawn and Ranger (1983) and Ranger's (1993) works come as a relief as they pushed the boundaries advanced by the perspective on colonial invention of African ethnic identities further. Ranger drew attention to how collective self-consciousness in Africa was fuelled by colonialism. Ranger framed his argument from the premise that pre-colonial Africa constituted of societies who identified and articulated consciousness of belonging through overlapping, multi-layered and fluid allegiances as they responded to realities of particular contexts. In his famously cited 'invention of traditions' model, Ranger powerfully argued that in establishing their colonial administrative units and state structures, Europeans brought rigid 'invented traditions' which they used to set rigid parameters within which socio-political identification, indigenous cultural traditions and association transpired. As he puts it:

> The colonial period in Africa...was not only marked by the importation of European neo-traditional inventions of identity-the regiment, the boarding school, the refeudalised country house-and the inclusion of Africans within them as subordinates, but also by systematic invention of African traditions –ethnicity, customary law, "traditional" religion... (Ranger 1983:63).

It is within this context that ethnicity as a primary classification and categorization of belonging crystalized and became deeply entrenched in Africa as the fluidity and dynamism that characterized pre-colonial Africa was greatly altered. Illife (1979:234) compellingly captured how colonialism altered prevailing social organization and political formation in Tanzania in a way that lends credence to Ranger's formulation when he noted that:

> The British wrongly believed that Tanganyikas belonged to tribes; Tanganyikas created tribes to function within the colonial framework.... [T]he new political

> geography...would have been transient had it not coincided with similar trend among African. They too had to live amidst bewildering social complexity, which they ordered in kinship terms and buttressed with invented history. Moreover, Africans wanted effective units of action just as officials wanted effective government...Europeans believed Africans belonged to tribes; Africans built tribes to belong to...

Not only is Illife's observation is instructive of ethnic identities as products of colonial creations but it enables one to glean how Africans themselves participated in appropriating ethnic labels appended to them and ultimately developing bounded ethnically defined groups that we see today. In determining their own identities, colonized subjects retained some degree of agency. The outcome of ethnicity is thus seen as resulting from a negotiated and contested process between administrative authorities and the Africans. A relevant observation was made by Chanock's (1985) study of how 'customary law' in Malawi was a result of the transformations of African tradition through a negotiated process, which actively involved the colonial state and the pre-existing systems of African patriarchy.

A further related argument, which highlights how the roots of ethnic identities in Africa could be traced to the colonial administrative era was proffered by Vail (1989). Taking the direction of invention paradigm, Vail's articulation pushed its claims further by paying attention to how the intellectuals who he saw as consisting of European missionaries, anthropologists and African intellectuals, indirect rule and urbanization variably contributed in entrenching consciousness of belonging to ethnic identities in Africa. In elaborating why these three conditions are crucial in the analysis of ethnicity in Africa Vail explained (1989:12) that:

> European missionaries, assuming that Africans properly belonged to 'tribes' incorporated into the curricula of their mission schools the lesson that pupils had clear identities, backing up this lesson with studies of language and 'tribal custom' in the vernacular. Thus, mission education socialized the young into accepting tribal membership, and to be a member of a 'tribe' became 'modern and fashionable through its close association with education....

In pulling this thread of argument together, Vail observed that it was commonplace to find missionaries' evangelizing process entailing a tribal labelling and appending of African societies.

On demonstrating how indirect rule cultivated and laid a base for consciousness of ethnic identities, Vail argued that the colonial state administration requirements necessitated the use of the consciously crafted divide and rule strategy. The divide and rule strategy was embedded in the colonial state's indirect rule whereby it appointed chiefs and traditional leaders to govern African societies. Alongside affording the colonial state some reduced involvement with local communities, which was politically and economically expedient for the colonial state, the strategy went a long way in stirring ethnicity. The kinship or tribal entities, which were governed by the appointed African intermediaries who constituted of chiefs and traditional leaders, were crafted by the colonial state and the contours of its boundaries were far removed from matching the realities of African societies' past. This presented a complicated social context, which saw ethnicity thriving as individuals resigned to express and legitimate their belonging to existing tribal or ethnic lines. Fukui and Markakis (1994:7) thus exposed that:

> As time passed and circumstances changed the label came to designate a level of social interaction, which can also function as a group in conflict situations. Africans found it convenient, if not advantageous, to belong to a recognized 'tribe' when dealing with the colonial state. The 'invention of tribes' in the colonial setting, therefore, is not simply an administrative expedient employed by alien rulers, but also a native response to a drastically altered socioeconomic and political environment...

Vail lastly analyzed urbanization as a condition that critically captures the argument on ethnic consciousness as a colonial invention. Labour migration increased in the context of urbanization resulting in urban migrant workers resigning to expressing their sense of belonging to broad-

based cultural identity. Urbanization was thus a context that made ethnicity functional and necessary for migrant workers.

Various scholars' studies on ethnicity in Africa proved that transformations brought by colonialism commanded a great deal of influence in shaping ethnic consciousness. For instance Vansina (1990:247) in reference to her observation of the invention of African traditions in Equatorial Africa, argued that:

> The cognitive part of the old tradition, its very core, went into irreversible crisis. ... The Europeans first built their own cognitive view of rural African society and then imposed it on daily life. ... The only concession to the equatorial way of life was to preserve some cultural flotsam and jetsam, and to erect a structure labeled customary law, which was utterly foreign to the spirit of the former tradition. Customary law was the headstone on its grave....

Vansina's argument demonstrates the degree to which processes of colonial domination transformed Africa's pre-existing indigenous structures.

An examination of the literature on ethnicity in Africa and most importantly how it casts the role of colonial domination in constructing African identities immensely provide insights which best explain the crystallization of Ndebele ethnicity apartheid's homeland system. The thesis centrally observes that the South African state's policy under apartheid imposed a politicized use of the category 'ethnicity' to engineer notions of exclusivist nation-hood, but it also pays attention to the academic reflections which cautions the over-stating of colonial power in shaping African ethnicity. Some scholars like Berman (1998) rightly reminds us that African agency needs not be underplayed in articulating the construction of African collective identities. For example he aptly argued that:

> the invention of tradition and ethnic identities, along with polities, religions, trading networks and regional economies were present in Africa long before the European

> proconsuls arrived to take control and attempt to integrate the continent more directly into the global economy of capitalist modernity.(Berman,1998:130)

The limits of over-emphasizing the invention of tradition models are also strongly shared by Hamilton (1998) in her analysis of Zulu ethnicity. She argued that pre-existing indigenous discourses such as symbolic forms and forces adapted as material requisites for invented traditions in the colonial era. In the same breath Spear (1993:26) observed that: "precisely because struggles over tradition, custom and ethnicity are so embedded in local discourse and so emotionally fraught, they are readily evoked but not easily created." These scholars aptly call for attention to be drawn to the historical value of many materials of Africa's pre-colonial past, which neatly resonated with colonialism's invention of traditions. Similarly Ndlovu-Gatsheni's (2009:214) work captures that "ethnic identities across sub-Saharan Africa has proven to be complex, protean expressions of distinctive and particularistic historical experiences and memories." Ndlovu-Gatsheni's work particularly argues that African identities have too complex a history, which resists essentialization of traditions and simple over-emphasis of colonial constructions of ethnicity. This paradigm is useful insofar as offering a dimension, which does not underplay African agency in capturing how ethnic identities of colonized subjects were constituted in the context of colonialism.

In analyzing the production of Southern Ndebele identity in the context of the formation of national identity the study takes cognizance of arguments advanced by scholars like Ndlovu-Gatsheni Berman (1998), Hamilton (1998) Spear (2003), Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009) who warned against over-stating colonial power and ethnicity being imposed from above. However, Legkoathi's work befittingly provides indispensable and useful insights in understanding how the construction of colonized subjects' ethnic identities were entangled in power dynamics embedded in the structural colonial domination. The insights become even more indispensable

for analyzing Ndebele identity whose form and content was transformed into an ethnic mode in the complex history of apartheid wherein ethnicity was overtly used for political purposes to sustain an exclusive Afrikaner nationalist project. Not only did this colonial encounter alter the flexibility, cultural fluidity and pluralism that characterized pre-colonial Ndebele societies as Legkoathi (2014) emphasizes, but a consciousness of ethnically charged claims ensued that reinforced Ndebele ethnicity. Legkoathi has remarked that "like other pre-colonial African societies the Ndebele existed within a reality of multiple and overlapping identities and while ethnicity may or may not have existed as a distinct category, it was most certainly not a primary marker of identity or group consciousness amongst them". His analysis of the ethnic category as insufficient to capture the form and content of pre-colonial Ndebele identity is attuned to the perspective that see ethnicity as a relatively modern construct that emerged from colonial impositions in Africa. This has also been recently revealed by Mamdani's (2012) work when he problematized ethnicity as a framework to explain pre-colonial Northern Nigerian societies.

Ethnicity: A hindrance or necessary constituent of crafting national identity in Africa

Because colonial states had attempted to ossify African identities into rigid ethnic groupings, through its systems of divide and rule, one of the major challenges that confronted African nationalist at independence was that of ethno-culturally diverse society. Crafting and nurturing a consciousness of belonging to a homogenized national identity out of diverse ethnic groupings was a challenge that saw political organization centering on the nation-state as the dominant model. On this scholars like Lewis (1965), Davidson (1992), Welsh (1996) Berman (1996),

Moore (2003) and Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009a) among others have observed that the project of nation-building that topped the agenda of post-colonial Africa retreated from acknowledging the legitimacy of ethnicity which was largely seen as inimical to the crafting of a homogenized national identity. Holding together forces, which had coalesced in the struggle against colonialism was at the core of most post-colonial national projects. Rebuttal of ethnicity as a form of parochialism, inimical, retrogressive and a force sitting uneasily with the project of nation-building was even pronounced by leaders like Kwame Nkrumah who had this to say:

> We must insist that in Ghana in the higher reaches of our national life, there should be no reference to Fantes, Ashantis, Ewes, Fas, Danagombas, "strangers", and so forth, but we should call ourselves Ghananians, all brothers and sisters, members of the same community-the state of Ghana.

Similarly, the former president of Mozambique, Samora Machel's famous phrase 'for the nation to live, the tribe must die' aptly captures that ethnic identities were viewed with hostility and dismissed as a parochial force that can plague the nation-building process, subvert political stability and impede the establishment of social cohesion. Indeed the inhospitable approach of the post-colonial African nation-building to ethnicity and the potential claims to which it could give rise to has received extensive amount of academic attention which forms a body of studies which feed into capturing the nation-building processes in post-colonial Africa. Laakso and Olukoshi (1996:29) for example stated that ethnic consciousness was seen as inherently negative in political terms and dysfunctional in the task of nation-building." African states like Zimbabwe, Tanzania, Ghana, Kenya and Zambia designed nationalistic ideologies, which placed a high premium on the idea that everyone formed part of the whole (Chazan, 1992). But scholars like Berman (1996:306) refreshingly points to the ambiguity surrounding African nationalists'

approach to ethnicity as anti-thetical and inimical to the national project as he opined that "[African nationalist] in the open secret of African politics, sedulously attend to the maintenance of ethnic networks of patronage that are the basis of their power." As he further explains, "post-colonial attempts at nation-building were overlaid on top of ethnically defined patronage politics, which rapidly reproduced itself within national institutions of states and parties." Berman's argument even calls for greater consideration in light of how ethnicity has continued to be a major challenge in the project of forging a common national identity in most of post-colonial African societies.

A number of African states' have continued to be haunted and plagued by the spectre of ethnicity despite concerted efforts to suppress it as a disruptive force in achieving national integration. For example, states like Zimbabwe saw ethnicised violence engulfing its Matabeleland and Midlands provinces, which are largely dominated by people identified as Ndebele ethnic group immediately after independence. According to Eppel (2004), this violence was in the form of massacres, mass beatings and destruction of property, popularly known in political and academic circles as *Gukurahundi*.[6] Such puzzles about the salience of ethnicity and the claims to which it gave rise to led scholars like Ndlovu-Gatsheni and Muzondidya (2007) to extensively engage with ethnicity in Zimbabwe and posit that ethnicity, alongside race has continued to shape and influence the economic, social and political life of Zimbabwe since the achievement of independence in 1980. They stress that the Zimbabwe's nation-building project of the early 1980s glossed over ethnic configurations of the inherited state's structures and institutions, which enacted and reproduced ethnicity. Indeed there are various examples of African states that

[6] Gukurahundi is a Shona expression meaning 'the first rain that washes away the chaff of the last harvest before the spring rains'.

witnessed vagaries of ethnically motivated clashes and tensions, which haunted and challenged the projects of crafting social cohesion and homogenized national identity. Kenya for example is a case in point, which led Ogude (2002:206) to opine that, "the fact remains that four decades after the ushering in of a new nation-state there still exists space for the mobilization of ethnic consciousness in modern Kenya." These examples cast light on the limits and inadequacies of nation-building trajectories that did not embrace ethnicity to achieve social cohesion.

The continuing salience of ethnicity to trump most post-colonial African societies made it a field of academic interest in ways, which saw the inadequacies of the rebuttal of ethnicity in post-colonial nationalism coming out strongly in many of the writings. Lewis (1971:18) had this to say:

> any idea that one can make different peoples into a nation by suppressing the religious, tribal or regional or other affiliations to which they themselves attach the highest political significance is simply a non-starter. National loyalty cannot immediately supplant tribal loyalty; it has to be built on top of tribal loyalty by creating a system in which all the tribes feel that there is room for self-expression...."

On the same line some like Laasko and Olukoshi (1996: 15) have observed that "'[m]any African one party and military regimes, in spite of their supposed aversion to ethnicity ... rested on distinctly ethnic political foundations and reproduced themselves on the basis of definable, in most cases, narrow ethnic alliances..." It therefore became clear that most of Africa's post-colonial nation-building projects rested on flawed presumptions of the primacy of national identity and exclusive relationship between national belonging and ethnic consciousness. A number of scholars have advanced our understanding of the failure by most post-colonial African states to embrace multi-ethnic identities as indispensable part for national integration but the

relationship between expressions of ethnic identity and national identity are debatable and remain insufficiently explored. The failure to achieve the stated goals by these post-colonial African nation-building projects has been a major concern in academic, politics and policy circles.

As it seeks to take a deep-seated engagement with the relationship between ethnic and national identity in post-apartheid South Africa through the lens of Southern Ndebele ethnic group, the study benefits from the abounding literature that lays bare the suppression of ethnicity in an all important task of nation-building projects in Africa. At this juncture, a consideration of studies that have penned vital insights on post-apartheid South Africa's nation-building trajectory and its engagement with ethnicity is considered vital. This is a fundamental undertaking precisely because it reinforces the foundation of situating the thesis's main aim, which lies in analysing the articulation of belonging to Southern Ndebele ethnic identity as it inter-relates with the construction of national identity in post-apartheid South Africa.

As a late decoloniser, South Africa tried to advance a nation-building project, which cast ethnicity and national identity as mutually reinforcing and inclusive. The heterogeneous identities cutting across race, ethnicity, gender, generations and age were embraced as indispensable for national integration in ways, which instructively tell a story of South Africa's uniqueness from many African countries that held ethno-cultural diversity in contempt. Since the demise of apartheid, the issue of nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa and challenges associated with it has been one of the recurring themes of academic research in South Africa. Ivor Chipkin's (2007) book *Do South Africans Exist? Nationalism, Democracy and the*

Identity of 'The People' is one of the major ground breaking and pioneering interventions on the subject of nation-building and forging citizenship in South Africa. Chipkin (2007) focused on how an 'African people' as a collectivity organised in pursuit of a political agenda came into being in processes of resisting colonialism. This thesis argues that Chipkin rather sought to ground the South African case study within broader theoretical interventions on the subject of the nation and its relationship to the struggles for democracy. Chipkin argued that as part of the African national project; the nation-building process in South Africa grappled with challenges in terms of mapping forms and boundaries of inclusion and exclusion. Imaginations of a South African nation were many ranging from liberal inclusivists, democratic inclusivists, African inclusivists, communist class oriented and cultural movements.

For Chipkin, whilst the over-arching vision of laying to rest the evils and history of racial discrimination was the rallying point through which the 'authentic' subject of the South African nation coalesced, this glossed over glaring deficiencies, flaws and contradictions. Consequently, African nationalism failed to adequately answer the pertinent question of what constitutes South Africanness and produces a nation, which according to Chipkin precedes the state. He therefore provided a ground- breaking study on how the definition of 'identity' in post-apartheid South Africa revolved on the authenticity and constitution of people as national subjects and citizens. He however confined his study on the key constituents in the construction of South Africa identity to the period of Africanist national struggle and post-apartheid era. By so doing he missed the crucial periods of Anglicization and Afrikanerisation processes that were equally important as discursive identitarian processes around which foundational myths of the South African national identity were shaped and re-shaped. But in his latest interventions, which expand the frontiers of thinking about notions of imagining national belonging and

accommodation of diverse identities in post-apartheid South Africa, Chipkin (2016) highlights the importance of institutions as foundational. Chipkin pushes to the fore the prioritisation of focus on institutions as material basis to bring together a sense of shared identity instead of understanding the South African nation as grounded in identity and identification.

Chipkin's (2016) work on *The Decline of African Nationalism and the State of South Africa* offers a vantage point for an analysis of the extent to which the post-apartheid national identity as anchored on rainbowism accommodates diverse identities. But this study sees his primary focus on African nationalism as not going far enough in terms of capturing Anglicization and Afrikanerisation as analytic discursive terrains that constitute an equally vital background for a historical analysis of the challenges of forging common national identity and collective identity formation. From this observation, the thesis is compelled to register its indebtedness to this background, which is taken into account to map a historically grounded analysis of the production of Ndebele identity in the context of the challenges of the politics of belonging and forging national identity across space and time. This take follows Dubow's (2006: v-vii) work, which aptly argues that the processes of 'Anglicization' and 'Afrikanerisation' were crucial in contributing to the construction of 'South Africanism'. More tellingly, Dubow's work best demonstrates the need for engagement with South Africa's long-term historical trajectory as foundational in unpacking the fossilization of the idea of South Africa and the concomitant identities like ethnicities that emerged and got reinforced.

Anglicization, Afrikanerisation and Africanisation were discursive nation-building processes that invoked and presented different contending articulation of histories and myths as nodal points to construct the South African national identity. Under Anglicization, English identity was privileged as Marks and Trapido (1987) have it that English-speaking settlers were given some

protection and power under the presence of the hegemonic British imperial power. Under Afrikanerisation, Afrikaner identity was put at the centre of nation-building and citizenship. A catalogue of events such as the 'Great Trek', Anglo- Boer wars and development of the Afrikaans language among others were mobilised to create Afrikaner republican nationalism and to put the Afrikaners at the centre as the 'authentic' subject of the nation. Under African nationalism, there was a clear attempt to transcend the narrow focus of both Anglicization and Afrikanerisation and adopt an inclusive definition of who constitutes the 'authentic' subject of the nation. As a discursive nation-building process, Africanisation has tried to define, enforce and maintain a non-racial articulation of nationalism that accommodates diverse cultures and multiple identities. Hence the Freedom Charter of 1955 defined belonging in a very open way- 'South Africa Belongs to All Who live in it." This definition was however contested by those political formations like Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) that was influenced by the Garveyist ideas of 'Africa for Africans.'

Contestations over the issue of who constitutes the authentic subject of the nation still continue despite the post-apartheid government's effort of projecting a 'rainbow' imagination of a nation that sought to transcend the narrow exclusivity of racialized notions of national identity propagated by Anglicization and Afrikanerisation. The post-apartheid government led by the African National Congress (ANC) in particular has projected and articulated an inclusive construction of a homogenised national identity under the foundation myth of the rainbow nation. The myth of the 'rainbow nation' was articulated by the Nobel peace laureate Archbishop Desmond Tutu a day before the Presidential Inauguration of 10 May 1994. Desmond Tutu delivered a speech, which ended with these words: "we of many cultures, languages and races have become one nation; we are the Rainbow People of God." Nelson Mandela also added

credence to Tutu's speech in his inaugural address by proffering a vision of "one nation, many cultures" (Villa-Vicenco, 2001:24). F.W deKlerk, the last head of apartheid state also proffered the construction of a rainbow nation in post-apartheid South Africa by saying: "The 'New South Africa' would recognise the reality of the need for people and communities to remain themselves and be able to preserve the values that are to them-so that the Zulus, the Sothos and the whites can feel secure in their distinctiveness" (Sparks, 1994:128). The myth of the rainbow nation predicated on values of non-racialism and liberal democracy then became a catchy phrase that rose to prominence as a particular approach of harmonising multiple identities that cut across race, ethnicity, gender, generations, languages and cultures into a common national identity. But these multiple identities have remained difficult to ramify into a stable national identity.

The contestations around articulations of belonging even after the projection of an all-inclusive rainbow nation has seen some scholars critically engaging with the discourse of rainbowism to expose its inadequacies as a narrative for forging common national identity. They have mainly argued that it is marred by contradictions. Gqola (2001) for example has illuminated the sites of contestations and problems embedded in the discourse of rainbowism. She has argued that it essentializes differences and blurs power dynamics that are inherent in the cultural formations, preservation, fragmentations and new forms of identity construction.

A discernible trend in the studies on black ethnic identities in post-apartheid South Africa largely interrogate how the discourse on rainbowism-aligned with multiculturalism should by necessity not afford to ignore the fact that South Africa's heterogeneous identities were (are) inherited identities that were institutionally imposed by systems of colonialism and apartheid. Thus whilst rainbowism has created new spaces for the (re)articulation of the sense of belonging; 'unity in diversity', multiculturalism, inclusivity and changes therein has presented a paradox

and a complex scenario for the articulations of belonging to ethnic identities and how to balance these with the construction of a contested rainbow nation. For example some scholars like Erasmus (2001) have highlighted the mutating articulations of identity ushered in by the discourse of rainbowism by noting that coloured identity is a cultural identity, which is not to be conceived in race terms. As she elaborates "coloured identity is reconstructed by the people according to their beliefs, morals, values and attitudes, this however differs from one person to the next as there is no set definition as to what it is to be a 'coloured' person in South Africa" (Erasmus, 2001: 16). Indian identities have also undergone some mutations and shifts as they grapple with articulations of belonging to the rainbow nation and belonging to ethnic identity. As captured by Desai and Maharaj (2007), the shared experience under apartheid reinforced a sense of supra Indian identity but this identity has fragmented along class lines in the context of the fundamental political and social shifts that were ushered by the discourse of rainbowism. In a nutshell these studies on black ethnic identities offer some useful insights for this study that seeks to explore how and why the notion of Southern Ndebeleness is asserted in the context of a post-apartheid South African national identity construction.

Other issues explored in the literature that ponder on the problematic of forging common national identity through the myth of rainbowism, is the extent to which identification with ethnic groups remains salient in post-apartheid South Africa (Bornman (1995), Bornman and Olivier (2001) and Mattes (1994; 1997). The projected ideological mantra of rainbow nation has provided space for the expression and revitalisation of ethnic identities in an unrestricted political environment. It is within this space that the distinctive Southern Ndebele ethnic identity has been preserved, shaped, reshaped, negotiated and continued to be a primary marker of identity in some areas of the present day Mpumalanga Province. The Southern Ndebele identity

is distinctively reflected in artistic work, a particular way of dressing, language, heritage celebrations among other identity features to express their cultural identity (James & Van Vuuren, 1998; Powell &Lewis, 1995, and Van Vuuren, 1994). The historical accounts of how this identity came about and how it was (re)constructed, negotiated and reconfigured in different contexts across space and time has received a considerable amount of scholarly attention (McCaul, 1987, Nielsen (1996), Ritchken, E (1990), Delius (1989), James, (1990), Phatlane (2002) and Lekgoathi (2003; 2009). Much of this work reflect the experiences of the people identified as Ndebele, the expressions of Southern Ndebele identity at different key historical epochs and the complex ways in which this identity was constructed and reconfigured by different actors in the context of South Africa's historical processes and changes therein. These studies have not highlighted the connections between expression of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity and the crafting of national identity. The informative and guiding framework offered by these studies cannot be understated but the study notes the dearth of scholarship on the making of Southern Ndebele identity as it relates with post-apartheid's discourses of inclusion and exclusion At the centre of this study lies the observation that in KwaMhlanga, belonging to Southern Ndebele is distinctively manifested in ways that intrigues an analysis of the discursive production of Southern Ndebele identity in a multi-cultural setting. I argue that in KwaMhlanga, people identified as Southern Ndebele share social spaces with other ethnic identities, other heritages, local, provincial and national influences which nonetheless have impacted on how Southern Ndebele is defined and interpreted. It is the vehement belief that accounting for the mutually constitutive relationship between the crafting of national identity and assertion of belonging to ethnic identities is set to add value to conversations on nuanced politics of belonging in culturally diverse societies like South Africa. Connections and overlaps between

expression of ethnic identities and national belonging need to be explored as an attempt to re-assess our thinking on the challenges of being and belonging in post-apartheid South Africa.

Conclusion

As it became apparent that the study unpacks what identity is, this chapter reviewed literature of influential thinkers who provided conceptual lenses through which being and becoming Southern Ndebele in the context of the construction of the broader South African national identity can be understood. In drawing guiding insights to lay the framework for illuminating arguments of this study, the chapter did not collapse nationalism and ethnicity into one but, instead, the theoretical conversations on the nexus between the two were purposefully reviewed. A closer appreciation of Brubaker and Cooper's (2004:4) work draws us to the proposition that it is through identity that people "make sense of themselves, of their activities, of what they share with and how they differ from others" was the chapter's mainstay as it purposely reviewed literature on post-colonial African nationalism, debates on post-apartheid South African national identity and assertion of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity. The chapter's position on the questions of what is meant by identity and what constitutes identity is that even though there are various conceptual lenses that can be used to assist us to unpack articulations of belonging, there is strong resonance on boundary formation, making sense of self, definition and labelling by others and otherization as the binding framework. The chapter also notes that the different interpretations and re-interpretations of what constitutes identity is compellingly explained by shifts that have ensued in framing theoretical approaches in rationalizing arguments about the notion of identity.

CHAPTER THREE

Origins of Ndebele identity

Introduction

The Ndebele of South Africa constitutes one group of people whose identity emerged in the context of the tangle of South Africa's processes and struggles of fashioning a national identity. These processes and events constituted a broader discursive terrain through which seeds of collective identification germinated, coalesced, were contested and redefined. Collective identities like ethnicity are discursively and historically produced or rather emerge within political, social and historical experiences in an on-going process over long periods of time. Consequently the analysis of how the experience of being Southern Ndebele was expressed and shaped cannot be spared from this articulation and is considered a crucial background for this study. This chapter therefore analyzes how Southern Ndebele identity was discursively constructed out of pre-colonial, colonial and post-colonial histories and experiences. It engages with several theories that have been propounded to explain the discursive origins of the Southern Ndebele in South Africa.

Any analysis of social identity warrants the use of theoretical and conceptual framework which constitutes a toolkit to illuminate the complexities of the processes through which identities are formed and how individuals articulate and re-articulate their self-definition, their sense of belonging to a social group and how they are perceived by others. Against this backdrop, the chapter draws insights from social constructivist theoretical approaches to explore how the content of Southern Ndebele identity was defined, interpreted and contested across space and

time. The chapter makes a strong case that Ndebele emerged from social action, in a dynamic continuum and has been expressed differently as it is influenced by and responds to various changing historical, socio-economic, cultural and political contexts of the South African polity. As Hall (1994:395) rightly argued "identity and belonging are not a fixed essence at all, lying unchanged outside history and culture". In this chapter I endeavor to employ a genealogical and historiographical narrative analysis of Ndebele identity that dates back to the pre-colonial era. Such an approach will enable the chapter to show the changing articulations of belonging to Ndebele identity and how boundaries were (re)shaped by different social actors as the dynamics that emerged thereof.

Ndebele identity construction in Transvaal: pre-colonial era

Non-literacy and lack of internal documentation on the social dynamics and political practices, which shaped the content of collective identities characterized pre-colonial African societies. But oral evidence, missionary texts, archaeological and historians' works have revealed the existence of people identified as Ndebele in Transvaal in the 19th century prior to European colonial encroachment (Lekgoathi, 2006). The identity of this group emerged out of different and competing discursive sites in the context of the complexities of social change in the South African polity at large and Transvaal in particular hence resulting in multiple interpretations and different historical narratives of the origins of the people identified as Ndebele. There is no single narrative on the origins of Ndebele as an identified group but worth mentioning is that these multiple narratives productively uncover historical accounts and or collective memories. It

suffices to note that these multiple historical narratives lay a vital base from which to develop a rich understanding of how Ndebele identity was expressed, defined and redefined from precolonial to present times. Acknowledging the multiple narratives on the origins of the Ndebele as the starting point adds significantly in dissecting, problematizing and analyzing oral narratives.

