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THE PUBLIC SPHERE AND REPRESENTATIONS OF THE SELF: RADIO TALK SHOWS IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

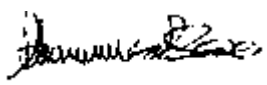
JENDELE HUNGBO

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Humanities, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, in fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Johannesburg, 2012

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own original work. It is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination in any other university.



Jendele Hungbo

March, 2012

ABSTRACT

A vibrant media environment is fast becoming a prerequisite for democratic culture. Recent studies in radio in Africa have also paid attention to how the deregulation of the media space in the continent can be a catalyst to the growth of democratic culture. Yet, in so doing, current research pays less attention to the crucial aspect of self-fashioning which reflects power relations as well the existing relationships among individuals and different groups in society. This thesis examines the representation of the self on two 'popular' radio talk shows in contemporary South Africa. Using 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' the thesis looks into the dynamics of representational politics which characterise the post-apartheid public sphere in South Africa. It deals with the way 'imagined communities' emerge through different kinds of discursive practices on radio talk shows and how participants react to different kinds of situations when they feature on radio. The study reveals access inequalities, performance and performative practices which translate to the silencing of various aspects of the self on radio talk shows. It concludes that the democratic credentials of radio talk shows are dwarfed by these silences which have the potential of privileging power and the power elite in contemporary South Africa.

DEDICATION

To all whose vision of a less fractious universe never wavers.

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

DECLARATION i
ABSTRACT ii
DEDICATION iii
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS iv
TABLE OF CONTENTS vi

CHAPTER ONE

TALK RADIO AND THE POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SPHERE: AN INTRODUCTION 1-53
Introduction 1
Research Questions 3
Review of Relevant Literature 7
Radio in the African Media Space 14
The Context of Radio Broadcasting in South Africa 18
The Concept of Talk Radio 19
Emergence of Talk Radio in South Africa 26
Synopsis of Primary Research Data 29
Theoretical Framework 36
Representation and Selfhood 37
The Public Sphere: A Conceptual Framework 40
Methodological Approach 47
Outline of Chapters 51

CHAPTER TWO

EMERGING 'COMMUNITIES' AND NEW UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE SELF IN POST-APARTHED SOUTH AFRICA 54-87
Introduction 54
Understanding Community 55
Media and Community 59
Community Life in South Africa 63
Community and the Public Domain 67
Discursive Practices in 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' 69

(New) Nationalism(s) in Post-Apartheid South Africa 78
Citizenship and New Imaginings of the Self 82
Conclusion 86

CHAPTER THREE

NARRATING FRAGILITY: PERFORMATIVITY AND REPRESENTATION IN 'THE AFTER EIGHT DEBATE' AND 'THE REDI DIREKO SHOW' 88-115
Introduction 88
Perspectives on Fragility 89
Fragility in 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' 92
Performance, Performativity and the Mediation of Fragility 102
Conclusion 114

CHAPTER FOUR

CREMATING THE NATION: DEBATING XENOPHOBIC VIOLENCE ON 'THE AFTER EIGHT DEBATE' AND 'THE REDI DIREKO SHOW' 116-157
Introduction 116
Post-apartheid Utopia, Dystopia and Xenophobia in South Africa 117
Popular Mediations of Xenophobia 121
National Identity and the Challenge of 'Negative Publicity' 125
Strategic Silence, Denialism and the Margins of Talk 129
Radio Talk Shows, Language and the Social Determination of Discourse 137
History on the Spot 143
Intermediality: a Paradigm of Mobility 152
Conclusion 155

CHAPTER FIVE

TALKING TO THE POLLS: ELECTION DISCOURSES IN 'THE AFTER EIGHT DEBATE' AND 'THE REDI DIREKO SHOW' 158-191
Introduction 158
Elections, Democracy and Popular Participation 161
Advantage, Disadvantage, Urgency and Election Discourses 162
Discourses of Power in Talk Shows on Election 164
Discourses of Time in Talk Shows on Election 183

Radio Talk, Elections and Participation 188
Conclusion 190

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION: MEDIATING SILENCES AND THE EMERGENT SELF IN SOUTH AFRICA 192-203

BIBLIOGRAPHY 204

APPENDICES 229

CHAPTER ONE

TALK RADIO AND THE POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICAN PUBLIC SPHERE: AN INTRODUCTION

Introduction

The mass media are gradually becoming a site of critical assessment of society and the different ways in which institutions, groups and individuals operate within it. It is in this regard that the relations between mass media, society and culture will continue to occupy a central place in various fields of scholarship (Spitulnik, 1993). The explanation of this relation will form a crucial aspect of this study which will be a response to the need to understand the emerging culture of debate in the public domain in post-apartheid South Africa, where society is undergoing social and political transition and is in search of new modernities. The aim of this research is to understand how talk shows work as part of the public sphere in post-apartheid South Africa. The study, therefore, examines the emergence of new cultures of debate and modes of representation of the self typified by radio talk shows as avenues for self fashioning and what forms of new power relations may emerge as a result of such debates in contemporary South African society. This is borne out of the fact that before the demise of apartheid, the openness of talk had been a difficult thing to achieve driving the media to adopt a subversive approach to critiquing government policies or discussing matters of general interest to the public. In other words, open talk became a feature of radical alternative media spaces (Couldry and Curran, 2003; Downing, 2001; Gunner, 2000, 2005; Lekgoathi, 2009, 2010; Switzer and Adhikari, 2000).

Through alternative media and various devices in the mainstream (especially indigenous language) media, a few radical practitioners 'bypassed the snare of the censor and attracted an eager and discerning audience' (Gunner 2000: 223). This was made possible as some announcers 'intermittently subverted white control by inserting hidden messages using the thicket of language' (Lekgoathi, 2009). More recently, the transformation from the apartheid state to a democratic society seems to have given the media an opportunity to push into the

open talks or messages which were hitherto hidden. This openness of talk seems to promote a fertile discursive public space where experiences are mediated and new understandings of the self and the nation emerge. As Njabulo Ndebele argues, what seems to have happened in South Africa is that 'the passage of time which brought forth … freedom has given legitimacy and authority to previously silenced voices' (Ndebele, 1998: 20). As more voices now become audible, there is the need to explore 'what it is to be a human agent, a person, or a self' (Taylor, 1992: 3) in the new social space that the post-apartheid milieu offers.

Different forms of the public arena, including radio talk shows have gradually become the epicenter for the contestation of different forms of identities signifying both unity and difference as individuals and communities strive to play out the new national identity of a largely inclusive 'rainbow nation' which is a metaphor for cultural diversity. In the new dispensation, there is a noticeable paradigm shift from the old order in which 'the purpose of communication was domination and coercion' (Zegeye and Liebenberg, 2001: 316). Situations of flux or change, such as Zegeye and Liebenberg identify in the new South Africa, are often accompanied by the emergence of new subjectivities and shifts in the negotiation of culture. Radio may be either a key mediator or mere vessel of passage in this process depending on the way it is used and the way and manner in which ownership and control of the media are determined by public policy. As Jeffrey Jones argues, 'our accountings of how media shape contemporary civic culture should lead us to examine traditional (or old) media, new media, and alternative media *as a whole*' (Jones, 2006: 371). It is in this regard that the study is interested in how different types of subjectivities are constituted through different forms of articulation, and at times repression, on radio talk shows in post-apartheid South Africa.

Again, the idea of a public, as Michael Warner observes, 'has become part of the common repertoire of modern culture' (Warner, 2002: 50). This debate on 'publics' and 'counterpublics' extends Jurgen Habermas' postulations about the public sphere which offers a platform for deliberation (1991). Habermas has provoked a series of criticism of his conception of a bourgeois public sphere based on his experience of public life in Enlightenment Europe (see for instance Calhoun, 1992; Fraser, 1992). This work does not intend to go into a detailed dissection of the already existing polarities in this debate about the public sphere. What it intends to do is to rely on these notions of 'public' and 'public sphere' to bring forth an understanding of the dynamics of radio talk shows as an important aspect of

popular culture or a media platform which offers opportunity for public participation. The radio talk show can, therefore, be said to be a programme genre that deploys its publicness towards the projection of the different subjectivities within the polity of the new state which should be understood against the background of their spatial and temporal significance (Fabian, 1998). The passage of debate and conversation from verbal communication to the mediation of the airwaves and radio requires some critical evaluation. It is in view of this that the study brings to the fore the role of mediality in the modes of negotiation of culture and the inscription of identities and power. This is crucial as cultures and societies in Africa are constantly redefined through the use of the media in cultivating dynamics of change in modernizing African societies. As participants in radio talk shows 'respond to the new, more inclusive political moment in South Africa' (Nuttall, 1998: 75), a study of this nature becomes significant in trying to understand the underlying exchanges which contribute to the entire project of public debate.

Research Questions

The aim of this thesis is to examine the politics of self representation and the enunciations of selfhood emerging from two radio talk shows, SAFM's 'The After Eight Debate' and Talk Radio 702's 'The Redi Direko Show', which seek to constitute a mediated public sphere by creating avenues for public discourse in post-apartheid South Africa. This aim should be understood against the background of an understanding of the social political realities and tensions which define relations among different classes of people in contemporary South African society. Do these realities, hinged on different categorizations of race, ethnicity, class and gender reflect the mantra of inclusivity which has often been paraded by the leadership as the defining spirit of the 'new' South Africa? In other words, how do social actors, featuring on talk shows 'use the media for self definition or civic discourse' (Brown, 2003: viii)? The historical experience of South Africa has caused the media to undergo different forms of transformation dictated by socio-political adjustments in the polity. From the 'Jabulani! Freedom of the Airwaves' Conference held in the Netherlands in 1990 to the ongoing Save Our SABC Coalition campaign for freedom of expression and media diversity, there emerges a picture of a persistent attempt to see a media environment which offers opportunities for open expression across the board in the post-apartheid dispensation. The reality however points to reluctance on the part of the hegemonies noticeable in the media to give way to

equal access to the different groups competing for space. Using the example of the public broadcaster as a starting point, Colin Sparks calls attention to the hegemonic influence which economic power can wield on the media signaling a regime of elite continuity in media transformation efforts in South Africa:

> While the mass movement has in the final years of the apartheid regime influenced early debates about broadcasting, subsequent developments have made SABC more and more a prisoner of the economic realities of the new South Africa, where white economic power remains largely intact. (Sparks, 2009: 195)

Shifts that are envisaged by efforts towards creating a level playing field are not often visible in the structural composition of the mediascape or in media platforms alone; they are also to be seen in the modes of production, circulation and reception of cultural material inherent in the media. In the same vein, shifts do occur in individual identities as new cultures of debate evolve through the media. More often than not, it is possible, albeit only to a certain extent, to track the shifts in identities in the way people talk openly or interact with one another through the media.

In the South African case, shifts have been witnessed from the form of exilic clandestine broadcasts in the days of apartheid when the public (then state) broadcaster was heavily censored, and the distribution of tapes containing speeches of banned activists and other cultural material like music and poetry was common, to the present return to radio via the talk show format as a means of giving voice to the 'subaltern collectivities' in the present post-apartheid setting (Bosch, 2006). Again, the technological convergence witnessed today has brought about a new culture of media production making use of telephony, sms and email for the circulation of messages in the media. What this points to is the flow of a particular form of culture through different forms of media and technologies aimed at gleaning participation in the processes that define the establishment and running of modern society. With the introduction of radio talk shows more people become more actively involved in the interpretation and contestation of master-narratives disseminated through the mass media. What remains a matter of curiosity however is the dynamics of power that plays itself out in the way certain ideas and personalities seek to become dominant while others may be relegated or silenced in the course of public debates taking place on radio talk shows. This quest for relevance and influence which in certain instances tilts towards the dominance of

certain groups over others further raises questions about the role of the existing regulatory or re-regulatory structures in the giving of voice to different categories of individuals or groups in the enactment of debates touching on core values in society.

In essence, broader issues around ownership and control, the discrepancies in economic power among different racial groups and the burden of a history of inequality and its scars become intervening parameters which must be unpacked for a better understanding of the way and manner in which debates are conducted through the media. Writing specifically about South Africa, Jeremy Seekings and Nicoli Nattrass observe that 'state policies played and continue to play a major role in the reproduction of inequality' (2005: 4). For them, what has changed over time is just 'the composition of the privileged group and the basis of privilege' (Ibid: 6). In such regimes of inequality, different individuals and groups bring their own experiences and opinions into public debates leading to new understandings of the structure and dynamics of the 'new' South African society. It is against this background that the complexities of identity in contemporary South Africa need to be unpacked in order to better appreciate the kind of relations that exist, and are possibly fostered, through different fora of contestation like we have in radio talk shows.

In this modern society believed to be envisioned by the new community of leadership and citizens, there are different views shaping the idea of the 'Rainbow Nation.' In externalizing these different ways of understanding the project of the 'new' nation, different actors in the system tend to 'produce effects that constitute the self' (Besley, 2005: 77). Besley's understanding of the constitution of the self follows a Foucauldian approach to selfhood expressed in Foucault's concept of the 'technologies of the self' (Foucault, 1988). In Foucault's estimation, as technologies of power 'determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends of domination, an objectivizing of the subject' and technologies of the self gravitate the people transforming them to reach a 'state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality' (Foucault, 1988: 18). Beyond the question of identity or subjectivity implicated in Foucault's argument is an underlying display of agency seemingly aimed at (re)invigorating the self in contemporary society. In postcolonial societies, this reinforcement of selfhood becomes part of the bigger concept which Patrick Chabal labels 'the politics of being' (Chabal, 2009: 24). In Chabal's estimation, three basic factors—origin, identity and locality—usually inform the highly politicised agenda of representation found across postcolonial Africa. This kind of politics implicates a larger discourse around agency

and the ability to define subjectivities in a historically transforming society through discursive opportunities made available by the mass media. In looking therefore at this idea of the media and the public sphere (Habermas, 1987, 1991, 1996), this work touches upon the dynamics and significance of the media, represented here by the medium of radio, in the fashioning of new cultures of negotiation of power and the institution of deliberative processes as part of the emerging traditions of democracy in South Africa.

The term 'democracy' itself, it is worth noting, has remained a problematic appropriation which seeks to represent the idea of participatory governance in the general sense. From the traditional understanding of democracy as a move towards the attainment of a separation of powers to new institutional applications of the term, there is an apparent struggle between unanimity or consensus and a strict adherence to the principle of majority rule. As Thaddeus Metz argues 'unanimity is prized, and majoritarianism is typically seen as a morally inadequate way to resolve conflicts of interest or to determine law' (2007: 324). Though Metz's understanding of democratic values in the traditional African setting falters on the assumption that 'discussion continues until a compromise is found and all in the discussion agree with the outcome' (Ibid), he nonetheless brings to light the convolutions which attend the various understandings of democracy at different historical moments and places. The resultant ambivalence in the application of the term justifies the need for stipulating the conceptual understanding of democracy to be adopted in any form of research. For the purpose of this research greater emphasis is placed on deliberative democracy which focuses principally on hearing out every policy alternative or at least as many alternatives as possible in order to arrive at decisions that speak to the concerns of a larger number of the members of a particular community. This work therefore critically examines the potential of radio talk shows as 'a means of reinventing identity through mediation and intervention' (de Kock, 2001: 294). Though talk shows provide an avenue for the articulation of individual and collective experience, the underlying principles including the modes of operation of such debates need to be further investigated before we can reach any conclusion as to the level of inclusivity occasioned by such media debates.

It is in light of the foregoing that this thesis has attempted to answer two main research questions: What forms of deliberative 'communities' and ties emerge as people participate in radio talk shows? What new understandings of the self and citizenship develop as people engage in public debates on radio talk shows? The answers to these questions are expected to

significantly show how radio talk shows, as a programme category and a new radio genre, become a major factor in the understanding of the concepts of political belonging and representation in stratified societies such as we have in South Africa. In other words, they will point in the direction of 'the empowering possibilities media production offers for [previously] marginalized groups' (Ginsburg, 2004)[1] in a mediated democratic culture especially in view of the contention that 'it is now difficult to imagine a political perspective within which the media do not figure as an important agency' (Corner, 2007: 211). The work focuses on two radio talk shows from two FM radio stations in South Africa (SAFM and Talk Radio 702). These two shows are used as illustration in coming to terms with the modes of operation and peculiarities of talk shows which set them apart as programmes which bring about 'shifts in local discourses [and generate] different notions of citizenship, nationhood and cultural identity emerging in the post-apartheid period' (Hadland, et al, 2008: 3).

There are several underlying assumptions which line the path of reflections on radio talk shows generally. Three of such assumptions provide a hypothetical foundation for this study. The first assumption which the questions raised in this study deal with is that of democratic participation which constructs public debates on talk shows as offering free access to 'open' debates where participants are at liberty to air their views. The second hypothesis is the assumption that people participate on talk shows only because they want to 'enter' a debate. The third assumption, which is in a way connected to the first is the one that sees the talk show as a platform which 'transforms democracy into a more participatory regime' with populist impulses which can be freely expressed at any point in time thereby creating an increasingly active citizenry (Bolce, De Maio and Muzzio, 1996: 480). These hypotheses are put to the test in relation to the basic research questioned raised earlier in the course of this research.

Review of Relevant Literature

This thesis seeks to contribute to the existing body of knowledge on radio studies in Africa. What this presupposes is that it will be building upon previous research by scholars in the

[1] Sharon Shahaf's online comment on Ginsburg's discussion of media flow. http://flowtv.org/2004/11/10000-years-of-media-flow/ accessed 22/04/09

field in an attempt to take research in the field one step further. There has been a noticeable renewal of interest in the study of radio in recent times. This is after a considerable period of neglect of the medium as a result of the advent of television and video technology which temporarily eclipsed the importance and popularity of radio (Keith, 2007). Yet, radio remains 'one means of vocalizing needs by marginalized segments of the population' (Ibid: 533). More importantly, radio is a key player among the electronic media which today 'transform the field of mass mediation because they offer new resources and new disciplines for the construction of imagined selves and imagined worlds' (Appadurai, 1996 : 3). The renewal of interest is attributable to numerous factors some of which include the accessibility of the medium, the increase in the number of listeners as well as the continuous increase in the number of radio stations especially those transmitting signals in the FM band. Beyond these factors is the importance of radio as a major transmitter of culture in the contemporary society. This cultural transmission function is performed by the medium through the broadcast of news, music, drama and other forms of programmes which appropriate the cultural practices of the people who constitute radio's audiences. As Don Mitchell observes, 'culture is represented in terms of spheres, maps, levels or domains. It becomes a medium of meaning and action' (1995: 103). A closer look at radio shows that a number of interests, including the political, have found space in the medium. Radio has thus become a channel through which different interest groups in society seek to reach the people with different kinds of messages and ideologies. Such messages may be social, economic or political depending on the interest of their originators. In other words, the medium of radio has grown beyond the capabilities as an instrument of relaxation and entertainment, with which it was traditionally credited, to become 'more than a music box' (Crisell, 2004).

Radio is a crucial medium for the dissemination of information. The experience of the African continent makes radio a particularly crucial medium for the dissemination of information. This stems from the literacy levels, the limited technology available as well as the paucity of basic infrastructure in most African countries (Spitulnik, 2000). Added to these points is the pervasiveness of radio and its ability to reach even remote communities and settlements where other forms of media encounter difficulty in making an impact. These factors perhaps inform the contention of Alfred Snider that:

> Radio is the most pervasive of the electronic media, in large part because of its characteristics. It has fewer technological requirements than its electronic

> competitors. Its range is greater than conventional television and involves less equipment than satellite TV. As a result, it is accessible to the vast majority of the world's population. (Snider, 2005: 11)

Steve Buckley agrees with Snider on the importance of radio to different kinds of population spread across the developed and the developing world. For Buckley 'only one electronic communication medium has become both an intimate and pervasive presence throughout the developed world and penetrated into the remotest rural areas of the poorest countries. That, of course, is radio' (Buckley, 2000: 181). In advancing a similar argument Briohny Clark (2006) concludes that 'radio is affordable, flexible and sustainable.' Radio, therefore, becomes a medium for popular and participative communication through which different categories of people and institutions seek to advance their views and interests.

The mobile nature of radio sets also constitutes a great advantage for the medium. This mobility is further enhanced by the availability of transistor radios, the evolution of which has greatly transformed the history and importance of radio in the field of communication. As Andrew Crisell observes:

> Not only did the transistor allow the listener to take her radio anywhere, for it was no longer a fixture of the home or factory but could go with her to the seaside or out into the country; it greatly extended the number of things she could do while listening, such as working out in the garden or even driving her car. (Crisell, 1994: 29)

Apart from the portability of transistor radios, a radio set comes with almost every new car manufactured in recent times; and taxi drivers fix the device in their cars. Particularly, in countries like Nigeria, Mali, Cameroon, Togo and Benin Republic commercial motorcycle riders are now fond of having radio sets attached to their bikes[2]. Radio messages, in addition to breaking the barrier of illiteracy through the use of local languages, become most instantly accessible as they reach different people without discrimination and the receivers or listeners require less intellectual exertion to understand such messages. This accessibility, in a sense, benefits the African continent more than any other as the people continue to seek valuable information on various issues affecting their lives on a daily basis. It is quite obvious that a

[2] This trend may indeed not be limited to the West African sub-region.

lot of the decisions people make are based on information available to them, through the media; hence the quantum of importance which the media enjoys today in various forms of discourse having to do with transformation and development. Vicky Randall agrees with the views of Snider and Buckley on the prime of place that radio occupies in the dissemination of information even to the remotest of communities around the world. In relating the crucial role of the electronic media to the question of development in different ramifications, Randall concludes that the importance of the media to the development of democracy in Africa is a matter of 'critical importance for the understanding of continuity and change in contemporary political systems' (Randall, 1998: 1). In a similar vein, Mary Myers, who draws on the experience of the role of radio in promoting democracy in Mali, submits that 'radio is perhaps the most natural 'press' for a largely non-literate country…. In many ways radio is the tangible modern extension of oral tradition.' (Myers, 1998: 201). The same argument reverberates in Clark's (2006) contention that 'the oral nature of radio and other broadcast media can merge with the Aboriginal oral culture in which alphabetic writing is not traditionally used.' This question of orality is quite crucial to the primacy of the medium of radio and its significance for audiences on the African continent as radio merely replicates and extends the already existing or predominant oral culture which forms the base of the society. In this manner, a community's level of literacy becomes inconsequential or at least of less importance in the determination of access to information about contemporary issues bordering on personal and communal development.

Approaching the issue of the importance of radio from an ideological (neo-Marxist) point of view, Graham Hayman and Ruth Tomaselli contend that:

> In modern urban society within a large nation-state, the radio is clearly the medium through which many people experience the world beyond the geographical limits of their daily life. The act of listening to the radio (switching on the receiver in the family home, with one or more members of the family present) could be considered as a daily habit or ritual in which ideology is present. (Hayman and Tomaselli, 1989: 2)

This view not only hints at the importance of radio in the political landscape and the search for transformation in different facets of life, but also tries to draw our attention to the transnational as well as transcontinental orientation of radio as a medium of communication. Over the years, evidence has shown that radio can transcend various barriers which would

have otherwise inhibited the realization of the medium's potential as a means of mass communication.

With the emergence of new media, the internet mainly, radio has found an ally in the spreading of its transnationality and transcontinentality as radio stations now set up websites on which people can read information and also listen to live programme streams from any part of the world. It is worth alluding, briefly, to the contentious debate on what constitutes *new* or *old* media. Scholars have taken different positions on the classification of media as either 'old' or 'new' and to which category radio belongs. Here, I intend to adopt the position of Francis Nyamnjoh (2005), reinforced by Paddy Scannell (2007) and Benjamin Peters (2009), in which radio especially in Africa is seen as constituting part of new media because of the peculiarities of development on the continent when compared to the developed economies of the West. In Peters' words, 'new media can be understood as emerging communication and information technologies undergoing a historical process of contestation, negotiation and institutionalization' (2009: 18). There is therefore no position of stasis as far as new or old media are concerned as media forms shift constantly between invention, obscurity and reinvention. Different factors are usually responsible for the shifts in status mentioned above as 'historical forces—perhaps through a breakthrough in use, technology, law or socio-economic demand—spark the core idea of a medium (e.g. the telegraph or television) to express itself in new form and the next cycle begins anew' (Ibid: 18). This is true of radio as the medium seems to have recently become more relevant as developments in technology and social processes which seemed initially to possess the capacity of confining radio to the realm of an archaic mode of communication now reinforce and complement the medium as it undergoes a renaissance in social interactions in various communities. As a new digital culture continues to take root even in Africa to 'enable the creation of additional space in the public sphere' (d'Haenens et al, 2008: 234), the idea of convergence further blurs the borders between 'old' and 'new' as nomenclatures when we refer to the media.

Two typical examples therefore illustrate the transnational nature of radio, at least at a sub-regional level. The first is the case of Talk Radio 702 which is based in Cape Town, South Africa but broadcasts opposition news and interviews which are received in Zimbabwe. Also Studio 7, run by the Voice of America broadcasts daily into Zimbabwe where it is difficult for opposition radio to officially obtain operational licences. The second example is that of Radio Ouake, one of several Beninoise community radio stations brought on stream to

'improve access to information for the rural population, especially in African languages, and to promote development initiatives' (Gratz, 2000:111) whose broadcasts are received across the border by some Nigerian communities[3]. The signals of this radio station travel further beyond towns and villages close to the border especially at night or during the last quarter of the year when the harmattan appears to aid radio signals. These examples not only illustrate the transnational power of radio, they also echo what Michele Hilmes and Jason Loviglio describe as 'the medium's transgressive power' (2002: xiii).

Radio, therefore, penetrates various barriers and, in a sense, limits the ability of government to totally restrict the flow of news and other forms of information. Added to this power of reach are the social and development roles which radio performs in every community especially in rural and remote locations. With listening groups fostering community relations and enlightenment programmes related to development issues like education, health and even democracy, radio is gradually becoming a development tool in countries seeking to improve their ranking on the world growth index. For instance radio stations often engage in voter education shortly before elections in most African countries with programmes about political parties, their logos and identification marks, how to cast valid votes, regulations about voting and the like. In many instances, this process of educating, reawakening or conscientizing the populace comes in form of talk shows and radio drama as was the case with South African Zulu radio drama which 'may paradoxically have cleared a space for the discourses of democracy even though it was—in part at least—conceived as an instrument to be used, …, to shape and control the mindset of its listeners,' (Gunner, 2000: 223). This is often done in realization of the centrality of democracy and transformation to general development as well as the importance of participation to the success of a liberal and permissive developmental process in society. It is important to note, however, that the question of equal and fair access to media exposure for different political parties still remains a very contentious issue in broadcasting on the African continent.

The attractive characteristics of radio notwithstanding, there have been instances where the medium has been manipulated for negative purposes. While radio became a very strong propaganda tool during World War II (Hilmes, 2002: 3, 6), for instance, the medium has also

[3] There are more community radio stations now in Benin whose signals filter into Nigeria in spite of the absence of any community radio in the country. Gratz's work deals with five community radio stations existing in Benin by 1996.

more recently been extensively denounced as the promoter of ethnic hate speech during the Rwandan genocide (Carver, 2000; Hamelink, 2008; Hendy, 2000; Mitchelle, 2007). An even more recent example is found in the role played by the media, especially radio, in the 2007 post-election crisis in Kenya. In the Kenyan case, some local language radio stations propagated some form of hate speech that further fuelled the tense political situation (Ismail and Deane, 2008, Oyaro, 2008). For Ismail and Dean, the posture of some local language radio stations during the period can best be described as propagating 'part hate, part peace' (2008: 321). It is instructive that radio stations broadcasting in local languages were more culpable in the two African examples cited here. What sets the Kenyan scenario apart from the Rwandese experience, however, is the fact that while the incitements were openly aired in the latter, they were more implicit than explicit in the former. There have also been other similar instances where radio's power of reach has been manipulated to the detriment of the development of freedom of expression and the protection of the common good. In such instances, we encounter 'how the media influence the distribution of power' (Entman, 2007: 163) with the hegemonizing deployment of different kinds of media, including especially radio, in the suppression of alternative views. In the case of South Africa, the SABC served as a government mouth piece during the era of apartheid shutting off opposition views which sought to challenge the status quo (Gunner, 2000, Fardon and Furniss, 2000, Wasserman and De Beer, 2005, Bosch, 2006). This kind of use of the medium of radio attained a curious height when 'special services were created to mirror segregationist practices' (Bosch, 2006: 250). These practices were, in the main, part of strategies adopted by the apartheid government for ensuring continued dominance and control of the airwawes. In other words such practices made it easy for the government controlled radio to beam the apartheid government propaganda to the black population in the country. The grip which the apartheid regime exercised over the SABC was not easy to eliminate. Fardon and Furniss observe that 'the concessions wrought from the South African government were not won without concerted, politically inclusive and protracted agitation' (2000: 15). The kind of agitation referred to here has often led to the establishment of alternative media, or clandestine radio to be specific in this instance, which operate outside the control of government like we have seen in several African countries, including South Africa and Nigeria.[4]

[4] The case of Bush Radio in South Africa and Radio Kudirat in Nigeria are quite instructive in this regard.

Radio in the African Media Space

In Africa specifically, radio is not just an interesting medium but also a very curious one in trying to grapple with the various contestations thrown up by the idea of the public sphere. In most parts of the continent and, to be specific, South Africa, there is still a noticeable reliance on radio. The cultural context of radio makes it one major medium that continues to attract great attention all over the world. And as Stephen Barnard observes, radio is 'the most pervasive, the most readily available, the least escapable of all mass media' (1989: vi). As a result of this pervasiveness, the influence of the media generally, and that of radio in particular, can no longer be taken for granted because of their 'power to shape cultural values and identities' (Hendy, 2007: 18). Yet there has been a seeming lull in scholarship on radio in recent times. This paucity of work on radio is alluded to by Kelly Askew and Richard Wilk who contend that radio and its aural counterpart, the cassette, 'have attracted less academic interest than they deserve' (2002: 2). They argue further that 'aural forms (such as radio and cassette technologies) are significantly under-represented in comparison to contributions focusing on the visual genres of television, photography, and film' (Ibid). In addition to the above is the justified concern that much of the work on radio and media studies in general is based on data from Western nations. The implication of this is a considerable neglect of African case studies (Downing, 1996; Thussu, 2007). In a significant way, this study intends to provide an alternative praxis outside the Anglo-American axis and by extension challenge 'the most often mistaken impression that the Western text and Western ways of making meaning are universal, and, therefore, to be copied by academics the world over' (Nyamnjoh, 1999: 17-18). It is hoped that fresh perspectives, invigorated by empirical evidence from radio talk shows in South Africa, will emerge in the course of this research.