A recurrent narrative in the interviews conducted with the elder generation, mainly comprising chiefs invariably pulled together a vaguely remembered past which substantiates the view that the origin of the label 'Ndebele' has not been dealt with, with certainty. Uncovering the history of the origins of the Ndebele, Chillies Mahlangu one of the chiefs who was introduced to me as a descendant of the Ndebele King reflected:

> *You see, the origins of the Ndebele nation are not clear, we just hold on to what we got from our history which we will pass to our younger generation. The history tells us we are originally from Zululand, we were part of Mzilikazi.....*[7]

In a similar breath, chief Mgibe remarked that:

> *We don't know well about the origins of the Ndebele and where they come from, what I really know is that we never lost our culture. What we know about Ndebele history is what we were told by our fathers, for instance I was born in 1935, I was not there by the time the Ndebele left Zululand but we were told that our forefathers originally stayed in Zululand and we migrated to Transvaal....*[8]

Such utterances were variably echoed in ways that revealed and reinforced the dominant but fragmentary historical narrative on the origins of Ndebele. This could be illustrative of the shortcomings of oral traditions and their reliance on memory, which is prone to distortion with

[7] Mahlangu, Chillies , Kwaggafontein, 26/02/2013
[8] Mgibe[first name not disclosed], KwaMhlanga, 17/04/2013

passages of time from generation to generation. However, these oral narratives feed and resonate with several academic studies that have been advanced to explain the origins of the group of people identified as Ndebele in present day South Africa. That said, the study settled for the view that oral narratives render the origins of the of the term 'Ndebele' patchy, but if read critically alongside written records, they attest to a recognizable existence of a Ndebele group consciousness whose identity became constituted and rendered more visible in a complex discursive context.

While it may be argued that the history of the origins of the Ndebele has remained an enigma in academic discourse, accounts of scholars like Legkoathi (2004; 2006; 2009) substantially contributes insights that enable us to understand the idea of Ndebele as having coalesced historically from the movement of a variety of Nguni speaking communities into the interior Transvaal region due to political and social turbulence in the 17th century. As one of the key contributors of the analysis of the discursive formation of Ndebele identity, Legkoathi uncovers a historically grounded analysis, which argues that the Ndebele are traced as a group of people who had survived a break-way from Nguni speaking people of the Zulu and Xhosa groups of the province of the present day KwaZulu-Natal. This historical outline has been documented elsewhere by scholars such as Ziervogel (1959) and Delius (1989) who place KwaZulu-Natal as an ancestral home for the people we know as Ndebele today as the dominant historical narrative. This narrative was strongly supported in virtually all the discussions I had with a number of Ndebele chiefs. Their utterances converged on the idea that they are descendants of the Nguni-speaking people who settled at Transvaal after migrating from present day KwaZulu-Natal province. As Legkoathi (2006) posits that when they arrived in Transvaal, their Nguni identity was clearly discernible to the Sotho/Tswana neighbours, missionaries and other literate observers

in Transvaal, the key question that then arises is at what point the people we know as Ndebele today came to define themselves and also by others as Ndebele? This is one of the complex questions that this chapter attempts to resolve as it traces the evolution of Ndebele identity.

As I push to the fore the argument that Ndebele identity evolved and was shaped under the weight of power dynamics of socio-political and economic frontiers from pre-colonial to the present, it is helpful to consider the Ndebele's experience with other communities at Transvaal. Lekgoathi's arguments are appealing in this regard. He reveals that the Transvaal area was inhabited by the Sotho as well as other groups that recognized Nguni-speaking immigrants upon their arrival. Of interest is how this constituted a discursive terrain through which the simultaneous processes of Sotho's sense of themselves and othering the Nguni speaking people shaped a sense of belonging to Ndebele identity. Brubaker and Cooper (2000:4) provide the much needed analytic lenses to understand how the Nguni communities were recognized and the processes of articulating a sense of belonging ensued. They argue that people "make sense of themselves, of their activities, of what they share with, and how the differ from others" through identity as a 'practical category'. Brubaker and Cooper's analytical insights helps in understanding why a distinctive identity was played out by Nguni immigrants in their everyday social practices as they experienced a sense of being treated as 'outsiders' as they met people who differed from them in terms of language, cultural practices and origins. Their identification by the Sotho/Tswana neighbours as '*Matabele*' as early as the 1500s and 1600s which in their mouths translated into *AmaNdebele* as vividly captured by Byrant (1929)[9], impacted on their

[9] This is a view supported by other scholars such as Loubser (1981), Rasmussen (1978) who posited that the name "Ndebele' was descriptively used by the Sotho/Tswana people to identify various unrelated Nguni communities who migrated from present day KwaZulu Natal province to the interior Transvaal province of South Africa.

articulation of belonging and identity. This identity became constituted by common origins, identification with particular chiefdom, clan names and a distinctive language. Legkoathi's work (2006) cogently elaborated on this when he noted that the Nguni migrants filled in the identity appellation of '*AmaNdebele*' through various means such as developing a distinctive language, establishing marriage alliances, adopting common totems and clan names, keeping alive common oral traditions of origins and maintaining some elements of Nguni material culture such as beadwork and architecture.

The analysis of pre-colonial African identities as characterized by permeability, fluidity and dynamism has earned most academic attention and debates on the conceptualization of pre-colonial African communities. Such analyses are numerous and constitute established scholarship that has been supported comprehensively by evidence from many parts of Africa (Berman, 1998) and Lentz (2000). Insights from this scholarship are useful in so far as they enable to foreground a vantage point from which to nuance a reading of how expression of belonging to Ndebele identity was shaped, maintained and articulated in pre-colonial era. A critical interrogation of evidence from oral narratives renders transparent the porous borders between communities and fluid ways through which belonging to Ndebele identity was expressed. Richly telling of the fluidity of Ndebele identity in the pre-colonial era is the following narrative by chief Gija I had a lengthy conversation with:

> *We have kept our Ndebele culture, our Nguni culture but as you continue conducting your research you will notice that some sections of Ndebele language is diluted with Sotho. I will tell you one thing, we lived among people as you can see even today, we live with the Sothos, Pedis, Vendas, Zulus, we peacefully co-exist. Like I said in the beginning that I was born in 1935, most of what I am telling you, I got from elders, so you find that this peaceful co-existence I am talking about has a long history our fathers told us that when it comes to this issue of chieftaincy, as a chief your prime obligation was to be*

welcoming and provide protection to anyone under your chieftaincy, be it Ndebele, Sotho, Tswana Pedi...[10]

Such claims recurrently and variably came out in many chiefs' narratives when they spoke of historical relations with other communities wherein emphasis was placed on cultural connections with groups such as Sotho, Pedi and Venda. Implicitly, the fluid social relations with other communities were framed in ways that reflected that the Ndebele chiefs were comfortable in accommodating subjects from other communities and lived as such. The continuous strand that prominently featured in highlighting how the Ndebele were historically connected to other groups cursory referenced chiefs as the main actor in ways that were revealing of how the expression of Ndebele identity was discursively tied to chieftaincy as the key institution. The prevailing reference to chiefs in the oral narratives on the origins of Ndebele enabled a comfortable grasp of Delius's (1989) account which does not only stress chieftaincy as one institution that largely shaped Ndebele identity but surfaces the connection between fluid boundaries and allegiance to chiefs. In elaborating, Delius argues that chieftaincy could accommodate people of different cultures and languages to such an extent that cultural similarity played no critical role in expressions of Ndebele-ness. He further explains that owing to flexible boundaries, the Ndzundza-Ndebele in Transvaal adopted survival strategies which saw them seeking refuge and resources rather more vigorously than striving for cultural similarity in the areas in which they moved into (Delius, 1989:230).

Delius's reading of chieftaincy as one of the key institution through which fluid interactions and social relations occurred in the expression of Ndebele identity buttressed the evidence from oral narratives in ways that opened up a vein for further engagement with how this context shaped the way Ndebele perceived themselves. Practically, the institution of chieftaincy is important in so

[10] Gija [first name not disclosed], KwaMhlanga, 27/03/2013

far as it renders visible the porous borders within which consciousness of belonging was articulated as Beinart, (2001:97) has it that chiefs were "critical in defending the interests of the weak, enlarging their political horizons and enabling to establish leverage in a new context...chieftaincy could be a focus both of resistance and of ethnic expression." Further interrogation of the implications of how consciousness of belonging to Ndebele was articulated within porous borders does a great deal of service in understanding the nuances characterizing the definition of Ndebele identity during pre-colonial era. Lekgoathi's (2014) sustained analysis of how Ndebele identity was shaped by different historical contexts in a dynamic continuum of restless socio-economic and political turbulence of the changing South African polity at large and Transvaal area in particular reveals informative insights to enrich an analysis of the evolution of Ndebele identity. Legkoathi vehemently maintains that large dispersed communities resulting from social and political instabilities characterized precolonial South Africa and made cultural fluidity a normative feature of articulation of belonging. He gestures towards calling for a direction that integrates the reality of the heterogeneity of pre-colonial South Africa in the analytic lenses and thought about the creation of ethnic identities. His contribution weaves together historical evidence that abounds to plausibly challenge and push to surface the limits of ethnicity as a category in understanding how people perceived themselves in precolonial times. As he puts it:

> Precolonial South Africa was not a static region inhabited by self-contained 'tribes' where language determined where individuals or groups belonged (as it would become state policy under apartheid). Rather, it was marked by considerable social and political instability that gave rise to large-scale dispersal of established communities and the regrouping of new, cultural heterogeneous communities where a sense of belonging was determined by factors other than ethnic identities...(Legkoathi, 2014:61)

As this chapter's over-arching theme is broadly anchored on unpacking the genealogical evolution of Ndebele, how it was shaped, maintained, expressed and contested from pre-colonial to present times and the dynamics thereof, Lekgoathi's thread of argument sheds light on how consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity was articulated as fluid and malleable before colonial manipulative machinations.

Utterances such as 'we are told that wars between nations were a common phenomenon', 'our forefathers would walk long distances to seek refuge and owe allegiance to chiefs who welcomed them' strongly came out in the narratives of many elderly interviews in ways that affirm Lekgoathi's argument. In pushing Lekgoathi's position to the fore that ethnicity was not the main category through which consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity was structured in pre-colonial times, it remains productive to think of identity as contingently articulated in order to capture some aspects of the concrete materiality of Ndebele identity that defined its boundaries in the midst of interactions with other communities. Schoeman's (1998) archaeological work is appealing in so far as it reveals how the Ndebele retained some of their material culture, which links them to their Nguni origins as a significant marker of identity. In particular Schoeman noted that the Ndzundza Ndebele retained 'Nguni-type pottery and bee-hive houses'. In archeological studies, material culture has stood the test of time in enabling one to decipher and analyze expressions of identity consciousness and multi-cultural interactions resulting from adaptations and change. This rings true for Ndebele identity which was partly conceived, conveyed and represented through material culture which expresses histories of interactions with other groups and retaining some culturally distinctive material culture that projected a deeper history and continuity of Nguni origins. My visit to Kghodwana Cultural Village which depicts the origin and lifestyle of *amaNdebele* as early as 1600 years ago, lends

credence to this view as I observed changes and continuities of the perceived Nguni culture in the articulation of Ndebele identity and imprints of adoption of Sotho/Tswana cultural traits.

Colonial encounter: Redefinition of Ndebele identity by native 'experts'.

Interactions and processes of becoming Ndebele were not spared from (re)definitions, interpretations and articulations by various actors during the colonial encounter. More specifically in the first half of the twentieth century, Ndebele identity was no stranger to the profound effects of colonial encounter on collective African identities and the consequent socio-economic and political context of a changing South Africa. This section therefore sets itself the task of analysing the imprints of the contact with European colonialists on the form, content and articulation of belonging to Ndebele identity. Articulation of African collective identities as products of colonial creation by scholars such as the Comaroffs (1991; 1992), Bayart (1993) and Vail (1989) has thrived as an important conduit in illuminating ethnicity in Africa. However, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2007) points to the centrality of negotiations, contestations and resistance as nodal points in identity formation complicates the debates on ethnicity as product of colonial domination in ways that merit consideration. Dovetailing neatly with what Ndlovu-Gatsheni has postulated is Spear's work (1993:26) when he argued that, "intellectuals need historical raw materials to construct their stories if their reinterpretations are to ring true. Precisely because struggles over tradition, custom and ethnicity are so embedded in local discourse and so emotionally fraught, they are readily evoked but not easily created." Without necessarily understating the role of colonial encounter, Spears's position forms an important terrain for taking a more nuanced approach in deciphering how, through negotiability and contestations, the

Ndebele expressed, conceived, communicated and moulded their identity out of pre-colonial and colonial histories.

The fuzzy, murky and flexible boundaries of different polities, which existed in Transvaal until the end of the nineteenth century were significantly altered by the colonial state's social engineering process. In the hands of the Union Government, the colonial state engaged in the anthropological articulation and documentation of African collective identities, particularly in the first half of the twentieth century. This was no stranger to the prevailing anthropological articulation of African collective social identities at continental level at the beginning of the twentieth century wherein 'tribe' was conceptually and methodologically used as a unit of analysis. The discourse of 'tribe' as an anchor of belonging and model of social organization for African societies fed into the colonial state's agenda of controlling Africans through politicization of the tribe as the over-arching form of understanding African identities. To this end, the colonial state established the Native Affairs Commission in Transvaal wherein an Ethnology department was set up which employed 'Native experts' to articulate the practices, cultures, values, political and social structures and histories of African societies (Lekgoathi, 2006)

A number of identifiable key actors ranging from Dr Jacobus Van Warmelo-the chief ethnologist of the Native's Affairs Ethnological section, state ethnographers, local researchers, elites and chiefs played a key role in interpreting the nature of pre-colonial African identities. But the colonial's state hegemonic understanding of 'tribe' fed into each of these key players' articulation of belonging of Africans which was not congruent with Africans' experiences and their everyday social practices.

Within the context of the colonial state's use of 'tribe' as a unit of analysis for articulating African identities; the form, meaning and content of the boundaries of Ndebele identity was profoundly redefined in relation to other locals in Transvaal. More specifically, Dr Van Warmelo's research on African societies which was informed by and deeply embedded in the colonial's state's hegemonic order and use of the discourse of 'tribe' saw him imposing the ethnic label 'Transvaal Ndebele'. In his informative PhD thesis which gives a comprehensive history of the making of Ndebele identity Legkoathi (2009:64) stated that, "for ethnographic reasons, he (Van Warmelo) adopted the residual label 'Transvaal Ndebele' to describe the Ndebele in South Africa, using the geographical location and linguistic/cultural peculiarities to map out and distinguish the local Ndebele from other 'tribes'. Van Warmelo elaborated: "the name 'Transvaal Ndebele' is used to distinguish them from other *AmaNdebele*, namely those in Southern Rhodesia (Van Warmelo, 1935:87).

Whereas the Transvaal Ndebele are often confused with the Mzilikazi's Ndebele precisely because they share common traceable historical origins to the Nguni groups of the present day KwaZulu-Natal, Byrant (1929) specifically elaborates that Mzilikazi's Ndebele were immigrants who fled under Mzilikazi of Khumalo from Shaka's Zulu kingdom during the Mfecane period. Loubser (1981) adds that upon being attacked by Boers in 1938 in the Transvaal, Mzilikazi and his followers fled across Limpopo River and settled in present day Zimbabwe. Substantial oral evidence lends credence to the account that the Ndebele did not know themselves by the name 'Transvaal Ndebele' until 1930. On this note the term 'Transvaal Ndebele' is argued to have emerged in ethnographic circles/studies of Van Warmelo in the early twentieth century to distinguish them from the Ndebele communities that fled with Mzilikazi and settled in present day Zimbabwe upon being attacked by the Boers in 1838 (Legkoathi, 2006).

Working with local historians, indigenous researchers and local informants, Van Warmelo continued to interpret the details of social relations and interactions within African communities. Even though this process entailed 'negotiation and contestation' as Legkoathi emphasizes, it set uneasily with the hegemonic discourse, which prevailed in the mapping of parameters of articulations of belonging to collective identities. As Michel Foucault (1977:42-45) rightly posited, the processes through which reality was [is] constructed and dissimulated were [are] always acts of power and would always be resisted and contested; this rings true for the colonial state's power's position through Van Warmelo's articulation and documentation of Transvaal Ndebele identity. Legkoathi's (2006) work draws from a wide set of interviews, theoretical resources and archival material to critically analyse how Van Warmelo's work did not resonate neatly with Ndebele communities' traditions, social practices and interactions which shaped the discursive production of their identity and their articulations of belonging. The common thread that featured in oral narratives pointed to concerns about Ndebele history having been documented by the dominant colonial 'experts' persuades one to concur with Lekgoathi's observation. Intermittently, concerns about documentation of Ndebele history by the dominant colonial ethnologists were revealed to me in some narratives of the elder generation. In these criticisms, the strongly held view was that the concrete materiality of Ndebele identity such as some cultural rites as initiation and patterns of behavior that expressed Ndebele identity such as relations between younger and elder generation could not be adequately captured by colonial 'experts'. Such utterances added insights into how Native experts' imaginations of African societies were plagued by presuppositions that did not bear on some aspects of everyday articulations of consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity.

More specifically, Van Warmelo's categorized and defined Transvaal Ndebele as a bifurcated tribe of 'Southern Transvaal Ndebele' and 'Northern Transvaal Ndebele'-the division that roughly mirrored a cultural split between two groups (Legkoathi, 2009:64). As Legkoathi elaborates, this cultural split meant that the Southern Ndebele were considered 'pure' or 'authentic' in juxtaposition against the Northern Ndebele whose language has been plagued by languages of other ethnic groups such as Sotho. Van Warmelo's division was an imprint of power dynamics, which blurred the intricate details of the social dynamics, which shaped Ndebele identity and the relationships with other groups in the Transvaal polity. As oral interviews revealed, categories 'Southern Transvaal Ndebele' and 'Northern Transvaal Ndebele' are not commonly used by people identified as Ndebele ethnic group in the ethnically diverse KwaMhlanga region and beyond. Whereas the majority of former homeland politicians used the categories 'Southern Ndebele' and 'Northern Ndebele' as imposed by officialdom, such descriptions as 'I am a Ndebele of Ndzundza' 'I am a Ndebele of KwaManala' were commonly used by a majority of the interviewees as an initial way of introducing themselves throughout my initial phase of fieldwork. The differences in how people identify themselves might be indicative of class dynamics as former homeland politicians constituted a homeland middle class who worked with the colonial system, which categorized African people on the basis of Van Warmelo's officialdom. But what deserves foregrounding is the reality that throughout the fieldwork it was revealed to me that the categories 'Southern Ndebele' and 'Northern Ndebele' do not resonate with most Ndebele-speaking people and are not commonly used by them. Such observations were revealing of how Van Warmelo articulated Ndebele identity as fixed at the expense of exploring the intricate historical processes that had shaped expression of belonging to Ndebele identity and how Ndebele communities viewed themselves. In his ethnological analysis,

Van Warmelo presupposed homogeneity of native populations to illuminate the rationale behind the bifurcation of Transvaal Ndebele. As Van Warmelo puts it:

> I gather that most Ndebele tribes, especially the Northern ones retain very little of their ancient customs and language. In fact many self-styled Ndebele are, anthropologically pure Sotho, and in some places the language is said to be very corrupt. In other places, nothing but pure Sotho is spoken nowadays.

I argue that his analysis did not go far enough to account for how the complex matrix of Ndebeles interactions with other social groups, their defeat at the hands of the Boers in 1883 and the consequent loss of their land drastically shaped their consciousness of belonging and cultural traditions. Restless social and political frontiers presented a highly complicated social context and shaped fluid interactions, which nonetheless had an enduring imprint on Ndebele language and culture. This renders Van Warmelo's use of language and culture as a cognitive framework to justify the differences between 'Northern Transvaal Ndebele' and 'Southern Transvaal Ndebele' inadequate. In particular, the processes by which Ndebele identity was constructed and negotiated could not but produce stark historical differences, which affected the boundaries and meaning of their identity.

By the time the ethnologists used language and custom to categorise and label African societies in 1900s, the consequent dispersal patterns throughout Transvaal after the Ndebeles defeat at the hands of Boers had resulted in a long history of intermixing with other groups and the changes therein. This reality begs fundamental consideration in so far as it is revealing the nuances of the context in which the Ndebele identity was contingently articulated as a form of belonging to challenge and expose the limits of Van Warmelo's simple cultural explanations of the distinctions between 'Southern' and 'Northern' Transvaal Ndebele. Using language and cultural explanations to bear on what constituted Ndebele identity, blurred rather than highlighted

different intricate historical, socio-economic and political processes as they impacted and shaped manifold layers of everyday expressions of Ndebele identity. Similarly, Lekgoathi (2004) is unequivocally concerned with Van Warmelo's primary use of language and its analytical relevance to fully account for the historical and cultural links the Ndebele had with such groups as Pedi and Sotho which nonetheless had a profound impact on how Ndebele identity progressed over-time. Additionally, Hofmeyr (1993) remarks on the constant interaction patterns that prevailed in most Transvaal polities and how it created a complex cultural and political context reinforces Legkoathi's observations.

In strongly advancing the case for socio-economic and political instabilities as a critical terrain that needs to be drawn from to frame an understanding of Ndebele identity I also draw insights from Barth's (1969; 1995; 1996) works. Barth sustains an analysis that emphasise boundary maintenance as the core around which ethnic identities were formed and persisted through contact and interaction with other groups as opposed to culture which was [is] always fluid. Similarly, Jan-Petter (1994:74) contributing to Barth's volume observed that, "the organization of ethnic identities does not depend on cultural diversity per se but rather on the assignment of particular social meaning to a limited set of acts". In hindsight, the evidence for Van Warmelo's juxtaposition of Northern Ndebele as less culturally conservative in comparison with the Southern Ndebele (Legkoathi, 2009) cannot be sustained as cultural similarity did not bear primary relevance in reading shifts and transformations of Ndebele identity prior to 1930. I therefore observe that the Native experts' imaginations of African identities operated within interstices of colonial projects and domination in ways that profoundly complicated and shaped the label of what constituted Ndebele identity.

The official impositions of the categories 'Southern Ndebele' and 'Northern Ndebele' were thus marked by ambiguities and arbitrarily applied but they found further expression and continuity during apartheid's political mobilization of ethnicity to sustain its segregationist policies. As shall be shown below, the South African apartheid state's grand aim of ensuring its survival by controlling and dividing the non-white population also profoundly changed the pre-colonial African ethnic cartography in various ways. What has been discussed so far pushes us to think about how Ndebele ethnic identity was discursively shaped by frontiers of colonial domination without necessarily reducing it as an imposition from above. But I take a position that the dynamics of consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity were discursively shaped by colonial encounters in ways that call for further analysis of its shifts and transformations as implicated in the context of colonialism.

Politicization of ethnic identities in the context of apartheid's homeland system: reflections on the crystallization of Ndebele ethnic identity

In the hands of the Afrikaner nationalists since 1948, the segregationist policies of the apartheid state were primarily anchored in guarding against the threat of the mass black population to the minority white population. Scholars like Moodie (1975), Dubow (1989), Bonner et al (1993), Delius and Posel (1993), Worden (1994), Brown (1998) variably argue that the protection of white dominance and privileged access to political and socio-economic resources was apartheid's enduring rationality which resulted in enactment of discriminatory regulations and policies. Understanding how everyday expressions of belonging to Ndebele identity were

entangled in apartheid's reality is the focus of this section, which necessitates the analysis of institutions and colonial administrative practices used to validate segregation.

The context of colonial rule from the time the Cape was initially invaded and occupied by white settlers in 1652 drew increased scholarly attention which has provided useful approaches and grids through which to navigate and nuance our reading of the administrative and legislative practices to rationalize division of people and their expression of belonging in South Africa (Bennet, 1995, Posel, 1997; Evans, 1997, Mamdani, 2001). The apartheid state which anchored a nation-building discourse rooted in legitimization of discrimination, exclusion and quasi self-determining and governing enclaves couched separate development as the over-arching principle to govern the South African space through which white and blacks asserted their belonging. Scholars like Wolpe (1972) took a Marxist analysis to establish the link between development of capitalism, notions of racial superiority and ethnicity. Wolpe argued that class, race and white domination contingently related to each other in the matrix of South Africa's doubled political economy. Of centrality is that Wolpe's position is part of the nuanced debates on apartheid as grounded in 'divide and rule' as the discursive framework to protect the white population and its dominance and reduction of African population in urban areas. In other words, Wolpe's modernist -Marxist analysis highlights the functionality of apartheid as hinging on a framework of a sustainable system of cheap labour power. This reality then gave further impetus for the need to tighten influx controls and political repression in ways that intricately constituted black and white subjects as interdependently relating to each other through separate development and reproduction of cheap labour, which South African capitalism rested on.

Whereas the rationale, meaning and significance of apartheid can be understood from different vantage points I argue that the grand discourse of 'divide and rule' provides an entry point to

reflect on how tribal identities were reinforced on Africans. According to Schutte (2000:211) blacks and other groups were ideologically defined as 'ethnic' peoples and by extension reduced to the minorities-to the status of discrete nations. In the same vein, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2012:411) elaborated that, "the apartheid regime invented and recreated African ethnic fragmentations through legal codification to prevent the possibilities of coalescence of multiple ethnic African identities into a singular national identity." Thus a unified concerted resistance by the majority of non-white movement was something the apartheid state wanted to avoid through all seemingly possible costs hence "it suppressed and distorted identity to the extent that it excluded and suppressed all constituents of identity except race and ethnicity" (Zegeye et al, 2000). From the 1950s, segregation was thus perceived to be a necessary undertaking in light of the influence of the South African Bureau Racial Affairs (SABRA) group of intellectuals who argued that South Africa is composed of cultural groups that seek expression in their own territories.

Important to highlight is that segregationist ideology was perceived as entailing both separation and development deeply ingrained in ambiguous and complex problems that needed to be resolved to sustain the political economy of the apartheid state. Implementing separate development was thus a complex exercise which required setting structures to delicately balance the relocation of the black population to reserves, maintaining the supply of what was perceived as cheap labour from black population and guarding against African resistance to white rule. A set of structures and legislations were then drawn up as an attempt to resolve apartheid's inherent ambiguity and sustain its ideology of separate development.

In 1950, the Population Registration Act was promulgated which demarcated South Africa into white, Asians/Indians, Coloureds and Africans or 'natives' (Posel, 2001). The Tomlinson report was vital in influencing framing systems of mapping boundaries of belonging in so far as it held

that "black people were discursively conceived less as 'native' and more as 'Bantu' (ethnicised), and self-conception of an Afrikaner identity which had been re-cast less as a settler and more as a native" (Pillay, 2004). But as Mamdani (1996) advised us to think of the distinction between 'settler' and 'native' as political identities, it is vital to argue that the policy shift towards categorizing the African population as Bantu changed boundaries of consciousness of belonging to collective communities in ways that profoundly grounded the manifestation of apartheid and its commitment to move the black population to reserves. Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 is one such legislation that was designed to move and resettle black populations in Bantustans. As ingrained in this Act, Bantustans were to be established to control the number of urbanized blacks and migration to urban areas. Black natives were then to be resettled in these established homelands wherein the administrative system entailed co-opting chiefs and tribal authority as the "...central and authentic institution within African culture upon which an alternative and distinctive domain could be constructed" (Bonner, 1993:32). Mamdani's (1996) intervention is relevant in so far as it reveals how the late colonial state (apartheid) rendered the black governable through tribal authorities and chiefs through crafting differences of settler and native to legitimize its institutional powers to pursue the goals of separate development to their logical conclusions.

The resettlement of blacks to their homelands was seen as essential and in line with the prevailing discourse that blacks were defined as Bantu instead of natives-a label, which will describe them as original inhabitants of South Africa. Framed in this way Africans were to return to Bantustans as their tribal homelands as they were "redefined as permanent inhabitants of ethnic homelands whose status in urban areas was that of migrant workers with the right of 'temporary sojourn' in the urban area in which they were employed" (Bonner, 1993:32). The

Bantu Authorities Act of 1951 was then entrenched through the Promotion of Bantu-Self Government Act of 1959[11], through which the apartheid government officially imposed and ascribed ethnic labels for the majority black population in ways that categorized black South Africans as nationals of established homelands (Davenport, 1991). The power of the chiefs and tribal authorities was also elaborated through the Bantu-Self Government Act, which instilled them with authority through which they were to exercise within the apartheid's Bantustan institutional parameters to advance separate development. Bantustans were thus created through the Bantu-Self Government Act as it accentuated the creation of separate geographic areas, ethnically defined semi-autonomous 'black states' (Bennet, 1995). The homeland system was part of advancing apartheid's grand socio-economic and political engineering process of 'separate development' which was to extend its tentacles to the black population's sphere of life and expression of belonging. Lekgoathi (2006) otherwise illuminating analysis holds that the Bantustan project should also be understood as apartheid government's attempt to adapt and respond to the international moral call for Africans' self-government within South Africa.

The above background on apartheid's Bantustan project as embedded in ethno-nationalist politics is illustrative of how ethnicity was heavily mobilized on a political terrain as a core concept of belonging and nationhood to avoid a collective African imagination of a South African national identity. More than rendering transparent the ways in which the apartheid state politicized differences to sustain its project of 'divide and rule' the background provided above permits an analysis of how belonging to Ndebele identity was negotiated in the context of conditions created by apartheid to accentuate ethnic identities. Tribal territorial boundaries were

[11] The Promotion of Black Self-Government Act of 1959 stated that the Black peoples of the Union of South Africa do not constitute a homogenous people, but form separate national units on the basis of language and culture

mapped in the period 1960s and 1970s for the supposedly distinct black ethnic groups. Transkei and Ciskei homelands for the Xhosa were the first to be established in the early 1960s (Ramutsindela, 1997). The apartheid government continued to use language and culture to arbitrarily establish KwaZulu homeland for Zulu speakers, Bophuthatswana for the Tswana, QwaQwa for the Southern Sotho and homelands for other groups like Venda, Tsonga and Pedi speakers (Ramutsindela, 1997; Evans 1997).