The renaissance of radio studies which is being witnessed at the moment requires efforts in the direction of the impact that talk radio make on society as there is still a gap in the area of assessing the impact of talk radio programmes on society and the forms of power relations which may emerge from the way people interact through public debates in the media. Much of the work done on radio in Africa has dwelt on other aspects of radio like radio drama, music, community radio and the like (Bosch, 2003, 2006; Gqibitole, 2002, 2007; Gunner, 2000, 2005; Lekgoathi, 2009; Ligaga, 2005, 2008). What most of these works have sought to do is to lay out the importance of radio as an instrument of mobilization in society. While Gunner and Lekgoathi deal with the African language radio and subversive presentational

practices by radio announcers or writers of radio drama in the apartheid period, Tanja Bosch's work pays attention to the use of community radio for activist purposes in a South African society bedeviled by different forms of inequality. More interesting is the fact that the few scholars who have attempted work on talk radio have focused much more attention on political talk (see for instance Mwesige, 2009; Tettey, 2011) as well as ethical issues and the observance of journalistic codes expected of the producers of these shows (see for instance Nassanga, 2008). This kind of approach leaves a large area to be covered by scholarship on radio talk shows. In other words, it would be important to venture into the realm of scholarship that deals specifically with talk shows in Africa in order to better understand their usefulness beyond the emergence or sustenance of a 'democratic' society. Since the notion of democracy and its numerous calibrations like 'liberal democracy', 'constitutional democracy' remain largely contested, an investigation into the motivation for people's participation in media debates is likely to break new grounds in African media scholarship.

Talk shows are interactive programmes which allow for a great deal of audience participation. Be they on radio or television, they allow the audience to be part of the creation of their content through the use of communication technologies like letters, telephones and the internet. In some instances, such participation may be in the form of studio appearances, just being part of a studio audience or a phone-in audience. More recently, the phone-in voice has become a major defining feature of talk radio as more and more of the shows connect their audience through telephone technology. Relying on the authority of Rubin and Step (2000), Tanja Bosch defines talk radio as 'a format characterized by conversation that is initiated by a programme host and usually involves listeners who telephone to participate in the discussion about topics such as politics, sports or current events' (Bosch, 2011: 76). The key element therefore is the enablement of participation which comes with talk shows. In Africa, this enablement of participation is a very significant resource in the political landscape because of the exclusionary nature of politics on the continent. As Peter Mwesige observes while dealing with political talk radio in Uganda:

> opposition politicians and civil society activists now have an opportunity to compete with government leaders to get their message across, in part because of the availability of political talk shows on radio. In addition, and perhaps more importantly, the public has an opportunity to: call in and express their concerns and

> views; challenge official power; let off steam; listen and learn about political developments and opinions of other citizens; or simply amuse themselves (2009: 221-222).

While it can be regarded as the major ingredient that sets talk shows apart from all other programme formats, participation is not through telephone alone as it can involve the use of any of the other means of communication earlier mentioned. With talk shows, broadcasting, and by extension radio, acquires one major characteristic that makes it a significant aspect of civil society and the quest for democratic participation by people in their own affairs. This major characteristic is in the fact that it elevates broadcasting from the level of the mere provision of information to a new pedestal where it becomes an instrument for participatory deliberation about public affairs.

The radio talk show is one programme genre which tends to illustrate, to a large extent, how much radio itself matters in societies undergoing transition. This is in view of the fact that talk shows, as Andrew Tolson contends 'are a focus for considerable public debate' (2001: 3) and are of fundamental significance to the landscape of popular media as much as such shows themselves take on contemporary issues germane to the progress of society for public debate. Again, talk shows 'revolve around the *performance of talk*' while 'the controversy and popularity of talk shows is fundamentally rooted in the pleasures of watching and listening to people talking in particular ways—and for the most part these are ordinary people who are engaged in colloquial forms of talk' (Ibid: 3). The reasons advanced by Tolson underscore the importance of the talk show as a subject of study in emerging democratic societies where the media, especially radio, play a prominent role in providing direction and setting agenda for public discourse. In addition to these points is the contention that 'radio talk shows mimic the increasingly contentious character of everyday life' (Illouz, 2003: 109) thereby creating an opportunity for the representation and reinvention of the self. This kind of opportunity, it should be noted, presents itself for all categories of participants in the arena of the talk show. It would then be interesting to 'focus on the configurations of selfhood as they emerge in … talk shows, a highly popular autobiographical site in post-apartheid South Africa' (Nuttall and Michael, 2000: 300). The work done by Nuttall and Michael dealt with television talk shows and so it would be important to look into radio talk shows considering the renaissance of radio and the growing acclaim enjoyed by talk in recent times.

South Africa has tried to adopt media policies which seek to paint a picture of a 'deregulated[5]' media space in the post-apartheid era. In addition to this, 'changes are referred to as media transformation, whereas in the rest of the continent they are referred to as media reform' (Kupe, 2004: 353). This differentiation would seem to make a number of researchers curious as to what the trajectory of the media in South Africa is. The boldness to be different and to present a picture of a post-apartheid reformed media space raises a lot of questions about how the South African media environment operates. These questions which have become more noticeable in the structure and content of the media in recent times make the study of emerging modes of representation, which in a sense imply the negotiation of identity, quite attractive. As Hadland *et al* note, 'the media generate, corroborate and accelerate identity formation, just as they diminish, overshadow and negate it' (2008: 3). Also, as Zegeye and Harris observe:

> South Africa is undergoing a complex, far-reaching and multifaceted process of social transformation. The country's media of mass communications are playing an important role in this process. They are not only important sources of public information and channels of communications; they also serve as important conveyors of the identities and interests of the different social groups within South Africa society…. In addition, they provide an important forum for public debate and opinion formation in South African society. Thus they are important elements in the on-going democratization of the political system (2003: 1).

It would be significant, therefore, to try to figure out the operational modes and underlying currents and principles of debate generated by the media considering the fact that 'South Africa is searching for a way in which to reconcile peacefully the many identities that have formed over the years and which still give rise to conflict and tension' (Ibid: 10).

The existence of a plurality of electronic media especially radio[6] would also make a study of this nature worthwhile in order to further understand the extent to which the media in seemingly liberalized climes are able to, as Kupe puts it, 'speak to and for broader interests in

[5] Media policy scholars have argued that 'deregulation' has given way to're-regulation' of the media as media are not able to operate freely without the burden of statutes like licensing requirements and content ratios which seek to direct their modes of operation in particular ways (see for instance Banda, 2007; Mazango, 2005).
[6] More than a hundred community radio stations were granted licences within a period of ten years after the promulgation of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA) Act No. 153 of 1993 which deregulated the broadcast media industry in South Africa. See Hadland et al (2008: 5-6).

society' (Kupe, 2004: 254). It is hoped that this study will contribute to the existing body of knowledge and expand the frontiers of research available on radio in general and the talk show genre in particular. It will be of use to media researchers in contemporary society. The work also hopes therefore to be of significance to scholars as well as media industry practitioners. Talk show producers and presenters, for instance, may also find the outcome of this research of use in trying to understand the intricacies of the work they do.

The Context of Radio Broadcasting in South Africa

The trajectory of radio broadcasting in South Africa is indeed interesting in many respects. Apart from the fact that South Africa provides an example of the monopolization of the airwaves witnessed under the reign of apartheid it also offers a unique experience of transformation and the most rapid pluralization of the media especially radio, brought about by the adoption of a policy of deregulation. The first radio station was established by the South African Railways in 1923.[7] The South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC) was later established in 1936 (see Hamm, 1991; Tomaselli, Tomaselli and Muller, 1989). While the initial language of broadcast in South Africa was English, the 1936 Act establishing the SABC also legislated the introduction of broadcasts in Afrikaans from the following year. A Rediffusion Service was created in 1952 as a separate broadcasting service for Africans. Its broadcasts were then conducted in African languages and were also beamed to black communities in the country. Radio Bantu later came on air in 1959 with seven radio stations broadcasting in different African languages with the slogan 'one nation, one station.' All these African language stations targeted black populations and 'each station targeted a specific ethnic group, located within a specific geographic area, with specific languages and music to create a sense of belonging to these specific ethnic groups' (Bosch, 2003: 71). The rise in the wave of anti-apartheid activism in the 1980s brought a lot of pressure on the South African government and state owned media as opposition voices which were hitherto drowned by the mainstream media began to contest for space. This period also saw the emergence of a 'people's media' popularizing anti-apartheid discourse (Tomaselli, 1989).

[7] www.oldradio.com/archives/international/safrica.html accessed 12/08/09

As Guy Berger notes, 'the success of the South African liberation movement wrought profound changes in the environment, ownership, staffing, content, and audiences of the mainstream media' (2000: xii).[8] In spite of this success, it has been observed that with the exception of the African National Congress, (ANC)'s Radio Freedom, an underground radio station which was broadcasting from exile, the democratic movement largely ignored radio as a site of struggle (Bosch, 2003). In putting this discounting of radio in perspective, Stephen Davis argues that 'the role of exile media is not necessarily to communicate with audiences at home, but rather to gain advantage over internal rivals by capturing the means of representation' (2009: 362). The struggle to dominate the public sphere can therefore be seen as a major motivation in the kind of politics taking place around the establishment and operation of Radio Freedom which ordinarily proclaims an alternative ideology aimed at liberating an oppressed population. In view of the strategic purpose for which it was established in 1967, Radio Freedom merged political content and news with popular music of many banned artists thereby offering to the public content that was not available on the SABC which was still at the time a state broadcaster insulating its audiences from alternative views and content considered reprehensible by the apartheid regime (see Coplan, 1979; Hamm, 1995). The struggle for relevance marked by competition within the broadcast media space in the country had thus begun before any official move was made towards the opening up of the airwaves. The subsequent attempts at liberalization of the airwaves through the formation of the Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA)[9] after the 1994 elections in South Africa has since opened up the broadcast media space leading to the emergence of commercial broadcast stations and several community radio stations 'intended to give previously disadvantaged groups access to the airwaves' (Ibid: 69).

The Concept of Talk Radio

In the entire scenario discussed above, radio employs different types of programme formats in the consummation of the power it wields and the advantage it enjoys over other forms of mass media. But the talk radio format seems to be one which has acquired a vibrant currency over numerous radio stations in Africa in view of the way and manner it seeks to employ

[8] Berger makes this point in his foreword to Switzer and Adhikari (2000)
[9] The IBA and the South African Telecommunications Regulatory Authority (SATRA) have since been merged to form the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) which now regulates broadcasting in South Africa.

audience participation as a form of opening up the mediascape. In other words, the new regime of media convergence which appropriates broadcasting, internet and telephony into almost a seamless entity enabled by modern technology, makes any medium of information dispersal, like radio, an important instrument. This importance is noticeable in the way people negotiate a sense of belonging in a democratic system which, in the assumption of the modernity that institutionalizes it, requires participation by a wide spectrum of the people in the society based on the assumption of their ability to make rational choices. This is corroborated by David Hendy to the effect that:

> The contemporary radio phone-in programme, built on the ability of listeners to use their telephones to become contributors, at least momentarily, certainly now allows radio to advertise itself to the world as a democratic, reciprocal, *two-way* medium on a large scale—a claim easily enhanced with the rapid adoption of email and internet discussion forums as a tool of audience involvement. (Hendy, 2000: 195)

Talk shows, therefore, like other forms of communication engendered by radio and other media, seek to contribute to the actualization of citizenship, a status which, in the words of Lynette Steenveld (2002: 64), 'describes the condition of one's membership' of the community. Relying on the authority of Golding and Murdock, Steenveld concludes that:

> Communications are necessary for making citizens aware of their rights; they provide access to the variety of information citizens need to make informed political decisions, and they provide the means through which citizens 'recognise themselves and their aspirations in the range of representations', which confirm and construct their personhood and their identity as citizens. (Ibid: 64)

But more than providing access to required information, the talk show stands ahead of various other programme formats by going a step further to offer analysis of events or issues while also allowing for a ventilation of the views of the citizens who form the bulk of the audience. In practice, talk shows provide an avenue for a contestation of ideas which are crucial to the process of fostering change in society. In this manner, a kind of internal transformation is likely to be achieved at the personal level of the audience before it translates to change in the larger society. It is perhaps in realization of this that Hartmut Wessler and Tanjev Schultz argue that 'talk shows allow for immediate challenges and

responses so that the audience gains more vivid insights into the constellations and dynamics of public controversies' (2007: 22). This is where the essence of the talk show as a space primarily of discussion and dissent, which is not always in alignment with orthodoxy, must be stressed as a major attribute setting it apart from other forms of broadcast programmes. Again, the media, and by implication talk shows, in contemporary society obviously concern themselves with more issues than politics, as Steenveld seeks to suggest, as a wide range of social and economic issues also find space in the media with the intimation of the need for transformation in these areas too.

The argument above is not in any way meant to suggest that there could be a homogeneous audience or that audiences would react to media messages in a similar manner. In showing awareness of the tensions often present in the relationship between media and the audience, for instance, Nick Couldry and Tim Markhan (2008) have argued that 'most people [have] some degree of mediated public connection' (19) by which they imply that media use is capable of shaping people's orientation to a public world. This position, which is a further development of Paddy Scannell's (1996, 1989) argument as to the ability of media to expand the horizons of everyday life for the audience, 'at least in relation to the public and potentially political dimensions of media consumption' (Couldry and Markham, 2008: 6), further validates the claim of the power of media debates to influence people's attitude towards particular issues in the society. In creating a 'connection' between the audience and contemporary public issues, therefore, talk shows assume a very significant role in the setting up of the space for discourse and creating a platform for deliberation which is akin to the idea of a public sphere. This, in a sense, tallies with Scannell's argument that broadcasting offers a 'universe of discourse' (1989: 143) for the entire society. It is pertinent to point out, however, that the possibility of indifference on the part of some members of the society grants credence to Couldry and Markhan's questioning of Scannell's assumption of universality in his postulation. With the emergence of talk shows on radio, the medium continues to gain the capacity of what Hilmes and Loviglio describe as 'a new social space' with 'powerful claims on private and public registers of experience' (2002: xi) in different communities.

Numerous attempts have been made by different scholars to define what is meant by 'talk' in broadcasting. Most of such attempts often go back to the linguistic and sociological definitions of talk in order to put in perspective the concept of talk radio or talk TV. Anthony Giddens (1987: 99), for instance, defines talk as 'the casual exchange of conversation in the

settings of day to day life' while Stephen Levinson on his own part takes talk to be 'that familiar predominant kind of talk in which two or more participants freely alternate in speaking, which generally occurs outside specific institutional settings like religious services, law courts, classrooms and the like' (1983: 284)[10]. As loose as the definitions of talk offered by Giddens and Levinson may sound, they provide an entry point for a number of scholars attempting to make a sense of talk shows on the broadcast media. Addressing the question more directly, Zhongdang Pan and Gerald Kosicki state that:

> 'talk shows are those TV and radio programs that involve people expressing "live" their opinions, knowledge, and feelings as part of "live" studio audiences or as call-ins to the show…. From a communication standpoint, talk shows involve constructing a sphere with both temporal and spatial dimensions, real and/or imagined, for people to act and iteract. (1997: 372)

The definition of the talk show offered by Pan and Kosicki places a lot of premium on the 'liveness' of the show as well as the creation of an avenue for the public or the audience as the case may be to express their views. With this kind of orientation radio and television content production no longer remains the exclusive preserve of the medium and its staff, as is the case in mainstream news programming, but an enterprise in which the audience also become major stakeholders. In addition to this the continuous transformation of talk shows through technological and social innovations continues to make such programmes a very significant part of popular culture as they offer avenues for the evaluation of the progress made by society in terms of values which define human conduct. As Wayne Muson argues, 'talk shows offer a variety of Others to the fluid spectatorial self' (1993: 15). The import of Muson's argument is that the contemporary talk show goes a long way in shattering the dominance of perpetuated selfhood, as society and by extension citizenship becomes more highly contested and people's identities continue to mutate.

Identifying broadcast political talk as a distinctive programme category, Richard Davis states that 'unlike traditional news media, broadcast political talk programs appear to give common people the chance to "talk back"' (1997: 324). The political character with which Davis imbues the talk show, as will be seen later, appears to stem from a more recent engagement

[10] Giddens and Levinson cited in Scannell (1999: 4)

of the talk show genre with political issues, especially with the central role played by talk show hosts and their programmes in the presidential campaign of Bill Clinton and his opponents in the race for the White House in 1992 and the involvement of talk radio in the black identity politics in the United States (Owen, 1997; Davis, 1997; Hollander, 1997; Squires, 2000; Clayman, 2004). Experience in relation to the use of the talk show in various parts of the world including Africa tends to give credence to Davis' characterization of the talk show as a political programme genre, as a greater proportion of the issues raised by talk show hosts border on the political. Beyond the political however, Muson (who incidentally leaves out the idea of the political orientation of talk shows in his own classification) identifies about six categories of talk shows. According to him such shows can be classified into call-in interview shows, insult humour, news/talk magazine, 'confrontalk', sports talk, and talk/variety shows (Muson, 1993: 7-9).

Drawing on the genre of television talk shows, Andrew Tolson (2001) contends that the kind of programmes that qualify as talk shows 'range from issue-oriented debates, through explorations of personal experiences, to the kinds of staging and performance sometimes dismissed as "trash" TV' (2001: 5). Tolson's definition of talk shows echoes the assertion of Paddy Scannell that 'all talk on radio and TV is public discourse, [and] is meant to be accessible to the audience for whom it is intended' (1991: 1). In Scannell's estimation, broadcast talk, and by implication talk shows on radio, can be regarded as 'public, performed talk' (1991: 12n). This publicness and performativity of talk shows can indeed be said to be two major characteristics that not only set this programme genre apart but also make scholarly enquiry into the structure, content and impact of talk shows interesting. It is against this background that Scannell further contends that 'broadcasting is an institution—a power, an authority—and talk on radio and television is public, institutional talk, an object of intense scrutiny, that gives rise to political, social, cultural and moral concerns' (Ibid: 7). Scannell's contention is, no doubt, reinforced by Ian Hutchby who argues that:

> Talk radio is a form of institutional interaction. The talk takes place within an organization, the broadcasting company, which has its own structure and stability. That structure and stability are themselves phenomena which are produced and reproduced through talk and interaction. (Hutchby, 1996: 7)

In an apparent reference to the origins of the public sphere in the days of the Enlightenment, Susan Herbst argues that 'we can think of contemporary talk radio programs as electronic salons: they are based upon conversation, they are noninstrumental (at least at the start), and they enable common citizens to voice opinions that might not ordinarily be heard.' (1996: 125). In fact, normative public sphere theory 'holds it as a problematic if politically or socially defined groups vacate or are banished from the larger community' (Moe, 2008: 325). So, more than the 'casual' talk of Giddens which takes place, according to Levinson, 'outside specific institutional settings' talk shows on broadcast media become a more structured entity with institutional backing aimed towards addressing certain issues which are of concern to the society. It is in this regard that Hutchby, again, argues that 'the talk produced on talk radio exhibits a variety of features which formally liken it to everyday 'mundane' conversation, on the one hand, and more 'institutional' forms of verbal interaction on the other' (1991: 119). Based on this position, Hutchby proceeds to draw a distinction between 'radio talk' and 'talk radio'. For him:

> 'Radio talk' may be taken as referring to all forms of talk encounterable on radio, from DJ talk through interview to phone-in talk. 'Talk radio', on the other hand, may be taken as referring more restrictively to the phenomena of radio interview and radio phone-in broadcasts. Specifically 'talk radio'…implies the 'open line' current affairs phone-in broadcast: these terms are treated as more or less interchangeable. (Ibid: 135n)[11]

The understanding of the talk show which flows from Hutchby's description is one of a fluid programme which takes on issues of general concern to the public. This fluidity of the talk show does not, however, imply formlessness or a lack of structural orientation which defines other broadcast programme genres like news, documentaries, features and drama. It is in light of this that Brian Rose observes:

> The talk show is more than the contributions of the host and the subtleties of his or her performance style. It is also a forum for various kinds of celebrities. Discussion subjects seldom vary from a standard routine of current projects and amusing anecdotes, but the ordinariness of the topics is precisely the point. (1985: 342)

[11] An earlier work by Erving Goffman (1981) had treated radio talk as all forms of speech uttered on radio especially by announcers, newsreaders and show hosts.

In imagining the interaction which takes place in the public domain ordered into being by radio talk shows, a new culture of discourse emerges which brings to the fore a sense of community among participants. Norms of secrecy and privilege which govern political and even social discourses in strictured societies are, therefore, eliminated, creating room for even citizens at the periphery to air their views. Most importantly, the emergent public constituted by the talk show audience is one 'organized by something other than the state' (Warner, 2002: 51). This mode of organization is a major characteristic of the public sphere that points to the ability to generate a new culture antithetical to the silencing potentials of the state or the ruling elite. In this manner a major attempt is made towards a reinvention of the status quo, which is likely to translate into new cultural capital as 'discrete human cultures have survived a plethora of threats to their existence through their ability to interpret, adapt to, and resist hegemonic cultures that are "powerful"' (Rodriguez and Fortier, 2007: 1).

Talks shows, when considered as part of popular culture, play an important role in energising the voices of ordinary people thereby creating a public which the ordinary people are at ease to interact with. In other words it reflects much of the common interests of the 'community' or of the people who take part in both the production and consumption of such cultural products. In the increasing interdependence between popular culture and other arenas of social life (Grindstaff, 2008; Willems 2011), radio has become more relevant as an avenue for the articulation of the concerns of the people. In a way, popular culture is no longer regarded as the bastion of false consciousness and escapism as scholars of the Frankfurt School saw it. It has become a site for the expression of the aspirations and concerns of the people, especially the ordinarily voiceless members of society, who are actively involved in its production and consumption. In specifically identifying radio as part of the popular cultural forms which are becoming more pervasive and reflective of the daily concerns of the people, Grindstaff argues that:

> emperical studies representing this perspective cover a range of cultural phenomena including news-making…, prime-time television…, tabloid talk shows…, art museums and symphony orchestras…, book publishing…, country music…, popular music…, and gastronomy…(Ibid: 208-209).

Popular culture generally deals with the everyday life and as such in the mediation processes that produce it; we find discourses of the everyday concerns of particular societies, the kind enacted on radio talk shows in recent experience. These various discourses which manifest themselves in the plethora of topics raised by these shows often attempt to bring to the fore the major concerns of particular communities anticipated by such shows. As Karin Barber has argued, 'if we take these art forms as social facts, and examine the network of relations through which they are produced and consumend, we may already be uncovering important but unnoticed aspects of the societies in which they flourish (Barber, 1987: 1). This flourishing in the contemporary sense is further aided by what Willems describes as 'convergence culture' where 'formal and popular media become entangled in a dialogue with each other' (Willems, 2011: 46). As the formal and informal realms of the media come together, the dynamics of relationships as well as the politics which define the fashioning and sustenance of identitites become more visible through interactions taking place in the media.

Emergence of Radio Talk Shows in South Africa

It is difficult to give accurately the exact dates of entry of the talk show phenomenon into broadcasting in South Africa. In spite of this however, the political negotiations that preceded the democratic elections of 1994 opened up the space for the discussion of various issues regarding the proposed transformation in the media. Open talk therefore became one of the major beneficiaries of the decision to dismantle the state policy of apartheid and democratize South African society. The demise of apartheid in itself was quite symbolic as 'an event of great catharsis' (Waldmeir, 1997: 2) leading to a flurry of self-expression in different media platforms. Talk therefore, whether in its ordinary or mediated form produces new practitioners of self expression who, in the long run, become instrumental to changing the landscape of media representation. One of the early talk shows on radio in South Africa, John Robbie's 'Talk at Ten' was launched on 702 Talk Radio on 26th January, 1990 just a week before the announcement of the impending release of political prisoners and the unbanning of political organizations by then president F W de Klerk (Andersson, 2004). Around this same time, another talk show, Tim Modise's 'Jungle Fever' also started running on SABC's Radio Metro. Other radio stations continued to embrace the talk format in programming as the SAFM had also switched to this format in February 1998 (Ibid). This switch brought in another talk show anchor, John Perlman who became an instant celebrity on SAFM as a

result of his approach to debating issues on radio. The SAFM is the station within which the first research focus of this thesis is situated.

SAFM is the SABC's national English language public radio station based in Johannesburg. It has been in existence since the establishment of the SABC and has gone through several changes in name and in the focus of its broadcasts. Starting off as the 'A Programme' the name changed to the English Service after the emergence of the Afrikaans service of the SABC. It became Radio South Africa in 1985 and later in 1995 took on the present name of SAFM. From inception to 1995 the SAFM (under different names) was a full spectrum broadcast radio station taking on news, information, drama, art, and general entertainment. This full spectrum approach however gave way to the 'talk' format as SAFM dropped various other programme forms and cut down drastically on music to concentrate on news and information executed mainly through the live talk show format. With this shift, SAFM became the first public service station to introduce the 'talk' format and current affairs programming in South Africa. Though an ICASA order compelled SAFM to re-introduce drama and children's programmes the bulk of its broadcasts still feature news and talk shows. SAFM lays claim to a listenership base in the region of seven hundred and fifty thousand drawn from the age bracket of 30-49 years with a diverse racial background (about 61% blacks and 39% whites)[12] as at October 2009. The South African Advertising Research Foundation (SAARF)'s Radio Audience Measurement Survey (RAMS) however, credits the station with an audience base of six hundred and forty thousand for the same period.[13] This profile of SAFM's listeners is thus summarized as 'an English-speaking audience that is generally more affluent and educated' (Lepere, 2007: 63). This classification of SAFM also extends to Talk Radio 702 (the second station which this research focuses on) as it is often regarded as an urban elite station. Such classifications however, require a more nuanced consideration. In the first instance, a station that is considered 'urban elite' may air programmes which do not necessarily cater for an elitist audience. In certain cases, different time belts are devoted to different kinds of programmes aimed at different sections of the audience. This becomes more pertinent if we consider the fact that audiences are no longer monolithic as such. Secondly, the demography of a city like Johannesburg can no longer be described under a single rubric as the city itself continues to exist as a sectionalised space offering abode to different categories of people. 'The After Eight Debate' is a flagship talk

[12] http://www.safm.co.za/portal/site/safm/menuitem accessed 24/10/09
[13] http://www.saarf.co.za accessed 09/11/09

show which runs from eight o' clock to nine o'clock in the morning every weekday as part of SAFM's AM Live featuring news, commentary and analysis of events. It is anchored mainly by Tim Modise, and occasionally by Tshepiso Makwetla, during the period covererd by this research. Once in a while the show is co-hosted by both Modise and Makwetla. This trend of co-hosting is a noticeable feature during special occasions or events.

The second station within which the focus of this research is situated is Talk Radio 702 based in Johannesburg with another studio in Cape Town. Talk Radio 702 is owned by Primedia and is often classified as a private commercial radio station. It started in 1980 as Channel 702 and concentrated largely on music entertainment. Its broadcasts into South Africa originated from Mozambique and Swaziland. It had a very strong affiliation to LM Radio in Maputo (formerly Lourenco Marques), Mozambique where a good number of its presenters were also trained. In 1986 the radio station changed its name from Channel 702 to Radio 702. It operated on the AM frequency for twenty six years before moving to the FM band in September 2006. News and information were not the immediate priorities of Radio 702 but it later transformed into a news and talk station dealing largely with current affairs and social issues in society. 'The Redi Direko Show' is therefore one major talk show on the morning belt with which Talk Radio 702 has justified its new all-talk identity. The show is hosted by Redi Direko (now Redi Thlabi). Though Radio 702 initially targeted a young audience aged between 16 and 24 years, in 1988 it was re-launched as a full-service adult radio station targeting listenership in the 25 to 49 years age bracket (Wigtson, 2001: 426). There was also a change in the name from Radio 702 to 702 Talk Radio with a listenership base as high as one million in 1989 (Horwitz, 2001: 123). The transformation of Radio 702 from a popular music format station to an all-talk radio station may have led to the loss of the youthful segment of its audience, a loss somehow compensated for by the increase in the number of upper-income adults who have joined the stations audience (Ibid: 427).

A closer look at the activities of the station however makes an exclusive classification of it problematic. The involvement of the radio station in the promotion of community activities ranging from charities to participation in crime fighting efforts especially in the Gauteng region which is its primary coverage area presents the picture of a community radio station. This ambivalence of identity makes Talk radio 702 a very interesting part of this study. Community radio stations are usually owned and managed by members of a particular community and they often get actively involved in activities aimed at the development of

such communities. Private commercial radio stations on the other hand hardly get involved in community development initiatives. One recent example of involvement in community development initiatives by Talk Radio 702 is seen in the launch in August 2010 of the 'Lead SA' project. Through this initiative the radio station has been involved in different mobilsation programmes to help South Africa and South Africans 'look within, and be the change they want to see'[14].

In a nutshell, the initiative hopes to help South Africans realize the need to take the lead in helping those around them and obeying rules which will eventually help in making the country a better place to live in. Further information available on the Primedia website describes the station as 'the premium talk brand in the country' and it 'attracts a mature and educated listenership, with the highest disposable income.'[15] SAARF RAMS gives the audience base of Talk Radio 702 as six hundred and six thousand listeners as at October 2009[16] giving an indication that it is one of the major players among the urban elite radio stations in South Africa. Before the collapse of apartheid in 1994 members of liberation movements including the ANC kept abreast of events happening in the country by listening to Radio 702 as a result of its perceived independence which made information from the source more appealing than those from the public broadcasters. Some leaders of such groups also featured on the radio station to air their views especially on the direction of the proposed transition which saw to the end of the apartheid system of government (see for instance Wigston, 1987).

Synopsis of Primary Research Data

Discussions in this work are based on primary data generated from episodes of 'The After Eight Debate' (SAFM) and 'The Redi Direko Show' (Talk Radio 702). The discussions will focus on three important moments in recent South African history (the xenophobic attacks in May 2008, the general elections in April 2009 and a 'neutral' month in 2009). The month of January 2009 is chosen to represent the 'neutral' period. This is done in consideration of the

[14] Description of the Lead SA project available on Talk Radio 702 website http://www.702.co.za/press/leadsa.asp accessed 09/11/11

[15] http://www.primedia.co.za/download_files/corporate_information/social_responsibility/talk_radio_702. accessed 12/04/09

[16] http://www.saarf.co.za accessed 09/11/09

fact that January is generally quiet as activities for the year are just beginning to gain momentum thereby creating an atmosphere of less frenzy and the kind of hustle and bustle that characterise the rest of the year. The choice of a neutral month is important in order to understand what happens on radio talk shows during moments when there are no 'special' events happening in the country. In other words, it might help us not to take the quietude of that period for granted but rather to probe whether it is representative of tranquility in the affairs of the nation and its people.