How was Ndebele identity shaped in the context of the politics of the establishment of KwaNdebele homeland?

That apartheid's implementation of Bantustan project to enforce ethnic consciousness as one of the cornerstones of 'separate development' was a complex exercise marred by inconsistencies was revealed in the politics of the establishment of KwaNdebele homeland. While each ethnic group was intended to develop into separate 'nation' as per the 1970 Homeland Citizenship Act which bordered on conferring Bantustans with eligibility status for adjudication of citizenship and self-government, the Ndebele group of people were excluded in the homeland politics. So fundamental is apartheid's complex implementation of homeland consolidation and controversial setting of boundaries of ethnic divisions that it set a discursive context through which the politics of the establishment of KwaNdebele homeland was played out. What deserves foregrounding is that engaging the politics of the establishment of KwaNdebele is an invaluable compass with which to read and render visible the internal and external dynamics, which centrally played themselves out in the expression of Ndebele identity in the context of homeland politics.

Studies of scholars like James (1988); Ritchken (1990); Nielsen (1996) and Phatlane (2002) have pointed to the exclusion of Ndebele in apartheid's commitment to separate development as one

of the major springboards through which the politics of clamouring for recognition of a distinctive Ndebele identity unfolded. This was echoed in oral narratives particularly of the former homeland politicians whose utterances nested together some evidence that the exclusion from apartheid's ethno-nationalist politics was a paradox. Nice Masango is one former homeland politician who instructively offered the following:

> *You will find that the architects of apartheid had left us the Ndebele people. All these other tribes, Zulu, Pedi, Xhosa you name it were given territorial enclaves. We had a problem them, it was not clear why we were left out in this separate development thing, it was not clear, do you get me. Well the apartheid government thought we will join other tribes in homelands such as Bophuthatswana but why, why because we are a nation ourselves?*[12]

Such kinds of sentiments were, in various ways, echoed virtually across all the narratives of the former homeland politicians with some like Ndaweni Mahlangu the executive mayor of Thembisile Hani municipality remarking that:

> *By that time, 1969, the South African government was giving self-governing status to various homelands but with regard to the Ndebele people, they were not on the map, it was assumed they will be subsumed by other ethnic groups such as the Pedis in the Lebowa government, Tswana in the Bophuthatswana government, Xhosas in Transkei and Ciskei..... I think since the Ndebele had contact with the Boers and you must have captured it in the history of Ndebele that our relations with Boers was always a hostile one, we fought with the Boers, so in my opinion I think the apartheid government did not want us (the Ndebele) to regroup as our history of fighting with the Boers and almost defeating them at Erholweni was known. They wanted to keep us scattered in various homelands, they did not want to give us an enclave of our own like other groups. But we fought for it because we knew we were a different tribal group that cannot be subsumed. We fought for recognition....* [13]

The excerpts above give a glimpse into the context of how the homeland system left out the Ndebele- a context within which we can begin to understand homeland politics as a frontier of

[12] Masango ,Nice, KwaMhlanga. 11/06/2013
[13] Mahlangu, Ndaweni, Kwaggafontein, 13/06/2013

that gave impetus for an articulation of heightened consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity.

Significantly, oral narratives accentuated dissatisfaction with apartheid's contradictory homeland politics and how it spurred appeals for recognition of Ndebele as a distinctive ethnic group. Much has been written about apartheid's justification for excluding the Ndebele. For example Legkoathi (2009) underlines apartheid officials' use of Van Warmelo's classification of African tribes to perceive the Ndebele as too small in number and too scattered to deserve a homeland of their own. Similarly, McCaul (1987) noted that apartheid state officials hoped that the Ndebele groups will eventually disappear by integrating with other distinctive ethnic minorities who were consistent with granting 'self-rule' and 'independence' for black people in South Africa. But as I have argued earlier in this chapter, Ndebele identity was constituted less of homogenous and immutable boundaries as imagined by Van Warmelo. This reality thus renders apartheid's justification inadequate and leaving a yawning gap, which constituted a political frontier through which mobilization of Ndebele tribal identity could be mobilised.

The negotiation process for the establishment of KwaNdebele homeland between upcoming KwaNdebele politicians and apartheid state leaders reveals competing measures of what constituted Ndebele identity. For instance memoranda in the archives by the Ndebele nationalists to the Constitutional Development and Planning reveals attempts to ground Ndebele identity in ways that towed the line of 'tradition' of chiefly authority as one of the key cultural layer of a measure of 'authenticity' of Ndebele identity. One striking example is a letter from the secretary of the Ndebele Tribal Authority, which was responding to Chief of Bantu Affairs Commissioner

on the query about a certain chief who sought to be accommodated with his people as part of Ndebele tribe.[14]

As we read from Cornell and Hartmann's (1998) that ethnic identities derive their usefulness from the circumstances and contexts which alter their utility, I argue that access to resources such as land afforded a powerful base for Ndebele nationalists and ordinary people in navigating the politics for the establishment of KwaNdebele. Legkoathi (2006) has highlighted varying socio-economic and political curtailment that sections of the Ndebele group of people endured in Bophuthatswana and Lebowa homelands. He elaborates that they suffered marginalization in terms of accessing social amenities, jobs, economic resources and expulsion in ways, which legitimated a particular demand of getting a territorial enclave of their own. A key point to make is that consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity was mobilized with vigour. One of the memoranda by the Ndebele Tribes in Lebowa read:

> Since there is an Ndebele national unit that has already been instituted, it is the feeling of the Ndebele tribes in Lebowa that we be grouped with this Ndebele unit for the following reasons: we belong together, we derive from the same ancestral origins, we are Ndebeles in the way they are, our customs are basically the same, so amalgamation should not pose such a great problem...[15]

More than showing how ethnicity became a powerful force in the politics of establishment of KwaNdebele, it is revealing of how Northern Ndebele and Southern Ndebele contested apartheid's definition of what constituted Ndebele identity. Ritchken (1990) and Nielsen (1996) have highlighted on how KwaNdebele as the last and tenth homeland to be established primarily served to accommodate the culturally diverse black population as part of influx control policies in urban centres. Their analyses contribute to an understanding of establishment of KwaNdebele

[14] National Archives, Pretoria URU/7633/1266-Redefinition of the tribal area of Ndebele tribe of natives
[15] National Archives, Pretoria MSB/666/3/5/10/3/5-Memorandum, Department of Constitutional Development and Planning, Assent by the State President of the KwaNdebele Traditional Authorities Act, Amendment Act

as part of apartheid's political and economic expediency more than heeding to claims to existence of a distinctive Ndebele identity. Nielsen (1996:8) in particular had this to say:

> ...the provision of land for Ndebele settlement was infact becoming increasingly necessary from the perspective of the South African government itself. In particular, the mechanization of farm production and the switch to capital-intensive crops forced many African laborers, and their families, off the land in search of other places to live and work. Constrained by the tightening of influx control measures in the cities, many displaced families had no option other than to seek refuge in the Bantustan to which they said to belong according to the apartheid schema.

Threading together narratives of former homeland politicians revealed the precarious reality of socio-economic and political conditions of Ndebele group of people in Bophuthatswana and Lebowa homelands in ways that neatly dovetailed with Nielsen's observation. I advance the argument that homeland system profoundly brought changes in terms of accessing socio-economic resources, particularly land in ways that shaped chiefly authority and access to resources. This played an important role in enabling the Ndebele to navigate the politics of the creation of KwaNdebele homeland. Thus McCaul (1987) observed that, "it was these hapless migrants, persecuted by the Bophuthatswana administration, who provided the social and demographic base for the separate homeland." It is such reality of implications of some fundamental socio-economic changes on ethnic identification that has led Wright (1992) to persuasively argue that social stratification and struggles for power have intensified ethnic awareness among people who view themselves as sharing a common culture and a common historical origin, throughout history.

It is in light of considerations of the heightened articulation of Ndebele consciousness in the context of the creation of homelands that the way people perceived themselves was shaped by colonialism in ways that lend plausibility to insights of most of established scholarship, which

dismiss the ethnicity as a pre-colonial phenomenon. For instance, observations of scholars like Ranger (1993) that colonialism brought new forms of collective self-consciousness in Africa, which stood in stark contrast with the dynamic pre-colonial forms of identification. Homeland politics was a condition created by colonialism, which favoured increased ethnic consciousness in South Africa in ways that resonate neatly with Ranger's position.

The struggle against apartheid, KwaNdebele independence: Competing politics of mapping boundaries of Ndebele identity.

The tide of heightened Ndebele ethnic consciousness in the context of homeland's identity politics saw a number of principal actors actively emerging in articulating and constituting certain notions of Ndebeleness. Apartheid policies, particularly the accentuation of ethnic differences reinforced Ndebele ethnic consciousness, albeit not without contestations by various key players on the 'specificity' of what constituted Ndebeleness. The struggle for an articulation of an all-inclusive belonging to South African national identity by the African nationalists and liberation movements became one of the specific contexts which entangled the assertion of Ndebele ness within a broader conception of a South African nation.

The Ndebele ethnic nationalists who formed the core of the Bantustan elites and had undoubtedly played a key role in advocating for the establishment of KwaNdebele, the militant Ndebele youth and members of the royal family projected diverse intentions and interpretations of the proposed KwaNdebele independence. There were serious contestations over the proposed independence that pushed to visibility the expression of Ndebeleness as a new kind of politics, which contested apartheid's schema of bounded ethnicity. Elite driven, top-down articulations of Ndebele ethnic nationalism advocated by the KwaNdebele Bantustan elites and Ndebele nationalists provoked

some resistance and contestations that revealed how different sections understood the implications of the proposed Pretoria-styled independence and belonging to the broader South African identity.

A significant amount of evidence from newspaper clips such as *The Star*, 29 August (1983) exists that highlight how KwaNdebele Bantustan administration became intimately connected with patronage of resources in ways that reveal internal dynamics that shaped contestations on what constituted Ndebele identity. Journalists like Allister Sparks (1982) revealed that chief ministers like Simon Skosana controlled ownership of shops and liquor stores by offering trading licences to fellow cabinet ministers. That patronage of resources in the KwaNdebele Bantustan was one of the critical basis through which the leadership unleashed undemocratic and authoritarian rule is captured by Legkoathi et al (2008:21) when they note that the "KwaNdebele cabinet controlled state apparatus and used this access to dispense favours, especially business licences." More than rendering visible how the politics of the rise of homeland elites and patronage of resources, emergence of KwaNdebele is cast as an exceptional moment which saw political conceptions of Ndebeleness in ways that fundamentally coincided with modern conceptions of South African ness. As KwaNdebele leadership continued to opt for a Pretoria-styled independence, there was mass dissatisfaction for the people living in the area carved out as KwaNdebele Bantustan. Advocating for independence fed and dovetailed neatly with apartheid nationalists' divide and rule policy, which it sought to deeply entrench by granting 'independence' to homelands. But this presented a further complicated context, which revealed generational dynamics that sat uneasily with KwaNdebele Bantustan leadership's understanding of belonging to Ndebele ethnic identity and the broader South African identity.

People's self-definition and conceptions of their belonging to ethnic identities is dynamic as they respond to changing socio-economic and political circumstances. This rings true to the articulation of Ndebele ethnic consciousness in Transvaal and KwaNdebele homeland in particular. From the beginning of 1980s, a combination of the appalling socio-economic conditions that ensued from apartheid regime and homeland politics in KwaNdebele in particular shaped Ndebeleness as a notion for political sensibility within the broader struggle of the conception of South African-ness. KwaNdebele was established as the last homeland, which neatly fell into apartheid's economic and political calculations but it became the most economically unviable homeland (Phatlane, 2002, Legkoathi, 2006). The dire consequences of this economic unviabilty included lack of basic infrastructure and amenities, human suffering and unavailability of local employment in KwaNdebele which saw its residents resorting to daily commuting as far as Pretoria to places of work (Legkoathi et al, 2008). Legkoathi's observation was augmented Vellie Mahlangu, one of the former homeland politicians who described the increasingly appalling conditions and ways of earning a living for the majority of the residents of KwaNdebele homeland:

> *I will tell you one thing, it was tough. There were no employment opportunities in KwaNdebele, it was one of the most poverty stricken, there were no industries, the land was dry, so people were forced to look for jobs in industrial areas like Pretoria and Johannesburg but they could not stay there, ask any older person who had experience with KwaNdebele they will tell you this. So because they could not live in urban areas, the will commute by buses to work in Pretoria- you know Pretoria right, they will leave KwaNdebele as early as 3h00 a.m...*[16]

Vellie's description of employment conditions was echoed by a majority of older generation who had experience with KwaNdebele moment, with some citing patronage of resources by homeland elites as a factor that exacerbated the economic hardships. These hardships suggest the increasing

[16]Mahlangu, Vellie,KwaMhlanga-10/06/2013

exceptional moment of Bantustan, which shaped the peculiarity of Ndebele identity that political sensibility more aptly describes its nature more than bounded ethnicity as premised by the apartheid government.

The spark for militant youth's repudiation of apartheid's Bantustan ethnic politics was provided by the government's proposal to incorporate a predominantly Sotho-speaking area of Moutse to KwaNdebele. I argue that the politics of 'authenticity' of Ndebele identity was discursively at play in shaping the resistance to the proposed KwaNdebele independence. Inherent contradictions that plagued apartheid's Bantustan ethnic politics were unveiled, thus provoking militant opposition from the Ndebele youth, people who occupied the Sotho-dominated area and others in the area demarcated as KwaNdebele. These constituted some of the main groups who were involved in the struggle against KwaNdebele independence. That Ndebele ethnic consciousness was imbricated in generational dynamics and identity politics is revealed when a closer scrutiny is directed at how in 1985, the militant youth resisted the vigilantism of Mbokodo-a group which was established by KwaNdebele's political elites to entrench its administration and control of the Moutse area (McCaul,1987; Ritchken,1990; Phatlane,2002 and Nielsen,1989). Mbokodo used brutal tactics, which were caught up in youth's resistance to Bantustan politics and opened a fulcrum for resistance in form of strikes, demonstrations and boycotts against independence, which engulfed the whole area of KwaNdebele. The militant youth's resistance to KwaNdebele leadership's vigilantism is not only essential in revealing their contribution to the defeat of Bantustan ethnic politics but also reveals how articulations of Ndebele ethnic consciousness was caught up and expressed in the context of contentions and opposition to top-down homogenizing effects of articulation of belonging by KwaNdebele leadership and Ndebele nationalists.

As an epicentre for sustained resistance against homeland ethnic politics, KwaNdebele witnessed divergent interpretations of the broader implications of accepting independence and the impact thereof on South African citizenship and belonging. Whereas KwaNdebele's elites such as the former chief minister- Majozi Mahlangu[17] saw Mbokodo as a cultural organization that sought to instill discipline and preserving a homogenized articulation of belonging to Ndebele ethnic consciousness, the youth were opposed to this view. In alliance with members of the Mayisha David Mabhogo royal family, the youth predominated the struggle against independence by propagating conceptions of Ndebeleness that was not so much of an ethnic identity but aligned to broader conceptions of South African ness which stood in opposition to KwaNdebele elites' ethnic identity ideologues within Bantustan politics.

In the context of the intensified anti-apartheid struggle, appeals to Ndebele ethnic consciousness were subjected to widespread contestation. More specifically, politicized sections of people living in the area demarcated as KwaNdebele and the militant youth who had some level of high school of education articulated a politically conscious understanding of belonging to the broader South African national identity and citizenship which transcended and challenged Ndebele ethnic nationalism. Opposed to the perverted notion of nation-building as premised on apartheid's homeland system, politicized residents of KwaNdebele and militant youth in alliance with Ndzundza King Mabhogo resisted the Bantustan's leadership support of the proposed independence of KwaNdebele. The broader struggle against apartheid presented a new political and a social context which merit recognition in capturing how the militant Ndebele youth's resistance was historically contingent. Broadly, their opposition to apartheid homeland politics was rooted in the politico-ideological anti-apartheid mass movements like the United Democratic

[17] Mahlangu, Majozi, KwaMhlanga-11/06/2013

Front (UDF) (Legkoathi, 2006). The United Democratic Front anti-apartheid nationalist movement was launched in 1983 and constituted student organizations, youth organizations, civic organizations, trade unions, women, cultural and sports organizations (Houston, 1999; Seekings, 2000; Barell, 1984 and Marks, 2001). UDF propagated ideas for an-inclusive broader South African national identity, which appealed and became a nodal point of identification to militant Ndebele youth's opposition to apartheid state's negative effects.

While Ndebele identity has a deeper history and continuity, the apartheid's infamous Bantustan context was a defining moment in the historical narrative of Ndebele identity and placed it on an ethnic mode. Various actors like the apartheid state, KwaNdebele homeland elites, chiefs and ethnic nationalists advanced particular agendas during the KwaNdebele moment, which shaped the notions of Ndebeleness. The emergence of KwaNdebele as a homeland brought to the fore a fundamental shift in the specificity of Ndebele identity as it materialized as a social construct imbricated in the broader political struggle against apartheid.

Conclusion

This chapter has presented a historical narrative analysis of Ndebele identity from precolonial times. Drawing insights from theoretical expositions on formation of collective identities, the chapter framed an inquiry on changing articulations of belonging to Ndebele identity and established that like most identities it has been fluid, malleable and shifting throughout the years. One of the over-arching arguments pushed to the fore is that the shifts and transformations in the expression of Ndebele identity has been the result of the different experiences of their changing socio-economic, political and physical environment.

The chapter foregrounds an observation of significantly intricate historical processes and events as constituting a broader, dynamic discursive continuum as a grid that allows for a highly nuanced understanding of the evolution of Ndebele identity across space and time. In its analysis, the chapter attempted to show how the consciousness of belonging to a Ndebele identity were shaped by changing power dynamics by a combination of external and internal factors. The chapter has also, in the process of analyzing the expression of Ndebele identity across space and time revealed multi-layered arduous experiences that the Ndebele group of people endured, casting the shaky history of their identity as a unique one. I thus observe that despite adaptation ensuing from a long history of intermixing with other people and responding to changing historical conditions, a distinctive Ndebele identity was expressed in an on-going process that unveils deeper history of continuity. The following chapter thus turns to look at the expression of belonging to Ndebele identity through mobilization of heritage and history in post-apartheid South Africa.

CHAPTER FOUR

Navigating Ndebele identity in the context of heritage, history and memorialization in post-apartheid South Africa

Introduction

This chapter seeks to demonstrate how a sense of belonging to Ndebele identity manifests itself through drawing on particular histories of Southern Ndebele in ways that are attached to the way history; heritage and memorialization have been constructed and mobilized in the post-1994 period to shape a consciousness of belonging to national identity. The chapter illuminates its arguments as they relate with the broader thesis from the premise that heritage has been foregrounded as one crucial arena in the attempts to imagine, make and remake a post-apartheid South African national identity. The chapter argues that this offers a vital vantage point from which to decipher how consciousness of belonging to a reconstituted nation under the metaphor of rainbow and ethnic self-assertiveness is articulated and played out. As Golan (1994) observed that "in today's South Africa, the way that the construction of the past relates to ethnicity and national identity is of critical importance to the future", the chapter analyse how a historical narrative of Ndebele identity is mobilized to express belonging in ways that speak to the interactions and divergences to the project of nation-building.

The empirical findings presented are from the data obtained through observation and tracking of development of cultural activities in the KwaMhlanga region for four consecutive years. This has

been augmented by insights from in-depth interviews that were conducted and a purposive critical review of the extant literature on heritage and commemoration studies. It will be argued that there is an active mobilization of an ostensibly distinctive Southern Ndebele identity through heritage; a process that is embedded in the in the state's imperative of mobilization of heritage projects and policies in the construction of national belonging. The focus on selected three key commemoration and heritage celebrations that were attended by the researcher allows the chapter to explain the constitutive relationship between ethnic consciousness and national identity. Importantly, the chapter also demonstrates how the complexities of this process which is fraught with intricate dynamics, complexities and contestations that connect with the broader intense debates and conversations on mobilization of history, memory and heritage for South Africa's nation-building project.

History and memorialization

Substantial engagement with intense scholarly debates on heritage as it links to memory and history as mobilized to foster consciousness of belonging in post-apartheid South Africa calls for clarifying conceptual language and mapping working definitions for this chapter. That the use of memory as one of the foundational lynchpins for crafting of new identity is emblematic of societies that have emerged from violent past is a view that has been captured in the extant literature on memory studies (Werbner; 1998; Bell, 2003; Becker; 2001; Coombes, 2003, Marschall, 2006). The common thread coming out strongly in the scholarship on memory stresses its manifestation through present processes that navigate the past in ways that Brundage (2004:6) aptly captures as " a conversation that the present has with the past and includes several voices in the present arguing about exactly what kind of past actually existed." Through acts of

remembering and forgetting, the use of the past (ideologically and politically), commemoration of events perceived to be key, monuments and memorials, the memorialization process always engages the past.

Although it has been a daunting task for scholars to converge on how memorialization is linked to history, the scholarship on memory engages with the notion of heritage in ways that casts it as a key concept that is used to capture how societies like South Africa deal with the legacy of the contested past to make meaning of the present (Walsh, 1992; Baines, 2007; King, 2002; Lavabre, 2005, Marschall, 2010). As explained by Schouten (1995: 21), heritage engages the past in ways that renders it as linked to history that is "processed through mythology, ideology, nationalism, local pride, romantic ideas or just plain marketing into a commodity." Preservation is arguably the central tenet of heritage as it mobilises particular dimensions of history in order to celebrate aspects thereof for political or ideological purposes. Uzzell (1989:3) considers the essence of heritage as foregrounded by "interpretation, reinterpretation, selection and rejection of some aspects of the past".

For a chapter whose central concern is analyzing how consciousness of belonging of Southern Ndebele is invariably pulled together in ways that speak to the state's imperative of mobilizing collective belonging through reflecting on its past as a rallying point to affirm the founding myth of the new society, history is an indispensable concept of this context that need to be engaged with. The interpretation, production and reproduction of the past constitute the spinal framework of history, which distinguishes it from heritage. The unresolved intense debates amongst scholars about the difference between history and heritage throws up various challenges and complicates the subject but it will suffice to argue that unlike heritage, history is supposedly a critical engagement with the past that afford opportunity for reflections. Rassool (2000:3) renders the

argument on history being an intellectual engagement clearer by noting that historians have a greater stake in producing history in academic spaces. Whereas heritage engages with the past in ways that ascribes some degree of significance to some parts of the past, history is supposed to construct past through a process of critical reflection.

In the midst of raging debates on the links between memory, history and heritage which are never resolved, this chapter deems it appropriate to pin down a premise that argues that heritage's selective celebration and engagement with the past is mediated by ideological and political dynamics. As one of the key contributors to the debates on heritage and memory, Marschall (2004: 95) opines that "through a process of selective remembering, thereby simultaneously legitimating the present socio-political order", this chapter acknowledges that heritage engages and celebrates past in contested and problematic ways. Such an understanding shapes a zooming effect, which allows for reflections on the complex interconnections between expression of Southern Ndebele identity and national identity in the heritage context.

My arguments proceed from the premise that distinctions between the concepts memory, heritage and history are blurred and that they are in fact inherently related and inevitably overlapping in ways that resists easy demarcation of their boundaries. Marschall's (2004) work provide much needed insights for analyzing heritage as one of the terrains where consciousness of belonging is mobilized through "commemoration, memorials, museums, renaming of cities, buildings and streets and national holidays. " (Marschall 2004:96).

Memorialisation, history and heritage in post-apartheid South Africa

As the main argument of this chapter hinges on analyzing how a sense of belonging to a shared Southern Ndebele identity is mobilized through heritage it begs consideration of how heritage has evolved in post-1994 South Africa as a vital background. As one of the over-riding master-narratives of the post-apartheid nation-building discourse, heritage has entered the lexicon of substantial literature on South Africa's reconstruction of the past and identity with heightened intensity. For example, Shepherd and Robins (2008:124) has suggested that, "since 1994, heritage has emerged as a prominent discourse in the political and public arena, one of the principal sites for negotiating issues of culture, identity and citizenship." In the same breath, Marschall (2006:176) has offered a sustained analysis of post-1994 South Africa's heritage and concluded that, "since the advent of the post-apartheid period, South Africa has been pre-occupied with the identification and celebration of heritage."

Harris (2009), Burnett (2001), McEarchen (2002), Bundy (2007) and Buthelezi (2012) among many others have provided a rich tapestry of arguments about cultural heritage and commemoration as central discursive spaces that have the potential of overhauling the problematic historical legacies of legitimization of discrimination, prejudice and exclusion. They reveal how the heritage landscape has witnessed the involvement of different stakeholders who (re)define and (re)imagine the interpretation of the past in contested ways.

Engaging in heritage landscape for varied purposes, civil society organizations, individual entrepreneurs, politicians, lobbies and the government have shaped the interpretation of the past in ways that lend themselves to categorization. There are those who squarely place their appropriation, imaginations and meaning of heritage within the circuit of the post-apartheid

South African state's nation-building agenda as anchored on accommodation of multi-cultural identities. By contrast, others deploy their perceptions of heritage and the past in a manner that contests the state's master-narratives of belonging as embedded in heritage programmes. Precisely because heritage is entangled in multiple histories, it is not surprising that it has been deployed to counter state's initiatives. Buthelezi's (2012) work reveals how heritage have been mobilized in form of *uBumbano LwamaZwide* to radically contest the state's problematic engagement with the past as manifested by the promotion of Shaka as a representative of Zulu identity. Buthelezi's work is certainly appealing in so far as it lays bare a greater complexity of the ways in which the explosion of heritage in post-1994 opens up challenging questions about how the past is mobilized to assert consciousness of belonging and the state's master-narrative in mobilizing heritage. Buthelezi's thesis provides useful insights which are used in conversation with work of scholars like Horavoka (2010), Leggasick (2007), Stanley (2006), Bundy (2007), Saunders (2007), Rassool (2000; 2007), Baines (2007) and Minkley (2008) among many others to provide an analytical framework for a nuanced reading of mobilization of heritage to assert Southern Ndebele identity and how this relates to state's heritage discourse to craft national belonging.

It is apparent that the state has been instrumental in transforming heritage over the couple of decades. The mobilization of heritage as a medium of interpreting the past and public memory to validate notions of nation-hood in ways that supposedly promote collective belonging, allows for a more complex analysis of the manifestation of Southern Ndebele identity which is the subject of this thesis. I therefore devote the following sections to an analysis of how the group of people identified as Southern Ndebele assert their belonging through their interpretation and

construction of their sense of history as it relates to the evolving project of post-apartheid nationhood through heritage discourse.

Anderson's (1991:15) work which has yielded a view that observes shared history as the crucial element in the construction of an 'imagined community, rings true for the expression of Southern Ndebele identity in various ways. Embodied in strands of history of precariousness and heroism, a particular history of Ndebele identity has been mobilized in ways that assign levels of significance to a past under the leadership of key male figures. The underlying motif in the conscious mobilization of history has revolved around key figures like King Nyabela whose perceived heroism and bravery were manifested during the Ndebele-Boer encounter (Groenewald, 1998). The history of Ndebele's encounter with the Boer invasions at the Transvaal under the leadership of King Nyabela is invoked as arguably the hegemonic living tradition to mobilize an expression of common Ndebele ness. As shall be demonstrated below, the interpretation and construction of memory around the struggle against Boer colonization and domination is indicative of one of the particular context within which consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity was claimed. It will be beneficial to give a brief background of the contentious relationship between the Ndebele and Boer encounter to enlighten and nuance our understanding of why the invocation of memory around the leadership of King Nyabela continues to have a powerful emotive appeal. It is from this standpoint that the following section detours into giving a background of the Boer-Ndebele encounter in the Transvaal region.

Ndebele-Boer Encounter

Having survived the destruction of the Mfecane and Mzilikazi forces' annihilation, the Ndebele who were dispersed across the Transvaal region grappled with yet another resistance to Boers' demands for labour and tribute (Delius, 1989, Van Jaarsveld, 1985 and Van Vuuren, 1992). An uneasy coexistence between the Ndebele who had risen to constitute a focal regional point of resistance and the Boers ensued. In the face of Boer settlers' advances, the Ndebele retreated to a place called Erholweni or Mapoch's cave under the leadership of King Nyabela, where they built extensive impenetrable fortifications which became their stronghold to defend the autonomy of their polity. The violent encounter with the colonizing Boers and especially the defeat at Mapoch caves constitute the foundation of the notion that the Ndebele have had a precarious existence since the late 19th century. A thread that laid emphasis on how the precarious conditions, which confronted the Ndebele upon their early settlement in the Transvaal did not deter them from defending their autonomy was commonly recounted virtually in all interviews conducted. Remarking on the contentious relationship between the Ndzundza Ndebele and the Boers that saw the Ndebele retreating to Mapochs caves, one chief, Lizzie Mahlangu had this to say:

> *Ask any person about the history of us as AmaNdebele, nobody can talk about the history of AmaNdebele without mentioning how we suffered and resisted Boer domination under the leadership of Nyabela, You see out of all the Kings that ruled, Nyabela was the first one to oppose discrimination/segregation. Our history tells us that we managed to retreat to Mapoch's caves which were protective.* [18]

Similarly another interviewee, Sokhulumi an olderly man who was at ease in voluntarily revealing that his recollections of history of Boer-Ndebele encounter were based on what he heard from the older generation said:

[18] Mahlangu, Lizzie, KwaMhlanga, 17/04/2013

We heard from elders that any history of Ndebele that does not point to the leadership of King Nyabela especially how he defeated the Boers is incomplete. Our Ndebele nation is one of the nations that displayed high level of heroism against the Boers, we managed to fight and find refuge at Mapoch's cave, ask any Ndebele elderly person he will tell you about Nyabela, yes he was one great leader who had courage and it was under his leadership that the Ndebele nation managed to survive[19]

The above excerpts were variably echoed in ways that profoundly scaffolded the history of Ndebele-Boer encounter attachment to King Nyabela and the heroism narrative as a long-standing tradition. A careful analysis of the narratives on the history of Ndebele-Boer encounter highlights the confluence of precarity and heroism arising from the experience with colonial expansion thereby placing the chief in a crucial position in the history of the Ndebele. This forms part of the story that grounds Ndebele identity in chiefly authority which places King as the centre of how past relations with colonial encounter is remembered. The Zulus make similar claims about Shaka as captured in Buthelezi's work (2012) where he argued about the promotion of Shaka as the founder of the Zulu nation by the post-apartheid state to engage with questions of the past in the affirmation of Zulu identity. We also read from Hamilton's (1998) work that the history of Shaka's military heroism is mobilized as part of heritage and used to shape Zulu identity.

The memorialization of King Nyabela as a great man in Ndebele is embodied in the strand of the history of marginalization and heroism in ways that necessitated the study to probe on how the preservation of Ndebele identity in the face of conflict with the Boers is explained. Field's (1994:4) observation that "the material of memories is the experiences of the past and present..." feeds into understanding how a sense of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity is reinforced by perceptions of history of precariousness. Narratives of marginalization were framed by many

[19] Sokhulumi, Kwagganfontein, 17/07/2013

participants when alluding to the dire struggles the Ndebele engaged in to ward off the threat of the destruction of their autonomy under King Nyabela. Suggesting a uniquely brave stance taken by the Ndebele in the context of unsavory circumstances posed by Boer presence in Transvaal, Mavuso-an elderly man related:

> *Well I can say our experience of colonial rule, the Boers in fact was not anything different from other ethnic groups. As you might know or have read about how the Boers took away land from black people, you are familiar with that, right? But I will tell you one thing, we lost our land yes, but the Ndebele nation was able to fight to the dire end, we fought against the Boers, we really fought to preserve our nation, even if we were eventually defeated but we are one nation who courageously fought with these white people....* [20]

Most of the narratives collected from older generations casted their sentiments in ways that gestured towards passionate pleas to preserve memories of the Ndebeles struggles against the Boers to preserve and assert their belonging. The act of fighting to resist Boer domination ran deeply as a symbol of heroism that preserved Ndebele identity, reflected in common statements such as "We are one group of people who fought with the Boers, we fought to preserve our autonomy and to show them that we do not want to be divided, we are a Ndebele nation."

In explaining how the Ndebele fought against the Boers, there was wide reference to Mapoch's cave as historically serving a handy refugee purpose as the following account by chief Mgibe is instructive in capturing the symbolism of the Mapoch's cave in the history of Ndebele. In his own words he had this to say:

> *Mapoch's caves weren't easily penetrable; infact it was a network of caves that made our leader King Nyabela to accept and provide refuge to other tribes who were displaced by Boer invaders. Yah AmaNdebele are one group of people who were vehemently opposed to accepting Boer sovereignty and domination over the Transvaal area and I must*

[20] Mavuso, KwaMhlanga, 18/06/2013

> *emphasise that Mapochs caves were impenetrable against attack because they were covered in thick vegetation and boulders....*[21]

The above excerpt cogently reflect that the Ndebele turned Mapochs cave into a fortress- a move which was threatening to the Boers who were committed to establish their authority and control of the Transvaal region. Thus Delius (1989:245) has observed that:

> The Ndzundza-Ndebele developed fortified mountain strongholds. By the 1862, their capital, Erholweni was probably the most impenetrable single fastness in the Eastern Transvaal. The security and the resources which the chiefdom offered attracted a steady stream of refugee communities to settle within its boundaries....

Although there is scant literature about the Mapoch's cave, the studies by Delius, Van Vuuren (1992), Phatlane, (2001) and Legkoathi (2012) has done much to uncover the significance and relevance of this history of Ndebele resistance to colonial conquest. Their accounts neatly related to oral narratives which were used critically to make to make clear a thematic picture of the role of Mapoch's cave and its mobilization as a heritage site to assert belonging to Ndebele identity.

The popular version echoed in academic literature is that the Boers' attempts to conquer and subdue Ndebele's kingdom resulted in a protracted war (Delius, 1989; Magubane, 1998). The view that the because the caves provided a good defence, it took eight months for the Boers to starve the Ndebele out of the Erholweni stronghold is also captured in ways that neatly resonate with how oral narratives structure their consciousness of history. According to Delius (1989) and Van Vuuren (1992), the final defeat of the Ndebele happened in 1883 when the Boers managed to lay a siege around Erholweni and other strongholds in which the Ndebele were sheltered. The Boers eventually overcame the Ndebele who could not hold out because they were starving and King Nyabela eventually surrendered.

[21] Mgibe, KwaMhlanga. 17/04/2013

Van Vuuren (1992) and Groenewald (2001) argue that the Ndebele had to bear the brunt of the total loss of independence and sovereignty, decentralizing and dispersing of the tribe. Consequently, their settlement patterns were altered as their land was distributed as farms after the end of Nyabela's regency and disintegration of the authority and management systems of the various smaller Ndzundza chieftaincies. A reflection on these consequences sufficiently renders visible and back up the argument that they constituted one of the major identity threatening circumstances, which the Ndebele had to grapple with. This observation is even more important as it enables an analysis of how the particular celebrations of heritage around Nyabela draw on the intricate linkages between the history of precarious existence and triumphalism. In particular, one can decipher a version of the past that is constructed in ways that lean towards asserting a particular notion of Ndebeleness that strongly draws on memory as one of its constitutive elements.

Delius (1989) argues that despite the subsequent scattering of the Ndebele polities and their conditions as indentured labourers and labour tenants, a distinctive consciousness of belonging was maintained through material culture. As he puts it: "nevertheless, despite their dispersion, the Ndzundza Ndebele clung to their historical culture, as exemplified in their distinctive beadwork and wall-decorations." Whereas Delius' analysis is productively informative on some of the forms through which Ndebele identity was preserved, this chapter is concerned with reflecting on the mobilization of the history of colonial encounter and the ability of the Ndebele to simultaneously draw on the loss of their land and sovereignty, precariousness and heroism to make particular claims of Ndebeleness.

It must be emphasized that the interviews did not generate any substantial conflicting accounts about the narration of the siege of Mapoch's cave. The written narratives about what transpired

at Mapoch's cave were echoed in oral narratives in ways that reinforce Hofmeyr's (1993) argument in which where she argued that if historic messages of victory and bravery are repeated, they mirror an authentic existence and familiarity through repeated acts of commemoration. Hofmeyr's contribution is important in so far as it provides a framework for an analysis of the mobilization of the memories of Ndebele-Boer encounter as it manifests itself to express a consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity in post-apartheid South Africa. The next section then turns to explore the memorialization of Ndebele-Boer encounter as intrinsically embedded in asserting Ndebele identity.

Memories of Ndebele-Boer encounter in post-apartheid South Africa

The Boers' siege of Erholweni- as it is commonly known by the Ndebele has been memorialized and mobilized as a central plank in the heritage of the Ndebele because it was a turning point in their history that led to defeat, subjugation and dispersal. Despite these outcomes, the resistance by the Ndebele, led by King Nyabela, remains the most important aspect of the memorialisation of those historic events. Popularized and fundamentally retained as part of re-imagining the past, memories of Ndebele-Boer encounter at Erholweni lends credence to King Nyabela who is fondly raised as one of the national heroes of the Ndebele people. A deep conviction is shared by the majority of the elder generation that King Nyabela played a heroic role in counteracting the threats to Ndebele by Boer presence in Transvaal at the old Ndzundza capital of Erholweni located near Roosenekal, situated north of Middleburg in Mpumalanga province. To this end, the 19th December, the day King Nyabela died in 1903 was set as a day to commemorate and underscore the leadership of King Nyabela and his history of resistance, which powerfully shaped the existence of Ndebele tribe when it came into contact with the Boers. A need to

unpack how exactly King Nyabela's role in history is (re)presented and interpreted to express Ndebele identity arises and it is for this reason that a consideration of the installation of King Nyabela's statue is vital.

Although there has been paucity of academic engagement with the memoralisation of King Nyabela in the construction of a historical narrative of the siege of Mapoch's caves, remarkable similarities from oral interviews and scholarly works of Van Vuuren (1992), Groenewald (2001) account for the inception of King Nyabela statue in 1970, a period when the creation of homelands was in full swing. This opens a path into understanding some of the complex intersections of the Afrikaner government's broader project of politicizing ethnic identities and the mobilization of Nyabela's reign in the politics of the establishment of KwaNdebele homeland. One of the main players in the honour of King Nyabela was the Afrikaner government who erected King Nyabela's stature as a public statue to a black man. Narratives of the older generation mostly cited that the apartheid government erected King Nyabela's statue in consultation with Ndebele traditional leaders. For example Chillies Mahlangu had this to say on the installation of King Nyabela's statue:

> *One thing I will tell you is that the heroism of King Nyabela was even known by these apartheid leaders, the heroism of the Ndebele, which is why they erected our King's stature, King Nyabela. They worked with our leaders, our chiefs, there was no way they could have decided for us, about our King without us, so they worked with us, especially people like Simon Skosana who were actively involved in the establishment of the Ndzundza Tribal Authority ....*[22]

The above excerpt was a widespread view among the older generation of chiefs, which reflected how the period of early 1970s witnessed a constellation Afrikaner government's interest in

[22] Mahlangu, Chillies, Interview, Kwaggafontein, 26/03/2016

promoting a consciousness of Ndebele identity and chiefs' efforts to mobilize belonging to Ndebele identity through popularizing Nyabela and his statue.

To the extent that the Afrikaner government erected King Nyabela statue as a public statue to black man, it remains useful to show how it was apartheid's imaginary schema to politicize ethnic consciousness in ways that met the mobilization of King Nyabela in the politics of the establishment of KwaNdebele. Commemorations of King Nyabela Day came in handy for Ndebele ethnic nationalists in the 1970s as one of the conduits to claim recognition for a consciousness of belonging to a distinctive Ndebele identity that warranted an enclave of its own. It will thus seem plausible to argue that there was an intersection of interests between apartheid government and homeland nationalists. Interplay of political agendas propagated by Ndebele nationalists fell within the Afrikaner's broader project of politicizing ethnicity to sustain an exclusionary Afrikaner national project saw memories of Mapochs' siege being popularized. This served a great deal in crystallization of a Ndebele identity which fell handy in favour of Ndebele nationalists' moves of clamoring for granting of a homeland in the context of the Bantustan policy by organizing annual commemorations and visits to Mapoch's cave after the erection of King Nyabela's statue.

Since its inception, King Nyabela's statue has become an important memorial site to identify with and bond with the history of marginalization and heroism of the Ndebele polity. Every 19th of December, commemorations take place at the memorial site. Aharon (2004:v) observation that "memory is elusive and selective: it holds on to what it chooses to hold" provides a vantage point from which to understand why messages of using the history of King Nyabela revolve around precarity and heroic narrative. As the memorial site, Mapoch's cave has been constructed as a permanent representation site for collective remembering of Ndebele history. Given South

Africa's post-apartheid's mobilization of heritage to foster the idea of nation-building, it bears arguing that the mobilization of Nyabela relates to the state's project of harnessing consciousness of history to foster common nation-hood. Contrary to the pre-1994 state which embraced Nyabela's symbol as part of reinforcing and exploiting consciousness of ethnic differences to push separate development, the post-1994 mobilizes the same symbol for identity construction that hinges on transcending exclusionary articulations of belonging to South Africa. Bearing testimony to this is address by the then deputy president, Jacob Zuma in 2005 at King Nyabela's commemoration event where he stressed that King Nyabela is remembered for his contribution not only to Ndebele history but South African history, which is vital in grappling with issues of nation-building that is foundationally grounded on reversing discrimination. In his own words:

> *...they did not fear death, in their determination to fight colonialism, Kgosi Mampuru was hanged by the colonial government in November 1883, while Kgosi Nyabela was sentenced to life imprisonment, as they refused to abide by the authority of the colonial government ....This occasion reminds us that these two heroes contributed to the struggle against colonialism...this commemoration takes place at the moment when we are in a struggle to reverse legacies of apartheid to build an inclusive national identity....(Zuma,2005)*[23]

As anchored on memorialization, notions of South African national belonging are legitimized on the ANC as the heart of the struggle against colonialism and apartheid (Marschall, 2006). In many ways, the mobilization of Nyabela narrative to assert Ndebeleness corresponds with the state's narrative of heroism as the constitutive moment of the struggle and master-narrative of interpreting the past. From my observation of the proceedings and messages scripted through on of King Nyabela commemoration for three consecutive years, King Nyabela's memory is mobilized for both Ndebele and national histories in ways that correspondingly link his

[23]Jacob Zuma's address at the commemoration of King Nyabela and King Mampuru, Limpopo Province-29/01/2005

leadership as symbolic of the heroic struggle against the Boers with the struggle against apartheid.

Drawing from Coombes and Marschall's works that both raise concerns about the centrality of the male figure in the mobilization of national identity through heritage, it will help to point out how the Ndebele narrative around King Nyabela as the male figure relates to the project of national narrative. Coombes (2003:107) writes that, "womens' vital role in the overthrow of the apartheid state has been sorely neglected in favour of a more monolithic representation of the liberation movement". Coombes's observation provides a point of departure to describe the centrality of King Nyabela in the heroism narrative as resembling that of post-apartheid's national narrative of suffering and heroism around male figures like the late former President Nelson Mandela. The messages of suffering and heroism at King Nyabela commemoration day set his contribution as key in the anti-colonial struggle in ways that are illustrative of the dominance of masculinist discourse. The particular representation of the version of King Nyabela's heroism is inscripted in the messages in ways that reproduce and reinforce the national narrative's obscurity of women and other groups of people's experiences in the struggles against colonialism.

The use of Nyabela as a heritage figure also shows connections with the national narrative in ways that allow some of the undercurrents of the contested master-narratives of memorialisation of the struggle for liberation to surface. For example concerns about marginalization of King Nyabela's statue in comparison to Mandela's memorialisation through some of post-apartheid state's heritage projects, programmes and policies were injected in messages of the day by some speakers. More than reflecting on how memory as a source of narrativising the past is a process fraught through with contested meanings and significance, the fragmented messages of pleas for

equal memorialisation of King Nyabela and Nelson Mandela renders complex the relationship between expression of Ndebele ethnic identity and crafting of national identity. The plea to equate Nyabela and Nelson Mandela in the national narrative strikingly differs from Shaka whose mobilization is at regional level at KwaZulu-Natal. The use of King Nyabela as a key figure in the mobilization of consciousness of history makes it possible for one to understand and explain how in overlapping terms, the event relates to the ways in which history and heritage have been mobilized for nation-building in post-1994 South Africa.

Standing as an important heritage site where the motifs of suffering and the history of victory of the Ndebele are evoked (Legkoathi 2011), King Nyabela's statue does not only stand as a site for mobilization of a Mapoch's siege narrative. As a critical outsider, my observation of the activities of the commemoration day and analysis of the messages scripted through did not only bring to the surface heritage as a critical terrain for promoting Ndebele identity but most importantly rich nuances characterizing the expression of Ndebele ethnic identity as it relates to national identity. Whereas emphasis of the simultaneous history of precariousness and heroism occupies a central place in the messages, consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity is also mobilized in ways that pushes to the fore how expression of Ndebele ethnicity is tied to traditionalism. Perceived to be custodians of Ndebele culture and customs, the role and authority of traditional leaders is reinforced in ways that speak to broader issues surrounding the mutual relationship between assertion of ethnic identities and embracing national identity. Indicative of this, was the way in which traditional leaders were introduced as indispensably constituting part of the rulers that should work with national leaders in advancing common nationhood out of diverse identities. The commemoration of King Nyabela has been used in ways that carve a space for articulation of the fragmented relationship between traditional leaders as

constitutionally recognized and what they perceive to be their marginal role in the state's narrative of crafting a South African national identity. Of relevance are some of the utterances by chief Gija, which are illustrative:

> *You see as Ndebeles we have come a long way in preserving our identity as a tribe. Our Ndebele King, King Nyabela led a landmark event in the history of South Africa, you see the Boers' siege of Mapochs caves or Erholweni as is prominently known today where we bravely resisted Boer domination is marginalized in this ANC government. King Nyabela and Mampuru were the only ones to be imprisoned with life sentence but they aren't recognized today South African history especially the history of the liberation struggle, as if they didn't fight, they fought it big time. So we aren't happy about the ways things are happening but we hope they will be ok because if you go back you will find out that Mampuru's photograph was vandalized last year, am sorry not Mampuru's, in fact Nyabela's photograph, it was vandalized, until today it isn't fixed yet. You ask yourself that is it really how he is supposed to be treated after doing all that job.*[24]

This thread featured in most of the interviews I conducted with members of the house of traditional leaders who are the main organizers of King Nyabela commemoration event. These utterances alerted me to how the position of the traditional authority (chiefs) in relation to the state is perceived to be that of ensuring a functioning crafting of national identity that resonates well with expressions of belonging to ethnic identities. Combining my observations, the oral narratives and archival material afforded me an opportunity to uncover the extent to which the politics for the establishment of KwaNdebele homeland was founded on traditional rule. It emerges that to a greater extent, the clamouring of recognition of a distinct Ndebele ethnicity saw traditional authority resonating deeply with uniting different groups of people who identified themselves as Ndebele to claim recognition that warranted a territorial enclave of their own like other ethnic groups. As custodians of tradition, the efforts by some traditional leaders to have a Ndebele homeland drew legitimacy from the precarious reality of apartheid's controversial setting of boundaries of homeland and thus resonated with the Ndebele people. Evidence

[24] Gija, KwaMhlanga, 27/03/2013

abounds that Ndebele nationalists called for a homeland as the interactions I had with all former homeland politicians inadvertently pointed to the significance of chiefly authority to plead for land in the context of homeland politics. If pieced together, evidence from my observation of the critical space accorded to traditional authority in heritage events such as King Nyabela and archived records make it possible to understand that traditional authorities remain inscribed as custodians of Ndebele identity.

Additionally, the theme and messages of the commemoration event include the celebration of Ndebele cultural identity. What is perceived to be Ndebele culture is predominantly injected in the proceedings of the day in many forms ranging from songs which invoke the history of the struggle of the Ndebele which led to Mapoch's siege and a wide array of cultural performances in forms of dance and songs by members of the audience. Patterns of assertion of Southern Ndebele cultural identity were clearly discernable in the ways the greater part of the audience-cutting across gender and generation was dressed in what is perceived to be traditional Southern Ndebele regalia. As different groups showcased their performances, speaker after speaker reiterated the importance of upholding Ndebele culture as it pervaded everyday lives. The speakers went on to emphasise that throughout history; culture has been a pivotal locus of reference for the people identified as Southern Ndebele. For instance in his opening remarks at King Nyabela Commemoration on the 19th of December 2014, Mr S.J Ntuli -the chairperson of Mabhoko Kings Council described the Ndebele ethnic group in the following ways:

> *.... culture is part of us, it defines our identity, it defines our Ndebele-ness, which is why on this day I want to tell the younger generation that when you talk of your Ndebele-ness you cant avoid talk about culture because it is the backbone of our identity, which is why it is transmitted from older generation to younger generation*

Ntuli's reference to culture as constituting Southern Ndebele identity was echoed by various speakers of the day like Chief Chillies Mahlangu and Sohlungulu Skhosana who was the director of the programme. In Bhabha's (1994:172) view culture reaches out "to create a symbolic textuality, to give the alienating everyday an aura of selfhood, a promise of pleasure." Celebration of the vibrancy of Southern Ndebele culture as a rallying point to mobilise a sense of belonging through heritage seemed to abound in significance in ways that buttresses Bhabha's argument.

Strongly coming from the interviews was the strand that laid bare how the elderly generation attached significance to what is perceived to be Ndebele cultural heritage which included distinctive ways distinctive ways of dressing, language and rituals such as initiation among many others as symbolizing completeness in so far as expressing belonging to Ndebele identity was concerned. The commonly held views among the older generation that culture is an essential component for accentuating feelings of belonging to Ndebele identity within a heterogeneous post-apartheid South Africa did not neatly converge with those of the younger generation. For instance, fragmentary familiarity with King Nyabela's history was expressed by a majority of younger generation and is reflected in such statements as: "we don't know much of King Nyabela but we only know he played a leading role in defending the Ndebele against Boer attack[25]"; "we have heard its part of our culture and we should know our history..." Such utterances were commonly recounted by the younger generation at the commemoration of Nyabela in ways that reflected that the mobilization of Southern Ndebele identity through heritage cannot be constituted as a single category.

[25] Mahlangu, Thobile , Roosenekal,19/12/2013

While commemoration and heritage events such as King Nyabela day were seen as an important space in which the people identified as Southern Ndebele engaged with their past and by extension their contribution to the broader history of South Africa, the younger generation had mixed feelings about articulating their belonging to Southern Ndebele through culture. The younger generation who came to this event, some of whom I had the privilege to interview during the course of the proceedings of the day situated culture as secondary to Southern Ndebele identity formulation. A 20-year old girl felt that commemorative events like King Nyabela are important for cultural mobilization as the younger generation get to see Ndebele performances by various groups dressed in Ndebele regalia but "I personally came just to meet friends, it's a social outing for me..."[26] Similarly, a 22-year old boy expressed how he felt the younger generation were detached from the cultural as it constituted Ndebele-ness and commemoration events as follows: "I honestly do not think our degree of attachment to King Nyabela is similar to our grandparents who some of them directly experienced the effects of defeat by the Boers, and same applies to culture, yes I am Ndebele but I will tell you one thing I came here just for social outing..."[27]

Majority of the younger generation pointed to multiple influences to their identity ranging from global culture, cosmopolitanism and consumerism. Some who were not dressed in what is perceived to be traditional youth Ndebele regalia even explained that while they fundamentally embraced their belonging to Southern Ndebele ethnic identity by attending such commemoration events they also came to tap into entertainment provided by other ethnic groups as they live in a multi-ethnic post-apartheid South Africa. Their views were not completely representative but

[26] Skosana, Nhlomphile, Roosenekal, 19/12/2013
[27] Joseph, Roosenekal, 19/12/2013

their utterances gave me a glimpse into how age dynamics play themselves out in mobilization of Ndebele identity in such spaces.

Not only do the different views on attachment to Southern Ndebele cultural identity highlight generational dynamics which play themselves out in the mobilization of King Nyabela but permits glimpse into some of the multiple interpretations and responses to the mobilization of heritage events to affirm a sense of belonging. Upon further observation of the proceedings of the event and from the discussions it was revealed that even if Southern Ndebele identity surfaces strongly in such commemorative event, this is consciously transcended because the event is inclusive- a point that shall be elaborated on below.

Forging a distinctive Southern Ndebele identity through material predicates of history and culture is conjured up by a wide array of cultural activities and entertainment by Sotho, Venda, Tswana and Pedi speakers who constitute part of the crowd. The songs and dances by various ethnic groups in a space which is supposedly imagined to be meant for forging a distinctively Ndebele ethnic identity was striking and saw me wrestling with a number of questions. I could not afford the opportunity to attend some planning meetings of the King Nyabela commemoration day but an array of questions I wrestled with as I observed a wide variety of cultural activities by various ethnic groups saw me negotiating access to some members of the organizers of the event who mostly comprised of Ndebele Traditional Leaders. Interesting nuggets about why such spaces are deliberately intended to be inclusive of other ethnic groups even if they are primarily mobilized to craft a consciousness of Ndebele identity came out from the discussions I had with some organizers of this event. A common view among traditional leaders-who perceived themselves to be vested with powers and responsibility of fostering Ndebele identity, was that cultural engagement with Ndebele-ness pervaded everyday lives but a

rallying call to a consciousness of history around King Nyabela could not afford to leave out other ethnic groups. Peaceful co-existence and interaction with various ethnic groups was highlighted as an indispensable part of Ndebele's own history. Delius (1989) and Legkoathi's works have pointed to how after the 1883 Mapoch's war the Ndebele were dispersed and had to live with other people for decades unlike elsewhere in ways that explain a history of constant interaction with other groups of people. Arguably, the history of coexistence with other ethnic groups continues to command a great deal of influence in inclusion of various ethnic groups in commemorative events. This deliberate inclusion was thus seen as part of relating such projects with the state's discourse of heritage which intrinsically links to attempts to engineer notions of nationhood that accommodate diverse identities.

The emphasis put by organizers on deliberate accommodation of other ethnic groups, steered my analytic exploration of a related question of how the Ndebele identity is expressed in relationship to diverse identities, which is a constitutive element of national identity. The account of one of the organizing committee of King Nyabela commemoration who works for Mpumalanga's Department of Cooperative Governance- Mr B.L Nkosi illustrated how the Ndebele are comfortable being part of national identity precisely because they have always been historically connected to other ethnic groups. He had this to say:

> *Such events are an integral part of bolstering our Ndebele identity. Awareness of our own history shapes our belonging and is tied to our identity but it is a process that cannot ignore other nations. We stay with other nations, Pedi, Sotho, Tswana, Zulu, Venda speakers. Even our history tells us that we had cultural links with other people but this did not situate our identity as secondary you see. Am sure you are even aware of the history of Erholweni, the history of King Nyabela we commemorate every year, you might have heard how he gave Mampuru who was chased by Sekhukhune some refuge, King Nyabela did not chase Mampuru to his enemies. So we have always lived with other nations and us as the department of Traditional Affairs are committed to nurture diverse cultures in our community hence such an event cannot be exclusively for Ndebele, we*

welcome all cultures, they are not a threat to our Ndebele-ness, we co-exist peacefully, which is why even during Ingoma (initiation), am sure you know or have heard about it, we do not discriminate and say only the Ndebele can participate,....[28]

These utterances were echoed by organizers of this event like Municipal managers in ways that seemed to lend credence to the idea that the boundaries of Ndebele identity are negotiated in ways that are not divorced from the historical links with other ethnic groups. The observation that Ndebele identity is closely tied to long-standing social interactions with other groups is echoed by various members of the National House of Traditional Leaders. It was a strand that came out so strongly in ways that did not only reveal the complex porous borders between ethnic groups but validates Lekgoathi's (2004:14) reminder that "outsiders have always been an important feature in the survival of amaNdebele chiefdoms and that diversity of language and custom has always been part and parcel of AmaNdebele identity." On the porous boundaries of articulation of belonging to Ndebele identity, it will seem useful to accept and acknowledge the over-bearing consequences of socio-political processes and the resultant dispersal patterns that the Ndebele group of people got entangled in.

Ndzundza-Mabusa Commemoration and heritage event

The mobilization of heritage around the history of Prince James Mahlangu as a political figure constructs a narrative that draws from intertwined strands of precariousness and heroism in ways that overlap with King Nyabela's commemoration. Attending the event as an invited guest consecutively from 2012- 2014 enabled me understand how a sense of belonging is developed through this event and how it relates to the state's heritage project. Coming from a royal family

[28] B. L Nkosi, 19/11/14

as the second son of King Mabusabesala, Prince James Mahlangu was the former chief minister of KwaNdebele homeland (Groenewald, 2001).

Prince James Mahlangu is promoted as part of Ndebele heritage in ways that attempt to invoke his political career as attached to the narrative of the struggle against apartheid. He is cast as a modern heroic figure whose politics were defined by opposition to independence of KwaNdebele. Yet there is a profound paradox in this celebration of Mahlangu because he became the chief minister of KwaNdebele thus working in the apartheid system, while claiming to oppose it. Casting Prince James Mahlangu's historical position as an ambiguous one suggests that his mobilization as part of heritage in post-apartheid South Africa indicates that the idea of Ndebeleness and the nation in the new South Africa is completely different from what it was during the establishment of KwaNdebele moment. During the Bantustan project, Prince James Mahlangu's position was not delinked from broader political conceptions of KwaNdebele-ness and boundaries of political communities that were to be sites of eligibility to citizenship. This has shifted significantly in post-apartheid South Africa where his celebration as a heritage figure largely reflects an expression of Ndebeleness that sits comfortably with the production of national identity.

The memorialisation of Prince James Mahlangu happens annually in the month of September, which falls within the state's orbit and official discourse of attempting to shape perceptions of the past to celebrate cultural diversity. The 24th of September has been set as a heritage day to shape the celebration of cultural diversity as part of post-apartheid South African's nation-building project as anchored on the myth of 'a rainbowism'. That the Ndzundza-Mabusa commemoration happens every year in the heritage week reinforces the observation that the assertion of Southern Ndebele-ness in its modern form as not just an ethnic group within the

rainbow nation but as an identity that derives from experience of history and culture. This suggests a constitutive relationship between expression of belonging to Ndebele ethnic identity and the production of national identity at least in a way that it manifests itself through this event.