Over the past decade incidents of violence and discrimination against foreign nationals have been on the increase in South Africa (Nyamnjoh, 2006, 2010; Neocosmos 2010). In May 2008 violence erupted in the townships leaving about sixty two people mainly foreigners from other African countries dead. Scores were injured while many people were also displaced from their homes forcing them to seek refuge in temporary camps set up by provincial governments and humanitarian and relief agencies. In choosing the general elections in April 2009, I consider the value which South African society places on the question of democratic governance as one of the major ingridients for a free and equitable society (see for instance Marais, 2001; Mattes, 2002; Peet, 2002). In addition to this people tend to also become more vocal during political contestations.

The violent attacks on foreign nationals and other 'outsiders' went on for about two weeks. The orgy of violence subsided only after a deployment of the army by the authorities. Though violent incidents, including xenophobic attacks, are not completely strange in South Africa the intensity and magnitude of the incidents in May 2008 made them attract greater attention in the local and international media. Images in local and international media of a man who was set ablaze by protesters became a grim symbol of the rage and vituperations unleashed on the vulnerable immigrant community. The circulation of images of the burning man, later identified as a thirty-five year old Mozambican immigrant, Ernesto Nhamuave, through various media not only reinforced the outrage against what was considered a grievous crime but detracted from South Africa's image as an inclusive rainbow nation. It further brought to question the country's claim to a particular kind of African humanity propagated through the philosophy of *ubuntu* which preaches humaneness, solidarity and the ontological priority of community over persons. In the entire scenario of the xenophobic violence, or what some commentators argue should be labeled 'afrophobia' because of the limiting of attacks to foreigners from neighbouring African countries (see for instance Kersting, 2009: 11, Ndlovu-

Gatsheni, 2008), there is an apparent struggle for belonging and a contestation for survival in the face of increasing competition for scarce economic and social opportunities.

The internal economic inequalities inherent in the society set in motion various other conflicts that precipitated the violence. Such inequalities have also reached worrying proportions in view of the quick shift by the African National Congress (ANC) government from a welfarist policy of the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) which it adopted at the ascension of power in 1994 to the more neoliberal Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) policy which placed more premium on privatisation and deregulation of the economy (Carmody, 2002; Peet, 2002). This shift apart from bringing new dimensions to the struggle for resources also tends to project a particular kind of identity for South Africa as a country who is buying into the new economic ideologies seemingly propelling the industrialised nations of the West. The new wave of globalization which unfortunately cannot exclude South Africa as well as migration has resulted in the migration of labour from the rest of Africa and elsewhere thus making the competition especially in the labour market stiffer.

Both 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' ran some episodes discussing the xenophobic violence which elicited reactions from individuals, state institutions, and the global community. Even though xenophobia was not the only topic brought up for discussion for the whole of the month, contributors, especially callers and people sending sms onto the shows, found ways of 'smuggling' the issue into a great number of the episodes during the month. The reason for this may be partly because the issue of xenophobia featured continuously in the news from different efforts made by individuals, government and humanitarian agencies to return the situation to normal after the violent attacks. The way panels were constituted for the debates, the vibrancy and passion by guest contributors as well as the sentiments expressed by callers point to the fact that there are underlying socio-political tensions which define relationships in South Africa.

Electoral politics is a major event in states which lay claim to participatory governance in the contemporary world. In South Africa, there are constant debates about governance and the attempt to build an inclusive and transparent government which will offer selfless service to the people. Since South Africa has adopted the electoral option as the means by which leaders emerge in the polity, and now that the political space has been opened up since 1994 allowing

for a multi-party process, the interest of the people in matters having to do with election issues has been quite remarkable. Leadership is a crucial element in the scheme of things when it comes to the way people's identities are defined in specific or general terms. The South African case is even more interesting when the underlying issues of race, class and even gender are taken into account. For instance, the first multi-party elections which were held in 1994 saw the emergence of the African National Congress (ANC) as the ruling party.

As a black dominated party, yet with leadership from other racial groups, the ANC has often made it clear through some of its policies (based on the Freedom Charter adopted in 1955) that it intends to, as much as possible, right some of the wrongs of the past without being racist or committing the errors of the past when privileges were created for a minority along racial lines. In doing this, the party seeks to maintain the power it won in 1994 and has held on to till today. That hold is on the other hand being constantly challenged by the most visible opposition party which often argues that the collective or shared identity of South Africa is not being properly taken care of under the new dispensation. The Democratic Alliance (DA) had remained the main opposition to the ANC until recently when a group broke away from the party to form the Congress of the People (COPE) which questioned the dynamics of organization in the ANC with the principal argument centred on what it termed a lack of internal democracy within the ruling party. With the emergence of COPE shortly before the 2009 general elections it became clearer that the shared identity within the ANC itself was being called to question generating debate on what kind of leadership vision South Africa requires in the present moment.

The transition of power through whatever means often attracts considerable attention, as is evident in the kind of debates that came up in the media before, during and after the general elections in 2009. Apart from the regular editions of 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' there were special debates organized separately by the SABC and Talk Radio 702 sometimes in collaboration with civil society groups where representatives of parties or candidates were invited to speak to the people about issues which were deemed germane to nation-building. During this period officials of political parties tried to outdo one another in suggesting what they considered workable remedies to the challenges confronting the country. The connection of election campaigns to other major issues happening in the country, including events like service delivery protests and the xenophobic violence of the

previous year, also featured prominently in the discussions on the two programmes indicating a great deal of interconnection in events happening at different times.

The significance of power is a key element to be noted in the debates happening around the election period. To a considerable extent there are indications that the heritage of the past is inseparable from current conflicts in South African society as can be seen through electoral campaigns run by different political parties. The emergence into leadership of a historically marginalized section of society often generates scepticism and cautious appraisal as is evident in the way opposition parties concluded that the ANC no longer had anything to offer in terms of leadership in South Africa. Such scepticism, which is not completely unfounded in the face of present realities in South Africa, is generally premised on the doubts on the inability of the emerging ruling elite to metamorphose into the kind of oppressors from whom they wrestled power. This is akin to the problem of leadership failure facing most postcolonial states at the moment whereby the elite class which succeeded the colonial authorities seems to be at a loss as to how to engineer the much needed progress for their countries. In the South African case specifically, the 2009 general elections which this thesis relies on for analysis is a very crucial election in the country's journey to nationhood. The prelude to the election which saw the ascension to the leadership of the ANC by Jacob Zuma who was in rivalry with the incumbent President, Thabo Mbeki at the fifty-second national conference of the ruling party in Polokwane. The ripples of Zuma's victory can be said to have culminated in the eventual recall of his former boss Thabo Mbeki in September 2008. Though the loss of power by Mbeki has been attributed to both factionalisation in the ANC and the intransigence of the former president (Piper and Matisonn, 2009, Lefko-Everett, 2010) the kind of intrigues and political horse-trading which preceeded the 2009 elections seemed to have set the stage for a historic process in the quest for the consolidation of a liberal democratic order in the country.

The third media moment that this research uses to generate data is designated the 'quiet' month. It is a period when no significant media event is deemed to have taken place with such magnitude that can be compared to the previous two (xenophobic violence and elections). This is not to suggest that the media are in a state of inertia during such a period. The point here is that there were no serious media events that could uniformly attract the attention of the local and foreign media the way the other two events did. For the purpose of generating data that will present to us the way the South Africa public engage in debates

during less volatile moments, I have collected recorded episodes of 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' for January 2009. In all, there will be twenty episodes of each of the two programmes covering a period of one month just as is the case with the other two media moments that the work focuses on. A preview of the episodes of the programmes during this period shows a form of divergent choices made by the two stations as to what issues should be given prominence. The only period where there is uniformity in the choice of topics for discussion is the first week of the New Year when both shows choose to focus on the Middle East crises following the violent clashes in Gaza just before the end of the previous year. This coincidence of choice of topics for discussion when the event in question is not happening within the shores of South Africa has certain implications for the understanding of the interest of the nation and that of the listeners on the part of the two radio stations.

Again it is worth pointing out here that 'The Redi Direko Show' is the first to discuss the issue, bringing it up on the first working day of the week (Monday January 5, 2009) with 'The After Eight Debate' following it up on the second working day of the same week (Tuesday January 6, 2009). The sense of urgency applied to the situation in the Middle East by this kind of choice making or agenda setting becomes significant in further understanding several other issues around the role of the media, in this case radio, in nation-building. One major point to note in this direction is the question of how different stations may determine what is deemed to be of importance to the people of South Africa at a particular point in time. In the course of deliberations such as we have in this case, the contributions of participants including callers have the potential to set a platform for issues linked to selfhood and identity laying credence to the belief that individuals 'exist as continuing subjects of experience' (Catterson, 2008: 385). The relevance of experience alluded to by Catterson implies that people are able to draw parallels between their past and present experiences as they are able to do between events in their immediate environment and things happening in other climes. In a way, the 'neutral' month seems to be marked by the incursion of global politics into a media scene which is generally inward-looking and sometimes parochial. This kind of temporary transition from the local to the global can be said to be as a result of the lack of urgency in the national affairs at that particular moment to warrant much attention from the media.

The tensions between African nationalism and Afrikaner nationalism seems to have been partly resolved in 1994. However, the festering of multiple nationalisms seems to have just begun as discussions in both the print and electronic media indicate. In addition to this, debates on these programmes also indicate the fact that more forms of nationalisms may have continued to crystallize in the new South Africa after 1994 or even may have existed prior to this period as pockets of silent passionate feelings among different groups which now find avenues of expression in the public domain through talk shows. In other words there are in addition to the remnants of tensions between African and Afrikaner nationalism, new forms of nationalism or sub-nationalism (eg Jewish nationalism or Indian nationalism) which also become quite visible in the contemporary South Africa. Beyond this, evidence from the data through the multiplicity of voices that came up during the shows used for this research seem to point to different ways in which different social constituencies invent the nation and by extension present their own ideas of South African nationalism. Most often the tendency is for each group or constituency to strive towards making its own views dominant in the discourse. So the ideas of 'the nation' which are present as an underlying discursive thread in each of the three moments used in this research further help us to understand the dynamics of community and selfhood in contemporary South African society.

One other issue which should be of considerable interest in the South African socio-political space as reflected in the media is the conflicts of power reflected in public discourse. These conflicts can be viewed from at least four different levels. The first is the conflicts that occur among individual members of the community where economic and at times political power defines privilege. The second is the one which pitches the individual against the state where rights and obligations collide to create tensions which negatively impact on the progress of society. The third level of conflict is evident in the existence of parallel institutions like NGO's and agitation groups which constantly wrestle power with the state. For instance people feature on radio talks shows not only in their individual capacities but at times as representatives of certain interest groups (communities, age groups, professional associations, civil society organizations or NGOs etc) and at times claim to have better solutions to problems confronting the South African society even when at times such solutions may be tailored towards the protection of minority interests. The fourth level of conflict rests with the state itself where there is the lack of political will leading to the deployment of populist sentiments under the guise of being considerate or caring for the people. The state has responsibilities and when it fails to take on these, it leaves room for the degeneration of

society. The failure by the state to resolve internal conflicts often results in the politics of relativity presented as democracy where the state abdicates its roles in certain areas and presents such abdication as part of democratic dividends. A great deal of uproar is, for instance, generated around the question or desirability of the interventionist state when issues relating to the distribution of wealth come up for discussion. In other words discussions around Black Economic Empowerment (BEE) issues often generate such heated debates as to when and how state interventions could be deemed beneficial in the polity. Each of the four centres of conflict presented above, which will manifest themselves in different ways during public debates on the talk shows selected for this research, have far-reaching implications for the way things turn out in the society at large. In all this, certain posers agitate one's mind. Is the state overwhelmed or paralyzed? Is there a stalemate? Has the assumption of political power by the black majority answered the questions about deprivations of the past and even the present? Is the state subverted by its weakness or is it overwhelmed by the plethora of opposition coming from different angles?

Theoretical Framework

In contemporary cultural studies, the options available in providing a theoretical footing for studies are usually multiple. However, the environmental and historical scenarios determining each research become major factors to consider in giving it a theoretical direction. This study therefore draws largely on Habermas's postulations on the public sphere. In addition to this, it draws theoretical considerations from uses and gratifications theory. The uses and gratifications theory will be immensely useful in trying to understand the motivation for people's participation in radio talk shows. In this regard the uses and gratifications theory of media is linked to the concepts of deliberative democracy and civic engagement (Dahlgren, 2002). The uses and gratifications theory which has its origin in the functionalist perspective of media of mass communication was first developed around the medium of radio in the 1940s. It was made popular by Jay Blumler and Elihu Katz through the publication of their book *The Uses of Mass Communication* (1974) in which they highlight five areas of gratification to include escape, social interaction, identification, information/education and entertainment. A sub-tradition of media effects theories, the basic focus of uses and gratification is on explanations for audience behaviour or reaction to media messages. In other words, it basically examines the nature of audience involvement and the gratifications

which arise from such involvement. For the purpose of this work participation in radio talk shows will be taken as involvement. A basic assumption of the uses and gratification theory which further legitimates its use in this study is that which states that users are actively involved in media usage and interact highly with the communication media.

Representation and Selfhood

The idea of representation occupies a prominent place in cultural studies. As a major concept having to do with discourse, representation has become a major technique with which individuals attempt to navigate their ways through various tensions thrown up by inter-cultural relationships which have become prominent in contemporary society. To properly understand representation in relation to media messages, it is important to mention the fact that media messages are not in themselves reality. Rather, they are forms of social constructions of reality, a presentation of the narrative of particular events as understood by particular individuals or institutions. As Stuart Hall puts it, representation is 'an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture' (Hall, 1997: 15). Hall expands his explanation of representation to deal with the three theoretical postulations of reflection, intention and construction which seek to explain how meanings are generated by individuals and groups in the course of discourse. In the reflective or mimetic approach, meaning is said to lie in the object, idea or event in the real world and language acts as a mirror throwing back meaning as it exists in the world. The intentional approach, on the other hand, invests the speaker or author of a message with the creation of its meaning which is then imposed on the world through the use of language. In this case words are deemed to mean 'what the author intends they should mean' (Hall, 1997: 25). In the constructionist approach which seeks to mediate the flaws in the earlier two, the public as social actors use the conceptual systems of their culture to construct meaning.

One thing that is clear in all the three approaches mentioned by Hall is the significance of naming or what we may call an appropriation of meaning in the process of representation. In view of this, we can say that representation goes beyond a depiction of the object as it is to include the act of naming which largely implies the composition of meaning. By implication, representation is not a neutral act as objects are often re-presented in new forms in the process of construction. The gap between intention and meaning usually makes it difficult to

give a definite meaning to the term representation because it can be clearly seen that it is an explanation for how people form the images they have of themselves, others and events in their community. In other words representation is at best a social reproduction of identity which, in the estimation of Gayatri Spivak (1988), is also closely related to the positioning of different individuals and groups. By extension, representation therefore becomes a very important factor in trying to understand the dynamics of relationships that exist in societies with divergent identities or subjectivities. It is in this regard that the idea of representation will be conceptualized in this work as a historicized social practice where media messages articulated through 'The After Eight Debate' and The Redi Direko Show' will have their meanings constructed based on the social and historical contexts within which they occur. The implication of this is also that there can be no unified meaning because the media reflect the sentiments in society. In other words, different individuals or groups are likely to interpret contributions on the programmes based on the sentiments and prejudices attached to their social locations in society.

Perhaps one of the best ways to understand the issue of selfhood is to begin with an understanding of what is generally regarded as the question of identity. This approach is of significance in the sense that identity has become pivotal in the process of self definition which mediates social relations in contemporary society. Selfhood itself is socially and discursively constructed as the individual self cannot be properly understood outside the socio-political landscape that gives rise to different forms of debates and contestations for space. As Henriette Benveniste and Costas Gaganakis argue 'many historians consider the construction of identity as the focal point in the complex relationship between subjects (individuals and groups) and dominant discursive practices' (2000: 8). In this construction we often see a very close link between identity and selfhood where the commonest characteristic of both concepts resides in their constructedness. Selfhood, like identity, is therefore not a destination or a state of being. It is a journey through different stages of life experience as individuals and groups seek to adjust to historical changes in society. In arguing for the instability of the self John Dewey, after contending that there is no such thing as a disinterested self or individual, concludes that 'the self is not something ready-made, but something in continuous formation through choice of action' (2001: 358). Natural selfhood, as Mark Taylor argues in line with Hegel and Kierkegaard, 'examines the progression from the condition of nondifferentiation between self and other to the situation in which the subject is aware of itself as distinct from the natural and social totality within which it had been

immersed' (2000: 231). The self keeps evolving as situations arise and individuals and groups respond to them.

While dwelling on the question of identity, Charles Taylor argues that:

> What does answer this question for us is an understanding of what is of crucial importance to us. To know who I am is a species of knowing where I stand. My identity is defined by the commitments and identifications which provide the frame or horizon within which I can try to determine from case to case what is good, or valuable, or what ought to be done, or what I endorse or oppose. In other words, it is the horizon within which I am capable of taking a stand (Taylor, 1989: 27)

In essence, the identity of the individual is seen as the 'frame or horizon within which things can take on a stable significance, within which some life possibilities can be seen as good or meaningful, others as bad or trivial' (Ibid: 27-28). In spite of the 'stable significance' alluded to by Taylor however, identity is never a fixed or immutable characteristic of an individual or group. Differences are bound to occur from time to time based on the dynamics of power which place different individuals and groups in different social locations at different points in time. Establishing a firm link between identity and orientation Taylor further contends that: 'To know who you are is to be oriented in moral space, a space in which questions arise about what is good or bad, what is worth doing and what not, what has meaning and importance for you and what is trivial and secondary' (Ibid: 28). Selfhood or identity is also never defined in isolation as Taylor further argues that 'the full definition of someone's identity thus usually involves not only his stand on moral and spiritual matters but also some reference to a defining community' (Taylor, 1989: 36). This defining community is often made up of the individual self and different 'others' who are not necessarily in agreement with the principles that define the character of the self. In narrative or discursive terms, the self becomes something to be identified within the referential world of a text or a radio text (programme) and as such becomes semantically constructed.

The link between interaction with 'others' in society and the formation of selfhood echoes in Ervin Goffman's assertion that 'we come into the world as individuals, achieve character and become persons' (2002: 52). Goffman's contention here obviously exposes the significance of community and other forms of relationships in the composition of selfhood as individual

selves become entangled in different webs of interactions which eventually determine their subject positions in society. Anthony Cohen indeed argues that society is 'composed of and by self conscious individuals' (1994: 192) whose actions and utterances reflect their views of the world they live in and by extension determine the progress and direction of the nation. Selfhood in this regard deals with a set of attributes which an individual attaches to himself or herself and finds it difficult to imagine his or her personality without such attributes. At another level it involves the citizenship of the individual of a particular state or community. In this vein, the self beomes 'the agent, the knower and the ultimate locus of personal identity' (Perry, 1995 np). It is important to note the centrality of experience in the understanding of the self.

As Richard Stevens argues, 'each of us experiences the world through our own particular frame of consciousness not only of a world about us but also of a world within of inner thoughts, feelings and reflections' (1996: 18). The particularity of experience which Stevens' argument points to stems from the fact that different personalities usually relate to reality in diverse ways. This is perhaps the reason Paul Ricoeur (1992) also recognizes the 'privilege accorded the human individual' as a key factor in understanding selfhood. In Ricoeur's estimation, the privileging of the human individual stems from the attempt at 'individualizing the agents of discourse and action (1992: 28). Such individualizing also implies, to some extent, taking responsibility for the image of the self that is produced in discourse. In other words it allows for a form of agency in the project of constructing an identity which may determine the amount of advantage an individual gets in the course of interacting with others. Apart from the constant attempt to seize and utilize agency which can be seen in the ways identities are constructed, social consciousness produces a sense of self as 'we are aware of being a particular person, individual, unique (Stevens, 1996: 19). This kind of consciousness is also partly responsible for the conflicts which arise in most attempts at representing the self and the other in culturally diverse societies like we have in South Africa.

The Public Sphere: A Conceptual Framework

A major question which arises at this point is whether or not the kind of forum created by radio talk shows can be seen as constituting a public sphere in the real sense of the term. The

idea of the public sphere was introduced into public discourse by the German philosopher Jurgen Habermas. Though the original text of Habermas' postulations, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, was published in 1962, the English translation of the work published in 1989 and various editions of the work which have been released since then have made the idea of the public sphere a major issue of scholarly attention in a multiplicity of disciplines. This text is important in a variety of ways but chiefly in the conceptualization of the idea of a public sphere different from the Greek model which emphasized physicality in which case participants were expected to be 'united in a public square' with 'citizens being present to one another' (Whahl-Jorgensen, 2008: 963). This kind of model is what earlier scholars like Hannah Arendt had attributed to the rise of the nation-state which implied that citizens get involved in a 'public' life in addition to the more intimate 'private' realm of activity (Arendt, 1958). Arendt's thoughts on the composition of the public sphere further reflect the 'talkative' nature of the public domain which further separates it from the private domestic sphere. This vibrancy, Arendt argues, is further reinvigorated by 'the rise of the social' (Ibid: 38) which significantly altered the texture of the public sphere. In this way, everything that appears in public can be seen and heard by everybody and has the widest publicity possible' (Ibid: 50). This visibility which marks out the public from the private is often regarded as a major requirement especially when the idea of the public sphere is viewed against the backdrop of something needed for the proper functioning of a democratic society.

As Wahl-Jorgensen argues:

> Habermas disembodies the public sphere from the Greek model by saying that the public evolves into the reading public with the advent of Enlightenment and modernity. This is more a virtual community of authors, readers and writers and one does not need to be present to one another physically' (Ibid: 963).

In examining the progress of European society in the Seventeenth and early Eighteenth centuries Habermas dwells on the dynamics of state-society relationships at the time and identifies the need and existence of a deliberative 'public' or civil society which discusses various issues affecting the progress of society in a public arena. As Habermas contends:

> We call events and occasions "public" when they are open to all, in contrast to closed or exclusive affairs—as when we speak of public places or public houses. But as in

> the expression "public building" the term need not refer to general accessibility; the building does not even have to be open to public traffic. (Habermas, 1991: 1-2)

Elaborating on this concept, Habermas further states that the public sphere can be regarded as 'a domain of our social life where such a thing as public opinion can be formed [where] citizens… deal with matters of general interest without being subject to coercion… [to] express and publicize their views' (cited in Alan McKee, 2005: 4). Participants in the public sphere are therefore at liberty to deliberate on issues ranging from the mundane to the exotic as 'the targets of such a developing critical sphere broadened from simply complaining about notorious dress codes to criticizing *governmental* affairs, such as taxations, state budget, and other public policies' (Koo, 2006: 3-4). In all this, the major emphasis, Habermas argues, should be on the constitution of a 'critical-rational' debate. It is through such a process that citizens could protect their own interests because of the belief that 'prior to that period … citizens did not distinguish their own interests from those of the state, and rulers claimed to represent the masses' (Herbst, 1994: 12). Habermas then identifies the various conditions and institutions which make the constitution of the public sphere possible. For him, places like coffee-houses, salons and table societies where the bourgeoisie often gathered for 'rational-critical' debates would constitute 'public sphere institutions.' Habermas therefore construes the public sphere as an ideal-type of space which is more normative than praxis. It is a station to which society needs to aspire in order to accommodate diverse views and enhance political participation and democratization. In other words, the public sphere as proposed by Habermas was thought to have the potential of calling to question the arbitrariness of state power. The public sphere, therefore, becomes, in the words of Steven Clayman, that aspect of civil society in which persons from various backgrounds meet to confer on matters of public importance' (2004: 31). As Alan McKee argues,

> The concept of the 'public sphere' is a metaphor that we use to think about the way that information and ideas circulate in large societies. It is a term in everyday use to describe information when it's made generally available to the public: we say that it's in the public sphere. (McKee, 2005: vii)

It is important to note, however, that to effectively talk of a public sphere there must be room to grant the individuals involved more than mere access to information. The deliberative character expected of the public sphere suggests the need for the people to be active

participants in whatever goes on in that arena. It is in line with this need that McKee further contends that:

> It's where each of us finds out what's happening in our community, and what social, cultural and political issues are facing us. It's where we engage with these issues and add our voices to discussions about them, playing our part in the process of a society reaching a consensus or compromise about what we think about issues, and what should be done about them (Ibid: 4-5)

In creating group identities, the public sphere survives principally on the encouragement of debates as well as the existence of a multiplicity of views on any specific issue under consideration at a particular moment. In any case, Habermas' idea of the public sphere was not in any way premised on any form of passivity as it sought to challenge the status quo which privileged the elites at the time. It is in light of this argument that Nicholas Garnham sees McKee's criticisms of Habermas, for instance, as a mere misconstruction 'fixated on his historical analysis of the bourgeois public sphere' (2007: 203). Since Habermas' conception of the public sphere is based on the contemporary dynamics of eighteenth century European society, it would be expected that his understanding of happenings at that time would reflect a bid to provide 'a dialectical critique of the historical process of modernity that disentangled concretely the progressive and liberating potentials of social rationalization from its repressive side' (Ibid: 203-4). In other words, the need to liberalize society and make leaders accountable by listening to the views of the public becomes a central preoccupation when we talk of the public sphere. The democratization of society expected by Habermas in his imagining of the public sphere is inherent in his contention that 'only in the light of the public sphere did that which existed become revealed, did everything become visible to all' (1991: 4). This visibility of what is considered hidden, though it may not give the power of decision-taking to the public, serves one major purpose of at least providing an avenue for the ventilation of their views in the process.

In envisioning an egalitarian public sphere, Habermas envisages the sphere as a space for activism where people enter the discourse on the basis of equality. His public sphere is one that is deemed to be universally accessible which seems to suggest that everyone could take part in one discursive sphere irrespective of differences in social status. The reality of the case even in Habermas' salons however points to the fact that full accessibility was never

achieved and could not be achieved either in contemporary circumstances. This egalitarian imagination of the sphere is one major assumption that has attracted a considerable amount of criticism of Habermas's theory. Jeffrey Wimmer, for example, challenges Habermas on the crucial point of the exclusion of subaltern individuals which crystallize into counter-publics and possess the potential of further invigorating the sphere as conceived by Habermas. For him, 'the concept of the "public" has always been related to the [broader] questions of power, control and exclusion (Wimmer, 2005: 94). One of the major criticisms of Habermas is offered by Nancy Fraser whose main contestation is centred on the absence of subordinate groups, including women and lower classes in public sphere institutions. In addition to this is Fraser's disputation of the assumptions by Habermas which tend to create the impression that there can be a unified public sphere incorporating different classes of people on the basis that it is possible 'to bracket status differentials and to deliberate *as if* they were equals' (Fraser, 1992: 117).

Also making reference to Fraser's position, Susan Herbst contends that 'it is problematic, from theoretical and pragmatic standpoints, to think of the public sphere as a monolith or to think about public opinion as the aggregation of individual opinions measured by surveys' (1996: 131). It is in this regard then that it becomes important to view the public sphere 'as composed of smaller publics, each with particular concerns and channels of communication' (Ibid). The implication of Herbst's argument, therefore, rests in the fact that the diverse concerns and social locations of people are major determining factors which define the behaviour of different individuals on talk shows as well as their reactions to such shows and issues debated on them. In view of this diversity of concerns, it becomes clear that there would be a number of public spheres in place as opposed to one unified sphere at every point in contemporary society. Most of the criticisms proffered by Fraser and other critics of Habermas, though not unmindful of the structural foundation of his postulations, tend to emphasise the transformational implications of the theory for society at large. The interesting thing about Habermas as a thinker is the fact that he continues to reflect on his position concerning the notion of the public sphere and has had cause to revise some his earlier arguments as society progresses. For instance, Habermas makes a later attempt to revise his thinking on the dominance of the bourgeois public sphere which is one major point for which a lot of scholars criticize him. In retrospect, he contends that he had underestimated the significance of oppositional and non-bourgeois public spheres admitting that 'from the beginning a dominant bourgeois public collides with a plebian one' (Habermas, 1992: 430).

In attempting to put most of these criticisms to rest Luke Goode argues that:

> What in fact distinguishes Habermas' approach is *not* outright antipathy towards argumentation and particularism but, rather, a stubborn insistence that, if we aspire to argumentation gaining ascendancy over coercion in the public realm … then it is necessary to engage in the tricky business of imagining democratic norms which, although they could never operate in a vacuum, could reasonably motivate a diverse citizenry to favour argumentation over 'costlier' alternatives. (2005: 77)

The critical purchase in Goode's understanding of Habermas is to the effect that discussions, deliberations and debates would continue to remain a preferable option over strife and rapaciousness in every society which seeks to advance the cause of liberal democratic tendencies. Though Habermas may sound Utopian in his normative imagination of the public sphere, the idea of an active civil society which his thinking advocates has some measure of benefit for opening up democratic space for citizens of every society. As Wimmer argues, this kind of active civil society 'plays a vital role for democracy due to the rigidity of the institutionalized governmental organizations and structures (parliament, government, political parties etc) (2005: 100). Radio, it appears, has also the rare potential for setting up the space for this deliberative platform. This potential is not, however, achievable in every type of programme that goes into the medium. The radio talk show, therefore, claims an edge in the realization of the important attribute of radio as a facilitator of the public sphere because it appeals to a wider cross-section of the audience while at the same time taking on a broader perspective of issues including the social.

The concept of the public sphere, when related to the African continent, tends to show a few peculiarities in the nature and mode of public deliberations both in historical as well as contemporary terms. It is then important to point out that different public spheres existed prior to the eighteenth century when Habermas came up with his idea of the public sphere. African communities actually distinguish between the public and the private in social affairs while the public arena of deliberation existed in each community to take care of issued of common interest which required the participation of the different strata of people found in such communities. The major distinction of 'a pluralistic view of the public sphere' as 'most African societies have multiple and conflicting public spheres' (Mustapha, 2008) is equally

applicable to several other societies prior to the eighteenth century. In most cases, some of these multiple spheres exist as a transgression of the more popular spheres or what can be regarded as the official public spheres which allow for citizen participation through deliberation. Experience in Africa has shown, for instance, that people are always desirous of an opportunity to openly discuss issues going on around them as evidenced by the prevalence of what Stephen Ellis calls 'pavement radio' or '*radio trottoir.*' which is a phenomenon across Africa by which issues of interest to the public are discussed as rumours on the streets (Ellis, 1989). The public sphere is thus important for Africa as a site for the ventilation of different views about public affairs. The public sphere based on the principles of dialogue and rational debate may well be, as Mustapha argues, 'society's defence against the illegitimate use of power as the state is held accountable through publicity' (2008). The 'reality of cleavages, inequalities, and ethnic hierarchies which pervade colonial and postcolonial Africa' (Ibid) tends to necessitate more critical platforms for interrogating state policies and social conduct in the move towards the democratization of governance in Africa. Radio, and more specifically, radio talk shows can provide such platform which question the status quo and provides alternative approaches to ways in which public affairs are organised.