Comparably, the mobilization of consciousness of history around Prince James Mahlangu embodies the narrative of heroism and his significance in the struggle against apartheid like King Nyabela heroism against colonialism. But as earlier hinted, his ambiguous political position in the KwaNdebele homeland begged a critical reflection on how he is presented as part of the liberation struggle. It was interesting to note that in the speeches of the day, the references to Prince James Mahlangu revolved around his leading role in opposing the proposed independence KwaNdebele. That he was working in the apartheid system was an omission in virtually all the speeches of the day of the three events I attended from 2012-2014 in ways that reflects what heritage does as the contradiction of commemorating Mahlangu's role was dealt with through silence and historical erasure of his position in the politics of the KwaNdebele moment. As a researcher, I did not cast any moral judgement on how the mobilization of Prince James Mahlangu was detached from his recognition by the apartheid government as operating in the system. Instead such an observation sufficiently facilitated my understanding of heritage as ideologically mobilized -a point Bodnar (1992:14) rightly scaffolds by stating that "because memory takes the form of an ideological system with special language, beliefs, symbols and stories, people can use it as a cognitive device to mediate competing interpretations and privilege some explanations over others."

The historical background of the late King Prince James Mahlangu particularly how he defended chieftaincy and emphasis on kingship was mainly injected in King Sipho Mahlangu's keynote address and speeches from representatives of CONTRALESA and COGTA in way that gave

credence to the idea that the constitutionally entrenched traditional authority exist as the fulcrum around which Ndebele identity crystalizes. A rallying call which foregrounded traditional authority as indispensable for struggles of survival of Ndebele identity throughout history was recurred from the above mentioned speeches in ways that mapped a niche into lines of questioning and reflecting about how mobilization of Ndebele identity in commemoration and heritage events spaces feed into the broader nation-building heritage discourse. The emphasis on chieftainship (traditional authority) seemed to be echoed in the same or closely related way like in King Nyabela commemoration, which pointed to attempts to mobilise traditional structures to give meaning to Ndebele identity at the local community. This sharply indexed that even if rainbow position which is over-arching metaphor of the post-apartheid nation-building project accepts ethnic distinctions, identification with a distinctive Ndebele ethnic identity have greater legitimacy as a category that is deployed in the lives of people identified as Ndebele more than national identity.

Key organizers of the Ndzundza-Mabusa event like King Sipho Mahlangu, the son of the late Prince James Mahlangu who is also a member of the National House of Traditional Leaders, representatives of the provincial house of traditional leaders and local municipality were some of the major speakers of the event. In shaping the way Prince James Mahlangu should be remembered, their speeches were characterized by the theme of awareness of the history of precarious existence of Ndebele identity in the context of homeland politics. The following excerpt from Mr Lechesa Tsenoli-the minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs (COGTA) who was one of the main speakers at the Ndzundza-Mabusa heritage celebration and commemoration is richly instructive:

The Ndebele we know of today has a precarious history, this Prince James Mahlangu we have gathered here to commemorate stood firm against the Pretoria Bantustan agenda, he never stopped at defending the tribal authority as the member of KwaNdebele Legislative assembly. He worked very hard to oppose the KwaNdebele independence, he was even imprisoned....it is important that we all know Ndebele's history of suffering and how Prince James Mahlangu contributed in the struggle against apartheid especially during his political career from the time KwaNdebele homeland was established and the Pretoria government proposed independence...[29]

Mr Tsenoli's reference to Mahlangu's role was echoed in various ways by speakers of the day like the chief director of Cultural Affairs for Mpumalanga Province, Dr Lubisi[30] and many others. In ways attune to Hall's (1996) observation that heritage celebrations make more visible and more clearly heard a previously absent other, the theme of awareness of history ran across in the speeches of the day to present Mahlangu's role as part of Ndebele history who needs to be preserved.

The event commenced with the royal poetic praises by royal praise singers *izimbongi.* So striking were the poetic praises which were recited when King Sipho Mahlangu dressed in what is perceived to be Ndebele traditional royal regalia arrived at Mabusa Show grounds flanked by members of the royal family who were also dressed in Ndebele traditional royal regalia. This spectacle revealed how Ndebele identity is shaped more by adherence to traditional authority and culture.

A wide variety of musical performances by ethnic groups constituted activities of the day in a way that further highlighted the interplay of expression of belonging to Ndebele and articulation of South African national identity in heritage events. Particular cultural meanings of Ndebele identity by and large come to be centrally situated in the proceedings of the day ranging from

[29] Lechesa Tsenoli's speech at the Ndzundza-Mabusa Commemoration and Heritage, at Mabusa Show Grounds, 28/09/2013

[30] Dr P. Lubisi's speech at the Ndzundza-Mabusa Commemoration and Heritage at mabusa Show Grounds, 29/09/2012 and 28/09/2013,

'traditional' Ndebele music by different age groups and genders dressed in traditional regalia, royal praises and showcasing traditional attire, diverse cultures of the community such as Tswana, Pedi, Venda and Sotho were showcased. The musical performances by various ethnic groups opened the path and pointed to the need to probe the links between these various performances and the articulation of Ndebele's sense of belonging in commemoration and heritage spaces. This even became a more productive line of questioning when I listened to the speeches of leaders after leaders such as the Executive Mayor representing the local municipality and a speaker from Mpumalanga House of Traditional Leaders who appealed to the language of the presence and performances by various ethnic groups in this ceremony as representing the rainbow character of the post-apartheid nation. For instance, in his keynote address, King Sipho Mahlangu emphasised:

> *....as we gather on this day, we celebrate Ndebele culture, we celebrate our Ndebele-ness in South Africa, we take pride in being part of South Africa, which is why we do not discriminate, we preserve our Ndebele identity, we are proud of it but we are part of South Africa...*[31]

Similarly, Gitja John Mahlangu from the house of Nyabela reiterated that " we take pride in our Ndebele-ness but we do not exist in isolation, we are part of the rainbow nation..." [32]National identity came to be centrally echoed in the speeches of the leaders which I read as a representation of state's project of promoting such heritage events advance the nation-building project by attempting to psychologically orient people that engaging in such heritage spaces which allow them to take pride in their various cultures is a fundamental foundation for embracing belonging to a diverse but united all-inclusive national identity.

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[31] King Sipho Mahlangu, speech delivered as part of key note address at the Ndzundza-Mabusa Commemoration and Heritage at Mabusa Show Grounds, 28/09/2013

[32] Gitja John Mahlangu, excerpt from the speech delivered at the Ndzundza-Mabusa Commemoration and Heritage at Mabusa Show Grounds,28/09/2013

The invocation of rainbow character of the South African nation as cast in the speeches of the leaders indexed the involvement of the state in heritage events such as the Ndzundza-Mabusa in a way that retreated to the event being ideologically and politically charged. Several people who I interviewed expressed enormous pride in the event. For example, one elderly woman who introduced herself as Mrs Kabini who was dressed traditional attire, which constituted beaded garments, a blanket and neck rings cheerfully remarked:

> *I have never missed this day, even King Nyabela day I have never missed. Such occasions allow me to show my pride in my Ndebele culture. You see how I am dressed, you see my traditional attire, it is not fashion but it is my being, if you are Ndebele, you are Ndebele, you cannot deny it, I live with my Ndebele identity everyday but such occasions, let me tell you, they allow me to show pride in my culture, I really feel I belong to my Ndebele identity when I attend such occasions, which is why I will never miss them. My culture is not dying, as you can see even the young ones we encourage them to attend and dress in their traditional attire and when they come here, they get to know our history as Ndebele people, their origins. Yes we now live in the new South Africa but it is such occasions that remind us of our history, where we came from and where we are going. I am so happy to be here, it makes me feel I am really part of Ndebele, I belong to the Ndebele community, isn't all nations, Zulu, Xhosa, Pedi, Shangaan, Sotho, Tswana have their own history, and their culture, so yes such occasions, allow us to embrace our cultures.* [33]

Such accounts were replayed by many elderly people across genders who perceived themselves to be bearers of Ndebele identity as they retreated to such phrases as 'you can't deny your identity' 'we need to take pride in our culture' 'we need to know and bond with our history as Ndebele on such occasions' as reasons for why they attended the Ndzundza-Mabusa cultural event. Their narratives on the essence of such heritage spaces centred on embracing the Ndebeleness as a cultural identity in ways ranging from dressing in distinctive traditional attire and performing traditional 'Ndebele' music which did not only bolster their belonging to

[33] Mrs Kabini, Mabusa Show Grounds, 28/09/2013

Ndebele identity but most importantly enabled a space to transmit and to encourage the younger generation to take pride in their Ndebele -ness.

Nothing resonated neatly with the transmission of Southern Ndebele identity to the younger generation more than the observations I made of older woman when they led and directed the younger generation's cultural performances of the day. The performances done by young females were led by the older women that were dressed in Ndebele regalia and introduced the performing groups and explained meaning of the songs to the audience. In these performances lay the generational transmission of Southern Ndebele culture in form of traditional dances and distinctive ways of dressing from the older generation to the younger generation. This, in my observation significantly highlighted gender dynamics in the expression of Ndebele identity which pitted woman as occupying centre stage as transmitters of culture in a way which leaned towards what Esther Mahlangu, a renowned Ndebele artist once remarked to me when she said:

> *As a Ndebele woman I have made an effort to take the role of teaching the young generation how to make Ndebele paintings, doing Ndebele traditional dances, so that Ndebele culture doesn't die. So that they know it because if we do not teach them they wouldn't know their origins, and where we are going. A Ndebele person should know she is Ndebele, and where this Ndebele identity originate from. We play a very big, big role to transmit our Ndebele culture to the younger generation.*[34]

This view was shared by other women who were prominent in leading, coaching and dancing with the younger generation as they sang and performed cultural entertainment of the day. This did not only enable me to infer how gender dynamics are played out in the transmission of what is perceived to be Ndebele culture to the younger generation but it also afforded me an opportunity to decipher the extent to which such heritage spaces are used to mobilize Southern Ndebele as a cultural identity and how conscious efforts are made to cascade down its

[34] Mahlangu, Esther, Welteverde 16/04/2013

appropriation generationally. For instance, all women leaders of the performances, emphasised that they did not only coach the younger generation but also taught them the values of preserving their Ndebele-ness as a cultural identity.

It emerges that commemoration and heritage celebrations are a discursive space wherein such dynamics such as gender, generation, class and rural-urban divide in the complex relationship between Ndebeleness and South African national identity variably play themselves out. The younger generation expressed mixed feelings about such cultural events. Whereas the older generation's utterances mostly gestured towards such heritage spaces as coming handy for embracing their belonging as cultural beings but this significantly differed from the majority of the younger generation's views who downplayed the view that feelings of belonging to Ndebele identity are confirmed by attending such cultural events. In my conversation with Portia, a girl aged twenty-one who did not put on what is perceived to be traditional Ndebele regalia said:

> *As youth, influences that shape our identity are multiple, I wouldn't wear beaded garments or necklaces to express my belonging, I think it is uncomfortable to wear that stuff, you can imagine on a day when it is hot like this. I know very little of my Ndebele culture and values associated with it but it doesn't matter because I do not subscribe to culturally prescribed ways. I do attend such events for entertainment as I know I will see performances by various ethnic groups, Venda, Sotho, Ndebele, Tswana, you name it which are all interesting in various ways. Of course I consider myself Ndebele because I was born by Ndebele parents and am biologically connected to this identity and such occasions are vital for people who deem themselves to be bearers of Ndebele identity to know their history....* [35]

As she continued she was interrupted by her male friend-Thokozani who was of the same age, who endorsed her remarks by stating that:

> *Questions about who we are undeniable, so I invited most of my friends to come here because I sometimes attend these events and have observed interesting musical*

[35] Portia, Mabusa Show Grounds, 27/09/2014

performances and dances by various people. On such occasions we get to see our friends like I met her (he laughs), we were together at primary school but had not seen her for quite some time, we get to see important people like the mayor of our municipality, the king-Sipho Mahlangu and people from Ikwekwezi F.M. I was raised in the city- in Pretoria, but I am not disconnected from my Ndebele identity, it just that it does not matter, I don't care about being identified as Ndebele even if I think such heritage events like this one are about Ndebele history, I am of course interested in knowing my history....[36]

Such utterances were common among the younger generation across genders suggesting that the assertion of a common Ndebele-ness was fraught with complexities, which resisted homogenization. Thus even if material predicates of history, consciousness of the past and culture are used in the assertion of Ndebele identity in such heritage spaces, the mixed feelings about the meanings and interpretations of such events drew my attention to the complexity of the expression of Ndebele as a cultural identity is an interplay between homogeneity and heterogeneity. The narratives of the elder generation revealed that they retained considerable attachment to Ndebele cultural heritage as the primary reasons for attending such events but for the majority of the younger generation they did not deny their Ndebele cultural identity but they believed such events cater for diverse cultural backgrounds such that embracing Ndebele identity becomes secondary. Their utterances were in line with what Hall (1994:394) suggested when he asserted that culture by its very nature:

recognizes that, as well as well as the many points of similarity, these are also critical points of deep and significant difference which constitutes "what we really are", or rather-since history has intervened-"what we have become.....

It thus goes without saying that heritage spaces are not devoid of contestations as sites mobilized for expression of belonging to Ndebele identity which is not contingent on sameness or neither is homogeneity its only constituent part. If articulation of belonging to Ndebele identity is so

[36] Thokozani, Mabusa Show Grounds, 27/09/2014

complex as reflected in the mixed feelings expressed by ordinary members in conversations about why they attend such events, how then are messages about South African national identity as scripted through by leaders and organizers of such events received by people who perceive themselves to be bearers of Southern Ndebele identity. This necessitated that I broaden my view from the tightly focus on why people perceived to be bearers of Southern Ndebele identity attend such events to probing more about how they receive messages that feed into the broader articulation of belonging to national identity as decried by the leaders, representatives of the state and speakers of the day in such events.

For the state, as represented by premiers and the executive mayors, invocation of heritage through events such as King Nyabela and Ndzundza-Mabusa commemoration and cultural events presents an opportunity to make a rallying call to the audience to connect with the underlying project of nation-building. Such messages settle for a complex accommodation by the people who identify themselves as Southern Ndebele which goes a long way in tapping into the complex relationship between expression of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity and South African national identity as anchored on rainbow imagery. People who strongly identified with Ndebele-ness perceived such heritage spaces as connecting them with their traditional ethnic identity. For instance in retaining a considerable attachment to Southern Ndebele ethnic identity, one elderly man who introduced himself as Msiza said:

> *Yeah we hear all these messages about taking pride in being part of South Africa, yes we live in post-apartheid South Africa, but as for me my being Ndebele comes first and it matters, I didn't come here to hear about being part of South Africa but I primarily came here because I am Ndebele, that doesnot change, when it comes to my identity I do not second guess about it, am proudly Ndebele, as you can see how I am dressed, this occasion enables me to connect with my history, my Ndebele history, of course as we celebrate the history of King Prince James Mahlangu, it is part of South African history because he contributed to it as he represented the Ndebele, so infact I think on such*

occasions messages that should be emphasized are those of the contribution of Ndebele to the South African history, our Ndebele identity should be preserved...[37]

These views were echoed by rank and file members particularly the older generation. The most significant feelings that came out was that whereas such spaces come handy in asserting Ndebele as a cultural community in the South African nation such events are paramount in reinforcing expression of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity. That the majority of the older generation had a much stronger attachment to Ndebele-ness as the main factor that had propelled them to attend such events was reflected in statements such as "this event is about the Ndebele"; "it is about Prince James Mahlangu" ; "it is about the Ndebele nation not South Africa"; "the core of this event is our Ndebele culture not the rainbow nation". Such utterances framed the production of Southern Ndebele as primary in these events more than messages of nation-building which were stressed by speakers. The generally shared view, though points of emphasis and nuances differed from interviewee to interviewee, particularly the older generation who expressed that they have had experience with KwaNdebele homeland moment during Prince James Mahlangu's political career expressed concerns that the event should be primarily about the preservation of Ndebele history not nation-building messages. This indicated a strong sense of disconnection from messages of nation-building scripted through by speakers of the day.

The tone of disconnect between the leaders' messages of unity in diversity as the over-arching adage of embracing South African identity and the firm attachment to Southern Ndebele identity as a locus of reference by a majority of older people who attended such ceremonies further locked up the production and meanings of Ndebele in heritage spaces in another layer of complexity. It seems that the articulation of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity is continuously negotiated within a contested heritage space where there is coalescence around the

[37] Msiza, Mabusa Show Grounds. 28/09/2013

nation-building project, which seemingly subordinates the expression of Southern Ndebele identity. Distiller and Steyn (2004:8) rightly stated that South Africa remains "one of the sites of contestation within which different groupings struggle for their sense of social identity." This rings true for the articulation of belonging to ethnically defined Ndebele identity which takes precedence as a point of reference for social identification by a majority of people who perceive themselves to be bearers of this identity even if they deem their identity to be part of the rainbow nation.

Articulation of Ndebele identity in relation to nation-building project in heritage spaces is fraught through with political power dynamics, which play themselves mostly in the messages scripted in the activities of the day but this does not deter the increasing commitment to mobilize Southern Ndebele ethnicity around adherence to tradition and culture. I observed what is perceived to be traditional Ndebele dishes, which were served to the audience. Besides tasting the food, I had the opportunity to have conversations with some women who were preparing the food who mostly resigned to the idea that such activities were not only important in constituting particular meanings of Ndebele cultural identity but also served showcase and preserve tradition and culture which mainly shape Ndebele identity. Beaming with joy, one woman who introduced herself as *Mam'* Mantuli was preparing a tradition Ndebele could not help but say:

> *Today you will get the opportunity to experience Ndebele cultural identity in totality, we are Ndebele, we are proud of our identity, this is what we call Ndebele traditional food, maybe you will get married to a Ndebele man (we both laughed), you should know these traditional Ndebele dishes....* [38]

These sentiments were echoed by the majority of women I spoke to who were preparing these traditional dishes and the common usage of the terms 'it is part of our culture' 'we want to

[38] Mantuli, Mabusa Show Grounds, 28/09/2013

preserve it' indexed to me the level of commitment to embracing and claiming belonging to Ndebele identity in this community.

Celebration of heritage at local-village level

That mobilization of Ndebele identity through heritage spaces occasionally cascades down to local village levels as was evident in the heritage celebration on the 24th of September 2012, at *Bonginkosi Pre-Schoo*l which is located at Gemboskpruit village. The activities of the local heritage celebrations at Bonginkosi Pre-school, though having much in common with what happened at King Nyabela and Ndzundza-Mabusa commemoration and heritage event mainly focused on the cultural dimensions of Ndebele identity. Within the ambit of culture, the activities of the day commenced with a speech from a woman -the principal of the pre-school who was dressed in what is perceived to be 'distinctive traditional Ndebele regalia'. After welcoming the audience, she emphasized the need to ensure that the young generation appreciate and preserve their belonging to Ndebele identity. Her constant enunciation of the older generation having a role to play in endorsing cultural meanings of Ndebele identity to the younger generation through everyday relations and performances was striking in so far as highlighting how Ndebele identity construction is transmitted across generations.

Activities of the day –mainly by pre-school children who were dressed in traditional Ndebele regalia constituted songs, poetry and dances expressed appreciating the heritage space as crucial in enabling various ethnic groups to embrace their belonging by showcasing their cultures. The messages pitted the articulation of belonging to Ndebele identity as a constituent part of the rainbow nation, which went a long way in revealing how the attachment to Ndebele ethnic identity and consciousness of belonging to national identity manifest itself at the local level.

Ideas of knowing that Southern Ndebele does not exist in isolation but instead existed as part of the broader South African-ness were mainly emphasised and transmitted to the younger generation through performances that were led by pre-school teachers. Much striking was a performance where pre-school kids were made to recite a poem in various ethnic languages to express that assertion of belonging to Ndebele-ness is part of broader South Africa. Not only were the kids made to mention different ethnic groups but were dressed in various traditional attires perceived to be representing different ethnic groups. The consciousness of belonging was asserted in way that did not only celebrate the vibrancy of cultural dimensions of a distinctive Ndebele identity but it also embraced diversity in way that neatly resonated with expressing belonging to the broader South African identity. It however should be noted that such pre-school based activities are not commonly conducted every year like other cultural celebrations.

Conclusion

This chapter concludes that heritage activities, organized around particular forms of memorialization helps us explain the relationship between consciousness of belonging to Ndebele ethnic identity in the context of the production of a post-apartheid South African national identity. I demonstrated that, in overlapping attempts, narratives of what are perceived to be great man in Ndebele history are drawn and attached to the way history and heritage has been constructed in the post-1994 period to foster the idea of nation-building. In the process of analyzing how a sense of belonging to Ndebele identity through mobilization of history relates to how heritage projects and policies has evolved, the chapter revealed the construction of a historical narrative of precariousness, marginalization and heroism as intertwined strands embodied by key male figures (King Nyabela and Prince James Mahlangu). The strands of the

history of precariousness and bravery are mobilized and attached to key historical figures in ways that corresponds with post-1994 state narratives of suffering, struggling and heroism against colonialism. The chapter also highlighted that even if the mobilization of consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity through heritage, speak to the project of nation-building as hinged on to massive shift in government's effort to promote development of heritage as part of nation-building, key intricate dynamics and contestations play themselves out in these events in ways that reveals connections and divergences in the expression of Ndebele identity and national belonging.

CHAPTER FIVE

Material culture in Southern Ndebele identity making in post-apartheid South Africa

Introduction

Beadwork, wall paintings, architecture and distinctive ways of dressing are a form of material culture that constitutes an expression of Southern Ndebele identity. This has not only attracted popular media attention but most importantly some scholarly reflections that interrogate how people identified as Southern Ndebele contribute to and draw meanings from this kind of material culture to express a consciousness of belonging. The influence of material culture in constituting elements of Southern Ndebele identity gives credence to the notion that material culture serves as an ethnic signifier and a proclamation of Southern Ndebele identity. This chapter seeks to reflect on ways in which material culture express consciousness of Southern Ndebele identity by addressing some of the following questions: How has the use of material culture extended beyond decorative purposes to express meanings and functions that invoke notions of belonging to Ndebele identity? The chapter also illuminates how the production of a new South African identity has appropriated aspects of Ndebele's material culture, further imbricating the production of ethnic and national identities. As it contributes to the thesis's over-arching aim of uncovering the relationship and interaction between Southern Ndebele identity and the production of a South African national identity, this chapter argues that material culture is an important constitutive element of Southern Ndebele identity which lays bare some key dynamics of its historical, political and cultural purposes.

What is material culture?

As expressions of a sense of belonging and identity, material culture has attracted a considerable amount of scholarly attention which places high premium on how cultures and identities are shaped and maintained through the production and use of tangible objects. Mandelman (2014:188) stresses that there is "dialectical relationship at work in which the material objects of human worlds shape cultures and identities as much as cultures and identities shape those objects". This proposition dovetails with Tilley's (2006a: 61) argument of material culture "making, using, exchanging, consuming, interacting, and living with things people make themselves in the process...." The emerging argument is that the self-conscious and deliberate articulations of belonging ensues from processes of production and use of material culture which Mukerji (1994:146) captures as "...made up of objects that people both derive and distinguish from the natural resources around them to make a visibly human environment in which to organize group life." Identity manifests in the production and use of objects. Material culture is thus rendered as a key notion of analysis of interactions and relationship people have with material symbols in ways that enable this chapter to explore the cultural character of Ndebele identity through beadwork, wall-paintings and architecture.

Nettleton (2015) has shown that many South African peoples have used dress and beadwork to self-identify in smaller, often political rather than cultural or ethnic groups, especially in the Eastern Cape in1820s. Nettleton's observation is important in so far as it invites us to think about how material culture can be used for purposes other than ethnic claims and provides useful insights to understand particular meanings of Ndebele in relation to material culture. Courtney-Clarke (1986); Loubser (1994) and Van Vuuren (2008) have drawn attention to the long history

of beadwork and mural art among the Ndebele communities, tracing it to the 1940s. This suggest that beadwork and paintings has evolved over time

The narratives of the participants shed light on how the attachment to material culture was shaped by the history of defeat of the Ndebeles and the dispersal patterns that ensued in ways that support the arguments advanced by Loubser (1994) who has noted that owing to the difficult circumstances of the Ndzundza, the paintings became an expression of both cultural resistance and continuity. The commonly held view revealed the existential crisis that confronted the survival of Ndebele identity after the defeat by the Boers in 1883. The description of paintings as reflective of cultural resistance was highlighted by some of the participants as follows:

> *We have never let go of our culture, we have been doing these paintings even when scattered in these white farms. We have been painting our houses and everyone knew its Ndebele paintings, even white people during the time when our land was taken, well u will find that some people are no longer painting their houses but I will tell you one thing, these paintings have a long history... (Mrs Mahlangu)*[39]

Similarly another Mrs Sibindi highlighted:

> *You really can not take away one's culture, I am sure as you are doing this research you know the history of the Ndebele very well, you know the story of our land which was taken away by the Boers right, but we have been doing these paintings that's part of our culture which the Boers could not take away....* [40]

A similar observation was recounted by Mrs Masilela:

> *You see our encounter with these Boers changed the way we lived; they took our land and distributed it amongst themselves, we were forced to work for them in their farms. In fact I can tell you that, the way I see it, these whites just wanted to destroy the Ndebele society, they wanted to make it hard for us Ndebeles to imagine ourselves as belonging to one group, they wanted to completely destroy us, they wanted us finished as a Ndebele nation. What can you do if you are dispossessed of your land? What can you do? You*

[39] Mrs Mahlangu, Verena. 18/04/2013
[40] Mrs Sibindi, Siyabuswa. 18/04/2013

> *become forced to work for the same person who took away your land, your choices become limited. But we are resilient people; we hold on to our culture, our Ndebeleness resides in culture. So despite living further apart from each other we maintained these wall paintings which were even visible to them (the Boers). We continued painting our homes as part of maintaining our culture to show who we are. Even if we lived interspersed, anyone who arrived at Transvaal will still make connections about our wall-paintings and see that we are one nation. We didn't want to be destroyed by the Boers...*[41]

The above excerpts illustrate how paintings emerged as a prominent visual form of material culture that was deliberately maintained to claim a consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity. Important to emphasize is that the utterances reinforced observations revealed in the works of scholars like Schneider's (1987) who argued that wall-paintings only developed and operated as a statement of ethnic solidarity in the 1940s after the Mapoch war. The association of wall-paintings with the aftermath of Mapoch war interestingly begs a consideration of how the changed social and political conditions that confronted the Ndebele after their defeat led them to maintain their identity through material culture. Specifically, in the midst of dispersal patterns, which had resulted from the loss of land, wall-paintings, beaded adornment and architectural designs intensified as one of the mechanisms to maintain Ndebele identity (Legkoathi et-al, 2008). Davidson (1985:1) also had this to say:

> .....it is significant that in reaction to being divided socially and geographically, a stronger consciousness of identity developed and was expressed in material culture...it was because of dispersal patterns that it became imperative both to retain customs and to develop new ways of expressing and defending their identity in alien surroundings....

The common reference to the conditions of precarity after the Mapoch's war in the scholarly literature and interviews underscores the enduring significance of paintings in invoking notions of Southern Ndebele identity in ways that open up a window for further exploration of its role in identity negotiation.

[41] Mrs Masilela, KwaMhlanga, 13/06/2013

We learn from Schneider's (1987); Courtney-Clarke's (1986) and Nettleton and Hammond-Tooke's (1989) works that wall-paintings was important both in terms of its production and its use to express values, marriage and other everyday intricacies of what constituted Ndebele-ness. Whereas points of emphasis and nuances about the uses of paintings differed in interviewees' narratives on the uses of wall-paintings, the generally shared view was that wall-paintings aesthetically reflected women's role at home-in the domestic arena. Rich's (1995) reflections on how the production of architectural design and paintings were related to and done by women highlights how gender roles were represented in the mural designs. Rich's observation supports the idea of paintings as a cultural activity through which gender roles were sharply defined to explain how wall-paintings were the domain of women. He elaborates that through wall-paintings, women communicated statements of stages of life such as marriage, initiation of their sons and birth of a child. Placing wall-paintings in the domestic domain, the interviewees' narratives gave a picture of how paintings were principally women's work through which they were made socially visible in a homestead.

A common statement from interviewees' narratives of emphasizing women's role in managing the homestead was: "a woman showcases her Ndebele-ness and presence in a home by taking good care of it, by painting it, and constantly renewing the paintings". Basically wall-paintings were depicted as an expression of traditional values of women as an integral member of a family in Ndebele communities as Schneider (1985:64) also tells us that "through her painting the artist is saying that she is a good Ndebele wife who keeps a proper and well-decorated home." Virtually all elderly women whom I had conversations with on wall-paintings expressed a sense of attachment by uttering statements such as "it is part of showcasing one's womanhood; it is our domain" in ways that echoed Schneider's observation. They further stressed their roles in

keeping to the tradition of wall-paintings in ways that provided additional insights to how women were valued as guardians of Southern Ndebele identity and significantly shape and maintain cultural conceptions of motherhood. In a richly instructive account, Mrs Magagula, an elderly woman who described her experience with wall-paintings as a long-standing one dating back to early 1950s as follows:

> *I started painting at a tender, age, I think I was 14 years, my mother taught me to paint, isn't it is our duty as mothers to keep this tradition of painting walls because if we don't do that, our Ndebele culture will diminish, that's the role we play as mothers in our society, I know the young generation do not care as we do about our culture, but we have to teach and encourage them so that our culture does not diminish.... (she emphasized repeatedly)* [42]

The above account was echoed by others, confirming that wall-paintings are a constitutive element of Southern Ndebele identity that affirmed women's position as nurturers of culture by uttering such statements as "yes we keep our culture through these wall-paintings and we transfer to younger generations, we teach them to do these paintings." According to Nettleton (2014) women consciously and unconsciously bore the responsibility of keeping cultural identity alive when labour practices pulled large numbers of men into cities. This view is argued by scholars like Delius (1989); James (1985) and Van Vuuren (1994) who revealed that Ndebele women found themselves separated from their male counterparts who went to urban areas as job-seekers and as indentured labourers in farms. Delius in particular elaborates on how in the complex matrix of dispersal patterns, women nurtured and maintained a consciousness of belonging through wall-paintings and beadwork. He further observes that wall-paintings became a means through which women's visibility as guardians of Southern Ndebele identity was played out.