South Africa, like any other modern society has no unified public sphere in spite of the conscious efforts to create a common democratic ethos in the country. The presence of numerous public spheres in the country can be attributed to a number of factors ranging from the plural nature of the country to the peculiarity of South African historical experience. Preben Kaarsholm argues, for instance, that 'the possibility of a unified public sphere in South Africa is hampered by a powerful historical legacy of colonialism, segregation and apartheid' (2009: 412) which constantly fragment the people and the way they imagine themselves as citizens of the 'new' nation. Though all the three elements of the legacy that Kaarsholm talks about appear to have officially gone into the dustbin of history, the emergence of a 'national' public sphere is still 'held back in South Africa … by class division, poverty and extreme inequalities of access to wealth resources and power' (Ibid). With these inequalities, the state while responding to global neoliberal socio-economic pressures also becomes 'a site of contradictory impulses and tensions' (Pillay, 2004: 167). The multiplicity of publics that emerge in the South African milieu therefore implies several voices seeking avenues through which they can be aired in order to call society's attention to various issues of concern.

We are reminded here of the role of the media as an institution that has the potential of providing this platform through which citizens express their preferences on issues affecting society. In addition to this is the very crucial role of mobilizing people in the first place for the composition of the public sphere. Since audiences are usually dispersed and are also made up of people in different spatial and social locations there is often the need to provide information which must be made available to the different audience categories in a bid to set up the public sphere. It should be noted also that every society, including those in Africa, had its own way of deploying indigenous communication media in this important task of bringing people to the public sphere. But as society and communities become increasingly sophisticated in nature, newer forms of media have continued to either take over this role or combine with the indigenous forms of media in mobilizing for the public sphere. Though Habermas dealt mainly with the press[17] in his postulations on the idea of the public sphere as a result of the reigning popularity of the print media at the time he came up with the idea of the public shere, the general applicability of the concept to all forms of the mass media in the present day is no longer in doubt.

Methodological Approach

The basic approach in this study is to view radio talk shows as social texts that make significant statements about identities and social relations in contemporary South African society. Though the idea of text has been generally attributed to the written sphere especially by scholars relying on Western traditions of understanding 'text' as 'permanent artefact', there is the need to appreciate the presence of textuality in oral art forms which mirror the life experiences of different communities. As Karin Barber puts it, while trying to establish the textual attribute of oral art forms which are common in Africa, 'performances within oral traditions entail some kind of textual dimension' (2003: 324). Barber's conceptualisation of 'text' seems to adequately capture the essence of talk shows which are themselves a kind of performance genre. As a separate artistic category, the content of the talk show is not completely ephemeral and it does not just happen or simply disappear after enactment. It is a properly planned and articulated form which needs to be understood against background of

[17] Habermas did not limit his identification of the public sphere to the tangible print media alone as it included discussions held in such public spaces like coffee houses and salons where issues bordering on business, culture and politics were openly discussed.

its own internal mechanisms even where there is no formal or completely written out script. Indeed, radio talk shows are better seen as a unique form of oral performance as, in Barber's estimation, 'it is clear that what happens in most oral performances is not pure instantaneity, pure evanescence, pure emergence and disappearance into the vanishing moment' (Baber, 2003: 325). Following in the tradition of Richard Brown (2003) and Norman Fairclough (1992), and Barber (2003) talk shows are treated as symbolic codifications embedded with metaphoric meanings which are germane to the understanding of the dynamics of social relations in any particular community. As far as Fairclough is concerned, 'text' can be used 'to refer to any product whether written or spoken, so that the transcript of an interview or a conversation, for example, would be called a 'text' (Ibid: 4). In this regard, the radio talk show is treated in this work as a new radio genre which produces useful textual material for the understanding of social relations in contemporary South Africa.

From the discussions in the previous sections of this chapter it is possible to come to a number of conclusions about the mass media, particularly radio. One of such will be that the mass media have a great influence on the people and the society at large. In addition to this is the fact that radio in Africa also plays and needs to continue to play a vital role in the transformation process of society. In this regard, it becomes important to pay a good measure of attention to radio in the process of the moderation of what Kaarle Nordenstreng (1995 np) describes as 'the political balance of power prevailing in each society.' This attention involves studies of this nature which seek to better understand the intricacies of the influence of radio especially in developing societies like Africa. In the course of doing this, the right approach, in terms of methodology, must also be adopted in order to arrive at conclusions which would be as representative as possible of the prevailing realities in the society. It is however, important to note here that no single methodological approach provides all the nuances required to draw valid conclusions in a study of this nature.

This study, therefore, adopts an integrated approach towards the question of methodology. In other words, though the study relies extensively on the qualitative content analysis approach, there will be a triangulation of methods as it will also draw on quantitative selection of material in the course of data collection. Triangulation offers corroborative evidence in research and when properly used it there is likely to be a more reliable outcome at the end of the study. As Gary Thomas observes, 'because of the potential frailties and weaknesses of one kind or another in evidence, it is useful to gather it in different ways, so that one piece of

evidence supports another' (Thomas, 2009: 18). Empirical evidence has been obtained from a total of one hundred and twenty episodes of talk shows which average about fifty minutes each. These shows have been transcribed and used for analysis in the course of the research. As Jensen and Jankowski contend 'data collection in qualitative research involves a variety of techniques: in-depth interviewing, document analysis and unstructured observation' (1991: 59). It is in view of this that the study uses semi-structured interviews with participants on the selected programmes. The interviews are then used in addition to the transcribed actual programme content in trying to analyse the ways and manner in which the different aspects of the self are articulated on these shows. The participants interviewed include show hosts, listeners, callers-in, and invited guests. This kind of process is expected to generate important data while at the same time taking care of the lapses which are known to arise from the adoption of single methods in the conduct of social research.

In doing this, a purposive sampling approach has been used to select the two stations and programmes to be used in gathering data for the study. The same approach was used to select interviewees drawn from show hosts, invited guests, listeners and callers-in. Purposive sampling is a form of nonprobability sampling which targets a particular group of people or study population. It is often regarded as an informant selection tool which seeks to yield data for the purpose of drawing inferences and generalizations. One of the major advantages of purposive sampling is that 'the researcher can identify participants who are likely to provide data that are detailed and relevant to the research question' (Jupp, 2006: 145). Though not fool proof as a research tool, it helps to identify the key informants or respondents needed in a research. As Paul Oliver puts it, 'the necessity is often to identify people termed key informants, who have specialized knowledge or experience of a question' (Oliver, 2010: 78). The choice of purposive sampling therefore seems to suit this kind of research in which I will be seeking to collect data from people who have participated one way or the other on the selected radio talk shows.

Part of the reason for this choice is also to facilitate the achievement of the research objective within the limited time and resources available for the research. The implication of this is that those stations, programmes, presenters and producers considered more accessible engaged the attention of the study. Using this approach, the study focuses on two talk shows selected from two radio stations in South Africa. 'The After Eight Debate' is selected from SAFM while Talk Radio 702's 'The Redi Direko Show' also engages the attention of this study. Sample

content is tracked from these programmes, transcribed and analysed, using critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1992; Reisigl and Wodak, 2009; Sahin, 2011) to draw conclusions on trends which answer the basic questions raised in this research. As Fairclough argues discourse analysis is useful in understanding the relationship between texts and the social conditions that produce them:

> 'Any discursive 'event', (i. e. any instance of discourse) is seen as being simultaneously a piece of text, an instance of discursive practice, and an instance of social practice. The 'text' dimension attends to language analysis of texts. The 'discursive practice' dimension , like 'interaction' in the 'text-and-interaction' view of discourse, specifies the nature of the processes of text production and interpretation, for example which types of discourse (including 'discourses' in the more social-theoretical sense) are drawn upon and how they are combined.' (Fairclough, 1992: 4)

Apart from Fairclough's argument, John Richardson also contends that critical discourse analysis can be 'applied as a model for explaining and understanding argument, emphasizing the functional, contextual and interactive features of argumentative discourse' (2001: 143). The thesis therefore pays high premium to the contextual interpretation of data in order to properly situate the South African case within the framework of a unique socio-historical circumstance which produces different discursive communities struggling for not just self expression but different ways of articulating the different aspects of the self with a view to representing to the public certain characteristics which portray the power relations existing within society in particulars ways. This is borne out of the understanding that 'the material contexts that bound and situate' media content are crucial to the interpretation of such material (Richardson, 2008: 152). As Richardson further argues, this kind of model is important in analysing data in the sense that it is often based on the presupposition that 'power relationships [articulated in media debates at times] are both generative and transposable, modifying power relations in other fields' (2001: 143). In other words, the mediation of power relations through radio or other means of public discourse is capable of at least creating a consciousness about the nature of power in a particular society. It is therefore possible, through critical discourse analysis to bring out 'the structure and directed manner in which texts achieve their persuasive goal(s)' (Ibid: 144).

The content of the two programmes analysed was obtained from the archives of Monitoring South Africa (MSA)[18], a licensed media monitoring service that tracks, analyses and archives media content in South Africa. Specific content was collected from one month of recordings done during each of three important 'media moments' in South Africa. These moments are the media events of the xenophobic attacks in May 2008, the April 2009 general elections and a neutral or 'quiet' month when there was no noticeable major media event in the country. While carrying out a close reading of the data collected in the course of this study, more attention is paid to the particular episodes of the two programmes that deal with the issues around which the discussions are framed in relation to questions of representation and identity in the new South Africa. With discourse analysis it is possible to examine not just what different people say but also how things are said and the totality of interactions on the programmes. It is important to mention the fact that, in some way, these talk shows are a daily drama or theatre on the air. As a result, tools of analysis will include elements where features of drama like voice, tone, pitch and contestations of personality become part of what will also be used to understand the text. The critical concern then is to try and figure out how the reflection of such categories as class, race, gender and social location may create dominance in terms of participation in talk shows in present day South Africa considering the fact that 'there are many ways of enacting citizenship in late modern society.' (Dahlgren and Olsson, 2007: 200).

Outline of Chapters

The research is structured into six chapters. This first chapter has provided an introduction to the entire thesis. In introducing the research, the chapter has set out the objective of the thesis while also providing a background to the media environment in post-apartheid South Africa especially as it concerns the trajectory of radio broadcasting and the evolution of radio talk shows. It deals with the basic operational concepts of the research like representation, silence, selfhood talk shows and the public sphere. Furthermore, this first chapter touches on the theoretical framing as well as the methodology adopted in carrying out the research and also provides a review of some relevant works already carried out in the field. The introduction also includes an attempt to point out the relevant manifestations of the discursive practices

[18] MSA unfortunately went into liquidation in 2011

taking place on radio talk shows through a short synopsis of the two pragrammes that the research focuses on.

In Chapter Two the thesis interrogates the idea of emerging 'communities' in post-apartheid South Africa. It uses discursive practices of constituting 'imagined communities' in 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' to try and understand the way the 'new' South Africa relates to the concept of *Ubuntu* which is often said to be central to social relations in South Africa. The chapter tries to establish a link between the ideas of nationalism, citizenship and belonging in the 'rainbow nation' proclaimed after the demise of apartheid and everyday life experience as read through the participation of different categories of people on radio talk shows.

Chapter Three examines the fragility of post-apartheid South African life and how this fragility is dealt with through the 'staging' of the self on radio talk shows. It deals with the mood and tone of debates in the two radio talk shows studied especially during 'quiet' moments when no significant events are taking place in the country. This is done bearing in mind however that January 2009 was just after the ANC conference in Polokwane and not long before the general elections of April 2009. In finding out whether and how the 'quietude' of such moments are reflected in the public arena of radio talk shows the chapter explains its discovery of the management of tensions and latent conflicts which exist in spite of the general atmosphere of tranquility that veils such realities.

Chapter Four deals with the representation of violence and the use of silence and silencing as one of the main strategies for dealing with the crisis of representing the self and the 'other' in situations of emergency. It uses data drawn from both 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' during the 2008 xenophobic violence in South Africa. It examines how talk shows and participants on them reacted to situations of anomie such as this. Against the background of the persistent reference to the philosophy of *ubuntu* in contemporary discourses the chapter examines the failure of the ideals of community, communality and respect for human life which define the concept of *ubuntu*. It looks at other strategies employed as a way out of the difficulty of representing the shame of identity inherent in xenophobia. The chapter also looks at the ways in which language, history and intertextuality become resources relied upon by participants in the process of constituting debates in crucial moments like this.

Chapter Five deals largely with politics. It examines how political contestations are enacted during debates especially in times of electoral contests. It explores the question of power relations and the significance of temporalities which become evident on 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' during debates around the 2009 presidential elections in South Africa. In this manner it tries to establish the seriousness of political contestations which relate directly to power distribution and the strategies that different kinds of people may employ to gain political advantage and dominance.

Chapter Six draws conclusions from the study and is based on findings in the previous chapters. It dwells on the implications of the different modes of representations of the self going on radio talk shows for the agenda of inclusivity which is crucial to the sustenance of the democratic order in South Africa. It further points out the implications of 'silences' in the public sphere for agency in the 'new South Africa. In summarizing the issues discussed in the entire study, this concluding chapter attempts to point to the contribution of this study to scholarship on radio talk shows in Africa and suggest possible future areas of research into radio and radio talk shows in Africa.

CHAPTER TWO

EMERGING 'COMMUNITIES' AND NEW UNDERSTANDINGS OF THE SELF IN POST-APARTHEID SOUTH AFRICA

Introduction

In this chapter I examine the idea of 'community' in order to provide an understanding of the composition of contemporary South African society in its diversity. In dealing with this question of the constitution of community, the chapter explores the ways in which different discursive communities emerge and are positioned in the radio talk shows selected for the study. In addition to this, material will be drawn from the interviews conducted during fieldwork so as to understand the dynamics of community and the way different kinds of communities have continued to emerge in the new South Africa. I ask, how does this diversity affect the grand national project which seeks to create a sense of community among the different categories of people and ultimately attain an ethical national community. The quest for a cohesive community in this case arises from a historical background based on mutual suspicion and acrimonies which has required different forms of intervention, at times by the state, to reassure the people of the gains in staying united.

In trying to understand the way community is produced on these talk shows, we will be providing an avenue to further appreciate the nature of the public sphere that comes into being though discursive cultural practices of open engagement which is one of the major indices of a plural, liberal and nondiscriminatory society. The discourses of community which become apparent in these shows are therefore significant elements for the understanding of contemporary South Africa. This is even more so if we consider the position of Norman Fairclough that 'discourses do not just reflect or represent social entities and relations, they construct or 'constitute' them; different discourses constitute key entities (be they 'mental illness', 'citizenship' or 'literacy') in different ways, and position people in different ways as social subjects' (1992: 3-4). This chapter therefore proceeds on the basis of the understanding of community as a form of sociality. In this manner, it avoids any attempt to seek any form of analytical precision in appreciating the concept of community. It rather

takes on the term as an important element in 'interrogating the dialectic between historical social transformations and social cohesion' (Amit, 2002: 2). In other words, the concern with community in this instance would be in the direction of seeing it more as a form of social affiliation which further explains social relations which define the 'new' South Africa.

Understanding Community

The word 'community' conceals as much as it reveals. For some people the idea of community evokes images of a small group of people where the terrain and characters are well known and understood. It is, in the words of Bess *et al*, 'an idealization in place and time of feeling a part of a place, with those around knowing us and caring about us' (2002: 3). In many ways, it shows the extent to which people strive to do away with individuality and adopt a more inclusive approach to relations which gives preference to group activities. This choice of doing things in a group rather than individually, when closely examined, appears to be a response to a psychological need in the individual to have a feeling of being considered important to others and at the same time being able to partake in what goes on in the lives of others and the larger community. In other words, it caters for the need for a sense of community in the everyday lives of people who either occupy a physical space or are connected by other means. In this way, community is better understood as 'practices of social interaction' (Calhoun, 1998: 373) which seek to link lives and relationships in specific circumstances. So, community is best understood as 'the life people live in dense, multiplex, relatively autonomous networks of social relationships. Community, thus, is not a place or simply a small-scale population aggregate, but a mode of relating variable in extent' (Calhoun, 1998: 391).

In spite of the construction of individual agency as pivotal to modernity, the idea of community seems to be core in contemporary sociological discourses. While it may not displace individual agency as a crucial element in the understanding of democracy and the legitimisation of its institutions, the concept of community has also established itself as one that needs to be continuously examined in various efforts aimed at comprehending the various transformations taking place in everyday life. The questioning of individual agency as the major building block of society has therefore made room for a reconsideration of the idea of community across various fields. In trying to make sense of the processes which

produce the power relations in society therefore there is the need to understand the link between agency and community. This link is often established through the concept of participation which involves individuals and groups that constitute the collective. As Mary Ann Owoc argues:

> Particular communities often define their identities as participatory units, solidify their social bonds, and in the process, reproduce themselves by materializing these traditions in quite distinctive ways that may be compared and contrasted in analyses of broader regional interactions and general structures of meaning informing human practice (2005: 265)

In a similar vein, Timothy Pauketat argues that 'moments of interaction' (2000: 124) often produce evidence of agency and community. Such agency also becomes more visible through a process of mediation. In other words, people tend to mediate relationships and 'in the process gain identity and self-understanding' (Owoc, 2005: 266). This mediation process also has a kind of productive capacity in the meaning-making process. It has a potential for instilling 'self-understanding, and the constitution and reproduction of societies happen as individuals participate in communities, and communities embrace their members (encircle, influence, and shape them through human interaction and mutual influence)' (Ibid: 263). The important point here is that the active participation of the individual is crucial to the making of community just the same way that the community's embracing of its members moulds them into agents, actors or active citizens.

In a way, the advent of what Anthony Giddens refers to as 'high modernity' or 'late modernity' has considerably altered the way we imagine human relations in the contemporary world especially with the influence of the media on human society. As Giddens puts it:

> In high modernity, the influence of distant happenings on proximate events, and on intimacies of the self, becomes more and more commonplace. The media, printed and electronic, obviously play a central role in this respect. Mediated experience, since the first experience of writing, has long influenced both self-identity and the basic organization of social relations. With the development of mass communication, particularly electronic communication, the interpenetration of self-development and

> social systems, up to and including global systems, becomes ever more pronounced. (Giddens, 1991: 4)

The implication of Giddens' argument is that society is becoming so complex that people are bound to now relate with one another both at the micro and macro levels. This necessity of having to relate across various forms of boundaries is also made possible largely by different forms of media as people are drawn out from different cocoons to become participants in public events of common interest. In other words, the dichotomy between the positioning of individual agency which prioritises individual subjects and collective action which elevates the idea of collective social subjects gives currency to the mediating role of culture as an instrument with which to make sense of the dynamics of the various levels of human relations that percolates different strata of society.

As a construct, community has been referred to as 'an empirical entity to be discovered and described by ethnographers, a natural territorial unit of human organisation linking culture and society' (Knapp, 2003: 566). In this regard communities:

> are usually characterized as sharing residence or space, and bearing a collective consciousness, knowledge, and experiences. Typically the community is reckoned to be a fundamental social institution, internally homogeneous and externally bounded, in which all cultural, biological, and social reproduction took place (Ibid: 566).

In looking at the concept of community from this kind of perspective, Bernard Knapp attempts an all-inclusive definition in which the basic considerations for the existence of any form of community could be said to be present. This is however a very difficult task to achieve as it would be extremely difficult to pin down community to specific physical and ideological boundaries like we encounter in the above definition. As a form of social group, a community may display some of the characteristics that Knapp talks about like 'sharing residence or space' or external boundedness. These characteristics may however not be enough to take care of the numerous complexities of different kinds of communities in the modern world. While some communities are defined by the occupation of similar space or cohabitation others are not as clearly defined or visible. It is also possible to approach the understanding of community from a psychological perspective through the idea of a sense of community which is a major component in the appreciation of the interactions which people

have with other individuals on a daily basis. This way, our understanding of community extends beyond a geographical definition of the term to include elements which contribute largely to the composition of the individual self. In other words, there is a way in which community transcends the mere understanding of it as place, where place is viewed ordinarily as space or a demographical entity. Community involves different forms of ethical and aesthetic orientation to both place and location.

Scholarship dealing with community has become more amplified since Benedict Anderson's theorising of community as 'imagined' (Anderson, 1991). Anderson's idea of 'imagined communities' appears to have built upon Melvin Webbers' (1963) concept of community which argues that relationships could be maintained at a distance and it is possible for communities to emerge in spite of spatial dispersion. In other words, communities can still exist even when there is what Craig Calhoun describes as 'time-space distanciation' (1998: 374). Like Webber, Anderson makes it clear that community goes beyond the physical presence of the members involved, as common interests and feelings may also be shared in virtual spaces. Community is thus a mode of social integration which allows us to have a better sense of interactions and social practices in which people engage as a group.

Neuwirth's position is also relevant:

> Communities are defined in terms of the solidarity shared by their members, which forms the basis of their mutual orientation to social action. Solidarity is not seen as a function of ecological residence, but rather as a re-sponse to 'outside' pressures. It is manifested in those relationships and communal actions which are relevant to the members' positions within the larger society or relative to other communities (Ibid, 148-9)

The formation of community is further nuanced by Shanyang Zhao and David Elesh who advocate a combination of both spatial and social elements in the process. For them, co-location and co-presence are preconditions for the establishment of social connectivity. While co-location implies availability in the spatial sense, co-presence is more of availability in social terms. Drawing on Goffman and Giddens's theories of human interaction, Zhao and Elesh conclude that 'co-location puts people within range of each other, [while] copresence renders people mutually accessible for contact' (2008: 566). Social contact, which is

composed of 'activities of socializing and friendship' (Ibid), occurs 'in the realm of copresence – which is affected by the regionality of space and the power relations that underlie personal affinity and social engagement' (Ibid). With the emergence of new ways of looking at the concept of community, the term has 'hovered somewhere between fantasy and belief—imagination and reality…an extreme form of dialectics—a concept that is real and imagined' (Blackshaw, 2010: 7).

Media and Community

With the expansive influence of the media across various genres, images of community, belonging and support have become dominant in discourses about human relations in contemporary life. Community incorporates both direct and indirect relationships. This incorporation is made possible by technologically mediated communications such as we have with radio. Apart from setting up the platform for the exchange of ideas about contemporary issues that may be of concern to the larger society, discursive communities which emerge on talk radio shows tend also to add to the ability of the different individuals who feature on the programmes to appreciate the need to take action on certain issues that affect them either as individuals or as a group. As Calhoun observes, 'community has the considerable advantage of a social foundation for concerted collective action without requiring formal organization and the creation of a new set of statuses with new interests' (1980: 424). Calhoum's argument therefore positions the media as very crucial to the formation of communities with the possibility a production of agency for the elevation of common or group interests.

Again, of interest to linking media and community is McMillan's focus on a shared commonality. With the idea of 'sense of community' (McMillan, 1996: 315), the old model locational communities which may be inhabited by people with diverse interests now attract lesser attention while greater focus shifts to relational communities which dwell more on the shared interests and common values of group members. Modern relational communities are formed on the basis of common interest or other characteristics shared by the members. In this regard each individual can be considered a member of different communities at a particular time or at different time though the relative importance of the communities and the allegiance to them may vary across time and circumstances. As John Bruhn argues, 'we are embedded in networks of unique relationships which gives our lives meaning, provide social

support, and creates opportunities' (2005: 1). For Bruhn, 'social bonds are nonetheless the basic building blocks of the larger world' and 'people do not simply interact in a context; they join with others to create a context to determine what kind of behaviour is called for' (2005: 6).

The strength or capacity of a community therefore resides more than any other thing in the sense of community which the members of the group have. In this regard, Jeff Weintraub's classification of the four main models that define the public/private distinction in contemporary discourse is important. He identifies the classical approach or what he terms 'the republican-virtue approach which sees the public realm in terms of political community and citizenship, analytically distinct from *both* the market and the administrative state' (Weintraub, 1997: 7). But community can be public, private or in-between as Weintraub identifies the need to draw a distinction 'between the inner privacy of the individual self and the "interaction order"' (Ibid: 2). In other words we need to grasp the different 'modes of intimacy and obligation' that give rise to the formation and sustenance of different kinds of community experience. At its hermeneutical level community becomes an instrument with which social science scholars try to explain the relationships that exist in society which may generate what Blackshaw identifies as 'a sense of belonging, warmth and companionship' (2010: 1). The problem with this kind of approach as Blackshaw himself acknowledges is the fact that hermeneutics itself is a practice 'burdened by a romantic sensibility, which evokes spirits of nostalgia and closeness' (2010: 1).

When considered against the background of historical realities in South Africa the kind of communities created by radio talk shows like 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' tend to push a lot of issues from the realm of the private to that of the public. What is more important at this point however is the ways in which different categories of people are linked together through these shows in a discursive environment where matters of common concern take center-stage. The significance of such temporary convergence of individuals is noticeable in the responses of some of the interviewees in this research to the question of the main reasons why they call into these shows.

One of the respondents, Sean, for instance thinks calling in or participating in the shows is important because:

> It gives people a space to vent or to confront issues I think in often a fairly open way. You also get to know whether or not other people around you are bugged by the same kind of issues you are worrying about. I think when you listen and call in you are indirectly telling those in your area the kind of things we should all be concerned about. (Sean, Interview 15 September 2010)

Just like Sean, Debby thinks that being part of talk shows opens up a kind of new social space where people tend to engage with one another even if at an informal level. According to her:

> I've got to know many people through listening to radio talk shows around here. You know here in Jo'burg people just go about their own business without even caring to know who's next door. But there are people I can tell you where they live and the kind of challenges we all face together even though I've never met them in person. I think on Redi's show particularly, I get to have a feeling that I'm not alone as far as the basic issues we face around here are concerned (Debby, Interview 17 September 2010).

It can be deduced from Sean and Debby's responses that radio talk shows could play a significant role in building communities and bringing people together around salient issues which affect their lives as a result of living in close proximity or simply belonging to a similar social category in society. What should also be noted however is the fact that participation is not always a voluntary act especially on the part of ordinary listeners who get exposed to talk show content. This much is made clear from the response of some listeners interviewed in the course of this research. In response to the question seeking to understand the reason for choosing to listen to particular radio stations, a university student, Andiswa, who claimed she was a fan of Talk Radio 702 said:

> It started at first year when it was suggested by lecturers to listen to 702. And I had a sense then I'd never listen, because I don't enjoy youth shows that much, but I later had to listen because it was a kind of an order from the lecturer and I didn't want to be left out of what was going on in the course. I later found 702 interesting and that's how I became a fan of Redi's show (Andiswa, Interview 20 October 2010).

In a similar fashion, Sonto's response to the same question shows that she did not willingly choose to listen to shows she was exposed to:

> My boyfriend gives me a ride to work everyday. He likes politics too much and he's always listening to 'The After Eight Debate' and some other shows while we are travelling together in the car. Sometimes, he'll want me to engage in a discussion with him on what is being said on these shows. It looked like I didn't have a choice much (Sonto, Interview 22 October 2010).

In the instances cited above radio can be said to be a medium that attracts its audience through different kinds of means which bother on community building and participation at different levels.

What the above examples point to is that listeners constitute different communities of practice. In other words, there are different kinds of roles expected of specific groups of people who form the large community of the radio talk show. While the show hosts with their professional colleagues who produce the show may be regarded as part of a professional community of practice, listeners and callers may also be seen as constituting another category which employs discursive strategies or practices in particular ways in other to negotiate space in the larger community. Practice is important in describing communities because as Etienne Wenger puts it, 'practice is the source of coherence of a community' as it produces mutual engagement, a shared enterprise and a shared repertoire; three elements that are crucial in the bonding and coherence that make communities stand out (1998: 72). A community of practice therefore 'describes how a group communicates, learns, participates and transforms at the same time as their practice evolves. At a basic level, it is a way of understanding how knowledge and learning are intertwined and how this occurs naturally within a social group' (Weiss and Domingo, 2010: 1157). Discursive practices on the other hand consist of 'structuring or 'articulatory' processes in the construction of texts, and in the longer-term constitution of 'orders of discourse'' (Fairclough, 1992: 9). They deal with how 'texts are produced in specific ways in specific social contexts' (Ibid: 78). In other words, they are those strategic tools employed advertently or inadvertently by participants in public engagements for the purpose of negotiating different kinds of identities.[19]

[19] In this work, I use the expressions 'discursive practices' and 'discursive strategies' interchangeably.

Community Life in South Africa

Conflicting representations of Africans and their 'imagined' communities abound in literature across different disciplines. The colonisation of the continent, by mainly Europeans, can also be said to be a major factor in the negative representations of Africa and its peoples by European writers and scholars. Such disparaging portrayals were in most cases meant to specifically justify the colonisation of the continent and imposition of new forms of 'civilisations' which tend to serve foreign interest. In South Africa, white supremacist views which eventually culminated in the imposition of the state policy of apartheid created divergent 'imagined' communities which separated different categories of people based on skin pigmentation. With a peculiar history that sets it apart from other postcolonial African states, South Africa has always had its own impediments to the cultivation or nurturing of communities. During the apartheid days, community life in South Africa was highly regulated and socially engineered. This regulation was a weapon for keeping the 'natives' in check and preventing the possibility of mobilization for resistance. The strictures of apartheid laws and regulations made the mixing of the races a serious crime. This official prohibition was effected through the Immorality Act of 1927, the Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act of 1949 (a year after the National Party came to power) and the Immorality (Amendment) Act of 1950 all of which sought to prohibit amorous relationships between the different races especially between so called 'natives' and people of European descent. Out of all these legislations, the Immorality Act of 1950 is perhaps the most documented. This is partly because it was part of the first laws to be passed by the National Party after its ascension to power ant therefore 'formed part of the legislative foundations of apartheid' (Martens, 2007: 225). A provincial amendment to the 1927 Immorality Act in the Transvaal even made matters worse by disenfranchising any white person who violated the legislation. The Transvaal legislature's Ordinance No.4 of 1927 had a provision to the effect that 'white persons cohabiting with native or coloured persons shall not be entitled to be enrolled on the Voters' roll for any municipality, nor qualified to vote at any elections' (Ibid: 224).

Apart from the overt legislations keeping the different races apart, intra-racial community was also limited in the apartheid days as individuals and families perceived to constitute 'threats' to the state were kept under security watch and contacts with them by other people could have grave consequences. In narrating the difficulty inherent in associating with 'marked' individuals and families during this period, Mamphele Ramphele in a memoir

writes that the quality of communal life that people lived under apartheid depended on factors like 'the temperament of the local security police' (Ramphele, 1999: 92). During this period, a good number of the people involved in the liberation struggle lived isolated lives in fear of arrest. As Ramphele puts it, 'many South Africans spent miserable years imprisoned in their own homes' (Ibid: 93). Ramphele's own ordeals which symbolize the kind of strictures under which many people lived during the apartheid days stem from her relationship with Bantu Steve Biko, a strong figure in the anti-apartheid liberation struggle[20]. The politics of space going on at this period obviously favoured a particular race over others. The national space became segregated in such a way that the pleasures of community were denied the majority black population whose identity has much to do with communality. In the face of policies that sought to reduce the rate at which races mingled it became expedient for citizens who did not see themselves as being fundamentally different from others because of their background to seek means of defiance against the state in order to realise their aspiration of fraternising across colours. The philosophy of *ubuntu* which defines relations among native South Africans 'has descriptive senses to the effect that one's identity as a human being causally and even metaphysically depends on a community. It also has prescriptive senses to the effect that one ought to be a *mensch*, in other words, morally should support the community in certain ways' (Metz, 2007: 323). The difficulty imposed by the manipulation of space by the apartheid authorities made the practice of community difficult and dangerous for the people leading to a life of individualism with its implications for the structuring of relationships. As a result the people occupied multiple imaginary communities defined by highly contested and politicised understandings of community. Situating this kind of understanding of community within the context of nostalgia, Jacob Dlamini labels it 'an incurable condition of modernity' (2009: 16). For Dlamini, the fragmentation of collectiveness attending life in South Africa at the moment is indicative of 'present anxieties refracted through the prism of the past' (Dlamini, 2009: 16).

There is no gainsaying the fact that apartheid was greatly divisive, necessitating the idea of a 'new' nation after the emergence of democratic governance in 1994. As Muiu puts it, 'the first encounter between Dutch colonizers and the indigenous community resulted in master/slave relations. Progressively, these relations became competitive and hostile, as Dutch colonizers encroached on indigenous land' (2008: 22). This shows that tensions had

[20] Mamphele Ramphele was a co-founder of the Black Consciousness Movement and Steve Biko's lover, a relationship that exposed her to constant brushes with the state.

existed between Dutch settlers and 'native' South Africans before the arrival of the British. The implication of this is the absence of any cohesive community prior to colonisation. The exception to this however is the presence of the Dutch which had the imprint of colonization. The later appearance on the scene by British imperial authority did not help matters either. For the British, the land in Africa which technically included the indigenous population was lacking in 'civilization' and the Dutch who were presumed by the British and other Europeans to have lost their 'Europeaness' and the 'sophisticated' civilisation that goes with it had not really been of any help to this local population as they themselves had 'degenerated' as a result of contact with the rugged African environment. The important thing to note here is that in the history of colonialism the interest of the colonised and that of the coloniser are often at variance with each other.

The absence of a common interest therefore triggers mutual suspicion and a vicious struggle for space, domination and myriad forms of resistance which tend to make the idea of a unified conceptual community impossible. In this vein it becomes quite problematic to view the year 1994, in spite of its significance to the historical development of South Africa, as the historic moment when suspicion ended in the country. The reprieve which self-determination, or the demise of apartheid in the case of South Africa, was expected to bring appears to be long in materialising creating further anxieties about the possibility of community. It is important to note that the anti-social policies of the state which are meant in many instances to provide shields for private corporations that erode social cohesion and threaten human well being and potential. In other words, 'new regimes of accumulation of different forms of capital' (Isin and Turner, 2002: 1) have led to less emphasis on the communal values of *ubuntu* which places higher premium on caring for the less privileged. The emphasis on the market and the embrace of the lure of the new industrial state throws up what Chatterjee sees as 'the underside of modern individualism—the callous impersonality and massification of market-driven societies that destroy age-old institutions of sociability and community living without putting anything in their place' (1998: 278). The noticeable practice of exclusion of the less privileged in policies by the state is also the trigger for upheavals in community such as are exemplified by service delivery protests and charged debates on media platforms in contemporary South Africa.

In addition to the violent social engineering of the apartheid state, the strictures imposed upon the media during the apartheid era can also be cited as one of the factors militating against the

building of inclusive communities in South Africa. In discussing the fate of the media after the apartheid era, Herman Wasserman recollects the past as a period 'during which journalists… were subjected to restrictive South African laws, resulting in bans, police raids, harassment and detention of journalists' (2010: 570). It is therefore important to point out that overt and covert forms of censorship have militated against the idea of community in South Africa while radio talk shows offer a new vista of hope through the creation of platforms where issues of common interest can be raised and engaged with by different kinds of stakeholders in the 'new' nation. In this case, the role of the media and specifically that of radio goes beyond playing a supportive role to government as is often the expectation in the immediate postcolonial moment in most African states (see for instance Ligaga, 2011; Moyo, 2011). It involves rather the calling into being of a public space where opportunities exist for members of the national community to participate at the discursive level in matters affecting their lives. And in some instances where the government embarks on excessive control of the media space, like in the case of Zimbabwe presented by Moyo (2011), the people and opposition groups especially resort to clandestine means which become more difficult for the authorities to handle.

In the past, gender and education were also included in the instruments of separation employed to keep different groups of people apart and unequal in South Africa. These two indices are still evident in the way discourses in the public domain are structured. The evidence that comes out clearly in the two talk shows studied here point to the fact that male voices still predominate in spite of the serious efforts made to move towards gender parity in South Africa. While most of the invited guests on these radio talk shows are usually male the callers are also predominantly male. Even when hosts choose to identify senders of sms's there are indications that more men than women send such short messages. The problem of the exclusion of women has been treated by a number of scholars. Nira Yuval-Davis argues for instance that the exclusion of women from the arena of the public sphere often leads to their exclusion from discourses in society (1993). And this exclusion happens even at times when the issues concerned directly affect the womenfolk. So while women in South Africa can be said to be a very important part of community the need still arises to break barriers that limit them to the private sphere in order to transform their muteness in the public domain.

Community and the Public Domain

The public domain is an integral part of community. More than anything else, it is an imaginary space that offers the platform for the performance of the different roles which individuals either take upon themselves or are called upon to undertake in the community. Guided by normative codes and protocols of entering into it and engaging in discourse, the public domain or what Jurgen Habermas theorises as the public sphere provides a normative open community where the exchange of ideas and the questioning of deeds or even misdeeds resonate for the enablement of the practice of democratic ideals which further enhance citizens' claim to membership of the national community and the benefits that go with such membership. In the imagining of this space that tries to validate the membership of citizens, the media are often called to action through the deployment of different technologies which create different levels of information exchange aimed at the provision of as much information as possible for citizens to engage in practices of belonging. In so doing a 'communicative' or 'dialogical community' emerges which provides citizens with the opportunity to participate. The flaw in Habermas' position is in its elitism as he brings the question of legitimacy into democratic participation. To be able to provide legitimate argumentation, a member of the dialogical community would have to possess certain qualities chief among which is rationality[21]. This insistence on certain qualities is perhaps the reason why Jean-Luc Nancy deconstructs the idea of community as in itself a myth. For Nancy the 'myth of community' will at best remain an 'inoperative' entity (Nancy, 1991). What Nancy's ideas do to our understanding of community is to strip it of any form of finitude and, as we expect of the public domain, open up further possibilities in our understanding of the term.

For Habermas, communicative action is crucial to the existence and sustenance of the public domain as it constitutes 'the basic cement holding society together and so [is] constituting a viable sense of community' (Elliot, 2009: 895). Radio talk shows, in offering the kind of platform which provides for the expression of individual and group aspirations, make the move towards the achievement of community possible by bringing people from different backgrounds together in a discursive relationship. In this way talk shows, as exemplars of the public domain attempt to represent actual sites of 'collective democratic action and resistance' This actualization of the public domain is also made possible through by the

[21] Habermas often creates the impression that rationality is a given attribute of the elite and this aspect of his theory of the public sphere has remained one of its major criticisms over time.

existence of a 'community of selves' in a communicative network (Ibid: 893). Community is therefore a process of non-alienation as participation aids its composition or constitution.

In the South African context, this role of talk radio is crucial especially when considered against the background of the difficulty of open expression which characterized the days of apartheid. Before the demise of apartheid and the return to democratic rule in 1994 there had been centres of community, albeit of a different character. Such discursive communities were found in subversive radio broadcasts and unofficial dissemination of information about the state in clandestine fashion. In the 1960s for example a few radio presenters, producers and scriptwriters working in the section of the state broadcaster SABC, known then as Radio Bantu, adopted strategies identified by Liz Gunner as 'the rhetoric of resistance' (2005: 163) to destabilize the apartheid order of complete control over the airwaves. Citing the particular example of a versatile radio presenter, Alexies Buthelezi, Gunner concludes that the traditional Zulu narrative forms used by some of the clever presenters at that time 'may have been potentially far more subversive than [their] surface innocence, or sheer eccentricity, suggested' (Ibid: 166). In other words, the local African language presenters of this era, while constituting a unique kind of deliberative community, found in the traditional artistic forms 'a spoon long enough to sup with the devil' (Ibid: 163).

In addition to this form of alternative sources of information for the community is the resort to what Stephen Ellis calls 'pavement radio' or '*radio trottoir*'. This refers to the thriving of rumours or 'the popular and unofficial discussion of current affairs in Africa, particularly in towns' (Ellis, 1989: 321). This kind of information peddling is often a product of a lack of trust between the people and institutions charged with the responsibility of keeping them informed (Shibutani, 1966; Obadare, 2005; Fine, 2007). In putting this in proper perspective, Gary Fine contends that:

> In one sense, rumor indicates a breakdown of institutional trust. The existence of rumor suggests that those who disseminate such claims argue—implicitly or explicitly—that information from authoritative sources is either incomplete or inaccurate. Either they are incomplete or immoral (2007: 7).

In the event of this loss of confidence in mainstream channels of information rumour becomes a form of 'improvised news' (Shibutani, 1966) which helps individuals and

communities ‘cope with the ambiguities and strains of an uncertain present [as it] reflects the future through the recent past (Ibid: 7).

Discursive Practices in ‘The After Eight Debate’ and ‘The Redi Direko Show’

European settlers, both Dutch and British, saw indigenous South Africa as emblematically bounded, timeless and static. This could be said to be as a result of a lack of proper understanding of the prevailing ways of life of the African population that the colonisers met at inception. The structure of every community is often influenced by the different categories of people that can be found within it. In the case of South Africa, the population is composed of different classes, races, ethnicities and genders, dimming the prospects of a unified community as the interests and aspirations of each of the component groups differ extensively. This also leads to different forms of nationalism as people become loyal not just to the nation construed as a unified entity but also to cleavages based on several other interests and categorizations of affinity. In mediatised discourses like we have in radio talk shows, there are different ways by which presenters or anchors may also become part of the discourse community. In such situations, there is the possibility of identifying different forms of communities based on discursive strategies and practices adopted to be able to negotiate identity with the larger community.

Different categories of participants on radio talk shows do not just posture as a part of a unified group that meets at regular intervals to take a look at issues of concern but also feature as part of smaller divisions of the larger community showing concern for ‘others’ within the particular frame of reference that defines association. For instance, the presenter of a show may express a sense of community by making reference to other members of the production team as in the following example:

> Let me welcome you to my controller, Thomas. I have got three bosses here. Nobuhle, Mpheni, they are my producers. And Thomas tells me when to speak, when to shut up, when to go to on break. He’s been away and is nice to have him back, we love you Thomas. Anyway that’s it the whole team is back together. These are the people who make the show happen. We keep it together and I wouldn’t achieve a quarter of all I do without them. (Redi Direko Show, 19 January 2009)

This kind of community identification is a significant discursive strategy aimed at mobilizing not just professional colleagues in the studio but listeners outside who are invited to view the day's programme as important to them and the community they inhabit. Community identification, as Deen Freelon argues, is 'the extent to which participants view themselves as members of a community' (2010: 1180). In the case of the radio programme this identification also helps the show host to create, in the minds of the listeners, the image of an individual who is also part of their community and by extension should be interested in activities going on there. Here, the host attempts to use the power of community as a form of social capital to validate herself, the show and the issues to be discussed for the day.

The use of collective pronouns like 'we', 'they' and 'them' evidences the linguistic dimension of the inclusivity that the show host intends to bring to bear on the show. Redi's speech also resonates a kind of communitarian ideological leaning which tries to invest the show with a kind of ownership that transcends the show host alone.[22] The above statement apart from showing deference to the individuals mentioned by the show host also creates an ambience and feeling of community that attempts to legitimize the show itself as a product of group work, leading to the assumption that it is neither arbitrary nor unilateral. In a similar vein, Tim Modise, the host of 'The After Eight Debate' on SAFM usually concludes the show by making reference to members of the production team who are all deemed to have been part of the day's show. In signing off on one episode of the programme which featured the Secretary General of the ANC, for instance, Modise makes the following concluding remarks:

> Ok, Gwede Mantashe thanks very much for talking to us this morning. He is the ANC Secretary General and talking to us from East London. Misho Shandalala, Tshililo Tshivase, Harriet Nait, Marumo Kekana, Mark Pryler, Phuti Mosimane, Cleo Leshoro, Thandanani Dlamini, Nhlakanipho Zulu, thanks again for putting AM Live together. It has been a great week and I hope you have a great weekend. I'm Tim Modise. Wish you a great weekend. We'll be back with you again next Monday and bring you events from around the world. (After Eight Debate, 9 January 2009).

[22] This point is far more crucial for the Redi Direko show if we consider the fact that the show itself is named after her as an individual.

Although the voice of the show host usually dominates the airwaves during the course of the main programme the reeling out of the names of members of the team at the end is to suggest to the listening public a sense of community and communality. In the case of Modise, he mentions the names of nine other people who have been involved in the process that produces the day's progamme. They too form part of the community of the airwaves which the radio talk show brings into being.

On the same episode of her programme referred to earlier, Redi Direko dwells on the election victory of American president Barrack Obama:

> How many of you saw the concert last night on M-net? A host of stars on a special concert last night to welcome Barrack Obama to Washington. And it was very moving….what stood out for me was that this didn't feel like a democrat victory. You see where I am going with this; it didn't feel like the democrats' victory. It felt like the American nation victory because they kept quoting from past republican presidents, past democrat candidates and all of that….And I suppose that is the kind of democracy we want to get to. We want to get to a point where you agree with people on principle even if they come from a different party, even if they come from a different culture. You want to be able to say the DA's Hellen Zille says ABC even if you are in ANC and vice versa, DA giving praise and credit to ANC when it is due. That's the kind of unity that came through for me. Apart from that, the fact that the Americans can put together a blooming hearty party. I mean they raise the bar…. Anyway give us a call with whatever is on your mind this morning (Redi Direko Show, 19 January 2009).

The reference to Obama and the presidential elections in the United States of America seems to raise a major question about the boundaries of community. In short, it points to the expansiveness of community or the transnational character which community may assume at times. The expression of a feeling of community may, in fact, extend beyond physical territorial boundaries to include people and events which are of relevance to the identity of individuals or groups. In making a direct comment on the representation of the Obama presidency by mass media in Africa, Herman Wasserman argues that 'Obama's representation in African popular media…furthermore reminds us that African media can no longer be studied in isolation from global political events nor could local engagement with

global media events be understood as passive consumption' (2011: 1). This argument reinforces the transnationality of community both in representation discourse as well as in our understanding of even scholarly engagement in the amount of linkage which now makes community to transcend several boundaries. The American event, in spite of its taking place in a distant clime, becomes a reference point on 'The Redi Direko Show' because of its relevance to contemporary South African politics in terms of racial equations and aspirations for a community defined by democratic tenets. In making a reference to the relationship between the Democrats and the Republicans, the host expresses aspirations about political contestations in South Africa by calling on the ruling ANC and opposition parties to emulate the culture of tolerance in political disputations. In addition to this, the fact that Obama is the first black president of the United States becomes a major trope in addressing the conditions of the black majority in South Africa who as a result of long years of oppression under apartheid still have to struggle to imbibe self-confidence and the will to rise to the challenges of life.

In a similar vein, the 'After Eight Debate' broadcast on January 6, 2009 focused on the Middle East crisis. The discussion for the day was titled 'The Israeli Invasion of Gaza'. The show featured discussants from both sides of the conflict. It had as guests Ronnie Kasrils of the Palestine Solidarity Committee, Chairman of the South African Zionist Federation, Avrom Krengel, The Chief Rabbi, Warren Goldstein, and a political commentator on the Middle East, Azam Tamim. The transnationality of community becomes evident here in the fact that an event which ordinarily would be considered too remote to attract the interest of a South African audience became a template for raising some pertinent issues in the immediate community. In doing this, show hosts often rely on the discursive strategy of creating relevance by trying to make the topic acceptable to the audience. Here on 'The After Eight Debate, Tim Modise starts by saying that a lot of comments have been made about the crisis in the particular event which makes the debate important:

> We are going to talk about the Israel invasion of Gaza and we are asking whether it is justified? Many commentators have been talking about the disproportionate use of aggression and force in Gaza and these attacks have now claimed over 550 lives of Palestinians and in latest reports three Israeli soldiers died as a result of so called friendly fire. Now, we stay with the topic are Israeli operations in Gaza justified? (After Eight Debate, 6 January 2009).

It should also be noted that the host tries to call attention to the gravity of the event by stating the number of lives that were lost in the Israeli operation. Also, the reference to the action as a 'disproportionate use of aggression' tends to call attention to the question of power relations in the global community. In a way it reminds the audience of relations between strong states and weak states in spite of different kinds of agenda set up towards the attainment of world peace. The transnationality of community, it should be noted, is partly a fallout of the pervasiveness of media in the everyday lives of the people. This can be deduced from the contribution of one of the invited guests, Ronnie Kastrils as he says:

> Well, Tim, you know that Israel itself is guilty of breaking this truce many times over. Yesterday I was reminded of this watching an international broadcasting presentation and a member of the UN team reminded everybody how Israel had carried that emergent incursion into Gaza in November. The truce came up for renewal late December. Israel has continued to break the truce in the West bank with provocations around Gaza. (After Eight Debate, 6 January 2009).

Warren Goldstein also makes a similar reference to the media as a source of information and by extension an initiator of community on the same programme:

> You know it was reported in the Associated Press on December 27 how Israel has been sending out cell phone messages into the different areas begging people to move away from the weapons arsenal because what Hamas does is they put their weapons arsenal in civilian territories with the specific aim of protecting the weapons and then increasing the civilian casualties. So Israel sends a message before bombing losing the element of surprise begging civilians to get out of the way because in any situation when there is a war situation civilians die and that was the terrible thing that happened. (The After Eight Debate, 6 January, 2009).

Without being in the Middle East or anywhere close to that region, both Ronnie Kastrils and Warren Goldstein are able to follow the particular through the media thereby becoming part of a different kind of community without having to give up his membership of any other.

On this particular programme the host received a total of only four calls from listeners. There was no call at all in the first thirty minutes of the show. Interestingly, the four calls from Yusuf (Johannesburg), Mohammed (Johannesburg), Bashir (location not specified) and Ahmed (Polokwane) indicated that all the callers were male and had names which suggested they might be Muslim. A total of eight sms's are also read out by the host. While three of the sms's have the identities of the senders, the remaining five are anonymous. Also one of the three identified has no specified location from which it is sent. So we have Kustam Musila from Port Elizabeth and Dave from Johannesburg as the two sms's that can be traced to a location. The point to note here is that particular programmes tend to appeal to particular kinds of individuals who can also be said to constitute a particular community of discursive practice. Though this kind of community may not have a kind of clear boundary that excludes others or includes certain people, the sharing of interest or the anxiety that what happens within a particular community may have a reverberating impact on another community, will then be the motivation for other people to join or participate. For the hosts and producers of radio talk shows, fewer calls or limited participation is usually interpreted as a kind of failure of the show in a way. In other words, limited participation shows the limits of transnational community building as different events appeal to people at different historical moments.

Community building practices are also noticeable when the show hosts try to invite listeners to become more active participants by volunteering information on their programmes. On the SAFM's 'The After Eight Debate' for instance, a subtle invitation is extended to listeners to call in and give information about their observation of particular events or phenomena. One of such occasions is seen during the hosting of the Minister of Safety and Security, Comrade Nathi Mthethwa on the programme shortly after the New Year holidays, a season when crime is believed to be palpable in major South African cities:

> We are probing affairs in the safety and security environment area and asking whether the claims made by the police are true that they have reduced criminal activities over the past holiday season and whether you have been able to confirm this for yourself or what your observations tell you, and also talking about the various initiatives that the Minister of Safety and Security Nathi Mthethwa embarked upon once he got appointed as Safety and Security Minister and he joins us on the line. (After Eight Debate, 5 January 2009)

The first feeling that is obvious here is that there is a great concern for the safety of the national community and especially urban areas which constitute the coverage area for this particular programme. In addition to this, the show host attempts to compose a community of discourse by immediately inviting the audience to join in the discussion, either by sharing their own personal experiences or by asking the minister some questions. Another point to note here is the way in which security concerns contribute to the formation of certain forms of community. The preservation of life and the avoidance of harm of any form are very important elements in differentiating between the way people relate with complete strangers and people they know. In other words, while people may feel secure with acquaintances, they may be scared or feel highly exposed when they deal with people of whom they know little or nothing. Apart from the racial divides which determine the realisation of communities, security concerns may therefore play crucial roles in the way people associate with others or even the way access to communities is mapped. It is important to also note however that the emergence and maintenance of stratified communities cannot be limited to the racially determined as secluded communities now form across racial lines and people are unified by their security concerns to create impregnable abodes which give a sense of or a semblance of safety to the inhabitants. In such instances class, more than anything else, appears to unify more as a result of the values of materiality that determine vulnerability.

On this same episode of the show a caller who identifies himself as Jason volunteers information about the activities of criminals in Umkomasi in the South Coast, South of Durban, where he claims to call from:

> My question is the syndicates operating in South Africa. We had a case here where Tanzanians were caught for housebreaking and then they were said to be deported. They came back and tormented the people for the second time. Now I know in fact that in Mozambique or Tanzania because we worked there you daren't commit crime there because you won't even be deported you'll be tried and imprisoned there and be treated like one of their own people. (After Eight Debate, 5 January 2009)

The contribution by Jason is a direct reportage of crime linked to foreigners, specifically Tanzanians, in his community. The question of crime and its 'foreign' colouration, it should be noted, has been a major discourse in contemporary South African society. The belief is rife that most crimes in the country are committed by foreigners from neighbouring African

countries. So this reporting of crime committed by Tanzanians in Umkomasi speaks to the larger national discourse in which the rise in criminal activities in the country is attributed to the post-1994 increasing presence of foreign nationals from the rest of Africa. Though it is not clear in Jason's contribution whether or not he had personally been a victim of crime, the sense one gets of his contribution is a concern to see a larger territorial space free of crime and perhaps free of foreigners from other parts of Africa. The larger territory which goes beyond the boundaries of Jason's home or individual self is Umkomasi town where the caller is just a member of a large collectivity. In addition to this is the possibility that the criminals referred to by Jason are also members of the community. If they do not live in Umkomasi, they most likely would live at least in the larger national community of South Africa, of which Jason and other listeners and participants are also members. This is indicative of the difference between membership and citizenship in community to which I will return later. The anxiety over crime therefore speaks to the interdependence of participants of community whereby the actions or even inactions of some members could impact on the lives of others. In conceptualizing this principle of interdependence in communities Tamotsu Shibutani argues that 'participants are interdependent; each person must do his share or the unit as a whole breaks down' (1987: 35).

There is a noticeable transformation of the media itself brought about by the nature and structure of talk shows generally. With these shows, audiences become a part of a professional media community through the generation of content in the form of participation. Participants are given some form of space in the professional community to give information about things happening in their environment. This quasi-reportage of events, which has been generally designated as user-generated content, creates a new relationship between media and their audiences as the audience moves from the zone of passive consumption to that of active production. On 'The Redi Direko Show' the host often invites listeners to call and 'tell us what is happening in your area' or 'what happened over the weekend.' These kinds of calls provide an opportunity to interact with listeners located in different places. In addition to this the host and other listeners at that particular time are also able to share in the experiences of such listeners who call in with a narrative of events around them. In playing this role of the 'eyewitness'[23] members share experiences and concerns and further build a community of people who interact more freely thus radicalizing the concept of production and reception in

[23] Talk Radio 702 actually has a news slot called 'Eyewitness News' which features on-the-spot reportage of events.

radio broadcasting. As one of the respondent listeners, Mmathapelo observes in an interview, the main value of talk radio is in its ability to create a form of immediacy and inform people of what goes on around them and in other places which may be of interest to the community:

> The listeners interact with the radio like directly. They give them time to talk about current things, current affairs, things as they arise, they don't wait for tomorrow. If something happens, like on Radio 702 they actually give listeners a chance to call. If you see an accident, if you see something happening, a newsworthy thing, you call them and give them the information and as they report in their news they say so and so it's on ground and so this is happening and here is an eyewitness who was there. I think it makes news more interesting (Mmathapelo Interview, 26 April 2010).

She goes on to speak of how radio talk shows may further reinvigorate her interest in political issues as well as other contentious matters going on around her. In other words these talk shows may make her share the interests of other people around her and in the course of this bring her into the fold of an imagined community of discourse. In her view:

> With me when there is a hot topic on politics like the Julius Malema thing. I obviously look forward to him coming so if they announce that he's going to come I actually sit down to listen to him. If there is a war of words between AWB and the ANC Youth League and they say they are inviting one of them or both of them, I look forward to those people. So, it's about what is happening there (Mmathapelo Interview, 26 April 2010).

Prophet O. J. is another participant on SAFM's 'The After Eight Debate' who also featured as an invited guest:

> When one is on air you even, it's like you feel people who are listening, it's like you are seeing them, it's like you are with them. You know it comes to a point when you say a word knowing that somebody in Cape Town is listening, somebody in Johannesburg is listening, somebody maybe even in England is listening. It comes to a point whereby it's like that person is with you….You are sort of driven to give the person who is listening the humbleness and the respect that that person deserves as if that person is looking straight into your eyes (Prophet O. J. Interview, 22 April 2010).

There is a sense of community evident in the above response by Prophet O. J. It also shows that people who participate as invited guests on 'The After Eight Debate' may do so with the awareness that they are part of a community made up of different kinds of individuals. In talking about giving people the kind of 'humbleness and respect' they deserve, this participant calls attention to the consciousness of a position of power in the community by having the privilege to speak on radio while at the same time hinting at the need to be mindful of the arrays of difference that may characterize membership of the community

In this kind of environment the interactivity that comes into the work of media especially radio becomes important especially in societies undergoing transformation where the need for people to voice their concerns and anxieties is very important for the appreciation of progress and the planning of responses to outstanding areas of concern. The analysis so far positions radio talk shows as 'a community of characters' which 'depends on a core group of citizens to give it life and support' (Peters, 1999: 9). As members of this virtual community, each member's acts are based on different levels of consciousness. This raises a further question in relation to feelings of nationalism which to some extent are premised on the amount of interest that an individual has in the entity towards which the nationalistic affection is directed or even the desire for the idea of a single nation.

(New) Nationalism(s) in Post-Apartheid South Africa

Frictions do occur regularly in communities and generally remind us of the fact that communities are not necessarily avenues for agreement. Closely linked to the idea of community is the issue of nationalism. As Geoff Eley and Ronald Sunny argue, 'ordinary people need to see themselves as the bearers of an identity centered elsewhere, imagine themselves as an abstract community' (1996: 22) for nationalism to work. In this way nationalism becomes an invention of sorts just the same way Anderson sees communities as 'imagined'. Discourses on nationalism are not new to Africa. The various struggles against colonialism and different other forms of oppression in the past have made the African continent a place of the expression of sentiments which tend to place the love of place at the centre of academic and political discourses. Beyond the expression of this love, however, is the viciousness of nationalism as history is replete with instances across the world where

individuals and groups have committed heinous crimes against the 'other', in whatever form construed, as a result of sentiments bordering on difference. Relating this negative kind of nationalism to experience in Africa and Asia in the 1970s, a period less than a decade after the attainment of independence in some African countries, Partha Chatterjee argues that:

> nationalism had become a matter of ethnic politics, the reason why people in the Third World killed each other—sometimes in wars between regular armies, sometimes, more distressingly, in cruel and often protracted civil wars, and increasingly it seemed, by technologically sophisticated and virtually unstoppable acts of terrorism (Chatterjee, 1996: 214-215).

What Chartterjee construes as terrorism is often given expression in different forms in different places and at different times. While it rears its head as civil wars in certain instances, it manifests as inter-tribal hostilities, racial tensions, ethno-religious crises or xenophobia in other climes. The beauty of Chatterjee's thesis also lies in the fact that it sensitizes us to the realization that African nationalism, and by extension South African nationalism is not defined solely by the struggles for independence. As Ivor Chipkin argues there is the need to rise above the understanding of African nationalism 'simply as resistance to colonial authority, irrespective of its form' (2007: 11). Chatterjee's theorizing of the concept seems to have met this need even before Chipkin raises the question as he concludes that nationalism especially in Africa is being 'viewed as a dark, elemental, unpredictable force of primordial nature threatening the orderly calm of civilized life' (Chatterjee, 1996: 215). Chatterjee's argument clearly extends the conceptual boundaries of Anderson's 'imagined communities' and opens up the discursive space with new possibilities which offer scholars of the postcolony a multidimensional prism with which to view the concept of nationalism.

In classifying the kind of insufferable deployment of nationalism, which Chatterjee and Chipkin separately engage with, Arjun Appadurai identifies such practices as 'the politics of affect' (1996: 144). For Appadurai, 'there is always a real substrate of primordialist affect that is perpetual tinder waiting to be exploited by specific political interests at a given moment in the history of any given nation-state' (Ibid: 144). In a manner of connecting back to Frantz Fanon, Appadurai lays the blame for the nourishment of this harmful tendency at the doorsteps of a class of elites who grow on the wings on neocolonialist or neoliberal

ideologies that have little or no regard for the interest of most of the constituents of the national community. Fanon's theorizing of what he classifies as 'the pitfalls of national consciousness' (1963: 119) identifies the culpability of 'the national middle class which takes over power at the end of the colonial regime' (Ibid: 119-120), in concert with the national bourgeoisie, in creating difficult conditions which further strain relations in the post-colonial state. Appadurai, like Fanon also attributes constant crises in the national community to the 'new elites and new gaps between castes and classes, which may not have arisen except for various neocolonialist projects in the new states' (Appadurai: 1996: 144). The overbearing narcissism of the elite groups coupled with the contestations among different other groups in society often makes the attainment of a national community difficult. This often leads to a proliferation of narrow nationalisms based on the philosophies of different categories of difference. The defining characteristic of this kind of situation in most cases is the spectre of sectional interest which places the individual or one's group and its interest far and above the larger humanistic ideal.