[42] Mrs Magagula, Siyabuswa, 18/04/2013

Another central dynamic emanating from the narratives is that the attachment to Southern Ndebele identity through wall-paintings is particularly more pronounced among the older generation while younger people evinced only limited attachment. Nothing expressed a generational dissonance to wall-paintings than the younger generation's utterances of virtually no knowledge of the meanings of wall-paintings in assertion of Southern Ndebele identity. In various ways, a majority of the younger generation noted that they have seen wall-paintings being done mostly by their mothers and grandmothers and that they have never done the wall-paintings themselves. The recurring theme in conversations with the younger generation variably revealed that their perceptions of wall paintings is not imbued with ethnic cultural meanings but ascertained their value in terms of being part of South African traditional arts. It will seem that the material production of Ndebeleness sits comfortably with the production of South African national identity as a seamless process wherein the aesthetic appropriation of the colours of the South African flag in wall-paintings does not create any tension between Southern Ndebele identity and national identity. Statements such as "these colourful paintings make us proud as a South African nation, we all know that these paintings are made by the Ndebele but they enrich our South African culture, our nation" were common among the younger generation and across the gender and they rang to me as utterances of primary attachment to national identity. Beyond underscoring the generational differences on the production of Ndebeleness through wall-paintings, the Ndebele material culture and its imagined articulation to South African national culture casts a picture of the assertion of Ndebeleness that is made possible in its modern form in the context of production of rainbow nation that accommodates diverse cultures.

Architecture and wall-paintings as art form



Figure 1. (Photo taken by researcher at Mrs. Esther Mahlangu place. Mrs. Esther Mahlangu is an artist and icon of Southern Ndebele material culture place, 16/04/2013)

As the above figure shows, patterned ornamentation are striking in so far as they reflect how abstract wall-paintings as art forms are. The evidence collected from oral narratives and scholarly works brought out material culture as shaped by the histories of defeat and consequent dispersal patterns among the Ndebele communities. This has been a cross-cutting theme that was constantly brought up in ways that expressed the invocation of the notion of Ndebeleness not just

as ethnicity but experience of history and culture. Put forth as the baseline in explaining the patterns and the abstract forms was the idea that there have been changes from the use of natural colours to acrylic paints in ways that indexed modern engagement with technology. Rich's (1984) extensive study of Ndebele architecture highlights the complex patterns, sophisticated geometric patterns and the influence of Western styles which manifest in the images of aeroplanes and light bulbs. Similarly Powell (1995: 60) tells us "in many cases the new imagery included on walls was a depiction of things seen in the suburban homes when women were, and still are, employed as domestic workers..." Rich and Powell are convinced of the influential power of modern technology on Southern Ndebele architecture and wall paintings. I argue that through architectural designs and wall paintings, the Southern Ndebele express flexibility and adaptation to varying context. Chiefly, the abstract forms render visible the conceptions of Ndebele-ness that purport to draw on notions of material culture rooted in tradition but adapting to modernity bound up with changing global art context.

Significantly, the abstract designs characterizing Southern Ndebele wall paintings extend to the public sphere in ways that add a further layer of complexity to the representation of Southern Ndebele identity through material culture. The aesthetic manifestation of Southern Ndebele paintings in streets, billboards and tourist vouchers (Marschall, 1999), opens a window through which the interaction between consciousness of belonging to ethnic identity and national belonging can be gleaned. In my view, the public visibility of Southern Ndebele art designs lends credence to the deliberate attempts by the post-1994 government to appropriate aspects of Southern Ndebele culture in the project of crafting a national identity. It will seem that Southern Ndebele material feature so prominently in the national imagination because the aesthetic appropriation of modern metaphors of almost everything, ranging from razor blades, cars and

aeroplanes has been showcased beyond South African borders in ways that have even attracted tourist attention and earned aesthetic expression of Ndebeleness' visibility as part of South African pride. Rendering this argument more transparent was my conversation with Esther Mahlangu who shall be discussed in more detail later as the icon of Ndebele identity, who explained to me that her consciousness of national belonging is reflected in the use South African flag colours in some of her paintings. Esther's view resonated neatly with several narratives which framed the connection between Ndebele artwork and South African identity through such utterances: "these paintings are part of our culture, we feel very proud to see our paintings even in billboards that are seen by everyone who visit South Africa; "we are part of a South African community that consist of many cultures" , "our culture is part of South Africa." A majority of participants perceived the visibility of Ndebele art forms in public spaces as a showcase of Ndebele culture and national identity and they strongly advanced the claim that despite the influence of modernity, wall-paintings still remained a marker of Ndebele tradition. One should hasten to note that the visibility of Ndebele paintings in public spaces expresses how Ndebele identity is situated within the broader South African-ness in ways that increasingly reflects an articulation of Ndebele identity and national belonging in mutually constitutive ways.

Beadwork and expressions of Southern Ndebele identity

As an important conduit wherein particular cultural meanings of Ndebele identity are constituted, beadwork has a long history of association with the Ndebele community. Without exception, the historically enduring nature of beadwork has bestowed the Ndebele community a distinguished cultural identity (Smuts and Mahlangu, 2015; Levy, 1990). In line with what Smuts (2015) and Diane (1990) have uncovered on the production and uses of beadwork to invoke notions of

Ndebele identity, the study claims that in their various manifestations, beadwork produced important understandings into the dynamics of Ndebele identity. Qualifying this observation entails exploring beadwork in its historical context as a starting point hence the following section covers the historical establishment of beadwork as a tradition among Ndebele communities.

Historical account of beadwork and its use to assert notion of Southern Ndebele identity

Whereas the lack of scholarly documentation on the internal dynamics of everyday way of life of the Ndebele during the precolonial era has been comprehensively covered in Chapter three, it suffices to highlight that this renders fragmentary the evidence on the history of the evolution of beadwork. However Courtney-Clarke (1986) observes that the Ndebele utilized the glass beads brought by the Portuguese in the sixteenth century for trade in South Africa. Levy (1990) draws together fragmentary evidence to substantiate the claim that despite the patchy evidence on the dating and origins of beadwork a common thread suggests a long history dating back to the 19th century. Levy argues that the evidence on beadwork help to better comprehend the social functions that have led to its continued production and use. Reference to the precarious conditions that confronted the Ndebele after their defeat in the Mapoch's war casts a discursive framework through which beadwork constituted Ndebele identity in ways that were symmetrically related to wall-paintings. Schneider's (1987) work is of great utility as it essentially observes similarities of patterns and colours in wall-paintings and beadwork in her analysis of wall-paintings and the historical circumstances that gave rise to attachment to material culture to assert Ndebele identity.

The history of when beadwork emerged as a prominent visual form of material culture for the people identified as Ndebele has remained an enigma in academic discourse. But the extensive works done by scholars such as Levy (1990) and Powell (1995 provide us with a platform from which to analyse the dynamics that play themselves out in the production and use of beadwork as it continues to be as a marker of Ndebele identity. Undoubtedly, gender is one of the key dynamics that manifests in the production of beadwork in ways that highlights women's contribution to the making and remaking of Ndebele identity in the context of production of national identity in South Africa. Throughout all the conversations I had with interviewees about material culture, no issue garnered more reference than women as custodians of aesthetically asserting Ndebele identity through beadwork as a form of material. Utterances such as 'as women, we have a duty to transmit our culture to the younger generation' 'we have to teach the younger generation about the importance of these beads' indexes a socializing pattern in artculations of belonging to Ndebele identity.

Old women were far more attached to the production of beadwork than the younger generation. Although not detracting from usefulness of beadwork as a medium of articulating a sense of cultural belonging, a considerable number of young girls I interviewed spoke about the discomfort of putting on what is perceived to be traditional Ndebele regalia and beaded adornment. The commonly held view among the younger females was that whereas beadwork preserved Ndebele culture, they only occasionally wore beaded garments. The following excerpts give a glimpse into the feelings of disconnection the majority of the younger generation hold towards beadwork:

> *Beads are fashionable but I personally don't like them, I only wore them once, when I graduated from my initiation, If I had a choice I wouldn't, well its part of my culture but hey in a day when temperatures are high like this one, yoh that's not nice to put on that*

stuff I tell you. I care about my cultural belonging, I know I am Ndebele but some of the things that define my Ndebele-ness like these beads and traditional regalia, I don't like honestly, I don't have issues with taking pride in my Ndebele culture, I know that beadwork and these traditional stuff that our moms and granies like to put on communicate our Ndebele identity especially to people who are not Ndebele, they can tell you are Ndebele when they see you putting these beaded adornment but I don't think in post-apartheid South Africa, in this modern age, the significance of beads is diminishing. For instance, I am Ndebele, born by Ndebele parents but am not familiar with social functions or names of these beads, I come from a Christian background, my mom doesn't put on beads and has never bothered to explain various functions of beadwork... (Bonginkosi)[43]

In the same breadth, Norah Mahlangu, a girl who expressed that she stays and studies in Pretoria and only visit her parents who reside at KwaMhlanga during school holidays had this to say:

We live in era where traditional and non-traditional co-exist, the elder generation should understand that in as much as we value our cultural belonging, some of these things, such as beadwork, beaded adornment and traditional regalia no longer have that much value as expression of our Ndebele identity. We don't have much knowledge about their social functions, maybe as part of fashion yes, I can put them but I don't like them. [44]

In explaining why she did not have knowledge about the social functions of beadwork, Norah pointed to the influence of modernity, stressing that even if the production and use of beadwork, in her view, remains steeped in culture, as a young girl staying in an urban area she did not feel any sense of attachment beyond reasons of fashion. She thus said "at the end of the day, I do not care if they are Ndebele beads or Zulu beads, if I decide to buy beads; I just buy beads because I do not know the difference..." For the majority of the younger generation, the view that beads communicated value in terms of fashion more than its social functions and its uses for invoking notions of Southern Ndebeleness ran deeply in ways that sharply differed from the older generation's perspectives. A common statement by the younger generation was "it is just nice to put on beads if you love them, be it Ndebele, Zulu, Pedi, Xhosa...it does matter which ethnic

[43] Mabena, Bonginkosi, KwaMhlanga. 16/08/2013
[44] Mahlangu, Norah, KwaMhlanga, 13/06/2013

group you belong to." More than highlighting the complex interface between the generational dynamics and the appropriation of beadwork to express Ndebele identity, the above excerpts reveal disconnections between 'traditional' conceptions of Ndebele identity and influence of modernity.

It became clearer that there are generational differences on the material production of Ndebeleness through the production and use of beadwork when Mrs. Nomvula Mnisi who narrated that she was born in 1932, raised in Ndebele culture, married into Ndebele family and has stayed with Ndebeles her entire life. In her narrative Nomvula explained that she does not know how to do beadwork but explained that even if she does not know how to do beadwork:

> *I am proudly Ndebele but I do not have passion with these things of beadwork and wall-paintings, they do not matter that much in our everyday lives, beaded adornment especially, is only worn on occasions like the welcome of initiates. I understand it is our responsibilities as Ndebele woman to preserve our culture, to produce these beads and transfer this knowledge to the younger generation but the majority of these young girls are not passionate about learning to do beadwork and wall-paintings. Beadwork is part of our culture, our Ndebele culture, yes, nut I do not blame the younger generation if they do not take pride in these things, they live in the modern era, what matters is knowing their belonging, their Ndebeleness in their everyday life, like for example, respecting elders...*[45]

From the above excerpt I could glean how through the production and use of beadwork as material objects notions of Ndebele identity are evoked in ways that evoke contestations on modern measures of authenticity of Ndebeleness. Whereas the majority of the older generation cutting across gender revealed some sense of deep knowledge and perceptions of social values and manifestation of beadwork as a constitutive element of Ndebele identity, the younger generation demonstrated disjointed and scanty knowledge of these social values. For the most part, the younger generation across gender did not display a dismissive attitude about knowledge

[45] Mnisi, Nomvula, KwaMhlanga, 13/06/2013

on the specificity of the names of different beads and their values but laid emphasis on how putting on beaded adornment led them into positions of identification with their Ndebele ethnic group.

Uses of beadwork: How is beadwork used for cultural purposes?

Social meanings of beadwork were associated with age-sets and stages of growth from childhood to adulthood. For instance Esther Mahlangu whose well-known works has earned her an iconic status of representation of Southern Ndebele culture in South Africa and beyond had this to say:

> *Very young girls wore an igabe, a small apron with white beaded dressed skin or cotton fringes attached to a front waistband, densely covered with beadwork. After puberty and the accompanying initiation ritual, a young woman wore an isiphephetu, a stiff front apron decorated with beadwork, and she could then wear the isithimba, a long soft skin back apron,which was worn by women of all ages from puberty to old age. For her marriage, a bride wore an itshogolo, a goatskin front apron, with the lower edge cut into five approximately hand-length flaps. This was worn undecorated for her wedding, but as a married woman grew in status at her husband's home, she enriched her itshogolo with beadwork. She wore it at important ceremonial occasions, such as the initiation of her sons. Another type of front apron, amaphotho, was more generally worn by married women. It was shaped rather like the itshogolo but had a central beaded fringe with two squared-off flaps at either side. An important item worn by brides was a naga, a splendid panelled skin cloak. This might be heavily decorated with mainly white beads.....*[46]

This reveals the intricate details and communicative power of beadwork particularly to the insider who can distinguish beaded adornments and associate them with respective age set as Esther's remarks was replayed by all older interviews across genders.

There can be no doubt that bead production serves a variety of cultural functions as continued interaction with older women interviewees revealed that even blankets commonly worn by Southern Ndebele have different beads distinguishing newly married women from older women. All older interviewees virtually stressed that beaded adornments serve a cultural purpose in

[46]Mahlangu, Esther, Weltevede, 16/04/2013

ceremonial traditions like girls and boys initiation whereby the initiates and their parents were particular beaded garments, which symbolically communicate the value attached to initiation.

How has the production of South African identity appropriated aspects of Southern Ndebele material culture?

As notions of celebration of South African cultures were pushed to the fore as one of the foundational principles of post-apartheid South Africa's national identity, there has been appropriation of Ndebele material culture as part of traditional arts in the production of national identity. Marshall (2002:44) for instance highlighted that:

> Ndebele designs are constantly adapted to a range of contexts...nationally and internationally publicized and disseminated in everything from tourist brochures to souvenir objects, wall-paintings have become a visual cliché for South Africa.

Marschall's observation demonstrates the appropriation of some aspects of Ndebele material culture in the production of South African identity in ways that neatly resonated with Esther's reflections. As earlier hinted Esther Mahlangu is a key figure who has been elevated as the icon of Ndebele cultural identity in post-1994 South Africa in ways that reflect how South Africa assert itself on the international cultural landscape. According to Esther Mahlangu:

> *My artistic and beadwork is known all over the world. It is very significant because my cultural belonging is part of me. I am always dressed like this even when I travel. I enjoy every bit about Ndebele culture, Its good to be part of Ndebele culture which is why I don't want it to vanish. So when I am beyond South African borders, I proudly identify myself as South African from Mpumalanga province who is of Ndebele ethnic origin, they will know that in South Africa, this is how Ndebele culture is expressed.....*[47]

She repeatedly mentioned being conscious of her South African identity as secondary to her belonging to Ndebele ethnicity. The figure below when Esther Mahlangu was receiving an

[47] Mahlangu, Esther, Interview. 16/04/2013

award from the then president of South Africa, Thabo Mbeki attest to the intersections between Esther's cultural production of Southern Ndebele identity and the making of a post-apartheid national identity.



Figure 2. Photo taken by the researcher at Esther Mahlangu's place (16/04/2013)

A question that then arose as part of my central framework of enquiry was whether the appropriation of aspects of Ndebele material culture weakens or strengthens Ndebele identity. It would seem that the use of additional colours, which are part of the new South African flag strengthens Ndebele culture because the tradition remains steeped in tradition whilst there is

integration, which is part of expression of national consciousness. It emerged that, conversely, the Ndebele have appropriated and intergrated colours of the South African flag like they do with wall-paintings. Esther explained that as Ndebele design are sold as part of South African national pride, they have adapted and appropriated what works for them in ways that have kept the tradition alive. One might argue that this is precisely because as a cultural entrepreneur wants to sell her goods to a wider international context as the photos render visible some of Esther's wares she makes and sells.



Figure 3. Photo taken by researcher at Mrs. Esther Mahlangu place, (16/04/2013)

Esther's insistence that the tradition of beadwork has not waned even in the midst of appropriation of colours of the South African flag further enriched and revealed an additional dimension of the of the influence of commercial impetus in the production and use of beadwork. Esther's adamant remarks on the appropriation of new colours of the South African colours casts a possible fortune of the continued cultural relevance of beadwork. As shown in the figure below, Ndebele designs have been produced in ways that adapt to show integration of South African colours.

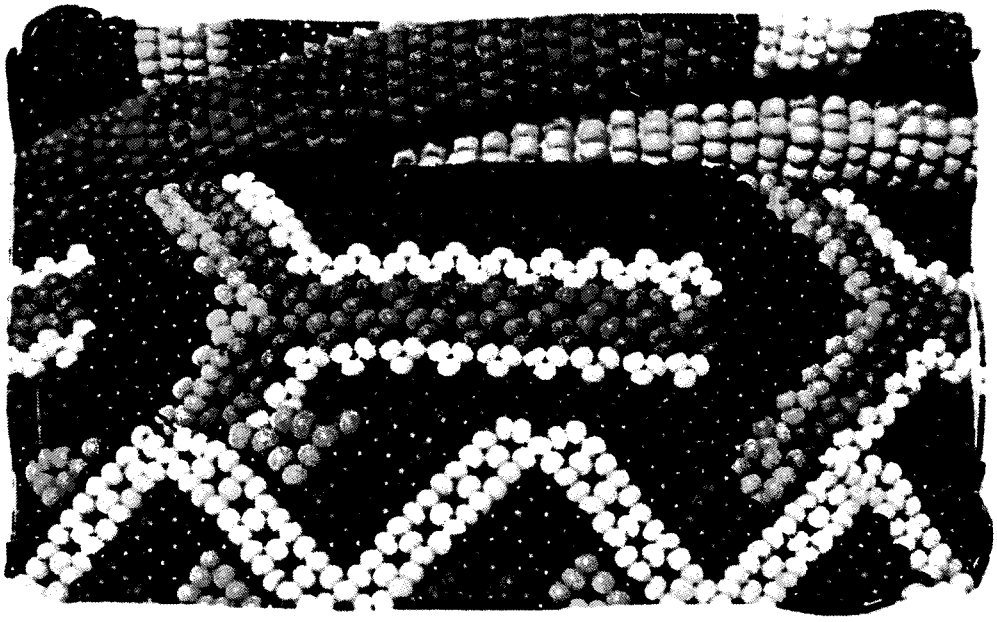


Figure 4.

Participation in the markets has had a significant influence in the continuing salience of beadwork production as some women have become entrepreneurs who attend key cultural commemoration and heritage events to peddle their wares to earn a living. However the pivotal need of the primacy of maintaining an ethnic identity prominently featured as entrepreneurs demonstrated knowledge of the associated social functions of beadwork. More than

communicating an entrenched sense of Ndebele ethnic identification which prevails in the heterogeneous KwaMhlanga region, the display of material culture at such key functions as Ndzundza-Mabusa commemoration and heritage day reflect complexities of the articulation of this sense of cultural belonging. For instance when I attended the Ndzundza-Mabusa commemoration for three consecutive years (2012-2013) as an invited guest, I observed a majority of older woman, dressed in their colourful traditional blankets and beadwork dancing with young girls. I read this as a conscious effort of generational transmission of identity which was amplified by a cross-section of interviewees I spoke to when they echoed that the survival of the knowledge relating to the making and functions of beadwork is potentially threatened hence there existed a need for the older generation to showcase and transmit it to the younger generation. Mrs Ntuli, one elderly woman who was dressed in beaded adornment and danced with young girls had this to say to me after the performance:

> *We have no choice as elderly woman, as you can see how I am dressed, I made these myself, I was taught by my mother, they communicate a lot about my culture, maybe you thought its fashion, yes it is for some, even for people who see, they can tell and its easy for them to identify my culture, my Ndebeleness but the way our generation disconnect from their cultural belonging, hey it is disheartening to say the least, Well some put these beaded adornment but the majority are carried away by this modernity, they don't even know the social functions of these beads. So it is our duty to showcase our cultural belonging, who we are in South Africa, it is our duty to transfer and educate the younger generation* [48]

A commonly held view among those who did beadwork was that feelings of cultural belonging to Southern Ndebele are confirmed by putting on beaded adornment, but this did not detract from expressing their belonging to South African national identity.

[48] Mrs Ntuli, Mabusa Show Grounds. 28/09/2014

That Ndebele material culture has been appropriated as part of developing a national identity was laid bare when Esther Mahlangu remarked that Ndebele material culture in the form of beadwork and paintings has become part of the national pride of all South Africans. In line with Van Vuuren (2008:21) who noted that "The Ndebele of South Africa has captivated the world with their specific style of mural art and beadwork". By the same token Esther remarked:

> *outside South Africa, they see that we have attractive nice traditional stuff, paintings, beadwork, they see what the Ndebele nation offers as part of their culture and when am outside South Africa, they see it as part of South African traditional culture, what the Ndebele group of people who are part of the South African nation do as part of their culture. We are part of the rainbow nation and the international recognition of our culture is not just for the Ndebele, it is part of South Africa, South African national identity. Even if it is us the Ndebele who do this beadwork and paintings because it is our Ndebele-ness, South Africans take pride in our culture as part of traditional arts and I am very happy about it...* [49]

The impact of tourism on cultural representation of Ndebele culture and Esther's response to tourism calls into question the extent of the weight to which one can give to her pronouncements on Ndebele culture. That Esther has become a cultural icon who participates in commercial ventures in response to tourism makes Sharon Macdonald's (1997) view a worthy consideration. Macdonald (1997:156) argued that representations such as performances of culture that are destined for tourists, are not real but staged authenticity. In the same breath, Lanfant (1995) noted that once culture becomes commercialized it deviates from 'authentic' culture. The commodification of Ndebele culture as simultaneously South African and Ndebele is seen as akin to Macdonald and Lanfant's concerns in that Esther's utterances hint towards taking pride in producing Ndebele culture for international consumption and marketing. Striking to note is that the influence of commercial impetus does not detract the meaning of beadwork as the below excerpt illustrate:

[49] Mahlangu, Esther, Interview. Mabusa Show Grounds. 28/09/2014

> *It takes a Ndebele to comprehend what different beads stand for, a Ndebele woman would even know the names of these different types of beads, so even if it is seen as South African traditional arts as you asked (she laughs) we know that it is our identity, we do not have problems though because we are part of the South African nation, but as for me my Ndebele-ness comes first, I know it is my culture, you see Zulus have their own culture, Pedis, Sothos...* [50]

I thus observe that the existence of beadwork is not threatened by its appropriation as part of national pride, instead a complex picture of the attachment to Ndebele identity comes out in ways that place material culture as relating to South African identity.

Conclusion

This chapter has sought to demonstrate how notions of belonging to Ndebele identity are evoked through the production and use of material culture. It identified wall-paintings and beadwork as major constitutive elements of Ndebele identity which are produced and used in ways that purport to simultaneously to strongly adhere to traditionalism and national identity. The chapter has demonstrated how gender dynamics play themselves out in the expression of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity through material culture in ways that cast women as the main custodians of the material production of notions of Southern Ndebeleness. The chapter has also revealed that some aspects of Ndebele material culture have been appropriated as part of South African traditional arts in the production of a post-apartheid national identity. Conversely, colours of the post-apartheid South African flag have been used in wall-paintings and beadwork in the expression of Southern Ndebele identity in ways that there is resonance in the use of material culture to assert Southern Ndebele identity and consciousness of national belonging. The chapter advanced the claim that beadwork and wall-paintings as a Ndebele tradition is not

[50] Mahlangu, Esther, Interview, Mabusa Show Grounds. 28/09/2014

waning as a marker of belonging despite the dynamics of commercial impetus, modernity and appropriation of its aspects as part of South African identity. A key point made by this chapter about the expression of Southern Ndebele identity through material culture and its appropriation in the making of a South African national identity is the continuous appropriation, adaptations and integration that the Ndebele engage in to keep the tradition vibrant. The chapter argues that this renders transparent the argument that there is mutually reinforcing relationship between the expression of Southern Ndebele identity and the production national identity as it manifests itself in the production of material culture even though the relationship is a complex and intricate one which resists easy descriptions.

CHAPTER SIX

"A cultural imperative?": Initiation rites, belonging and expression of Southern Ndebele identity.

Introduction

The transition from adolescence to adulthood among some Southern Ndebele communities is indexed by initiation ceremonies, which are culturally grounded. These initiation ceremonies carry enormous significance in the creation, recreation of membership boundaries and shaping notions of belonging. Commonly used as rites of passage to mark transition from boyhood to manhood and girlhood to womanhood, initiation practices have received a considerable scholarly attention as culturally grounded practices, which shape social identities. Initiation practices are but one prominent example of expression of Southern Ndebele identity. During the course of my research, in mid-2013, the initiation process of the Southern Ndebele was thrown into sharp relief because of the highly publicized botched circumcision and death of initiates that occurred in Mpumalanga. Whereas initiation can be seen to be a routine expression of cultural dimension of Southern Ndebele identity, the events of 2013 produced heated socio-political debates and contestations about the practice. It was arguably a moment of crisis, which allowed some of the undercurrents of the concerns about the expression of belonging to traditional Southern Ndebele identity through initiation and its relationship with the broader modern South African national identity to come to the fore.

The chapter argues that while initiation rites are important in the production of Southern Ndebele identity, the death of initiates, which occurred in KwaMhlanga area and other parts of Mpumalanga region momentarily disrupted the complex but functioning relationship between Ndebele identity and national identity. It examines the tensions, contestations and controversies, which were laid bare by the reactions to the death of initiates. In elucidating its arguments the chapter inquires into the peculiarity of the 2013 moment and the consequent concerns which arose on the complex questions of rights to cultural practices and the moral dilemma of the state to protect right to life through the constitution. The over-arching purpose of this chapter within the broader thesis is to illustrate that the relationship between the articulation of Ndebele ethnic particularity and national identity got unsettled by the peculiar moment of 2013 initiation in ways which casts the relationship between the two identities as a shifting one as opposed to being static.

Importance of initiation

Initiation rites have been extensively discussed in scholarly work. The extant literature on initiation captures it as rites of passage to adulthood through which culturally ascribed practices, norms, values and beliefs of everyday relations are passed from one generation to another at significant transitional stages of human development. Fowler (1972:527) sees rites of passage as "a body of rituals that mark the passage from one stage of development to another. According to Rice (2014:386) "various life events affect one's social standing within hierarchies of gender and age. For young men, completing initiation school and being ritually circumcised officially marks passage into manhood..." How these developments are considered culturally significant transitions in many African communities is underscored as a common thread in the growing

corpus of literature on initiation rituals (Malisha et al, 2008; Van Rooyen, 2006; Van Gennep, 1960, Lincoln, 1981, Young, 1965; Eliade, 1958). Rites of passages denote a point of transition to adulthood, which is crucial for identity development through an acquisition of knowledge of a particular society. As Mabena (1999: 4) puts it: "Initiation schools are traditional institutions, characterized by oral teachings of esoteric knowledge of the tribe, and by rituals whose functions are to effect the transition from adolescence to adulthood and are obligatory for members of a particular society." Notably, the role of culture is seen as the centre around which the practice of these initiation rituals revolves. Haralambos and Heald (1980) observed that culture is the collection of ideas and habits people learn, share and transmit from generation to generation. From elsewhere in Africa, research has indicated that initiation rituals serve as crucial bedrock through which the expression of belonging to cultural identity occurs. In the same breadth this chapter casts more attention on initiation to decipher how boundaries of belonging to Ndebele identity are negotiated and expressed. Practiced within the context of cultural tradition, initiation is important for both boys and girls in the KwaMhlanga region as a constitutive element of Ndebele identity and expression of belonging as they come to grips with the intricate processes of everyday relations and experiences of transitional points in life.

The chapter theoretically draws heavily on social constructivism and benefits immensely from the data gathered through interviews, which were conducted during the initiation rituals. The media publicity of the initiates' deaths and my visit to KwaMhlanga during this time did not only afford me the opportunity to garner insights about mixed feelings about initiation practices but most importantly enabled me to gather vital information about the complicated nexus between the rights to traditional cultural practices as enshrined in the South African Constitution and state regulation as part of nation-building in the post-apartheid democratic dispensation.