In the new South Africa, the different conditions outlined by the scholars whose works were examined above seem to be playing out in numerous ways as a new group of political leadership has taken charge of the country after the demise of apartheid.

As Mueni wa Muiu argues:

> …the achievement of equal political rights in the new democracy was premised on the acceptance of unequal economic relations among different classes, genders, and races. Furthermore, the middle-class in all its multiracial and multiethnic diversity constantly faces threats from above and below. Popular demands from below sometimes lead the middle-class to partially satisfy the majority's economic and social demands. Pressures from various economic interests (particularly the business community) limit its room for maneuvre. These pressures force the middle class to make compromises that are detrimental to the economic interests of the majority of the population. (Muiu, 2008: 1).

In addition to making compromises, members of the middle class, some of whom also have access to institutional employment, engage in subversive practices which further impede progress and heighten the prospect of degeneracy which forms the basis for continuous

agitation. In other words bribery and corruption become options which the middle class adopt to make up for perceived losses arising from the various pressures it has to cope with from below and above. This problem of helping oneself to the till has also become quite evidently one of the major issues leading to apathy and despondency on the part of the larger population who seize every little opportunity that avails itself to question the sincerity of the members of the ruling class and in the process putting their sense of nationalism or commitment to the common good to question. The deduction that can be made from this scenario is that there has been a form of 'multiracial nationalism in the wake of the transition from apartheid to liberal democracy, without a simultaneous transformation of economic relations' (Ibid: 1).

Embedded in the idea of nationalism is the understanding that individuals have of themselves as integral parts of the space they inhabit. In trying to figure out their stake in the national community, people grapple with different imaginings of the self as citizen or as entitled beings whose presence and agency become important in the constitution and sustenance of a national community. The question of citizenship is therefore considered against the background of inclusion and exclusion. In other words, who should qualify as citizen of the national community and who should not? Again, what should be the obligations of the state towards such individuals and what are the expectations of the state or the responsibilities put on such citizens by the state which also retains the power of social control over its constituents? The notion of nationalism often invokes sentimental affections of belonging, communality and allegiance. In some cases however, this kind of feeling generates debates around the classifications of 'insider' and 'outside' especially in multicultural or diverse communities where the competition for scarce resources is heightened by a new world order that seeks to advocate globalization and the need to protect boundaries and local privileges at the same time. The next section of this chapter, therefore, tries to unpack the idea of citizenship which in a sense draws in the politics of inclusion and exclusion in culturally diverse communities and situations of stark economic inequality like we find in post-apartheid South Africa.

Citizenship and New Imaginings of the Self

Beyond the question of nationalism, the idea of citizenship may further illuminate the concept of community especially in relation to how the state relates with its subjects or those who inhabit its border space. In other words, the ways in which a community is 'imagined' relate closely to both physical and social boundaries which determine the inclusion and exclusion of individuals and groups. Citizenship therefore becomes the key institutional mechanism for establishing such boundaries with the state playing a central role through the deployment of citizenship policies and the distribution of resources (Park, 2010: 380). So states also invariably become 'actors in the identity construction projects, with their own historically embedded imaginaries of their citizenry and their own agendas' (Ibid: 380). In the light of this, an understanding of the concept of citizenship in the contemporary world will make people aware of the meanings of belonging which further defines the individual, his roles and obligations in society. This awareness is expected to throw more light on the crucial phenomenon of civic engagement. To begin with, it is important to observe that the concept of citizenship keeps mutating thus challenging traditional modes of belonging and creating new practices of membership of groups and territories. As Engin Isin and Bryan Turner argue:

> Major social issues such as the status of immigrants, aboriginal peoples, refugees, diasporic groups, environmental injustices, and homelessness have increasingly been expressed through the language of rights and obligations, and hence of citizenship. Moreover, not only are the rights and obligations of citizens being redefined, but also what it means to be a citizen and which individuals and groups are enabled to possess such rights have become issues of concern (2002: 1).

Isin and Turner further argue that in the new globalised world citizenship is being redefined and reconfigured along three important axis of '*extent* (rules and norms of inclusion and exclusion), *content* (rights and responsibilities) and *depth* (thickness or thinness)' (Ibid: 2). In this manner it is possible for some members of a particular community to claim to be 'more citizen' than others. This claim to superior citizenship could be based on different kinds of factors ranging from indigeneity to membership of a particular social class. In most cases such claims collide with other forms of agitation for inclusion which extend the contestation

for membership of the particular community in question beyond passivity into an active demand for redistribution. Given this kind of scenario:

> …various struggles based upon identity and difference (whether sexual, 'racial', 'ethnic', diasporic, ecological, technological, or cosmopolitan) have found new ways of articulating their claims as claims of citizenship understood not simply as legal status but as political and social recognition and economic redistribution (Ibid: 2).

Citizenship in South Africa has been a highly contested concept because of the flawed racial conditions imposed by the apartheid government. This racialised citizenship falls short of expectations in the modern 'democratic' state. During apartheid, there were different ways of defining citizenship. Jeremy Martens (2007) identifies two of such definitions of citizenship. While the first stipulates that only 'civilized' men had the right to citizenship, the second gave citizenship to all white men by virtue of their race. This kind of imagining of citizenship resulted in frequent changes in the political landscape as well as constant altering of identities of people based on their different racial backgrounds (Hyslop, 1995[24]; Martens, 2007). The racialisation of citizenship and political participation implied the exclusion of the majority black population from taking part in civil society activities.

Since the demise of apartheid the South African state has tried to redefine the concept of citizenship through various means. The most obvious of these means is the South African constitution, a heavily advertised document, persuasively paraded as the most liberal in the world and by implication the best that can be found in the whole of sub-Saharan Africa where South Africa is perceived to be a big player. Apart from the constitution, there have been several references to the concepts of African brotherhood and the spirit of *ubuntu* which creates the impression of South Africa as an inclusive state, receptive to people from other parts of the world especially those from other African countries. A good example of this kind of reference can be found in former president Thabo Mbeki's matrix of the 'African Renaissance' which he vigorously and constantly emphasised while in office. This form of African nationalism expressed by the former president, coupled with the provisions of the constitution which was based on the Freedom Charter of 1955 created the impression of

[24] Although Hyslop's argument about anti-miscegenation, which is a response to J.M Coetzee's (1991) theorising of apartheid as a product of collective irrationality, provides a gendered reading of history, it clearly shows like the prevalent conferment of citizenship along racial lines which divided South African society and reinforced diverse nationalisms.

South Africa as an all-inclusive cosmopolitan community ready to accommodate people from different backgrounds and from all parts of the world. In short, the transition to a new order in South Africa has seen several attempts to present to the world the picture of a new and more inclusive territory. This new disposition is, no doubt, with the attempt to create the impression, as Hein Marais puts it, that 'the exclusionary basis of South African society would be replaced with an inclusionary one' (2001: 94).

However, the realities in contemporary South Africa seem to provide a different picture as the country still battles with problems of abuse of women's rights, homophobia and xenophobic attacks against foreigners especially those from neighbouring African countries. While focusing on the aspect of violent attacks against foreign nationals as one of the conditions that make citizenship problematic in South Africa, Francis Nyamjoh argues that:

> With the exception of occasional intervention of the Human Rights Commission, the failure of the South African Constitution and authorities to protect the rights of non-citizens is clearly at variance with all claims that South Africa is building a 'culture of human rights'. By limiting entitlements only to national citizens, the South African state has shifted the emphasis to keep out those who do not belong and preventing anyone else from joining, especially those who have the "wrong citizenship", ….[or the] "wrong gender" (Nyamjoh, 2006: 41).

The implication of Nyamnjoh's argument is clearly captured in Weintraub's caveat that 'membership in community does not necessarily constitute citizenship [as] citizenship entails participation in a particular kind of community …one marked by, among other things, fundamental equality and the consideration and resolution of public issues through conscious collective decision making' (1997: 13).

There is also a marked difference between the attainment of citizenship and attempts to become what Chipkin calls 'an authentic national subject' (2007: 12). While the citizen tries to convince about his/her entitlement to belonging, the national subject ('authentic' or not) often seeks to defend mainstream ideologies which represent the position of the state in an attempt to conjure an imaginary national community or its semblance. The problem of citizenship is made more complex in the new South Africa by the social and economic exclusion evident in the public domain. While pockets of service delivery protests signpost

the discontent of the masses and their frustration with the new leadership, more serious disruptive actions like xenophobia and other forms of subversive behaviour against individual 'others' and the state hint at a form of popular resistance borne out of frustration with a system that offers less than the expectations of the majority. In addition to these visible forms of expressing discontent, the media provide a platform for the expression of the feelings of the people on how they imagine themselves and others as citizens of the national community.

Radio offers this kind of expressive platform through talk shows like 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show'. In grappling with the different implications of being part of the national community the likelihood emerges for people to see their being part of that community beyond the modern conception of citizenship as 'merely a status held under the authority of a state' (Isin and Turner, 2002: 2). On the other hand they are persuaded more to see themselves as subjects existing in relation to various other realities which they have to cope with in an intricate process of negotiating their membership of different states of being which they need to inhabit at the different times. In other words, they see themselves as victims of a differentiated citizenship which 'accords dissimilar treatments to members of different social groups' (Young, 1989: 258). This new understanding of the self is often enacted in the public domain and through acts of agency which encourage apathy and seek to protect individual or group interests above the collective. A practice antithetical to community and social cohesion, such defence mechanisms are seen, by victims of differentiated citizenship especially, as survival strategies with which they cope with official exclusion. These 'ways of belonging' (Baumeister, 2003), which listening to or participating in radio talk shows provide, then become a scheme for the management of the deprived self in order to carry on with life.

Once the question of citizenship is settled, the next question that comes to mind is how actively individuals or groups participate in the social life of their communities. The strength of each community depends on the strengthening of social networks within it. These networks generate what Robert Putman theorises as 'civic engagement.' In his words ' when philosophers speak in exalted tones of "civic engagement" and "democratic deliberation", we are inclined to think of community associations and public life as the higher form of social involvement' (Putnam, 2000: 95). This higher form of social involvement seeks to create an ethical community based on the sharing of space by individuals and groups who see one another as very vital and relevant to the project of maintaining a national ideal. From the

evidence available through the public discourses on the two talk shows examined here, there is the temptation to see South Africa as a country still lacking a sense of a unified national vision. Rather, the picture that comes across is that of disparate visions being sutured into one with great difficulty. This is seen in the existence of broken bonds or communal gaps signaled by increased disconnection among the various groups cutting across racial and class categories. The post-apartheid vision of the rainbow nation is thus constantly being challenged by new or emerging centres of power which constantly portray varied nationalisms in the new South Africa.

Conclusion

Community in South Africa is still in the evolution phase where affiliational structures keep emerging with no certainty yet as to what the outcome might eventually be. This is as a result of the coalescing of different groups along different racial, class and even gender lines. With such different formations, the idea of a 'rainbow nation' which is central to the formation or shaping of identities in post-apartheid South Africa seems to still remain, at best, a distant possibility. There is ample evidence to believe that attempts to build a cohesive new South African nation are apparent in the two radio talk shows selected for this study. In seeking to do this, the shows try as much as possible to be as open as possible in order to give access to a wide range of participants. The various contestations in society as seen in the array of topics coming up for discussion on shows and the variety of the views and positions taken by people of different racial as well as socio-political backgrounds show that the different allegiances which people still hold especially to race or ethnic affiliations make the attainment of this cohesion a very difficult task.

What becomes more visible therefore is the continuous building of new alliances or communities based on numerous other factors which keep emerging as the reality of the new South Africa unfolds. It is indeed important to note that even the community that the participants on shows themselves constitute is as diverse as the different physical and social locations from which they come to be part of the shows. In a way, the representation of South African nationalism as multiracial is an attempt at forging a South African community which validates the post-apartheid slogan of the rainbow nation. The series of challenges which confront this effort as evidenced by altercations in public discourse tend to point in the

direction of diverse emerging communities in the new nation which lack cohesion. The expression of perverse nationalism(s) by participants on both 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' is a public testimony to the precariousness of community in post-apartheid South Africa. With such precariousness it is possible to conclude that the two talk shows like similar shows on other platforms in South Africa only offer the people an opportunity to be part of different communities of practice where their interests are discussed while the vision of the national community remains pending in the horizon. Another possibility is that a certain co-existence of diverse communities is hinted at through the debates, voices and persons who make up the radio talk shows. The discursive practices adopted by different categories of participants reinforce the presence of such smaller units of community in present day South Africa.

In any case, it is possible to say that it is from this kind of discordant communities which 'dramatize a series of questions around recognition and non-recognition' (Nuttall, 2001: 392) that a new nation must emerge where there is mutual respect not just in acts of doing but also in perception of different racial groups and classes of people who make up the new rainbow nation. The next chapter takes a look at the idea of fragility and the performativity of representation in radio talk shows in South Africa.

CHAPTER THREE

NARRATING FRAGILITY: PERFORMATIVITY AND REPRESENTATION IN 'THE AFTER EIGHT DEBATE' AND 'THE REDI DIREKO SHOW'

Introduction

As different interests compete for space in the 'new' South Africa, tensions are often generated which portray strains within the social order. Radio talk shows offer a unique cultural and social experience not just in the way they are produced but also in the way their participants tend to create different forms of identity and subjectivities when they appear in the public space of the media. The idea of public performance puts on the individual certain demands concerning modes of expression which may in the end influence the direction of the mediation process we see in media productions. The concern of this chapter therefore, is to seek a better understanding of kinds of narratives, of the self and the nation, which emerge from the contributions of participants on 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show'. In doing this the chapter tries to bring to the fore how public discourses evidence 'fragility' (a term I discuss below) within the larger South African society. It explores the ways in which participants on these two shows represent themselves in the public space in the process of self-fashioning which is seen as part of the mediation process.

The chapter further looks at contributions of participants on the shows, including invited guests, callers and the hosts, which point towards a staging of the self as citizens of the nation which is a larger community that mediates public conduct. It further argues that performance as seen through the actions and inactions of participants on these talk shows tend to appropriate the major questions around representation and constitution of the self which the media always have to contend with in contemporary society. The chapter draws two major conclusions. The first is that 'fragility' is not completely limited to moments of crisis or national emergencies, as discussions on these two radio programmes reflect discursive tensions which mirror latent tensions among the different social groups in contemporary society. The second conclusion is that these latent quiescent anxieties are often veiled through strategic performativity adopted by participants on these shows. Such acts of performativity

produce a kind of silencing of some aspects of the self which may be deemed unpalatable in narratives which aim to imbue individual selves with characteristics for the negotiation of space and relevance in the mediated public sphere. In other words, some participants on radio talk shows tend to act like personae in the course of participation and such personae which are adopted for the purpose of performance do not necessarily reflect the true character of such participants.

The media in South Africa have been one major institution involved in the process of liberalizing and transforming society since the demise of apartheid in 1994. In doing this, various forms of media have tried through a number of means to reflect the realities of the South African situation as they concern the quest for a new society in which the inequalities of the past give way to a more inclusive society imbued with a form of neoliberalism which still allows for the progressive development of society at large. The demise of apartheid and subsequent promulgation of a nonracial constitution has been described by many as one of the greatest achievements of the South African nation considering the fact that both feats were achieved through means of deliberation and consensus. The collapse of apartheid did not, however, end the various tensions among various domains of power in the new South Africa. These new forms of tension are also represented in the media in various ways. In radio, the talk show genre has been a major site for the contestations for space which often characterizes the power relations in the contemporary setting. It is in this regard that this chapter sets forth to examine the kinds of narratives of the self and the nation and the possible implications of such narratives on the perception of a unified entity emerging from the fragmentations of the past experience.

Perspectives on 'Fragility'

The concept of fragility is a relatively new one. With a firm root in ecology, fragility can be viewed from different perspectives depending on disciplinary concern. For scholars interested in national development indices, for instance, there is the tendency to adopt definitions provided by international development organizations which in most cases take into account issues of the market and the potential impact of events happening in a particular state on neighbouring states. So, fragility in social terms has been associated with the security of states and individuals within their territorial precincts. The Development Assistance

Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) in 2004, for instance, defined a state of fragility as 'when governments and state structures lack capacity and /or political will to deliver safety and security, good governance and poverty reduction to their citizens.'[25] In a similar vein, a 2005 USAID report on fragile states affirms that 'at least a third of the world's population now lives in areas that are unstable or fragile.'[26]

The significance of the self and the psychological well being of individuals who embody the nation are remarked by Sigmund Freud when he writes on the question of the vulnerability of the ego. For Freud, this vulnerability is a function of both external factors and internal or emotional factors within the individual:

> We are threatened with suffering from three directions: from our own body, which is doomed to decay and dissolution and which cannot even do without pain and anxiety as warning signals; from the external world, which may rage against us with overwhelming and merciless forces of destruction; and finally from our relations to other men. (Freud, 1961: 24)

While the fragility of the individual self becomes evident in the numerous conflicts which the individual has to contend with in modern society, that of the nation is inherent in the loss of power which the plurality and diversity of intent on the part of the nation's inhabitants reflect in their day to day dealings. In this process the sphere of influence with which the nation is invested becomes seriously threatened. In other words the idea of nationalism as 'the attempt by nationalist discourses persistently to produce the idea of the nation as a continuous narrative of national progress' (Bhabha, 1990: 1) becomes a tall order in the face of the socio-political realities of contemporary South African society as witnessed through the media. As Ilan Kapoor contends, there are 'unpleasant memories associated with nation-building (2008: 86). Such memories which reside in individual constituents of the imagined nation make the sustainability of a common purpose and by extension, nationalism a Herculean task.

Much of the academic efforts directed at the understanding of fragility have often approached the concept from the point of view of politics and economics. As such, existing scholarship

[25] http://www.oecd.org/document/53/0,3343,en_2649_33693550_38692341_1_1_1_1,00html
[26] "Fragile State Strategy." p.9 http://www.usaid.gov/policy/2005

on fragility revolves around issues related to state failure, state building, state consolidation, and how to ensure peace and structural cohesion or the territoriality of marked geographical entities among other things (see Ake, 1996; Boege et al, 2008; Englebert and Tull, 2008). While the development community conceives of state fragility in terms of the inability to meet development benchmarks put in place by regional or global agencies, those interested in security think more of the global security threats that fragile states constitute not just for themselves but equally for neighbours and the rest of the world. It is with these kinds of conceptions that most of the people who talk about fragility often want us to believe ''fragility' means that the state cannot or will not shoulder responsibility to protect the lives and well-being of the population within its borders' (Christoplos and Hilhorst, 2009: 4). While using human security as the entry point into the discussion of fragility, Christoplos and Hilhorst readily acknowledge that ''Fragility' is associated with flux, but there is little consensus about where change is headed and what should be done' (Ibid: 4). Interestingly, where a few scholars have attempted not to make the state the main focus of the fragility discourse, the tendency has also been to only look at the relationship between the state and society. This kind of approach, as seen for instance in the work by Beall, Gelb and Hassim (2005), has the potential of rising above the reductionism of the development discourse oriented approach yet falls short of dealing with the possibility of fragile social relationships among individuals and groups whose actions and inactions are crucial in the determination of progress and stability in a general sense.

In looking more at formal and informal state institutions, while paying less attention to people, groups and local communities in the fragility discourse, a good number of scholars miss the opportunity to make use of or see the potential of understanding the strength of national communities through the cohesion that exists among its severally diverse groups. There is the need for the academy to rise above using the fragility discourse to validate or invalidate governance models and see it as a way of pointing out the potential for conflict in society. It bears mentioning at this point that every human community has some element of fragility inherent in it at every point in time. The potential for aggravation and externalisation of open confrontation or disintegrative tendencies merely become quite obvious during major events of conflict which ultimately threaten community cohesion.

What can be deduced from all the different approaches to the fragility discourse outlined above is the fact that vulnerability and uncertainty are inherent in situations of fragility. It is a

product of the various kinds of interactions that go on in each society, as people relate among themselves, and also with the state and its institutions on a daily basis. In order to properly conceptualise fragility, therefore, there is the need to look beyond the state by digging into relationships among its constituents whose security eventually add up to create the bigger picture. Non-state factors and actors indeed have considerable impact in determining the stability level of different communities which constitute the larger nation-state. In addition, there is also the need to look beyond moments of visible conflict in order to appreciate the potential for discord that often exists even in seemingly tranquil communities. It is also important to note, as Christoplos and Hilhorst point out that 'so-called 'fragile' states can in some respects be very strong, or may be strong in some parts of their territory, but fragile and contested in other parts of the country' (2009: 11). In seeking to extend the understanding of 'fragility', the next section of this chapter explores the kind of topics that were brought up for discussion for both nation and citizens 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' during the 'quiet' month period spanning forty episodes aired in a period of one month.

Fragility in 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show'

The month of January 2009 was selected as the 'quiet' month during the collection of data for this research. This selection was not because there was anything special about January 2009 in South African history; it is rather as a result of a simple observation which seemed to show that there was relative calm after the volatile debates about the xenophobia of the preceding year which shook the moral fabric of the country. The first thing that this chapter tries to do therefore is to group the topics discussed on the shows into six broad themes based on the variety of issues treated on the programmes. The six themes into which the discussions have been grouped are: Safety and security, Politics, Economy, Education, Health, and Sports and Entertainment. This classification does not in any way claim to be an exhaustive capturing of the kinds of issues raised on these talk shows. They merely offer us a frame with which to assess the debates on these shows for the purpose of further understanding the workings of the two talk shows on radio and the link to the concept of narrating fragility.

On 'The After Eight Debate' where topics discussed add up to twenty, as there were twenty episodes in the month and each episode discussed only one topic, the grouping of the themes

reflect a higher focus on politics followed by safety and security concerns while the least discussed issue was sports and entertainment. More specifically, a total of seven episodes of the show focused on political matters during the month while five focused on safety and security related issues. This is followed by issues related to the economy which featured thrice. Education and health were each discussed twice while sports and entertainment featured once in celebration of the victory of the South African national cricket team over Australia in Melbourne. In other words, politics dominated on 'The After Eight Debate' with thirty-five percent of the air time. Safety and Security concerns took twenty-five percent of the time; the economy got fifteen percent, while education and health each took ten percent of air time. Sports and entertainment's time allocation is at five percent. On the other hand, 'The Redi Direko Show' featured thirty-one topics within the same period of the 'quiet' month. The reason for the increase in number of topics discussed is because the programme usually raises more than one issue on one episode. Issues discussed usually vary between two and three on each episode of the show allowing for flexibility in introducing topics. Just as in the case of 'The After Eight Debate', politics also dominated, featuring twelve times out of the thirty-one (38.7%). Politics was followed by safety and security which came up for mention nine times (29.1%). This was followed by education and health issues featuring four times each (12.9% each). Economy and sports and entertainment were the least discussed as each of them came up once (3.2% each).

The point that comes out of the distribution of air time reflected in the different topics discussed on the two shows is a clear showing of a prevalence of both politics and safety issues (including especially crime) on the programmes. The two, especially crime, signal the preponderance of anxieties which tend to create considerable amount of alarm and panic in South Africa. The crime panic readily manifests itself in the presence of a massive private security establishment in spite of the heavy investment on the police force. Quite instructively, crime has been one of the major issues attracting heated debates in South Africa while in elite discourses the debate extends to include bigger questions about the territorial integrity of the nation. The prevalence of crime is also noticeable in the heavy media reportage of incidents with murders, rapes, robberies, drug related crimes, car hijacks, assaults, cash in transit heists and even ATM bombings taking centre stage.

In view of the above, talk shows are important for several reasons. One major reason is the fact that they are capable of externalising the internally composed self as identified by

pragmatist self theorists like James, G. H. Mead and Dewey. At this level the construction of meaning, even when it takes place within the inner recesses of the individual, is brought into the social space where it engenders further deliberation thereby creating a connection between meaning and dialogue (Wiley, 2006). In addition to this is the opportunity offered by talk radio for people to participate in public life either by themselves contributing on programmes or by benefiting from the contributions of other participants who usually tend to analyze issues which are of concern to the people at various times. Through talk shows citizens are therefore able to bring their, opinions, views, and concerns to the public sphere thereby making it difficult for such issues to be taken from the public glare either by decision-makers or other custodians of power in the society. As individuals take part in talk shows, we encounter varied representations of identity which tend to excavate different forms of self-consciousness. Such revelations also point to the state of being of individuals and by extension the nation in respect of the relationships and tensions that exist among the numerous interest groups existing at the moment. In other words, what people say on talk shows and the way they partake in debates does not just mirror the self in the fashion of Lacan's theory of 'the looking glass self' but also reflects the prevailing environment in the larger society and how the participants identify with issues generated therein.

This chapter will now look in more detail at the two shows during the 'quiet' month. The major issues that dominated both 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' in the first week of the year 2009 centred on crime, safety and security, disaster management and the Palestinian crisis. Out of the five episodes of 'The After Eight Debate' broadcast in the first week of January 2009, two episodes dealt with matters of crime, safety and security. In the same vein, 'The Redi Direko Show' dealt with issues of crime twice in the same week. The anxiety about crime in South Africa, it should be note, often heightens during festive seasons. It is therefore not a surprise to see talk shows bear witness to this by attempting a review of criminal activities immediately after festival holidays. With crime both the individual self and the nation are deemed to be at risk and prone to dissolution in a sense. Thus, there is a form of seriousness and urgency in the way the discussions on crime are carried out on the programmes. This is evident, for instance, in the way the Minister of Safety and Security, Nathi Mthethwa, addressed callers' questions on the first episode of 'The After Eight Debate' in the first week of January 2009 which talks about safety and security in South Africa. There is a noticeable anxiety on the part of most of the callers on this programme on the question of crime in South Africa. Though the minister who is the guest on

the first day of the week seems to admit that crime is a problem, most of his responses seem to be aimed at giving the impression that crime has not gone beyond the control of the police and the institutions of government meant to curb it.

There was an apparent division among listeners who called into the programme in the January 5 episode of 'The After Eight Debate' which featured the South African Minister of Safety and Security, Nathi Mthethwa. A number of them supported the views of the minister while others sought to disagree with him. The minister's arguments on the show for the day were geared towards convincing the public that the police, and by extension the government, could not be said to have failed the nation as far as the issue of bringing crime under control was concerned. His position is premised on a perceived effective performance by the police in checking violent crimes during the festive season which had just ended. In response to the question posed by the show host on whether there is enough progress in the country in terms of dealing with crime the minister replies:

> Yes, thanks Tim, yes we are, em… if you remember when we were to outline the framework, our strategic approach to crime, we had to do that immediately having to look into the festive season and we then prioritized certain crimes. One of those is the cash in transit crime, and the bank robbery and ATM bombing and so on. We said then that we need to strengthen our crime intelligence so that works intelligently, prevent some of these criminal activities even before they happen. Now it's after that period now that we put forward the plan we unveil the plan to the nation. And I can say that, safely Tim, this festive season we really dealt a blow with this priority crime through this approach which we came up with. (After Eight Debate, 5 January, 2009)

A total of nine calls were received on this show out of which three callers appeared to openly support the position of the minister. The six other callers who held an opposing view to that of the minister made reference to other areas in which they thought the police had not performed effectively to counter his optimism. One of the dissenting callers who identified himself as Faizal from Mayfair said for instance:

> …you can't get a lot of move against crime as long as you have a corrupt police force. The perception I have is that we have a corrupt police force from the former police commissioner Jackie Selebi going right down to the metro police who take bribe ten

> out of ten times for traffic offences. Why is it difficult for the Minister or for the Department of Police to have a dedicated unit fighting corruption in the police. We still have rampant corruption among the police. (After Eight Debate, 5 January, 2009).

Such arguments as Faizal advanced represent a negation of the optimism expressed by the minister on the ability of the police to fight the menace of crime in South Africa. In addition, they also pointed to the fact that people do not enter the public arena of the talk show to simply agree with one another but to, as much as possible, make their particular kinds of views heard in order for the members of the public to either reason with them or sympathize with their positions. The public space of talk radio thus becomes a battleground between the self and in the process bringing out the underlying tensions within the state. In Faizal's view therefore there was no way government could check crime on the streets without, in the first instance, combating corruption which implicates political office holders. With the different forms of arguments, and even accusations, taking place the struggle to be heard therefore marks the contention for space in the public arena generated by these talk shows. More importantly, these tensions generated on talk shows point to potential fragilities in the national community.

The Israeli attack on Gaza on Saturday 27th July, 2008, just a week after the expiration of a ceasefire negotiated by Egypt was a global event that elicited huge media coverage and drew reactions from leaders of both camps in the Middle East strife across the world. The attacks became a big media event for the remaining days of the year and the early days of the New Year. 'The After Eight Debate' on SAFM (hosted by Tim Modise) brought the issue of the attacks up for discussion on January 6 while it was the only issue for discussion on the first episode in the year on 'The Redi Direko Show' (January 5, 2009). The decision to discuss the Palestinian crisis in the first instance shows the relationship between macro and micro events in a globalized world as topics coming up in the media reflect contemporary issues in society as well as the struggle by the media to give such issues prominence in order to show a sense of participation in the larger global media community. But beyond that, it also points to the way in which tensions in places distant from the immediate can also instigate some form of disquiet in a nation. As Hugh Megan argues, there are 'intervening cultural and social processes that mediate the relationship between macro structures and local events' (1996: 270). In this instance a macro event (the Palestinian crisis) with wide ranging ideological implications seems to direct the affairs of a talk show at the local level in South Africa. This

is a kind of situation in which 'the global and the local often overlap or feed off each other' (Hadland et al., 2008: 2). In other words, the global significance of the conflict in the Middle East seems to have elevated it to a level of preeminence, in spite of the fact that those who may be locally interested in it as far as the demography of the South African population is concerned could be in the minority. The public space or platform provided by talk radio in this sense becomes a rigorously contested space. This is made clearer by the way participants try to make their voices heard as they feature on the two programmes.

Closely related to the contestation for space in the radio talk show is the question of domination. Apart from the presence on the programme, either physically or by technologically mediated means, each contributor seeks to carry the day in the discussion. In most cases, especially when there are very contentious issues brought up during the debates, each contributor seeks to make his or her view the dominant one by striving to convince the audience as to the propriety of the position taken on the issue. In articulating their views therefore some contributors adopt different kinds of strategies including interruption of fellow speakers when they have a feeling that the other part or the views of the other might gain more prominence. In 'The After Eight Debate' aired on January 6, 2009, for instance, there are two attempts by The Chief Rabbi of South Africa Warren Goldstein to interrupt Ronnie Kasrils of the Palestine Solidarity Committee prompting the latter to raise an objection: 'Don't, in fact if the Rabbi keeps speaking, I really would ask him to let me finish. I didn't interrupt him' (After Eight Debate 5 January, 2009). The impulsiveness with which Warren makes his remark and tries to reclaim his right to expression without hindrance is symptomatic of an emotionally heated debate and a fragile relationship between protagonists of different views.

The spirited attempt by the show host, Tim Modise, to create a sense of neutrality in the debate clearly marks the volatility of debates of this nature. The host later introduced the chairman of the South African Zionist Federation, Avron Krengel, and Bahrain based British Palestinian scholar and political activist Azam Tamimi both of whom he linked up on phone onto the programme without any prior warning to the listener at least in view of the earlier explanations made at the beginning of the show: 'We are going to talk to Avrom Krengel, Chairman of the South African Zionist Federation in a moment' (After Eight Debate, 6 January, 2009). The initial preponderance of Muslim guests who were likely to be seen, ab initio, as people who would defend the Palestinian position on the programme seemed to put

the show host on the spot making it imperative for him to attempt to convince the audience of his neutrality as well as that of the organization he represented:

> It's now 25 to nine and just to remind you that we did invite Debbie Mankowitz researcher with the South African Zionist Federation to be part of the panel discussion this morning and she pulled out this morning. We also made contact with the Israeli embassy who were going to participate in the discussion then they decided also not to take part and we had Avrom Krengel of the South African Zionist federation join us but could not stay on for longer than the time we had him on the air for about 5 to 10 minutes or so. So, for those who may think that we are running a biased discussion this morning we did go out of our way and we still encourage anyone who holds a different view to phone in and talk to us. (After Eight Debate, 6 January, 2009)

The need for the initial explanation seemed to be borne out of the contentious nature of the Palestinian crisis which deals with security and religion. These two domains often tend to draw a lot of emotion from listeners and participants such that it becomes almost imperative for the show host to absolve himself and the organization he represents of bias in the programme. In addition to this may be a kind of political strategizing on the part of the Zionist Federation to have a representation on the show only after it had run for some time. The fact that someone as senior as the chairman of the federation decided to come on a show from which the spokesperson of the same organization had pulled out suggested an attempt to tread with caution and watch the other party in a game that required careful maneuvering. In South Africa especially, the two groups in the Israeli-Gaza conflict are represented in the country's population. While the Palestine Solidarity Committee defends the interest of the Muslim population in South Africa, the South African Zionist Federation stands for the predominantly Jewish community. The composition of the discussion panel on the programme can therefore be said to be by affiliation. The actions by the show host in this instance were clearly indicative of an exercise of power in determining who is let in or who is excluded from the show and possibly at what point.

In a way, the whole idea of inviting guests to speak on a programme speaks to the politics of representation as well as the politics of inclusion and exclusion which characterize societies with diverse interest groups like we have in South Africa. In dealing with this question of inclusion and exclusion Dominic Abrams, Michael Hogg and Jose Marques argue that:

> We can characterize targets and sources of exclusion as either individuals or groups; the relationship contexts as ranging from transnational to interpersonal; and the dynamics as involving degrees of interdependence, material or symbolic resources, a temporal dimension, and as invoking motives that centre on opportunities or threats. Exclusion can arise in several forms or modes, ranging from ideological, communicative and purely cognitive (Abrams, Hogg and Marques, 2005: 3).

To a large extent, therefore, the people who get heard or the ones whose voices are allowed to come on air may depend to a large extent on the decisions taken by the show host or even the makers of the show who may be individuals or organizations beyond the host whose voice is heard as the moderator of the debate. Call screening is another process by which people may also be included or excluded in a talk show. This process involves the refusal to take a call or put a caller on air or the cutting off of a caller when the show hosts feels such a caller's contribution is no longer in line with the topic or violates the protocols to be observed on the show. This approach is usually rampant in situations of censorship or when very sensitive issues are bought up on talk shows. Usually calls are lined up and the host or the call screening assistant, as is the case with the two programmes here, may even speak to a caller before allowing them to go live on air. The idea is to gauge the mood of the caller or the sensitivity of his or her contribution before allowing the call on air. When observed critically, call screening becomes a strategy to manage the volatility of programmes especially when issues considered very sensitive are brought up for discussion. This kind of approach towards managing the shows strongly suggest that participation on the shows is staged in particular ways so that the producers can have what, in their own estimation, is a successful show.

On 'The Redi Direko Show', the idea of inclusion and exclusion, took a different form in the way the topic was presented to the audience. This is partly because of the presentation style of the host which is markedly different from that of Tim Modise on SAFM. The host merely suggested the Middle East conflict as a possible topic for discussion while allowing listeners to deviate from her suggested topic to raise any other issue of concern to them:

> I'll tell you what we would do; I have a lot of sms's on this issue. I am not surprised. The lines are going mad and there are some of the interesting views you've raised. We are going to be talking about them. This is an open line let me remind you which

> means whatever is on your mind if you like to introduce a different topic, a different subject, I'll be more than keen to hear from you on 0214460567 0118830702 …. (Redi Direko Show, 5 January, 2009)

This approach is different from that of Modise who introduced the issue as the sole topic for the day and began by informing the audience that informed commentators had taken on the same issue as well:

> Good morning and welcome again to the After Eight Debate. I'm Tim Modise and we are during the last hour of Am Live, we are going to talk about the Israel invasion of Gaza and we are asking whether it is justified? Many commentators have been talking about the disproportionate use of aggression and force in Gaza and these attacks have now claimed over 550 lives of Palestinians and in latest reports three Israeli soldiers died as a result of so called friendly fire. Now, we stay with the topic are Israeli operations in Gaza justified? (After Eight Debate, 6 January, 2009)

It is important to note at this point that the show host also exercises power to a large extent in orienting the listeners and callers towards particular issues or perspectives.

The fourth episode of 'The After Eight Debate' in the month of January dealt with the problem of natural disasters. This was sequel to the ravages caused by freak storms in KwaZulu-Natal early in the year. The loss of lives and property which attended the freak storm showed the potential of forces beyond the control of individuals and even the state in preventing crisis for both the self and the nation. In setting the tone for the discussion the show host Tim Modise said:

> The question we are asking this morning is whether our disaster management systems and early warning systems are effective. We are asking this question against the backdrop of 18 people getting killed as a result of freak storms in Kwazulu-Natal and reports that are suggesting that over four billion Rands of damage were caused to the agricultural sector or the agriculture of Kwazulu-Natal and to discuss this and other issues I'm joined on the programme by the Kwazulu Natal Premier, Sbu Ndebele, the Head of Disaster Management, George Kiliano and Climatologist at the Weather Bureau, Collin Anderson. (After Eight Debate, 8 January, 2009)

From the tone of the show host and callers, it is obvious that natural disasters like the one that happened in KwaZulu-Natal posed a threat to both the individual and the nation. One caller who identified himself as Makhanya from Durban presented his contribution in a sober tone while sympathizing with victims of the disaster as well as government for which he thought the burden of providing relief might be too heavy to bear alone. Makhanya said:

> Actually, I concur with you as to where will the people be moved to…. The intervention that I am thinking about is the insurance people, the insurance houses, how can they be brought to play a role here? … because the people here they have got two devastated churches here in our area, our church, two of them… I think the insurance houses must also be brought to the fore so that they can help us especially in the rural areas (After Eight Debate, 8 January, 2009).

The same kind of mood was pervasive in the contributions of many other callers on the day's show. In this instance there is a palpable public fear which obviously defines individuals and the territory which they regard as their nation. There is also a form of responsiveness to this public fear by the state. In fact, the presence of the Premier of the KwaZulu-Natal Province on the show underscores this response. In line with Cass Sunstein's argument this 'responsiveness is complemented by a commitment to deliberation' (2005:1).

The manifestations of different levels of fragility at both the individual and national levels are seen in the expression of anxieties during interactions such as we have during public debates in the media. In 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' various the various themes as indicated by topics brought up for discussion by the producers of the show point to a regime of fear in a society where injustices and agonies of the past are said to have given way to a fresh lease of life signposted by liberal democratic principles. The illustrations made here point to the potential of radio, and by extension the media generally, to call attention to tensions in society which need to be addressed to strengthen ties and engender confidence and greater loyalty to the nation and what it represents. Again, it is not during openly volatile events which also create vibrant media moments that fragility becomes a problem at the individual or national levels. One way of deflecting the terror of fragility on these shows however is the adoption of performance as a way of representation on radio talk shows either during open crisis or during 'quiet' moments with embedded or latent conflicts going on

among different groups in society. The next section of this chapter takes a look at performance and the performativity of participants' contributions on the two radio shows.

Performance, Performativity and the Mediation of Fragility

'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' are cast in the modes of dramatic performance and narratives. This 'dramaticality' is evident in the way in which the shows engage participants in the verbal exchanges that take place. There are various ways to look at performance depending on the disciplinary concern of the scholar interested in the term. In this vein, several scholars have tried to look at the concept with different critical lenses and have also emerged with positions which seek to further complicate the idea of performance. What can be said to be a general pattern, however, is the willingness of many scholars to admit the obvious link between performance and the assumption of a role other than one's own as evident in people's attempts to represent themselves and others.

Felicia Hughes-Freeland perceives performance as 'the techniques and technologies of the self\selves rather than the models of the text' (1998: 3). Linking performance to the question of agency Hughes-Freeland argues that 'agency does not reside in a specific group of performers who are separate from the audience of passive spectators' (Ibid: 8). This kind of linkage works well for radio talk shows where the audience becomes active and participatory in the programme. Making an analogy between performance and 'actual' events, she states that:

> In the case of actual events, if we focus on the formal ceremonial aspect of a public spectacle, an audience may be primarily observers in formal ceremonies; but in the surrounding activities and informal performances that make up a spectacle, the category of audience is not distinguishable from that of a participant: the audience is part of the spectacle, is itself spectacle, and its ways of participating—audience performances—may reconstruct the nature and meaning of the spectacle itself. (Hughes-Freeland, 1998: 9)

Performance can even be used to 'refer to all the activity of an individual which occurs during a period marked by his continuous presence before a particular set of observers and

which has influence on the observers' (Goffman, 2002: 53) During such performance Goffman argues, the individual self becomes a 'front'. 'Front, then, is an expressive equipment of a standard kind intentionally or unwittingly employed by the individual during his performance' (Ibid: 53). Goffman also attaches a serious significance to 'setting' in the staging or performance of the self. In radio talk shows, the setting basically gives the performer a sense of what kind of 'front' to externalize in order to achieve the kind of self representation he deems appropriate for the circumstances in which he finds himself. In most cases the contributions of participants including the hosts are enacted in performance as part of efforts, conscious or not, to either make the shows interesting or at least create an environment of conviviality on the sets of these shows. In discussing the possible ways in which talk shows might be staged, Andrew Tolston (2001) cites the example of the 1999 suspension of the two producers and one researcher of 'Venessa', a show on BBC for recruiting two strippers purporting to be feuding sisters from an entertainment agency to make the show interesting. Though the show was later rested, mainly as a result of this simulation, the lesson that such an incident offers in understanding talk shows is the tendency to rely on spectacle or the spectacular to retain audience for the shows.

Adopting a more pragmatic approach to understanding performance, Richard Bauman relates it to the question of identity. Bauman (2000: 1) describes performance as 'a situated, interactional, communicatively' motivated process often employed in the service of identity. In the light of this service to identity, Bauman justifies the link he draws between performance and identity with the conceptualisation of identity as 'an emergent construction, the situated outcome of a rhetorical and interpretive process in which interactants make situationally motivated selections from socially constituted repertoires of identitfficational and affiliational resources and craft these semiotic resources into identity claims for presentation to others' (Bauman, 2000: 1). The importance of performance comes out more clearly in Kelly Askew's contention that 'performance provides an easy entry into the negotiations and contests between various Selves and Others over representation' (1998: 1030). So, like Bauman, Askew locates performance within the purview of mediation aimed towards representational politics and positioning. Kelly Askew (2002) also alludes to the spontaneity of performance which makes it a thing to consider when dealing with spontaneously expressive forms of popular culture like radio talk shows.

The amount of interest generated by a show is often crucial in the way people perceive it as a successful show. This perception of success is very important to show hosts, their producers as well as the media establishment as it constitutes in part to the rating of the show and eventually the station itself. In answering a question about the host's perception of the show's success 'After Eight Debate' host Tim Modise suggested in the interview I conducted with him that the show must be sees as interesting in the way it captures the imagination of both its consumers and producers. For a show to be considered successful, in his estimation:

> It would be if I have a guest, the amount of involvement, the level of involvement on the part of the guest, the spread of knowledge, the depth of knowledge of the guest and the enthusiastic participation on the part of the callers for instance and the quality of their opinions and contributions in the show as well as on my part the level of preparation. But you do know it; you do know that today you've definitely had a great show. You can also tell when you are not having a good day. And I've had a few episodes where I felt the guest was killing the show actually. (Tim Modise Interview 15 April, 2011).

In the event of having to make the show an interesting piece with considerable audience appeal some measure of performance or theatricality are usually introduced by both the host and participants. What can be deduced from the statement by Modise is that, for the show producers, the dramatic element in the show can come from any of the participants. In spicing up talk shows, therefore, producers often go for interesting or flamboyant guests while they also try to be jovial or even at times comic in their interactions with people on the shows.

One example of such instances of trying to stage a performance on the show can be seen in 'The Redi Direko Show' aired on 15th January 2009. In the show devoted to the issue of security ad law enforcement in South Africa, Redi had taken a look at the good example set by the KwaZulu Natal Province in the way traffic order was maintained during the December 2008 Christmas holidays. The conversation between the host and one of her callers identified as Zama from Hyde Park reflected the use of comical performance in dealing with a serious situation:

> **Redi**: Zama in Hyde Park, were you in KZN over the holidays?
> **Zama**: [talking to someone else another telephone line] 874178...

Redi : Zama whoa, whoa, whoa. Zama, good morning...

Zama: [finishes his conversation] ok, boetie.

Redi: Zama is on the phone with someone else and we are saying hello to him on radio. Zama.

Zama: Hi Redi

Redi: Are you giving out your number to people on the air? We caught your conversation; we caught your dirty conversation.

Zama; [Laughs] Sorry man, Redi how are you?

Redi: I'm fine. Ok, what's on your mind?

Zama: It was my first time going to Durban, you know. I was very impressed with the police visibility on the road.... I wish all provinces will do the same.

Redi: Ok Zama. I'm going to let you go so you can finish your dirty talk with whoever you were talking to.

Zama: [laughs] Ok, Redi. Thank you.

Redi: Bye bye. That's Zama in Hyde Park. (Redi Direko Show, 15 January, 2009).

In the above conversation the show host picks on the absent-mindedness of the caller, who probably had been kept waiting on the line for some time, and was attending to something else oblivious of the fact that his call had been put on, to create a dramatic 'scene' on the show. In this kind of scenario, the right tone has to be used to avoid a misinterpretation of harmless jokes on radio. Though Redi Direko uses harsh expressions like 'dirty conversation' and 'dirty talk' to refer to Zama's action, they both laugh it off as a comic relief on the show. Also, Zama, in spite of the light-heartedness of his contribution on the show, slips in a serious point about the quality of traffic police in KwaZulu Natal.

The kind of dramatisation evident in the conversation between Redi and Zama is not always initiated by show hosts alone. At times they are initiated by guests, callers or listeners sending sms or email. One example of this is noticeable in the sms sent by Ahmed on the day's programme: 'MEC for President! Well done Mr Cele on the Road Link Issue. That's from Ahmed' (Redi Direko Show, 15 January, 2009). The way the show ends between Redi

and the KwaZulu Natal MEC for Trasnport and Community Safety, Bheki Cele[27], who was guest on the programme reflects kind of interactive comic display typical of these shows:

> **Redi**: MEC, what hat are you wearing today? The last time I saw you, you were wearing a black hat with purple trimming. What colour are you wearing today?
>
> **Cele**: You see, I have a problem with these hats. They are too few. They are only forty- two. I don't know. Hahahaah….They are only forty-two. I don't know this colour but it's between orange and yellow. There is one thing I know about it, I love it.
>
> **Redi**: You love it. Enjoy. I'm really really delighted that you spoke to us....
>
> **Cele**: I've got several friends when they are caught on the road block they phone me. They say they are in trouble. And I usually speak to the officer and say bring the phone you let him go, you are fired. And I tell him I've spoken to the officer; we'll see what we can do about it.
>
> **Redi**: [laughs] Oh... KwaZulu Natal's MEC for transport, Bheki Cele. I like the sound of him; I really, really do. (Redi Direko Show, 15 January, 2009).

Just like the first example, the playful banter around Bheki Cele's celebrity hats creates a different kind of atmosphere which represents a mediation of the reality that the show seeks to initially represent by picking on crime and traffic rule violations (with the possibility of increasing death rates through road carnage) as the major issues for discussion. Perhaps, there might not yet be an emergency and no need to really panic about anything, but the light-hearted disposition characteristic of talk shows in moments of tranquility should not be mistaken as representative of a complete absence of tensions within society. With the kind of comic enactment taking place on the show, the tendency is to assume a normal relaxed atmosphere in spite of the fact that the discussion of the day is about something as serious as crime and road travel. Such a strategy, as Ihab Saloul (2008) argues, mixes perplexity with attraction in popular cultural forms. Performance, therefore, becomes a salient 'mode of discursive practice' (Bauman, 2004: 8) through which these shows address their publics.

[27] Bheki Cele was later appointed National Police Commissioner for South Africa as 'General Bheki Cele'.

More importantly, the two talk shows thrive on improvisation which is a very important tactical element in popular cultural forms. Improvisation usually involves the creation of 'a scene on stage, without any prearranged dialogue, with no character assignments, and no plot outline. Everything about the performance is created collectively by the actors, on stage in front of the audience' (Sawyer, 2000: 151). This is what Margaret Drewal (1991: 43) describes as 'moment-to –moment maneuvering' in performance. In the verbal performance forms, such as radio talk shows, improvisation helps to save the day when structured productions fail to go according to plan. In such instances improvisation 'is a *contingent* performance, with each moment emerging, unpredictably, from the prior flow of the performance' (Sawyer, 1996: 270). The show host at this point needs to know what to do or say to be able to maintain the plausibility and coherence of the show. It is important to note here that live improvisation, which is on display in radio talk shows, may even require group efforts in moments during crucial moments when the flow does not appear to be falling in line[28]. Improvisation is therefore, in the words of Sawyer, 'a *collective* phenomenon' (Ibid: 270) where the co-operation of other participants become crucial in achieving desired objectives. This usually involves a lot of understanding and negotiation because as Sawyer further argues:

> In every conversation, we negotiate all of the properties of the dramatic frame—where the conversation will go, what kind of conversation we are having, what our social relationship is, when it will end. In fact, improvisational theater dialogue can best be understood as a special case of everyday conversation (Sawyer, 2000: 151).

Closely related to the idea of performance is the concept of performativity which provides a frame for the staging of different aspects of the self on radio talk shows. Though popularised by gender scholar, Judith Butler, performativity has its roots in Austin's (1962) concept of 'performative utterances'. It signifies more or less a staging of events or actions through speeches and utterances with little regard for the veracity of actions implied by such utterances. The performance metaphor for speech, which performativity draws from, needs to be understood against the background of Goffman's theorising of 'life itself [as] a dramatically enacted thing' (2002: 62) where signification becomes important in both the

[28] A week of observation of the production of 'The After Eight Debate' at SAFM shows constant interactions between the show host and the producer in the course of airing the programme.

creation and deciphering of meaning. This is also closely related to identity and its construction as pointed out by Saloul. In Saloul's words:

> What animates the interconnection between "performance" and "performativity", then, is the understanding of performance as an act of theatrical enactment that has at the same time the performative power to trigger new signifiers and meanings beyond the present act itself and through these, a change of identity. (Saloul, 2008: 8)

Participatory spectatorship is a crucial feature of both 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' as any member of the audience can become a participant or actor in the show at any point. As Henry Jenkins puts it, 'participatory culture, contrasts with older notions of passive media spectatorship. Rather than talking about media producers and consumers as occupying separate roles we might now see them as participants who interact with each other according to a new set of rules that none of us fully understands' (2006: 3). This implies a convergence of roles as well as agency on the part of both producers and consumers of radio talk shows.

Approaching performance from a similar angle, Marvin Carlson argues that 'the pretending to be someone other than oneself' is a major attribute of performance. This way, performance is further seen as a human activity or 'behaviour consciously separated from the person doing it' (2004: 3). Making use of Richard Schechner's notion of 'restored behaviour, Carlson further contends that 'performance [is] not [necessarily] involved with the display of skills but rather with a certain distance between 'self' and behaviour, analogous to that between an actor and the role this actor plays on stage' (Ibid: 3). The idea of role playing points to the potential of a staging of identity which calls for a careful reading of texts generated by production processes in the media because the lives which produce such media content have got certain other factors determining their participation in public space. As Carlson further puts it:

> The recognition that our lives are structured according to repeated and socially sanctioned modes of behavior raises the possibility that all human activity could potentially be considered as "performance", or at least all activity carried out with a consciousness of itself. The difference between doing and performing, according to this way of thinking, would seem not to be in the frame of theatre versus real life but

> in an attitude—we may do actions unthinkingly, but when we think about them, this introduces a consciousness that gives them a quality of performance.' (Carlson, 2004a: 70)

So, we can say that the performance that takes place on talk shows is a form of social performance which shows the distancing acts of participants as they seek to produce narratives which enunciate their power positions and world views. These positions and views when espoused in the public sphere tend to have some form of impact on the public perception of the individual. The talk shows discussed here operate as a public platform in the public sphere where participants need to be mindful of the way they represent themselves and others. The need to maintain a positive perception of the self may then be said to be a motivating factor for the acts of staging the self noticeable in the talk shows examined here. Beyond this, however, evidence from both 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show', has shown that there is much contestation for space in the radio talk shows selected for the study. In situations like this the tensions generated by heated debates coupled with the desire to emerge the most convincing of the participants make guests or in some cases callers to put up a staging of the self which calls for more circumspection on the part of the audience. This is made clearer by the way participants try to make their voices heard as they feature on the two programmes.

The issue of crime was mentioned again on January 7, 2009 edition of 'The Redi Direko show'. One of the callers, Frank from Cape Town, tried to link crime to corruption in public office. For Frank:

> …anybody in public service prospecting in the ruling party what I'd like to see is that they step forward and say look we are entrusted with people's money essentially and in order for you to trust me they should go either monthly or bimonthly and then we know where we stand, we know that we are dealing with honest people. I must say especially we are not going to have many politicians left because by the nature of politics it's not an honest business. (Redi Direko Show, 7 January, 2009)

In Frank's view therefore there is no way government can check crime on the streets without, in the first instance, combating corruption which implicates political office holders. With the

different forms of arguments and even accusations taking place the struggle to be heard therefore marks the contention for space in the public arena generated by these talk shows.

It is important to note that most radio talk shows like the ones on which this study is focused, are live programmes and as such share the characteristics of what Nazari, Khojasteh and Hasbullah (2009) call 'portable programmes.' Though the immediacy and updated information available on live programmes may attract more listeners to them, their liveness or portability obviously imposes some constraints on the producers of such shows. One of such constraints is how to replace guests who pull out of the show on the day of broadcast, for instance, as is the case with 'The After Eight Debate' here. In some instances, it becomes perhaps easier for the producers or the show host to avoid the invitation of guests, like Redi Direko does in her open line belt, and rely on callers who set the pace and steer the discussion. This approach may not be appropriate for all seasons as apathy of callers in some instances may mean a bad show where there are no guests to speak on a particular issue.

Further evidence of self staging is seen in the attempt made at a domestication of the audience. In various episodes of the two programmes, some guests often direct their answers to the show host rather than address the generality of listeners who expectedly should be their target. Ronnies Kastrils, for instance displays this kind of bringing the audience closer through the show host who is with him in the studio especially when he responds to questions posed by Tim Modise: 'Tim, you know for us we need to look at our own history. We know what it's like to be under the boot, under the crush….' (After Eight Debate, 6 January, 2009). The same technique is employed by Nathi Mthethwa during his appearance on the show on January 5. Similar instances are recorded on Redi's show as the show hosts are called upon to appreciate the argument or positions of these participants on the shows. In reality, the audiences of the shows are far flung across the country, but instead of referring to the entire audience speakers choose to address the host as if he or she is the one who needed to be convinced on the matter being discussed.

There is also a great amount of theatrics noticeable in the way language is used by participants on the shows as they contrive effects in their speech either to draw sympathy from the audience or to persuade people to their side of the debate. A good example of this is seen in the debate on the Middle East crisis and it is a technique employed by both camps in the discourse. While trying to show the helplessness of Hamas and Palestinians in the crisis

for instance, Ronnie Kastrils, in response to the argument of Avrom Krengel which seeks to portray Hamas as a recalcitrant party in the strife says:

> You know, Mr Modise, he's talking here as an analogy of a heavily armed man bursting into your home killing the women and children, holding you to ransom, you are pleading you are on the ground the gun is at your head and he is saying that you must give in you must give up. There's no way you can find any solution to that. So, my view joining what is increasingly the outcry in the world is that the assailant in Gaza must get out. This is the immediate need to save the people of Gaza, that Israel must withdraw immediately out of Gaza and secondly this merciless siege must be lifted and thirdly the occupation of the West Bank going on since 1967 must come to an end. (After Eight Debate, 6 January, 2009)

As can be seen from the above example, invited speakers at times engage in a lot of theatricality and the deployment of hyperbole in order to drive home their points or make their passions sound like superior arguments.

In the same programme, the Chief Rabbi, Warren Goldstein betrays some level of ambivalence as he makes a comparison between the levels of violence inflicted by each of the two sides:

> I think that the most important thing to start off by saying is that when human beings suffer no matter who they are and where they are from and what religion, colour or creed, it's a human tragedy and I personally I'm moved by the suffering on all sides and I think that's something we do all have to acknowledge. On the other hand there is a moral clarity here, the two sides one of whom target civilians and that is Hamas targets civilians. Their specific aim of launching more than 6000 rockets from Gaza into Southern Israel has been targeting civilians and that was post disengagement. Israel pulls out of Gaza, withdraws, all of Gaza becomes due free. In response to that instead of building something on an independent territory they launch rockets more than 6000 rockets launched with the specific intention of murdering as many civilians as possible. Israel by contrast has gone out of its way to keep civilian casualties down…. I mean when the allied forces bombed Nazi Germany 50000 civilians were killed. So, it's an absolute lie, its just rubbish to say that they are targeting civilians.

> They are not at all. On the contrary, Israel's war effort here is seriously hampered by its concerns for civilians. (After Eight Debate, 6 January, 2009)

There is no evidence in the show that any of the two speakers on this programme had been involved in the actual events in the Middle East. Yet, the authority with which they speak and the empathy they seek to draw in the course of the programmes suggest a greater knowledge of the motives and plans of the main or real actors in the strife. On 'The Redi Direko Show', dealing with the same issue, a caller who identifies himself as Daniel engages in a similar display:

> It is Jews against Muslims, and this is why I find anti-Semitism will always remain until we resolve the hate between Muslims and Muslims. Jews don't hate Muslims, you ask me why the gates were closed in Gaza. Every time Israel opens those gates, a suicide bomber comes and blows himself up, kills Moslems, kills Christians, kills Gazans, kills Palestinians and Israelis. And you open the doors, it's like inviting somebody to lunch, he blows himself up and it sounds like, ok invite me too, I'll want to blow myself up also. Ok, the proportion to it, I promise you there are more Muslim-Muslim killings than any other, more even than in natural disasters. They even kill at mosques. (Redi Direko Show, 5 January, 2005).

Perhaps as a way of gaining some form of privilege, Daniel starts his contribution by asking the show host: 'Hi, will you give me 75% of the time you gave that gentleman?' The 'gentleman' he refers to is the previous caller, Saliu from Randburg, who spends a lot of time defending the Palestinian position and concluding that the attack by Israel shows the use of 'disproportional violence'.

The staging of identities through mediation also manifests in the way callers are identified on talk shows. In most cases, first names, or even acronyms are used by callers and listeners who send sms's onto the shows. Names like Faizal from Mayfair, Mohammed from Cape Town, and Prophet O. J. from Mafikeng are used on these shows. The point to note here is the ambivalence of identities and the possibility of a play upon the anonymity inherent in the use of names which do not reflect the full names of participants on the shows. The pertinent question here is whether the real self of the participant on a show is the self that is represented when names other than the full names of such persons are used for the purpose of

identification. Self identification is crucial to the project of identity formation just the same way a person's name may suggest numerous other possibilities in terms of characteristics of identity. For instance, while the name Daniel may suggest a Christian or Jewish male participant, Mohammed or Ahmed will suggest a male Muslim participant. Since there are no means by which the audience may confirm the genuineness of the identities with which contributors invest themselves, the talk show can be said to be prone to a process of self identification that makes it difficult for the listener to come to firm conclusions about the character of participants. This is part of the 'staging' which fundamentally defines radio talk shows. In other words, the fluidity of the radio talk show itself gives room for a lot of possibilities including different kinds of staging to take place.

In both of the shows, we notice a compression of time and space in the introduction of the Middle East crisis as a subject for debate in South African media. This compression is further manifested in the fact that none of the three guests on 'The After Eight Debate' for the particular day in question is physically present in the studio as all of them are connected on the phone just like callers contributing on the show. More instructive in this case is the introduction of Azam Tamimi who speaks from his base in Bahrain also via the telephone. Apart from the fact that Tamimi is a well know commentator on the Middle East crisis and other issues affecting Muslims across the world he is deemed to be able to offer some form of proximate experience since he is based in the Middle East where the actual events take place. The implication of this can be better understood against the backdrop of the overwhelming influence of globalization on politics and culture across the globe. This influence results in what Ulrich Beck (cited in Silverstone, 2007: 14) terms 'an inclusive plural membership' of the cosmopolitan world willed into being by globalization. The specificity of multiculturalism in South Africa may be used to rationalize the choice made by the show hosts, just as it is becoming a common slogan in the mouth of the protagonists of the new world order that everyone should see the entire world as occupying one mould containing diverse cultures which necessarily impact on one another. As attractive as this argument might be, however, the subordination of the cultures and politics of the global South under the hegemony of those of the global North still leave room for a mutual suspicion that tends to question motives for the propagation of such ideologies of inclusion. In other words there is a way in which the questions of hegemony are involved in the process of identity creation at both the local and global levels.