From the standpoint that identities are shaped by cultural practices, I sought to gain insights about how, more than as a rite of passage to adulthood, initiation rituals are commonly conducted to present, assert, affirm and constitute the meaning of Southern Ndebele identity. The practice of initiation does not cast itself as an obligatory ritual in the Southern Ndebele community precisely because the main consequences of not undergoing initiation lies in stigmatization that casts itself as a recurring challenge in everyday social relations. It is however common that boys and girls of an adolescent age-set undergo initiation rituals as they grapple with the challenges and complex intricacies of articulating a consciousness of belonging in the context of ethnic interactions and relations in the culturally heterogeneous KwaMhlanga region. In KwaMhlanga, the idea of Southern Ndebeleness is not dispersed as cultural practices like initiation invoke notions of clear attachment to Southern Ndebele identity even if there is constant interaction with other ethnic groups. Ndebele-ness is then expressed as distinctive cultural consciousness.

Male initiation

Initiation of boys into manhood is a practice that is deeply rooted in the history of Southern Ndebele. For Van Vuuren (1992:472) male initiation has deep roots and was only disrupted during the war against the Boers:

> Wat die organisasie van die seunsinisiasie betref, beweer Ndzundza-segslui dat dit tot voor die Mapoch-oorlog van 1883 'n gesentraliserde karakter gehad het, en wys daarop dat na die aanval deur Mzilikazi die *ingoma* as saambindende rite die Ndzundza bymekaar gehou het

(Concerning the organization of the boys' initiation, Ndzundza informants maintain that it had a centralized character up to the Mapoch war of 1883, and they point to the fact that after the attack by Mzilikazi the *ingoma* kept the Ndzundza together

According to Delius (1989) even if initiation and other traditional rites were abandoned in times of war, they were reinstituted in 1886, when large numbers of Ndzundza youth attended initiation schools. These remarks present an entry point, which lends credence to the view that initiation has been perpetuated as a long-standing cultural practice, which reinforces a sense of belonging to Ndebele identity. James (1990) shares the same view, which points out how social institutions like male initiation have been retained by Ndebele communities as they grappled with social conditions of existence and ensuring cultural continuity. In the same vein, the majority of elderly men who were interviewed insisted that initiation is one of the core ceremonies of Southern Ndebele identity. Nice Masango, a former homeland politician stated that:

> *Specifically we had initiation rituals throughout our history as Ndebele, a cock, iqhude is an initiation ceremony for a girl child and throughout those years we had\ ingoma, ukuwela, that is how we preserved our culture to date, otherwise had it not been for these two rituals, oh and even marrying and paying lobola in form of cattle, so had it not been for these three things which I named our culture and identity would have been long ago gone. Do you get me?*[51]

Ndebele have thus clung to the practice of initiation as an expression of belonging. Given that the practice of initiation rituals still constitute one of the salient and common ways of expressing a consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity in post-apartheid South Africa, it is therefore imperative to explore more about how a sense of Ndebele cultural identity is articulated and entrenched through initiation.

[51] Masango, Nice , Interview, KwaMhlanga-11/06/2013

Process of initiation

Pre-initiation phase

In theory and in practice, male initiation is highly centralized and controlled by the royal house that has absolute monopoly over authorizing male initiation. Unlike the initiation for Xhosa ethnic group, which happens every year (Vincent, 2008), initiation for the Ndebele happens after every four years (Van Vuuren, 2010). It should however be noted that evidence from the interviews hold that the four-year cycle is subject to change. Such utterances as "if there are internal problems with the royal house, if there are problems in terms of financial preparations for ingoma' were offered as reasons behind changes to the regular cycle of initiations. As the custodian of culture, the King is the only person with power to officiate and pronounce on the practice of initiation after conducting specific related traditional rites such as making an offering (Mabena, 1999). The emphasis on the centralized nature of initiation can be read as a reflection of how chiefly institutions ensure their roles as the custodian of cultural traditions and how traditional practices are mobilized to assert a consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity. Mxolisi Skosana –an old man who revealed that he had undergone initiation himself and had four sons who had all undergone initiation remarked that:

> *Ingoma is done after every four years, we keep our tradition my daughter, it is only the royal house which officiates this ritual and us as community members remain committed to retaining our identity as Ndebele by not distancing ourselves from Ingoma which is our cultural tradition. As Ndebeles we lay so much value in respecting the royal house and the King in terms of administering Ingoma ritual, which plays a critical role in initiating our youth into adulthood. It is part of our living, am Ndebele and you are*

getting it from a Ndebele man, I went to Ingoma myself which is why I speak of these things with confidence, because I am a real Ndebele who went to Ingoma ritual....[52]

Male elders who had undergone initiation ritual evinced a deep sense of loyalty to initiation and to traditional leaders and chiefs as the rightful custodians of culture.

Notwithstanding the challenges I faced in terms of secrecy surrounding the specifics of traditional rites which are conducted by the royal house during the pre-initiation preparatory phase, the fragmentary evidence I gathered confirmed that the royal house reserved the authority to administer the practice of initiation ritual. Moreover the evidence sufficed to enable me to glean useful insights about the extent to which the initial preparatory phase was vital to guard against death of initiates such as dietary prerequisites, abstaining from certain behaviors like taking alcohol and going for medical examination.

Once a decision is taken to organize the Ingoma, the royal house decentralizes the process to regional headmen who oversee the practice of this ritual of initiation over a period of two to three months usually in winter (May-July). The practice of initiation rituals ultimately involves the participation of the entire of the Ndebele community at the preparation phase before the ritual begins. As stated by Petros Mahlangu who had his eldest son undergoing initiation by the time of time of the interview:

At various levels, the whole community, the Ndebele community should ensure that proper preparation for the Ingoma is done. Isnt the King, King Mabhogo III authorises and decentralises to the regional headmen of the Nkangala, which is a wide area encompassing areas such as Siyabuswa, Kwaggerfontein, KwaMhlanga, Verena, Middelburg, Bethal...in a nutshell I can say all districts of Nkangala. So the regional headmen's task is to administer the practice of Ingoma for the entire two months. But as

[52] Skosana, Mxolisi, Verena-13/06/2013

a community, as a Ndebele community we also participate, especially us parents we should not leave it all to the royal house and the regional headmen, we ensure that our children are 100% fit for Ingoma, I took my son to the doctor to ensure he is fit, I wouldn't just let him go, No, No, No, I wouldn't do that. It would be negligence on my part as a parent because he got to be checked and screened of all illness; I should be 100% sure and know the status of my boy. Every family has to do that, we got to be responsible as parents. Yes we are involved at various levels at preparatory phase, because this Ingoma time does not only serve to initiate boys into adulthood but it unites us-our identity as Ndebele, so yes the health department, medical doctors and traditional doctors play a very important role at the preparatory phase. Its our custom, its our tradition we should collectively retain it...[53]

Another older men aged seventy years expressed his deep experience with initiation as an indispensable aspect of Southern Ndebele cultural identity and described the preparation phase as vital and involving the whole community:

We have to fulfil our obligations as parents; we take our children for check-up before taking them to initiation schools primarily because certain illnesses can't stand the initiation process. So, of course we have a responsibility to do our part before we send our boys to initiation schools. It is a collectively organised ritual.(Lucky Mahlangu)[54]

The above descriptions of the preparation phase were recounted to me as an outsider under peculiar circumstances, particularly in the context of 2013, which saw botched circumcisions leading to death of some initiates. A closer analysis of these descriptions, which seemingly emphasized the element of collectivity in the pre-initiation phase could be read as partly influenced by the need to respond to debates and discussions which had been triggered by the media hype on deaths of initiates. The idea that the pre-initiation phase required the collective responsibility of members of the Ndebele community particularly the parents of initiates was constantly brought up in the discussions in ways which inclined towards casting initiation as a practice to be maintained as a community value. Virtually all ten interviewees who formed a

[53] Mahlangu, Petros , Gemboskpruit Village-12/06/2013
[54] Mahlangu, Lucky, Gemboskpruit Village-12/06/2013

random sample of parents of sons who had undergone initiation ritual in 2013 spoke of how crucial the preparation phase and collective effort in arranging for the safety of children as death of initiates affected the image of the whole community. There seemed to be an implicit understanding that initiation practices enacted community values, which extended beyond household level in ways, which spoke to broader issues about how initiation is crucial as an index of expression of a collective Ndebele identity.

The role of women in the pre-initiation preparatory phase resonated with Powell's (1995) and Van Vuuren (2012) observations about the painting of homes by women in this process. House paintings signaled to the wider community that a particular household had a son who was preparing for initiation, which underscored the place of women in the preparation phase and initiation rites. Women's prominent role in doing paintings challenged the idea that the preparation phase was as a preserve of men. This was revealed when a female respondent Mrs. Mnisi,, respondent had the following to say:

> *Initiation time is crucial for the whole community, it is important, that is why you see the whole community participating. It is not about males only, that's why I repainted my walls, well nowadays it isn't commonplace to find women painting their walls but we all know what repainting your walls means when it is initiation time. It is not just about the identity of our individual sons but it is a kind of socialization that will enable our sons acquire societal values...*[55]

Virtually all participants revealed familiarity on women's painting of walls as a form of domestic participation in in preparations for initiation.

[55] Mrs Mnisi, KwaMhlanga, 14/06/2013

The initiation period

Whereas the research participants felt at ease in narrating about the institution of initiation as a communally supported ritual, the comprehensive details of what transpires in initiation schools and the initiates' lived experiences are masked in secrecy. Crucially, women are explicitly excluded from initiation schools. Framed as a long-standing tradition, initiation practice is fundamentally gendered and the way initiation is conducted in the bush remains the preserve of men. For instance a 60 year-old woman- Mrs Mtshweni, expressed how the tradition prevented her from knowing what happens in initiation schools. She emphasised that she is a Ndebele by birth and knows Ndebele culture very well but:

> *If there is one thing that we as Ndebele don't want to mess up with is our traditional beliefs, As a woman I don't get involved at all in what happens in initiation schools, I don't question that because its part of our culture, our tradition, it has been like that, I have four sons, they all went to initiation but I never visited any initiation school, it is a taboo to visit initiation schools as a woman, isn't they [men] don't also visit female initiation schools, we have our different domains, and we respect them as part of culture, we preserve our culture by not defying the tradition, never will we defy tradition, defying it is an assault to our Ndebele identity.*[56]

This view was echoed by a majority of women who firmly believed it was an important part of Southern Ndebele tradition. My position as a single, relatively young female researcher thus precluded me from comprehensively tapping into the details of what transpires in initiation schools. These strongly held views of culturally prohibiting women from initiation schools afforded me much opportunity for constant reflectivity on the gendered dynamics of the articulation of Ndebele identity. The explanations given in explaining why these prohibitions

[56] Mrs Mtshweni, Gemboskpruit, 14/06/2013

were not questioned even if they had sons who had gone for initiation leaned towards tradition as the cornerstone of such cultural practices.

Despite the secrecy surrounding initiation, there are common understandings of the broad process. For instance boys undergo a rigorous training in the virtues of manhood, which inscribe masculine identity for a period of two to three months during winter. Boys' endurance of the associated pains of initiation, which generally involves circumcision and rigorous training in the bush is linked with endorsing masculine identity and cemented a relationship with Ndebele identity. Mazis (1993) captured masculinity as socially constructed and elaborated that it is primarily the male's experience of pain that embodies masculinity. It would seem plausible to argue that the division between the preparatory and bush phases is deeply gendered, with the former involving large sections of the community including mothers of the initiates, whilst the latter is male dominated. The production of masculinity during initiation is the defining feature of this ritual and is very central to male identification with Ndebele-ness. On the gendered dimensions of the articulation of national identity I find it rescuing to consider McClintock (1997) who opined that all nationalisms are gendered. Gender dynamics in the process of male initiation are therefore seen not to be distinct from how gender is central in the construction of the nation. I thus maintain that masculinity, which is so central in the idea of the nation, is also one of the constitutive elements of Southern Ndebele ethnic identity in ways that casts a picture of an overlapping relationship between the articulation of Ndebele identity and national belonging.

The salience of gender in the initiation process was brought into sharp when Mpumalanga Province's MEC for health Candith Mashego Dlamini, a woman, was denied the right to probe the deaths of initiates. While admitting that these deaths were a serious problem that cast a long

shadow over the cultural practice, she cited her gender ad a major reason for failing to properly probe initiates deaths (eNCA news, 17 May 2013). In her words she underscored that:

> *this is a tradition... so in other traditions whether there are death or what -- but a woman can't come closer to that. But because there are police now, we're relying on the police so that they can give us reports,"*

Furthermore, the MEC maintained that closing down initiation schools would violate the tradition. But this attracted a lot of criticism and sparked public debates, which highlighted a complex interface between the rights to cultural practice and the need for regulation of such cultural practice to resolve the moral dilemma of protecting the right to life. The MEC's gender position situated her as powerless to probe further the initiates' deaths even if she had a more compelling and enabling legal right to do so. In response, the traditional leaders who are men cited the poor management of schools, which were not even legally known by the traditional leaders as the major cause of the death of initiates. It might therefore seem logical to conclude that the MEC's non-intervention and the traditional leaders' response bring to the surface the tensions of balancing cultural rights and the justifiable concern of the protection of right to life by the state.

The debates which pointed to MEC's position being an extension of the state's authority and rights to intervene in regulating cultural matters in such peculiar circumstances where the right to cultural practices had resulted in deaths essentially calls for further consideration. Post-apartheid South Africa's constitution (1996) establishes a right to participate in cultural life but these rights to cultural practice are guaranteed insofar they are not exercised in a manner inconsistent with other provision of the Bill of Rights. The debates on the death of initiates in the KwaMhlanga thus yielded vital pointers to the tensions, which underlie the moral dilemma of striking the

appropriate balance between the right to cultural practice and the right to life. This indeed is a complexity which the Comaroffs' (2003:446) observation provides necessary scaffolding when they noted that whilst the South African constitution is quite explicit in its accommodation of the cultural rights, life as a national citizen and life as an ethnic subject do not reduce to a 'flexible' accommodation. The MEC's adamant position of not probing into death of initiates highlights deep connections to initiation practice as a high moment of embracing Ndebele identity. The state intervened in various ways through the South African Police Services (SAPS), which launched probes and investigated initiation schools to identify those implicated in initiates' deaths and South African Human Rights Commission (SAHRC), which investigated the matter; the intervention was shaped by tensions. The contention between traditional authorities as custodians of culture and the public debates sparked by MEC's non-intervention circumscribed the state's intervention.

The lingering commitment to the preservation of initiation as a key cultural practice in the articulation of Ndebele identity as expressed by the provincial Health MEC, traditional structures such as the Head of Traditional Leaders, Ndzundza Tribal Authority and King Mabhogo III continually reinforced how the sense of belonging Ndebele identity is constituted through cultural practices. Strong cultural overtones attached to prohibitions in discussing the death of initiates were cited by virtually all interviewees in ways, which framed interference by the state in such cultural matters as a key concern. Utterances such as "the death of initiates is a concern for all of us but we cannot discuss, it is the King who officiates the practice of initiation"; "it is the King and the headmen who oversee the practice of initiation, so they are the only one who can talk about these deaths"; " we cannot talk about these deaths because it is the King who can talk about them"; "the King is the custodian of our culture, I will violating our culture if I talk

about these deaths...." came out in interviewees' narratives in ways that reflected how the traditional authority prohibited discussions about deaths. While admitting that deaths took place in some initiation schools, the recurring concern, particularly from narratives of the elder generation, about state's intervention indicated that the initiation ritual is intimately wrapped up in what is considered a sacred part of Ndebele identity. In a lengthy response, Nhlakanipho Kekana one elderly male interviewee who strongly emphasized that he had undergone the initiation rite and had three sons who had undergone initiation had this to say:

> *You see initiation is a sacred ritual, us as Ndebele we value it so much, it's a terrain that cannot be charted by anyone, it is a sacred ritual but with this new South Africa, there is too much interference on some aspects of our culture, why should deaths of initiates be publicised in media? The talk about what they don't understand, they don't know our culture and our culture cannot be a subject of criticism by media. For instance, the president cannot talk about the initiation (ingoma) because he knows nothing about the initiation, if I can ask him to define the word ingoma itself he can't tell me, so he better leave it alone and tell us what disturbed him in this initiation and we fix what went wrong that's all according to our culture and our King is there. He is the person who should stand up, if there is a person who made a fault during the process, the person should be called and made to pay the fine of cattle, two, six or twenty and this should be announced so that people learn to avoid such mistakes in future. But no legislation can come into this thing, no, our King is the person who has authority, he is the one for instance who announced and authorised the conducting of the initiation cultural practice this year, so whenever there is anything to be said on the initiation process he is the one to stand up and say it. I don't have authority; nobody has authority, only our King because he is the custodian of our culture.* [57]

The above excerpt reflects criticisms of the external critique by the media and the state as represented by the president in ways that presents Ndebele-ness as delinking from the nation if expressed as a cultural identity. More than bringing out the criticisms against the state's interference in cultural matters, the above utterance also sets out the need for internal practice of dealing with 'faults' that had led to death of initiates. This internal process sets the King as a

[57]Kekana, Nhlakanipho, Gemboskpruit, 14/06/2013

legitimate figure that has the primary role to hold accountable those who were implicated in initiates' deaths. Placing the King as central in assessing the practice of initiation demonstrates the articulation of Southern Ndebele-ness rooted in traditional authority.

The older generation expressed a deep concern with the deaths, which occurred in some initiation schools but resigned to the idea of having the issue of these deaths resolved internally without the interference of the state. Though the points of emphasis differed, the generally shared view of the need for internal assessment of initiation was reflected in such statements as "because this is our culture, traditional leaders are in charge and will forever be in charge of this ritual" which ran deeply in all the narratives. The frequent emphasis on the state's interference as represented by media's publicity and the sacredness of the initiation ritual was strongly advanced as an over-arching concern. Upon probing further it emerged that the concern about interference was not an expression of a desire for complete autonomy from the state but non-interference of the state on specific cultural practices such as initiation, which is considered as a major expression of belonging to Ndebele identity. Such sentiments as "we are part of the ethno-cultural diverse South African society but we hate it when the media exposes how we practice our culture" were commonly echoed particularly by a cross section of elderly people in the KwaMhlanga region.

The unwavering attachment to initiation and its cultural value was laid bare by the majority of elderly interviewees' utterances, particularly males who themselves were initiated and had sons who were in initiation schools in ways which speak to the stakes the cultural practices have in reinforcing the notion of belonging to Ndebele identity. Initiation rituals were seen as a powerful cultural template in expressing the meaning of Ndebele identity to the extent that the majority of the elder male generation I interviewed argued that a man's social power increases incrementally

from boyhood to manhood only if he has undergone the initiation practice. The emphasis on everyday societal moral codes that are imparted on initiates during initiation formed a thread which slanted towards casting initiation as practice through which one's relationship with Ndebele identity gets cemented. Such utterances as "it is only when someone has undergone initiation that he is socially acceptable as a man in our Ndebele culture '-were commonly recounted in ways which strikingly outweighed the tone of concern about the deaths of initiates.

Interesting class dynamics also played themselves out in reaction to how Ndebele cultural identity came under media spotlight. For instance, whereas the majority of the elder male generation expressed dissatisfaction about raging debates, which mostly condemned the failure by some ethnic groups to strike the necessary balance between the rights to cultural practice and the right to life, the executive mayor of Thembisile Hani municipality had a nuanced view. As a former homeland politician with a long political career as a member of the ruling African Congress (ANC) the executive mayor expressed that he was initiated himself, he has sons who have been initiated as part of expressing belonging to Ndebele cultural identity and he proudly embraces his Ndebele identity. He gave a lengthy response on his position on initiation and death of some initiates, which had occurred in his municipality:

> *South Africa is a country, it is a constitutional country, it has rights embedded in the constitution, the right to life, the right not to treat people with degradation, those rights are primary factor on which every value, culture, democracy, politics must be based, so that everything we do, in my view, look am a lawyer by profession, I have been a magistrate before. My view is that the constitution should always be supreme, be respected it doesn't matter what you are doing, whether you are government, you are a traditional leader or anybody the constitution must be respected...part of the rights of people to practice their culture must be respected, however that must not amount to a loss of life, the moment it amounts to a loss of life then it violates the constitution. The constitution must ring supreme, anybody violating the constitution is not right, anybody who wants to practice his culture must be free to do so, whether be a Xhosa, a Ndebele, a*

> *Pedi or white man must be able to do so, but the moment there is a loss of life in your practising that, in your activity then the constitution is violated, so in as far as the violation of the constitution is concerned, the state must or the courts must take their place..... if I want to practice culture in my own area I must be allowed to do as long as I do not violate the constitution. The moment I violate the constitution there is a problem because the constitution protects the loss of life. I believe there can be nothing wrong with the initiation necessarily if its practised because it is a long practice, many years and people were not losing their lives before the new constitution of South Africa came into being (Ndaweni Mahlangu)*[58]

It will seem that for the executive mayor, whereas the South African constitution supports the right of people to participate in cultural activities such as initiation, the main tension lies in the violation of the right to life. Whereas earlier utterances pointed to interference by the state as the key concern in the expression of Ndebele identity through initiation, the executive mayor foregrounded a view, which gives credence to the constitution as supreme in accommodating the ethno-culturally divided society in South Africa. Being mindful of Dersso's (2009:181) remarks that in South Africa, people across racial and ethnic lines have come to identify themselves with the constitution and the institutions of the state that it has established, it will seem plausible to argue that the executive mayor's position raises a view that sees the right of people to participate in cultural practice and right to life as guided by the constitution which is supreme. The mayor's view is interesting in so far as it illustrates the need for an appropriate balance between cultural practices and adhering to the constitution. It might be that his political position influenced him to hold this view but it was recounted as a common thread, which ran through most of the discussions I had with the employed former homeland politicians. These former homeland politicians referred to the constitution as the guiding lever in expressing consciousness of belonging. Though replete with contradictions that have attracted contestations and criticism, the constitution of post-apartheid South Africa was in this case used to advance a viewpoint that

[58] Mahlangu, Ndaweni , Kwaggafontein, 13/06/2013

one's sense of being and belonging should comfortably sit with national identity. The right to participate in cultural life is captured in the Constitution's sections of its Chapter 2 where Bill of Rights, Section 31 states that nobody:

> ...be denied the right, with other members of the community, (a) to enjoy their culture, practice their religion and use their language; and (b) to form, join and maintain cultural, religious and linguistic associations and other organs of civil society

It will seem that the deaths of initiates in KwaMhlanga could not afford to escape the invocation of the Constitution precisely because rights to cultural practices and life are guaranteed in the Constitution.

It is considered imperative to engage with how the executive mayor cited initiation as a long standing practice in ways which beg further exploration of why the 2013 initiation exposed some tensions between the expression of Ndebele identity through cultural practices and national identity. It will seem that the botched circumcision which led to twenty seven deaths of initiates in 2013 was an unusually large number of deaths and an issue to be grappled with. The mayor explained that in the past, few men have lost their lives during initiation, a view which rhymed neatly with virtually all elder participants' responses when I probed about why the 2013 deaths of initiates provoked so much media hype and put the expression of Ndebele cultural identity on public spotlight. Many interviewees insisted that the 2013 initiations were substantially different from previous initiation rituals because of the unusually high number of death of initiates. The events of 2013 were thus perceived as a moment of crisis, which disrupted the functioning articulation between Southern Ndebele ethnic identity and national identity.

My presence during the final stage of the initiation process, which constituted the grand welcome of initiates and celebrations in one of the villages on the 13th of July 2013 permitted further

deeper understanding of this crucial cultural practice. This afforded me the opportunity to observe how initiates are received back in their homes and enabled me to probe initiates' perceptions, beliefs, views and what influenced their decisions to participate in initiation. Taking an approach which lends credence to Sahlins's (1993:110) compelling perspective that rituals and ceremonies exist for various reasons such that "the purpose is to synthesise the form and function, structure and variation, as a meaningful cultural process, sequitur to a specific cultural order rather than an eternal practical logic..." my research tracked how the culturally grounded initiation practice is an articulation of belonging from initiates perspectives.

Drawing especially from accounts I collected from the boys aged between eighteen and twenty years of age who went for initiation, the commonly held view was that the feelings of belonging to Ndebele identity are confirmed and get cemented after successfully undergoing the initiation ritual. In identifying with the larger Ndebele community and in keeping with the culturally ascribed rituals, Thando Mahlangu, a boy aged eighteen expressed his voluntary decision to go to initiation by voicing that:

> *Undergoing initiation and being ritually circumcised does not only officially marks passage to manhood but most importantly it is very fulfilling of my Ndebele identity. Yes we are living in a post-apartheid multicultural South Africa but am Ndebele of Ndzundza clan. You have to belong and keep with your identity in order for you to exist, I therefore made a conscious decision to go for initiation as part of my Ndebele culture, I am Ndebele and my community will know me more as one of them by under-going Ingoma, they will identify me as one of their own it is such a fulfilling experience....* [59]

An expression of loyalty to the initiation ritual and defence of the custom were revealed in initiates' widespread accounts that offered initiation as deep-seated indispensable part of living,

[59] Mahlangu, Thando, KwaMhlanga- 18/07/2013

which connected them with their Ndebele identity. Qualifying their conscious decision to go to initiation, another initiate-Thulani Sibiya emphasized:

> *Am particularly overwhelmed by initiation time precisely because it enables me to define who I am as a Ndebele, I feel more Ndebele and empowered to live in culturally ascribed Ndebele ways. I now believe am a real man, I am very proud of the decision I made to participate in initiation and that I successfully sailed through the process, it is really fulfilling, we live in post-apartheid South Africa, am part of the rainbow nation but this does not detract the attachment I have about my identity as a Ndebele, I love my culture and will never ever distance myself from Ndebele cultural practices in anyway like some boys who are raised in the city who get carried away by, by, by these modern things and distance themselves from such cultural practices, initiation is part of our Ndebele-ness and way of doing things as Ndebele...*[60]

One may argue that the recent initiates coming home to widespread celebrations expressed such overwhelming positive views on the initiation ritual because of the circumstances of the interviews. As a form of expression of belonging which gives a sense of heightened consciousness, participation in initiation revealed further levels of complexity of Southern Ndebele identity when some initiates reflected that they felt the far reaching implications of non-participation and its consequences which bear on everyday lives was a pressing factor which confronted them. That manhood and its associated rights such as marriage and leadership was acquired through initiation was cited in ways that tellingly reflected that being initiated was less of individual's choice than the societal values attached to the ritual. More striking was a narrative by Vusumuzi Ntuli-an initiate who had this to say:

> *Even if the choice not to go for initiation is mine, manhood is a deeply –valued aspect of Ndebeleness, being initiated makes you a man you know, you see manhood that is acquired through initiation is not only respected and valued by the society but allows one to be legitimate for some social positions....*[61]

[60] Sibiya,Thulani , KwaMhlanga, 18/06/2013
[61] Ntuli, Vusumuzi , KwaMhlanga, 18/06/2013

The view that socially-valued aspects of transition from boyhood to manhood are acquired through initiation emerged as central in conversations I had with some initiates in ways that revealed the complexity that shapes the participation in initiation. Thus while there was widespread general sense of pride and support of the initiation custom, there were views which construed participation as being driven by communal pressure. Veering from the widespread expressions of voluntarily participating in initiation, one initiate sharply differed by reflecting on how the Ndebele society wields power on the meanings of participation or non-participation in such rituals. He explained that one's choices are compromised as the stigma attached to non-participation compels the majority of boys of his age to attend initiation. Offering initiation as more of serving as a critical domain through which generational transmission of culture to the younger generation can be conveyed, this initiate stated:

> *There is nothing you can do you have to be who are you, this initiation is inescapable, it is predetermined by the society you were born into, I am Ndebele, I have no choice. I have to identify with the large Ndebele community by doing what is expected of a Ndebele child when he gets to adolescence, I have to live in ways that are culturally ascribed by the community and my parents who brought me up. My family is Ndebele, my grandparents are Ndebele. One needs to go to initiation in order to fit in with the community he lives in. (Themba Mahlangu)*[62]

Similarly another initiate- Sibanisezwe Mkhize, proclaimed that they could not change their Ndebele-ness and added that:

> *One's choices are limited when you were brought up in a community that has culturally prescribed ways, norms and rituals....Ultimately the decision to attend initiation is that it sets you apart from those who choose not to as this is deemed as going against Ndebele culture...*[63]

[62] Mahlangu, Themba, KwaMhlanga, 18/06/2013
[63] Mkhize, Sibanisezwe, KwaMhlanga, 18/06/2013

The above initiates' narratives revealed that the space for one's choices in going for initiation was not always easy to manoeuvre. Both these initiates stated that if given a choice they would not go for initiation. They expressed immense pride in their Southern Ndebele identity as a primary marker of belonging but their frequent reference to the space of 'choices being not so easy' to navigate indexed that there is no homogenous attachment to some cultural practices that constitute Southern Ndebele identity. For the two young men, initiation's value lies in its teaching that penetrate everyday lives such that the stigma attached to non-participation and its bearing on everyday lives almost make participation seem mandatory as opposed to being optional. In essence, their perceptions of initiation was revealing of a category of a young generation who do not get initiated but insist on their belonging to Ndebele identity.

As I continued to probe further about reasons for choosing to go for initiation, their experiences and people who influenced their decisions, they made reference to reported cases of some young Ndebele man going to initiation schools without their parents' consent. This they adamantly opined that it suggests that the need to be accepted by the wider community and the stigma attached to non-participation is a key driver in informing a majority of boys' decision to go to initiation schools. They strongly felt that the initiated were seen and regarded as 'more' Ndebele against the non-initiated. What emerged from their accounts showed that the measure of authenticity as a Ndebele is tied to traditionalism and given by the King.

The varied attachment to initiation as a key cultural practice cannot be understated, but the general sense of initiation acquiring a meaning which is essential for mapping boundaries of belonging was reiterated in formal and informal discussions I had during the final phase of the initiation process. Barth (1969) writing on why members of ethnic groups want to maintain themselves as distinct from other groups maintained that it is through boundaries that ethnic

group establishes a distinction between itself and others. In context of KwaMhlanga region where initiation are practiced as an expression of a cultural belonging, the issue of boundaries was even made visible when initiates wore what is perceived to be Ndebele regalia on their joyous welcome. But it is important to highlight that the boundaries are not to be seen as homogenous and fixed as the welcome ceremony is amorphously open to a diverse ethno-cultural groups of people. It was quite striking to note that there were initiates who identified themselves as Sotho and Pedi among the majority of the Ndebele initiates in one of the homestead where I had the privilege to observe the proceedings of the welcome ceremony. This made the question of why other ethnic groups were part of the welcome ceremony a necessary undertaking. Lekgoathi's (2004:14) has written that "outsiders have always been an important feature in the survival of AmaNdebele chiefdoms and that diversity of language and custom have always been part and parcel of AmaNdebele identity". Ample evidence from interviewees' narratives variably supports Legkoathi's argument that the Ndebele have long standing historical cultural links with the Pedi and Sotho. Perhaps more than owing to the view that the construction of Ndebele identity has always been historically inclusive of other ethnic groups, the multi-ethnic character of the KwaMhlanga community merit recognition as a factor in explaining why initiation rituals are not exclusively for the Southern Ndebele.

The questions of gender dynamics I wrestled with when I was precluded from accessing initiation schools received further attention when I examined women's role welcoming the initiates at the final phase of the initiation. Dressed in what is perceived to be Ndebele regalia, initiates' mothers sang and ululated as they welcomed initiates in different households. In a celebratory mood the majority of women I spoke to framed their views in an implicit understanding of initiation as a critical domain of the cultural values and traditions through

which meanings of Southern Ndebele identity and everyday relations are constituted. That there was need for one to express belonging to Southern Ndebele identity at any given time was a common thread, which ran across views of the majority of women who had sons who had completed the initiation process. Beaming with joy, Mrs. Agnes Dlamini, whose son was one of the initiates responded as I sought her perspective on the seemingly heightened sense of consciousness of Southern Ndebele identity, which derives from initiation:

> *I am not Ndebele by origin, I am from KwaZulu-Natal, I am Zulu but I got married to a Ndebele man and I have over the years learnt Ndebele culture and customs. So as much as I am Zulu, my children are Ndebele, their father is Ndebele, their grandparents are Ndebele, so they are Ndebele. They have to belong to Ndebele, and initiation is one of the ways they can express and take pride in their Ndebele-ness. I am so very proud that my son went to initiation, yes he is Ndebele, he is more of a Ndebele man now. He was at the initiation school for the past two months, he was taught how to be a Ndebele man, to behave like a Ndebele man, He belongs and this will go a long way in enabling him to cope up with everyday experiences of what is expected in a Ndebele community. I am very proud of my son.....(she continued to smile)*[64]

The above expression was recounted by a majority of women whose sons had successfully completed the initiation process and were gathered in a particular household. Phrases like 'you can't help being happy when your son has been initiated', 'he is now a truly Ndebele man who will be recognized by the society', 'he belongs to the Ndebele' were common in the narratives. Emphasis was put that social reality poses the over-arching question of who you are and the Ndebele youth cannot afford to run away from it when they reach adolescence. It was quite intriguing to note that even for a majority of women who were not mothers of initiates' echoed similar sentiments and emphasized that it is a fulfilling experience to see the younger generation graduating from initiation which they consider as an indispensable part of Ndebele culture. Even though there was some relatively limited reference to their sons' having retaining choice in

[64] Dlamini, Agnes, Gemboskpruit, 18/06/2013

making decisions to go for initiation, the point of departure in responding to my questions nevertheless remained grounded in stressing the need to belong, how one's consciousness of belonging gets cemented and entrenched after initiation and how moral codes taught at initiation schools such cultural practices are constitutive of everyday experiences of Ndebele identity. This did not only leave me hard pressed to conclude that belonging to Ndebele ethnic identity was perceived as primordial but it most importantly led me to come to a better understanding of the interplay of interpretations of such cultural practices and experiences of everyday life in shaping Ndebele identity. That such cultural practices provide them with a sense of identification with the rest of the community and sets them apart from other ethnic groups increasingly became clear when most of women interviewees who did not have sons who were initiates stressed that they had come to celebrate with initiates' mothers as a Ndebele community.

That initiation is articulated as a cultural practice, which retains considerable credible in mapping the boundaries of belonging to Ndebele identity has been an over-arching thread of expression, which ran through the discussions I had before, during and at the final phase of initiation. At the same it should be noted that reference to discrimination and isolation as a reality which confronts the youth's transitional phase to adulthood and consequently their choices to go for initiation as a fundamental theme which spoke to complex interplay of consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity oscillating between self-identity and identification by others. The few participants who voiced that not being initiated did not make them less Ndebele cited family ties, kinship ties, language and historical origins as equally crucial signifiers of expressing a sense of Ndebeleness. This did not only open an entry point in enabling a space to understand that set of cultural practices which constitute Ndebele identity do not confer a homogenous sense of cultural belonging but also tightly reveals the fluidity and malleable character of Ndebele identity. Even

though there is a sense of strong attachment to male initiation particularly most pronounced among the elderly males, the discordant voices which cast the stigma attached to non-participation as highly constraining one's freedom of choice invites attention to Willis's (2000: xv) convincing observation that "no-one knows what the social maps are anymore, there are no automatic belongings so more than ever, you have to work for and make, your own cultural significance."

Female initiation

Unlike male initiation, which has received considerable scholarly attention, there is still a glaring lacuna when it comes to female initiation. Though not comprehensively focusing on cultural practices in KwaMhlanga region, Van Vuuren's (1999; 2010, 2012) works has rescued the paucity of literature on Ndebele female initiation by highlighting the relevance of both male and female institutions of initiations in ways, which are germane in exploring how Ndebele identity is reinforced through female initiation. Van Vuuren points out that unlike male initiation, which is officiated and administered by the royal house; female initiation is organized on an individual basis within a homestead. Discussions with participants, particularly female initiates and elderly women confirm Van Vuuren's findings and calls for attention to differences.

Whereas my position as a female researcher hindered me from tapping into the secrecy of men's initiation particularly the isolation phase, the tide shifted in my favour for female initiation. I had the privilege of observing the isolation of a certain girl, which constituted the initial phase of the initiation practice. Not only did it enable me to observe, as a critical outsider, what the isolation process entailed but it importantly enabled me to build rapport as I interacted with the mother of

the initiate whom I had some initial links with when I started my field work. This relationship also allowed me to touch general questions that mainly ranged from what age the girl goes for initiation, the significance of the initiation ritual and how an initiated girl is set apart from the ones who had not gone. I was able to probe further about the female initiation, otherwise known as *iqhude* in the Southern Ndebele language, and tap into the rich and dense set of perceptions, societal values, beliefs and views about *iqhude* as a quintessential marker of Ndebele identity.

Van Vuuren (2012:336) has noted that the first phase of female initiation is marked by the seclusion of a girl child to a room in the homestead when she reaches puberty and experiences her second or third menstruation. This was echoed by several women and girls particularly those that had undergone initiation. As Lindokuhle Mthombeni shared her views:

> *Puberty is a very important phase in our Ndebele culture, yes I had learnt about it a school and my friends shared their experiences, when I was growing up, I used to see sisters in this village do this thing called iqhude, I got to know through my mother that I will also have to do it when I get my second menstruation. I was initiated in 2011. We baked and made some traditional beer on Wednesday before other girls who had already done the initiation accompanied me to the mountain. It is during this period that neighbours and some relatives continue to brew beer and help my mother in terms of painting my homestead. On Thursday, some girls who had been initiated also came to pay me a visit, sang and danced. On Friday, many relatives arrive in my homestead, particularly female relatives to help my mother with cooking. They also sang and danced. Male relatives and boys are not allowed to be present on this day; they cannot even be closer to the homestead. We then returned home on Saturday, where we were welcomed by ululations, singing and joy by the relatives, neighbours and friends who had gathered at my homestead. We then sang and danced before I was escorted by some group of initiated age mates as proceeded for isolation in a hut that was built behind the main house. The proceedings of the day were marked by dancing and singing mostly by women...*[65]

The above description was commonly recounted in ways that pointed to how female initiation largely sees the domination of female relatives and initiated age mates. This might be read as

[65] Mthombeni, Lindokuhle Mthombeni, KwaMhlanga. 26 /11/2013

indicating symbolic gender values attached to initiation rituals as it was shown earlier that women are forbidden from attending the male initiation schools. But one may argue that the dominant role of females during female initiation might defy the patriarchal aspect of Ndebele identity thereby rendering it a complex process. As Van Vuuren (1993:7) noted that "women occupy central positions in the frontal courtyard (*isirhodlo*), the interior of the house and the public space between the front of the homestead and the cattle enclosure", gender differences are reproduced in ways which see women not negotiating their gender roles from a hampered position during the female initiation.

Another point worthy of noting and clarifying is that female initiation sharply differs from male initiation in terms of how it is conducted and the duration of the initiation process. Virtually, all initiated girls I interviewed highlighted the pre-initiation activities and emphasized that female initiation lasts for one month. As one initiated interviewee-Nombuso Nxumalo explained:

> *You will notice that I said that iqhude starts on Wednesday, and the initiate comes back on Saturday, that makes it three days and it constitute the initial phase of iqhude, which is very important. That's when my mother told me how to behave as a woman, which is part of our Ndebele culture. My mother expressed how happy she was that I have reached puberty and am graduating into womanhood, after being presented with presents, I was isolated for a month. After a month, some initiated age mates came to release me on a Saturday. We went to a mountain shortly and returned where upon I was handed to my father who had to confirm that I am his daughter. They then asked my mother for my traditional name, my mother gave that name and I then went to greet my brothers and sisters. I then helped in cooking for the guests before put on my traditional regalia-known as igrholwani, dancing and singing as I was given some presents, then the ceremony ended.*[66]

The above excerpt was replayed in almost all of the interviews I conducted with women who participated in the *iqhude* ritual proceedings of their daughters over the years. It is therefore clear

[66] Nxumalo, Nombuso, KwaMhlanga 26/11/2013

that contrary to male initiation which is conducted on quadrennial basis and sanctioned by the royal house female initiation is individually organized at homestead level.

Whereas the welcoming of male initiates attracts a large group of people cutting across gender, age and class dynamics; female initiation seemingly attracted only close relatives, neighbours and friends. Flowing from this was then the need to engage with the questions of how in comparison with male initiation, female initiation establishes attachment to Ndebele identity. Speaking to initiated girls as my starting point enabled me to garner insights on how one's relationship to Ndebele identity is validated and ascribed through initiation. That there was some sense of pride and joy in expressing consciousness of belonging through initiation was a common strand, which dovetailed neatly with what was expressed by a majority of male initiates. For instanc, Thobile Mahlangu who was initiated in 2013 saw *iqhude* as:

> *One of the backbone of our Ndebele culture, it gives me a sense of pride that I went to iqhude where I was taught a set of values which will help me to proudly distinguish me as a Ndebele girl who will one day marry and raise my kids with these values. Of course ours, iqhude, is not as difficult as ingoma for boys because they stay two months in the bush, but we were also taught Ndebele values, which will help me to relate well with elders, my husband and my in-laws.* [67]

It is clear that a connection is made between some aspects of Southern Ndebele values and initiation but some initiated girls expressed ambivalence about initiation. Whereas as for many, the initiation practice was seen as vital for establishing some degree of connection with Ndebele-ness, some felt no need to attend such ceremonies in order to affirm their belonging. Sithembile Sibiya who explained that she was initiated after her first menstrual experience and had attended several initiation ceremonies at her village had this to say:

[67] Mahlangu, Thobile, Gemboskpruit, 23/03/2014

I do not understand why our transition from youth to woman hood has to be facilitated by these initiation ritual, why, why, why (she repeatedly asked), Imagine having to put on those traditional attire in a hot weather like this, eish. I really felt it was punishment (she giggles). At least I did not mind learning Ndebele values, how to respect your husband, in-laws and other elders in the village as a Ndebele woman but putting on that blanket, the apron and the beads-ummmmh maybe it's because it was very hot. My question is why we must do these things; I know I am Ndebele but I don't have to go for iqhude to affirm that...[68]

Although not a common view, this does complicate the idea that feelings of belonging to a group are confirmed by participating in initiation in important ways. Although the *iqhude* initiation practices is framed as a normative medium through which some elements of Ndebele identity can be constituted, ambivalent voices from some initiates readily assent to the idea of contingency in the expression of belonging. It is clear that for some, attending these cultural practices is largely because of the context within which they find themselves in such as the need to belong and fit in the community.

Conclusion

This chapter has shown how initiation is a culturally grounded practice through which notions of belonging to Ndebele identity are expressed. More than highlighting how initiation practices retain cultural meaning in cementing attachment to Ndebele identity, one of the chapter's over-arching purposes was to demonstrate how the specific incidents of the deaths of initiates in 2013 in the KwaMhlanga region and some parts of Mpumalanga province were peculiar. These incidents were peculiar in the sense that concerns about the deaths of initiates were brought under media spotlight in ways that triggered public debates and discussions which highlighted the conundrums of state intervention on cultural matters, rights of people to participate in cultural practices and right to life as guaranteed in the South African Constitution and Bill of

[68] Sibiya, Sithembile ,Gemboskpruit, 23/03/2014

Rights as one of the major issues. One of the key observations that the chapter makes it is that the reactions to incidents of 2013 became a high moment of tension that saw the Ndebele people reacting negatively and expressing their various concerns to state intervention on cultural matters such as initiation. The chapter makes a key point that state interference on Ndebele's cultural matters and the consequent concerns about this intervention momentarily disrupted and went against the complex but functioning relationship between the articulation of Ndebele identity and national identity

CHAPTER SEVEN

CONCLUSION

This thesis explored the inter-relationship between Southern Ndebele identity and the construction of the new national identity in post-apartheid South Africa. It particularly focused on four primary aspects, which are: the politics of the making of the KwaNdebele homeland, commemoration and heritage, material culture and initiation to understand the production of Southern Ndebele identity in the KwaMhlanga region. The thesis makes the over-arching argument that the Southern Ndebele have almost seamlessly accommodated themselves in the new South African nation, notwithstanding moments of crisis like the botched circumcision during the initiation rituals of 2013. This is so because the idea of the post-apartheid South African nation is framed in terms of an inclusive approach that hinges on unity through diversity or rainbowism. South Africa was an interesting case study to explore how the context of the production of post-apartheid national identity premised on accommodation of diversity impact on manifestation of distinctive ethnic identities. The wisdom of the new South African founders- to enable the expression of ethnic identity, rather than repress it-is in itself a critique of other postcolonial societies that continue to grapple with the complex formation of nationhood. Postcolonial countries such as Nigeria and Ghana that have tried to suppress ethnicity to form a semblance of a unified nation have found that people easily regress to ethnicity during periods of national crisis.

The cross-cutting theme in the foregoing chapters was to demonstrate how the assertion of belonging to Southern Ndebele ethnic identity is entangled in a complex relationship with the

processes of crafting a national identity. Evidence drawn from observing and tracking political-cultural activities in the KwaMhlanga region over three years, archival research, in-depth interviews and secondary literature suggests that the expression of Southern Ndebele identity as it manifests itself in the culturally diverse KwaMhlanga region reveals its interactions with the making of a South African national identity. The connection between consciousness of belonging to Ndebele identity and the production of national identity reveals a dialectical relationship, which shifts from being profoundly connected at certain moments but also operate independently along parallel lines in a discursive dynamic continuum.

It has shown how Ndebele identity during the Apartheid period is strongly associated with the formation of the KwaNdebele Bantustan. In this respect it resembled more of an nationalism than an ethnic identity, if we use Chipkin's theoretical construct. In the period after Apartheid and in the wake of the collapse of the Homelands project, we see a shift to the expression of being Ndebele as an ethincity that is, as a material practice rooted in cultural practices without state-building ambitions. In this regard, Ndebele identity like most identities evolves and crystalizes around certain key markers like distinctive language, material culture, and heritage and commemoration events in ways that push to visibility the character of post-1994 nation-building process as premised on embracing ethnic differences. The thesis illuminates the shifts and transformations of Southern Ndebele ethnic consciousness as shaped by different power dynamics in the context of the production of national identity. The argument that at different moments, the production of national identity as an evolving work in progress bears on expression of Southern Ndebele is pushed to the fore as a spinal framework to illustrate the specific complications, complexities, dynamics and nuanced politics of the discursive production of Southern Ndebele identity in a culturally diverse context.

Chapter three took a genealogical analysis of the history of the evolution of Southern Ndebele identity that rendered visible that like most identities, SouthernNdebele identity has been fluid, malleable and shifting as shaped by a combination of various external and internal factors across space and time. An extensive analysis of the origins of Ndebele identity revealed the various transformations it has passed through as a continuous formulation sifting through the grids of historical forces, both internal and external. Most importantly, the chapter fleshed out how the label 'Southern Ndebele' was imposed by the state through the Native Affairs Department's Ethnological Division in its effort to classify Africans into tribal categories and how it was appropriated by some Ndebele elites and cultural entreprenueurs. The chapter observed that while consciousness of belonging to Ndebele ethnic identity was principally shaped by machinations of the colonial project, the analysis of its internal socio-political dynamics allow for a more nuanced reading of its changing articulations in ways that do not entirely reduce origins of Ndebele ethnicity to colonialism.

The study observed that although Ndebele ethnicity was reinforced during apartheid, it still evinces a strong sense of visibility as a primary marker of belonging in greater parts of Mpumalanga and beyond. In light of this observation, the thesis framed an inquiry of how notions of Southern Ndebele identity are evoked in ways which intersect and diverge with articulations of national belonging that transcend apartheid's exclusionary premises. In pursuing an analysis of the relationship between an expression of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity and the production of national identity, the fourth chapter looked at the Ndebele identity in the context of memorialization of heritage and history in post-apartheid era. The chapter analysed how notions of belonging to Southern Ndebele are discursively evoked through consciousness of history and heritage events to reveal the complex but mutually constitutive relationship between

Southern Ndebele identity and national identity. The analysis of commemoration and heritage spaces offered a window through which a sense of attachment to Ndebele identity in the culturally diverse KwaMhlanga region can be gleaned and concluded that the strong attachment is most pronounced among the elder generation in comparison with the younger generation who in certain regards expressed attachment to the South African national identity more than Southern Ndebele identity. It also emerged that nation-building becomes a communal project of historical appeal, memorialization and collective consciousness.

The analysis of the expression of Southern Ndebele identity in the context of the making of a post-apartheid South African national identity was pursued further by bringing to the fore material culture as a constitutive element of Ndebele identity in chapter five. In illustrating how notions of Ndebele ethnic particularism are expressed through architectural designs, wall-paintings and beadwork, the chapter argued that some elements of Ndebele material culture have been consciously appropriated in the making of South African national identity as part of traditional arts. The analysis also revealed that the colours of the post-apartheid South African flag have been used in Ndebele beadwork and wall paintings to render visible the impact of national consciousness in the assertion of belonging to Southern Ndebele identity through material culture. Chapter five provided an illustration that, in numerous ways, the appropriation of aspects of Southern Ndebele material culture in the production of South African national identity preserves something of Ndebele cultural practical as opposed to weakening it. The Southern Ndebele's appropriation of the colours of the South African flag indexes their adaptation to maintain their material culture and it reveals a co-existence of ethno-culturally diverse identities and post-apartheid nation-building. The material production of Southern Ndebeleness relates to the making of South African national identity.

As the thesis advanced the claim that commemoration, heritage and material culture are one of the key constitutive elements of Ndebele identity, which renders visible the complex but constitutive relationship between assertion of Southern Ndebele identity and national belonging, it offered an illustration of the shifts between the two identities through an analysis of initiation rituals. Chapter six analysed initiation practice as culturally grounded constitutive element of Ndebele identity. Chapter six provided an analysis of initiation and the specific incidents of deaths of initiates in 2013 to demonstrate how they ruptured the prevailing functional relationship between Ndebele identity and national identity. The chapter noted that even though initiation rites are a pivotal constitutive element of Ndebele identity for cultural purposes, the death of initiates in 2013 attracted state intervention and became a high moment of tension between some sections of people identified as Ndebele and the state. The chapter foregrounds an argument that these tensions momentarily created a rupture in the prevailing constitutive relationship between Ndebele and national identity. As this rupture widened, it allowed some undercurrents of the concerns about state interference on cultural matters that are a constitutive element of Ndebele identity to be brought to the fore in ways that enable us to understand that there are moments when the articulation between Southern Ndebele identity and national identity operate along parallel lines.

Even though different themes were introduced in each chapter, multi-layered, complex overlaps and linkages of expression of Southern Ndebele identity were revealed in ways that richly nuanced an understanding of the dialectical and mutually constitutive relationship of Ndebele and national identity. Crucial to point out is that the study was left hard pressed whether to conclude that the sense of belonging to a distinctive Southern Ndebele identity as it manifests itself in the culturally diverse KwaMhlanga region is symptomatic of the fractured nature of

post-apartheid rainbow national narrative which allows ethnic identities to exist along parallel lines or ethnic identity is experienced as core and closer to everyday experiences. On this note the study thus serves as opening an avenue for expanding frontiers of knowledge on the expression of belonging to ethnic identities in the context of crafting of post-apartheid national identity as hinging on acceptance of ethno-cultural identities as one of its foundational principles. The question of whether South Africa's embracing of ethno-culturally diverse identities as reverberating the centre of post-apartheid national identity is sufficient to pursue the goals of social cohesion will be an interesting line of research to explore to enrich academic debates on some very pertinent social and political process that are still unravelling in post-apartheid South Africa. Though more focused narrowly on the multi-ethnic and culturally mixed region of KwaMhlanga, the study opens up more areas of interrogation about the interaction of national and ethnic identities. It will seem that South Africa's unique trajectory has let the socialization most people receive at ethnic levels constitute an outflow that makes up national expression. The assertion and re-assertion of belonging to Southern Ndebele ethnic identity as it manifests itself in the KwaMhlanga region evokes intellectual curiosity for a much more nuanced understanding of the how ethnic identities interface with crafting of consciousness of national belonging. Further scholarly enquiries through such lenses can help widen literature on the politics of ethnicity and frameworks of nurturing social cohesion and national integration in post-apartheid South Africa.

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Appendix A

Explanatory Statement

University of the Witwatersrand's School of Social Sciences, Political Studies Department

Title: **Ethnic identity in post-apartheid South Africa: A case study of Southern Ndebele identity in the KwaMhlanga Region in South Africa's Mpumalanga Province.**

My name is Sifiso **Ndlovu**. I am conducting a research project under the supervision of Professor **Ivor Chipkin** and **Professor Noor Nieftagodien,** towards a PhD degree at the University of the Witwatersrand. I will be writing a thesis of 80 000-100 000 words. I am researching about how Ndebele identity is evolving and crystalizing as it intersects and diverges with the construction of national identity in post-apartheid South Africa. The mainstay of the project lies in exploring how the expression of Ndebele identity exposes the mutually constitutive relationship between ethnic identities and national identity in a culturally diverse post-apartheid South African society.

Possible benefits

This project does not have direct benefits for the research participants but it is capable of adding knowledge about the nuanced politics of identity in culturally diverse unitary states-especially those with colonial history and/or ethnic domination.

What the research involves

The study involves audio-taping, taking notes and observing and tracking development of political-cultural activities in the KwaMhlanga region. If you agree to participate in oral interviews, they will take 30-45 minutes of your time. You might be inconvenienced from your work and personal commitments. Please feel free to suggest the time of the day when I can make an appointment and also suggest how I can make this task comfortable for you.

Data storage

The storage of the data collected will adhere to the University of the Witwatersrand's regulations and will be kept on University premises in a locked cupboard/filing cabinet for 5 years. A report of the study will be submitted for an examination and an award of a Doctor of Philosophy degree and for publication.

Access to data

You have the right to request a transcript of data concerning yourself before it is included in the write-up of the thesis.

Confidentiality of results

All the information to be collected from you will not, under any circumstances, contain any personal identifying characteristics. Information about you will only be accessed by researchers and a coding system such as „Participant X" or pseudonym is used as one way of maintaining confidentiality.

Use of data for other purposes

Data may be used for other academic purposes such as conference and seminar paper presentations.

Contact details for queries

If you have any queries or would like to be informed more of this project please feel free to contact Professor Ivor Chipkin at ichipkin@pari.org.za or Professor Noor Nieftagodien at noor.nieftagodien@wits.ac.za.

Complaints

Should you have any complaint concerning the manner in which this research is conducted, please do not hesitate to contact the University of the Witwatersrand's Standing Committee on Ethics in Research Involving Human Subjects at the following address:

University of the Witwatersrand

Room 10000, 10th Floor, Senate House

East Campus

Thank you

Sifiso Ndlovu (Ms)-Researcher.

Appendix B

Interviewee Consent Form

University of the Witwatersrand's School of Social Sciences-Political Studies Department

Title of the project: **Ethnic identity in post-apartheid South Africa: A case study of Southern Ndebele identity in the KwaMhlanga Region in South Africa's Mpumalanga Province**

I agree to take part in Sifiso Ndlovu's research project specified above. I have had the project explained to me, and I have read the Explanatory Statement, which I keep for my records. I understand that agreeing to take part means the following:

- I agree to be interviewed by the researcher []Yes [] No
- I agree to allow the researcher to audio-record the interview []Yes []No
- I agree to avail myself available for further interview if required []Yes []No

I understand that I reserve the right to request a transcript of data concerning me for my approval before it is included in the write-up of the research.

I understand that my participation is voluntary, I can choose not to participate in part or the entire project, and that I can withdraw at any stage of the project without being penalized or disadvantaged in any way.

I understand that any data that the researcher extracts from the interview for use in reports or published findings will not, under any circumstances, contain names or identifying characteristics.

Participants name.....

Signature..... Date.....

Appendix C

Participant consent form: Recording of the interview

Dear participant, thank you for agreeing to participate in my research. Your participation is completely voluntary and you have the right to stop the interview if you feel uncomfortable with carrying on with the discussion.

(a) I would therefore love to record each interview in order to ensure that to keep an accurate record. The recording is voluntary and you may choose not to be recorded if you wish. I can also take down some notes during the interview if you do not wish to be recorded.

(b) A copy of your transcribed interview will be brought to you if wish to keep it as well.

Please sign below if you agree to be recorded during the interview.

Participant's signature_____

For further information concerning my research please feel free to contact me or my research supervisors on the following contacts:

Researcher: Sifiso Ndlovu: +27766781522 **Email**: sifisogatsheni@yahoo.com /sifiso.ndlovu@students.wits.ac.za

Research Supervisors:

Prof Noor Nieftagodien: +27 (011) 717 4284/ (011) 717 4266. **Email:** noor.nieftagodien@wits.ac.za

Prof Ivor Chipkin: Tel +27 (011) 4821739 **Email:** ichipkin@pari.org.za

Appendix D

Interview Guide

N.B//: These were guiding questions. Most of data was generated through tracking and observing developments of political and cultural events in the KwaMhlanga region and some parts of Mpumalanga province for three consecutive years.

Interview schedule

The interviews were open ended and the life history approach was adopted. The themes were as follows:

Background:

Full Name:

Date of Birth:

Gender:

Home Language:

Area of Residence:

Highest Level of qualification (academic):

Employment history:

Basic questions

1) What constitutes being Ndebele/How is Ndebeleness expressed?

2) What distinguishes Southern Ndebele ethnic consciousness from Northern Ndebele ethnic consciousness?
3) How is Southern Ndebele identity maintained, preserved and kept going?

Themes

Origins of Ndebele identity in general and Southern Ndebele identity in particular: Where did the Southern Ndebele come from?

Southern Ndebele identity during apartheid and the establishment of KwaNdebele homeland: How did the apartheid government use politicised ethnicity to divide and rule the Africans and how did the Ndebele respond to this? How was Southern Ndebele identity maintained during the infamous apartheid's Bantustan system?

Southern Ndebele identity after the establishment of KwaNdebele: How was Ndebele identity preserved and maintained after the establishment of KwaNdebele homeland? How did the Ndebele in general and Southern Ndebele articulate their citizenship and belonging to the broader South African identity? Why did the proposed Pretoria-styled independence for KwaNdebele rejected by militant youth, politicized section of people living in KwaNdebele and members of the royal family?

Southern Ndebele identity in post-apartheid South Africa: Who are the Southern Ndebele today and are there any changes, shifts and continuities in these people's ethnic identity? How is Southern Ndebele ethnic preserved, maintained and kept going in post-apartheid South Africa? How does Southern Ndebele identity intersect with national (rainbow) level of identification and what impact does this intersection have on Southern Ndebele identity? How do the Southern Ndebele perceive their belonging to rainbow national identity which is underpinned by

accommodation of various South African identities that cut across ethnicity, race, gender and class?

N.B// **since the interviews are open-ended, and will entail interviewing people from different diametrical backgrounds, focus of the interview will vary and will be determined by the interviewees' responses.**