Conclusion

This chapter set out to examine the staging of the self in response to the latent fragility represented by radio talk shows in South Africa. The argument so far has pointed to the numerous difficulties that dog the path of mediated identities as represented by cultural productions made available through the media such as radio. The characteristics of the public sphere which talk shows present to the listener and participants make the form of representations of reality that take place during public discourse to become mediated in particular types of ways. These representations both of the self and the other, which also draw participants into different camps as protagonists and antagonists, are aimed at achieving certain objectives which will in the long run bolster the image of each of the participants on these shows. There are expectations regarding the personalities of people in society. In the same vein people also habour preconceived notions about certain individuals or certain identities which tend to help the self image or detract from it. In order to either debunk prejudices or reinforce positive stereotypes about their selfhood, participants in 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' make strident efforts to paint a picture of what kind of identities they wish for themselves. Since most of this involves a staging of the self the sense of the different selves that the audience gets on these programmes can be said to be products of artificial perspectives which require a closer look for a better appreciation of identities in the mediated public sphere. Such scrutiny is likely to yield the understanding that participants on these shows are keen on using rhetoric to exaggerate a point of view in order to sound more convincing in their arguments and positions.

Even in the quietude that seems to pervade power relations in post-apartheid South Africa, just as in any post conflict situation, there are underlying insecurities that may threaten the self and the nation. This is because the ongoing transition in the country as Ari Sitas notes 'has its own logic of fragmentation and dis-empowerment' (1998: 37). In the event of such insecurities, the media and specifically radio is able to use talk shows like 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' to constantly call attention to the difficulty of co-existence which is often the origin of the disintegration of the self and the nation. As scholars like Nhamo Mhirirpiri, among others have argued 'identities are 'fictive', 'performative' and all narratives about them are constructs' (Mhirirpiri, 2010: 289). This fictiveness of identity as well as its performativity are evident in the structuring of discursive practices on radio talk shows in contemporary South Africa.

The space of the radio talk show can be seen as a performative sphere in which participants constantly strive hard to be what or who they wish to be seen to be. The implication of this is that different categories of participants on these shows exercise one form of agency or the other as the performance put up by others on the show is in the words of Bauman (2004: 9) 'a mode of communication display' which requires 'the collaborative participation' of co-participants to be a successful 'interactive accomplishment.' In other words, it is the willingness of the participants to silence certain aspects of the self that combines to produce the kind of shows exhibited by the producers.

The analysis done in this chapter has used much material from the 'quiet' month of data collected for this research. This was done in order to show that there could really be underlying tensions even when there are no serious events going on. But what happens on these shows when significant events come? How do people negotiate their identities in moments of nationally significant events which call for contestation for space and relevance? Attempts will be made to provide answers to these questions in the succeeding chapters of this research which deal with data from two crucial moments in recent South African history: the xenophobic violence of 2008 and the 2009 presidential elections.

CHAPTER FOUR

CREMATING THE NATION: DEBATING XENOPHOBIC VIOLENCE ON 'THE AFTER EIGHT DEBATE' AND 'THE REDI DIREKO SHOW'[29]

Introduction

This chapter sets out to advance two major claims. The first is that the numerous contestations going on through radio talk show discussions of the xenophobic violence in South Africa in 2008 may well be a reflection of a heated socio-political environment brought about by the constant battle for citizenship and belonging. In other words, beyond the touted inclusiveness of the 'new' South Africa, there are borders which define how different people may lay claim to citizenship and the privileges associated with the status. These borders come to the fore through the different understandings of citizenship—a concept that has assumed very complex dimensions with shifting definitions over time and discipline—displayed during radio talk show discussions around xenophobic violence in South Africa. The chapter intends to adopt the idea of citizenship proposed by Etienne Balibar where the concept is to be 'understood...in its broad sense as cultural initiative or effective presence in the public space (the capacity to be "listened to" there)' (Balibar, 1988: 724). The sense of citizenship advanced by Balibar appears to separate citizenship from nationality and this chapter intends to use this broad approach in order to theorise citizenship as a major idea in the determination of identity especially in situations involving interactions among different categories of people or social groups (see also Bosniak, 1998; Herr, 2008; Young, 1989). The argument in the chapter will therefore avoid a sacrosanct equation of citizenship with nationality while at the same time taking cognisance of the politicisation of citizenship and discourses around it in both the academy and policy spheres.

The second claim is that the popular discourses about different categories of the other and the techniques employed by participants (callers, invited guests and the hosts) on radio talk shows point to the ways in which popular imaginations about the self and the other contribute to the creation of identity in the public sphere. These two claims are intended to help us grapple productively with the paradox of a conflagration of immense magnitude which flared

[29] The reference to cremation in this title is for metaphoric effect. It is drawn out of the extensive use of the metaphor of fire in the reporting of the 2008 xenophobic violence in South Africa by both local and foreign media.

up in an acclaimed 'rainbow nation', proclaiming a humanistic agenda of communitarian inclusivity or what is known in local philosophical parlance as *ubuntu*. By analysing the way debates about the xenophobic violence of May 2008 were conducted in 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show', the chapter intends to create a better understanding of the social and political milieu that different participants attempted to respond to during the period while pointing out various discursive strategies with which participants on these talk shows positioned themselves in the public arena. Such positioning, the chapter intends to argue, impacts in the long run on both individual and collective identity. Much of the analysis will be done by examining the various strategies employed by participants on these two talk shows in order to wade through the complicated politics of representational challenges visible in the debates around xenophobia in South Africa. In carrying out its analyses, the chapter relies on material from episodes of the two programmes which discussed the violent xenophobic attacks in the townships of South Africa as well as interviews with invited guests and the host of one of the programmes selected for this study.

Post-apartheid Utopia, Dystopia and Xenophobia in South Africa

The first democratic elections that took place in South Africa in 1994 did not only place the country on the global map of countries with a modernist approach to the organisation of the affairs of their people, it also redefined South Africa as the bastion of majority rule. In addition to this is the way in which the democratic transition in the country has come to be seen as an enviable miracle achieved through largely peaceful negotiations between the two major racial divides which had hitherto defined power relations in the country. The excitement with which the world welcomed the 'new' South Africa into the community of democratised nations raised the hope about the former apartheid enclave serving as a beacon for democratic integration as well as lessons in peaceful transition processes for the rest of Africa in particular and the entire world at large. For some, the transition without bloodshed was indeed a 'miracle' which deserves emulation in other climes with similar situations as South Africa has had to grapple with prior to its transition to an inclusive liberal democracy (Guelke, 1996; Waldmeir, 1997; Jackson, 1998; Ramutsindela, 2001, Sparks, 2003; Jervis, 2005). As John Jackson puts it, for instance, 'in many ways the most remarkable fact was that a negotiated, and generally peaceful, transformation of South African politics occurred at all' (1998: 3).

The miracle discourse seems to have evolved from a statement made by South Africa's first black president Nelson Mandela after casting his vote in the 1994 elections. The relative ease and orderliness which characterised the process in spite of the initial 'grip of the fear of violent conflagration' (van Kessel, 2000: 51) apparently prompted President Mandela's description of the transformation as 'a small miracle' (van Kessel, 2000; Ashforth, 2003). The idea of the miracle, it is important to stress here, stems from the way in which the new South Africa overcame, at least for that moment described by Waldmeir as 'an event of great national catharsis' (1997: 1), the challenge of 'how to invent a new democratic nation from the ruins of a state built on institutionalised injustice' (Ibid: 3). This 'rhetoric of divine intervention' did not only change the image of South Africa across the world, it also became a pull factor for increased migration to the country especially by people from neighbouring Southern African countries and the rest of the continent. The South African 'miracle' like any other improbable extraordinary event was bound to attract people from far and near as a result of the sheer spectacle which such events constitute. The will to rush to see this new enclave which has suddenly defied predictions by embracing a new political culture should therefore be understood as the natural reaction to awesomeness. In addition to this, trade seems to have continued to expand making South Africa a major economic hub in the continent with perceived greater economic opportunities which, expectedly, resulted in the migration of more people in search of such opportunities. The flow of capital and labour to the 'new' South Africa no doubt implies a kind of multicultural mix in the demography of the country particularly in the cosmopolitan urban centres where most economic activities take place.

In the euphoria of the 'miracle' it is important to take note of the difficulty with which success stories can ever be sustained. Quite often, nations which record perceived miraculous success have an uphill task keeping the tempo of desired progress. It is perhaps in realisation of the difficulty of the continuity of triumphalism that Waldmeir further remarks that 'history provides few enough examples of the triumph of common sense over ethnicity, or religion, or the myriad other forces which divide human populations; how rare the opportunities to savour what Nelson Mandela calls "the poetry of the triumph of the oppressed"' (1997: 2). What many people had expected was that with the release of Nelson Mandela from twenty seven years of incarceration by the white minority government and the triumph of the black dominated African National Congress at the multiparty elections held in 1994 it was well

with the soul of South Africa and a new 'rainbow nation' was perpetually born. Events since the enthronement of the democratic order, however, seem to cast shadows of doubt over an unquestioning acceptance of any proposition of complete transformation or even a complete break from the past in the history of the country.

Rising poverty, poor social services and unyielding inequality continue to point to a persistence of the legacy of the past in the 'new' nation. The failures of expectation were also compounded by a drastic change in patterns of immigration into South Africa which consequently altered the landscape of citizenship of the country. Different categories of immigrants continued to move into South Africa after the democratic transformation of the country. While some skilled professionals from a few Western countries, Asia and neighbouring African countries moved into South Africa, secured formal employments and lived in the suburban parts of the cities, there was also an influx of not-too-skilled individuals especially from neighbouring SADC countries, as well as refugees and asylum seekers mainly from troubled African states. These less skilled individuals, refugees and asylum seekers lived mainly among the almost equally less privileged South African citizens in the townships, decaying city centres and informal settlements where basic services and amenities still remain serious issues till date. The identity of 'foreigner' in South Africa is therefore not stable based on the different categories of migrants coming into the country. Similarly, the challenges faced by the different categories also vary depending on what side of the social spectrum they have to interact with on a daily basis.

In May 2008, South Africa was in the news globally as a result of xenophobic attacks on foreign nationals resident in the country. The violence left over sixty people dead, several wounded and thousands displaced. The victims of this violence were mainly African immigrants from neighbouring countries. The print, electronic and new media within and outside the country were awash with stories and images of this heinous act against foreign residents most of whom were in the country legally. Perhaps the most disturbing of the images circulated in the media about this violence was the picture of what was generally referred to as 'the burning man' or 'the flaming man'. This picture showed a Mozambican, later identified as thirty-five year old Ernesto Alfabeto Nhamauve, who was captured at Ramaphosa Township, doused in fuel and set ablaze by his captors during the attacks. Ernesto's plight, gory and pitiable as it was, served to draw global attention to what was going on in South Africa at the time. It seemed to ingrain the reality of the horror of

xenophobia in global consciousness with the attendant widespread condemnation typical of such barbarisms. It also perhaps jolted the government which now saw the need to be more decisive in showing a resolve to put an end to the attacks rather than the initial complacency and noncommittal appeals for restraint and tolerance in spite of the hysteria that attended the actual act of xenophobia itself as well as its mediations across different media platforms.

The debates conducted on both 'The After Eight Debate' and the 'The Redi Direko Show' on the xenophobic violence can be said to revolve around forms of discursive construction of both individual and national identities. In examining how identities of the self and the 'other' as well as South African national identity are discursively constructed on these two talk shows, this chapter relies on the discourse-historical approach in critical discourse analysis (Kendall, 2007; Reisigl and Wodak, 2009; Sahin, 2011; Wodak et al, 2009). This approach which has been put forward by the Vienna School of Discourse Analysis 'combines historical, social-economic-political and linguistic perspectives to identify the relationship between texts and social practices' (Sahin, 2011: 585). It is premised on the understanding that 'institutional and social contexts shape or affect discursive acts' (Ibid: 585). It is then in this respect that there will be attempts to relate the historical, social, economic as well as political dynamics of contemporary South African society to the way participation is set up and the way representations of self and other become mediated in both 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show.'

This way, there will be a kind of integrated approach in trying to understand the contributions of participants on these programmes and how these contributions reflect the reality of individual statuses and the identity of the 'rainbow nation'. As Michael Billig has argued, 'a critical approach demands more than an interactional analysis of language acts: it requires an analysis of ideology. Because what is left unsaid can be as ideologically important as what is said, (Billig, 2006: 17). This critical approach seeks to eliminate the potential deficiency inherent in classical conversation analysis which focuses purely on what is said; having nothing to do with what is unsaid. In other words, the analysis will pay attention to both what people say and the silences (what is repressed or left unsaid) and how these come together to give a sense of the peculiar challenges of self fashioning going on in the two radio talk shows. It is important to point out here, however, that while the available content (what is actually said on these shows) is treated as the main text to be dealt with, the silences are dealt with as subtexts of the discourses emerging during deliberations on these shows.

Popular Mediations of Xenophobia

The popular discourse circulating in the South African public sphere about non-nationals of the country often reinforce a kind of difference that signals discomfort and distancing. This is noticeable across various spectra but is often more pronounced in the townships and informal settlements where a squeezing neoliberal economy seems to have left the local population with no choice other than to struggle with immigrants living among them for limited resources and opportunities. The discourses of discomfort and distancing are noticeable in the use of derogatory expression like 'alien', 'illegal alien' and '*makwerekwere*' to refer to immigrants from other African countries. Interestingly, the use of such terms was not limited to the township as some sections of the media, especially tabloids, also made use of them in the course of reporting events involving non-nationals of South Africa. A clear example of this is the *Daily Sun*'s constant use of the word 'alien' which was eventually challenged through a protest to the Press Ombudsman by the Media Monitoring Project (MMP) and the Consortium of Refugees and Migrants in South Africa (CoRMSA). Though the Ombudsman ruled in favour of the *Daily Sun*, the paper did not wait for the outcome of the appeal filed by the two bodies to the Press Appeals Panel before seeking a settlement.

Some of the headlines carried by the *Daily Sun* in the Month of May 2008 prompting the MMP/CoRMSA challenge included:

> "They wait for dark before they attack! Aliens use muthi to steal our Cattle!" (Friday May 9, 2008 p.11)
> "It's war on aliens! 20 bust for attacks!" (Tuesday May13, 2008 p.4)
> "Cops said I was an alien! Homeboy angry after jail horror (Wednesday May 14, 2008 p.1)
> "War against aliens! Thousands forced to flee Alex" (Wednesday May 14, 2008 p.2)
> "Aliens: The truth! *Daily Sun* tells why Alex exploded" (Thursday May 15, 2008 p.1)
> "Alex aliens want to go home" (Thursday May 15, 2008 p.2)
> "Blood and flames! Aliens killed and injured as new attacks stoke flames of hatred" (Monday May 19, 2008 p. 3)
> "Rampage! 13 aliens dead as angry flames of hatred spread!" (Monday May 19, 2008 p.1)

The Alien Terror!; Battleground: Images of war in the streets!" (Tuesday May 20, 2008 p.4)

"We're leaving… with nothing! – The alien terror!" (Wednesday May 21, 2008 p.3)

The *Daily Sun* is the largest daily newspaper in South Africa in terms of circulation figures. As at 2010 the tabloid, which was launched in 2002 and was aimed at the black working class (Wasserman, 2008), had a daily circulation figure of 513, 291 beating the *Daily Star* and the *Sowetan* which also have considerable appeal among the same demographics (Steenveld and Sterilitz, 2010). It's representation of immigrants by constantly referring to them as 'aliens' has a potential of creating identity divides especially when such representation is considered against the background of the less literate readership served by the paper. In addition to this, there is a noticeable atmosphere of discomfort unease and mockery defining relationships between the local population and immigrants in the townships judging from the negativity of most of the headlines above. The strained relation is further carried to the representational level in *Daily Sun*'s choice and insistence on the use of the word 'alien' in virtually all stories involving non-nationals. The kind of representation that the media adopt in dealing with categories of people especially those who are already disadvantaged in one way or the other matters a great deal. Where there are existing tensions, there are ways in which media representations may reinforce already existing prejudices. In the case of South Africa such prejudices which lead to tensions have moved gradually from the underground to the limelight where they are given expression in violent forms.

As Francis Nyamnjoh argues, 'accelerated mobility and increased uncertainty are generating mounting tensions fuelled by autonomy-seeking difference' (2007: 74) across Africa in recent times. Though Nyamnjoh's argument sees the dynamics of such tensions 'play into the hands of reactionary forces eager to cash in politically and ideologically [on such tensions] by posing as legitimate champions of the interests of their unsettled nationals or ethnic kin' (Ibid: 74) there are instances of wider more organised expressions of such conflicts thus raising questions about the safety of mobile individuals who find themselves in exceedingly bounded spaces. In some cases, the institutions of the state which ordinarily should offer reprieve become complicit in the event of inscribing difference. The prerogative to grant citizenship is seen ordinarily as lying within the purview of the powers of the state. In other words the state manufactures citizenship and avails whoever it pleases with such official belonging.

In the same vein there are mechanisms of power with which such citizenship granted by the state may be revoked. In most cases the powers to grant or deny any form of membership of the political community is often codified in immigration policies and laws as well as specified statutes on how to become the citizen of a country. In exercising its powers, the body language of the state and its institutions become quite significant especially in the way they deal with individuals and groups whose claim to belonging are not determined by ancestry. In a way, the state as has been observed in South Africa may itself, in the course of exercising its power of dispensing citizenship, inadvertently manufacture xenophobia through certain practices that create dichotomy in the way they relate to different categories of citizens (Neocosmos 2010; Nyamnjoh 2010; Landau, 2008). With such stratified ways of dealing with individuals in the country, it soon becomes apparent that it is not enough to just be South African or live in the country, there is the additional need to be South African in a particular way and even possibly exercise South African citizenship in certain localised manners. The potential danger of such deliberate or inadvertent acts from the state and its agents is underscored by the argument of Manisha Sinha and Des Gasper that:

> Social issues are not confined to a way of thinking but become tangible in the form of social practices that reflect and reinforce the constructions of meaning. Indeed, the people following the social practices may be adhering to them without explicitly referencing or validating the frames through which the beliefs that underlie the practices are constructed (Sinha and Gasper, 2009: 292).

In the light of the above, (new) nationalism, citizenship and belonging all of which in most cases are hinged on politics, underpin the understanding of xenophobic violence in South Africa. The role of political imagination is re-echoed by Neocosmos who points out 'the centrality of politics for any serious understanding of xenophobia in South Africa and indeed elsewhere' (Neocosmos, 2010: x). New nationalism or second nationalism is a concept coined by Claude Ake (1996) to describe a form of nationalism directed against people considered as non-citizens in African states after the first phase of nationalism that focused primarily on decolonisation. Norbert Kersting argues that 'new nationalism focuses on the new political cleavage of autochthony and origin' (Kersting, 2009: 11). It arises from the inability of the local population to develop (perhaps at the required pace) what Terhi Rantanen (2005) describes as 'zones' of cosmopolitanism that deal with sentiments which are likely to develop as a result of interactions among people who originate from different

divides of the social and concrete borders inherent in modern society. As Rantanen argues, there is often a progressive development of the different 'zones' for an individual to acquire 'cosmopolitan qualities' and after experiencing a development of all the 'zones' an individual is still 'unlikely to be completely and permanently above national or local sentiments' (2005: 124).

The issue of xenophobia is an important thing to consider in dealing with the mediation of South African identity partly because of its seeming ubiquity. This ubiquity is evident in the unbroken nature of the xenophobia discourse in public life and even in the media since the headline-making events of May 2008. It was the third anniversary of the 2008 xenophobic attacks in May 2011 and paying attention to the media across South Africa, there is a sense in which the dangers of the attacks still pervade the society. In other words, the xenophobia discourse seems not to be in a hurry to be forgotten in the South African public sphere as it continues to gain currency again and again. In most of the discussions held in the media, both print and electronic, the discourses on xenophobia still remain as fresh as ever and the threat that such an incident is not just still happening but might yet assume emergency proportions remains potent. For instance 'The After Eight Debate' on Tuesday 10th May, 2011 commemorated the third anniversary of the 2008 attacks. A few callers on the show still sounded angry insisting that 'foreigners' must leave South Africa because their presence was making life more difficult for the indigenous population in different ways. An earlier article published by *The Sunday Times* on May 8, 2011, under the headline 'Foreigners under Threat' had served as an instructive precursor to the debate on the anniversary of xenophobia. In the article the authors, Amukelani Chauke and Caleb Melby, write:

> *The Times* has seen a copy of a letter, handed to foreign shop owners late last month by a group calling itself the Greater Gauteng Business Forum which reads: "You are hereby granted a period of seven days to pack all your things and leave the area. Failing to abide by this request will result in drastic measures being taken against you. It is not xenophobia, we need no war, no negotiations—the same way you came in, will and must be the same on your way out."[30]

[30] http://www.timeslive.co.za/local/article1057167.ece/Foreigners-under-threat accessed 16/05/11

Interestingly, the commemorative edition of SAFM's 'The After Eight Debate' edition referred to earlier had made reference to the *Sunday Times* publication as a major motivation for opening up discussions again on what had happened three years earlier.[31] The background to the issue of xenophobia in South Africa provided above is important for a clear understanding of the kind of situation the media have to deal with in representing the events of the period. In addition to this, it positions xenophobia as an issue that has become more or less a going concern that will continue to attract attention from the media and society's stakeholders in more days to come. Since xenophobia appears to still lurk around in the townships, it is important to pay attention to the malaise and discourses around it as one part of the determining variables for a better understanding of both national and individual identities in post-apartheid South Africa.

National Identity and the Challenge of 'Negative Publicity'

Negative publicity occurs when the circulation of an event publicly is deemed to be injurious to image or identity. As Dwane Dean argues there is often 'a tendency for negative information to be weighted more than positive information in the evaluation of people, objects, and ideas' (Dean, 2004: 193).[32] The shattering impact of xenophobia on the image of South Africa as a country which has risen beyond the injustices and violence of the past cannot be overemphasised. This negative image is also in addition to the fragmentary impact that the event might have on the composition of the social structure of the country. As Khabele Matlosa argues, 'political violence and multivariate conflicts...prompted by resource distribution, ideological contestation, social differentiation along class, gender, ethnic and racial cleavages clearly have an enormous impact on the prospects for nurturing and consolidation of democratic governance' (Matlosa, 2003: 85). In addition to the identity markers identified by Matlosa, there is the need to add the claim to autochthonous belonging which is the principal marker of difference in most cases of xenophobic violence including the one under consideration in this chapter. National identity has often been regarded as one major factor which drives state policies and codes of conduct put in place by governments for

[31] There will be more discussions later in this chapter on intermedial relations among different media forms as a means of generating material for a vibrant public sphere.
[32] Though scholarly arguments abound about positive effects of negative publicity especially in relation to marketing economics (eg Berger, Sorensen and Rasmussen, 2010), the negative impact argument still holds sway considerably.

their institutions and citizens. As Sanem Sahin has argued, 'national identity is the primary form of identity that creates coherence and a sense of belonging by offering people authenticity, historical continuity and rootedness in a common territory' (Sahin, 2011: 585). This national identity in several ways often produces a national image which defines a nation and its people both locally and globally. The image so produced is circulated often in the media and attempts are usually made by governments to, as much as possible, be in control of such images in the media in order to reduce their negative impact on identity.

The media generally reported on the xenophobic violence that swept through the townships. Most of the reports across the media expressed dismay at the violence against fellow black Africans from neighbouring countries and also denounced the South African government's slow response to the crisis which was taking on the colouration of a continental emergency considering the fact that the attacks were targeted only at foreigners from other Africa countries. The widespread reportage became a form of negative publicity for South Africa in view of the expectations of the outside world in respect of the need for tolerance in a country that had been held up as iconoclastic in not just Africa but the whole of the third world.

The intricacies generated by negative publicity in both official and popular imaginations were discernible in 'The Redi Direko Show' aired on the 9th of June, 2008. In this episode of the programme, the host directly expressed concern for what was considered negative stories in the media in relation to what she thought the expectations of the listening public were. In other words, the host made an attempt to de-popularise the negative and position the radio talk show as a space where positive self fashioning was possible. Relying on the comments that people made when they spoke to her personally about her programme and letters written by listeners about the way they felt about the show, Redi seemed to follow the line of argument that media content is often skewed in favour of negative stories and this preponderance of the negative had also gripped talk shows and by extension her own show as well. So, in setting the tone for the day's show on 9th June, 2008 Redi informed the listener about the kind of feedbacks she got from people who tried to express appreciation for the show. In this case she was trying to relate her experience in real world terms on a programme which is basically part of media content set up for a specific purpose:

> I interact with people from all walks of life. I meet people when I go to functions, some of my friends, some of my relatives and so on or when u are just…, when I'm

> busy with my shopping and someone comes up to me and they comment about the show. I get a lot of feedback about the show and so do my producers. And, you know, people are kind, they'll say all the wonderful great things that you need to hear as a talk show host so that you are encouraged and you wake up the next morning to do it again. However, however, there is something else that I have observed as I receive feedbacks from people, and that is, there is a lot of negativity, right? There is a lot of negativity and people will tell you I love the show I listen to the show, we have great guests and so on. But sometimes when I tune in especially during the open line I hear someone moaning about something and I feel oops! I don't want to go there. (Redi Direko Show, 9 June 2008).

The frame that the host tries to draw on in the above statement is to invoke an expression of dissatisfaction from the listeners as a launch pad for the discussion of what may be perceived as the ubiquity of negative stories about South Africa in the media. So, in calling for participants' contributions on the day's programme therefore, the host tries to frame a direct question based on the need to satisfy her imagined audience:

> So, what I'm asking you today is what is it that you want to hear? How do we reflect how you really feel? How do we reflect the way society feels because I read a lot of these dear editor letters? Because they give you a sense of what people feel strongly about. So without subverting the truth of our lives as it were without really pretending that we are living in this Utopia and we're going to bury the negative things and pretend that they are not there, how do we give you a balanced package so that we talk about the positive things as well? (Redi Direko Show, 9 June 2008).

On this show, the host attempts to absolve the media of guilt in the representation of the negative as she tries to convince her listeners that talk shows and by extension the media generally merely mirror what happens in society and also respond to the tastes of the public. In doing this she continues her argument by saying:

> And before we point a finger at the talk show host and the producers, or the media and so on let's not be self-righteous and sanctimonious about this because you inform a lot of the content. So, if we say open line whatever is on your mind and you want to moan about the Matric certificates that you didn't get, you want to moan about health

> services, you want to moan about police and so on. You have every right to do that, if that is your reality. But I just get a sense that psychologically it's just having this negative impact on people. And I must be honest, I must be honest, there are times when, you know, a caller comes up and I like, oh no I don't want to go there today, I don't want to go there today. (Redi Direko Show, 9 June 2008)

In reinforcing her argument that even the listeners and participants do contribute to the negative stories about South Africa on her show, Redi Direko reminds us of a previous episode of her programme on which she had thrown a challenge to the public to attempt to 'market' South Africa:

> We said if you were to market South Africa what are the positive things, what are the good things what are the things that we have right, the things that are working, what are they? And it took at least 15 or 20 minutes to get people onto that subject because everybody was going on and on about crime and this and this is not working and then all of that. All of that may just be true. All of that may just be true but that moment nobody could come up with the positive things that we could make work (Redi Direko Show, 9 June 2008)

The idea surrounding the marketing of the country deals basically with the question of representation and identity as the image of South Africa that is predominantly circulated in the media is likely to impact on both individual and collective identities. In struggling to keep such negative representations out of the public domain, at least at the local level, Redi Direko invites her listeners to see the positive side of the country in their contributions to her programme. This kind of approach to representation stems from the understanding that the kind of stories people tell about themselves ultimately impacts on the outlook of media content. In other words, 'their statements define their coverage' (Patterson, 1996: 17). However, the project of positive representation or nationalist representation of South African identity which the show host seeks to propagate fails basically as a result of the diversity of the audience which also implies dissimilarity in socio-historical experience and reality.

A resort to a subtle blackmail of the audience, especially those who participate in the show by calling or sending sms, is also seen in the host's comment which deals with different ways in which people are likely to react to positive stories and negative stories in the media:

> Think of your reaction, your honest reaction to news. Do you read a positive story and go waoh! and tell your friends about it or do you read a story of a man who was burnt to death and go… how could this happen? where is this country going to? What informs your discussions as well with your friends is it the positive stories about the country or is it the negative stories. And are we right to be reflecting all of that, 0214460567, 0118830702 or are there days when you say I know that Zimbabwe is on its knees but I don't want to hear it (Redi Direko Show, 9 June 2008).

Again, the emphasis on satisfying the audience or giving to the listeners what they express preference for is located in the larger project of sustaining radio talk shows on the strength of the size of their audiences. In addition to this is the commercial implication of regular ratings with which advertisers make decisions on which programmes enjoy patronage among the plethora of similar shows available to the public. Another possibility is that the host is trying to influence the audience to be positive about themselves and their country rather than elevate the dark sides in the narratives that come out in the media. In other words, some of the discursive strategies used by show hosts and producers may be aimed at retaining audience and attaining prime positions on the rating chart in order to attract more advertising revenue. The subsequent sections of this chapter will now delve into some of the discursive strategies relied on by 'The Redi Direko Show' and 'The After Eight Debate' during debates on the violent incident of xenophobia in South Africa in 2008.

Strategic Silence, Denialism and the Margins of Talk

The mediation of violence is usually a very delicate thing to handle as can be seen in the various forms of ambivalence expressed by show hosts in programmes dealing with xenophobia in South Africa. In dealing with the discursive dimensions of mediation, Lidwien Kapteijns and Annemiek Richters acknowledge the possibility that a proper use of discursive practices and strategies [may] shape and promote moral repair in the present and future' (2010: 1). Both 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' devoted a lot of airtime to the discussion of the xenophobic attacks especially during the months of May and June 2008. In constructing the debates on these two shows during the period, there is a noticeable attempt by participants to battle the negative publicity generated by the violence

by managing utterances as much as possible not to give the impression that anyone in South Africa least of all the government was happy about the ugly event. In doing this there were strategies of silence and silencing employed by different participants in the public arena of radio talk shows. Silence in this case should not be seen as a failure to communicate. It, in fact, embodies and signifies a series of meaning which need to be understood within the context of particular discursive acts.

As Robert Scott (1993) argues, in silence, we speak and create meaning or lend our muteness to interpretation. Scott's idea of silence is further reinforced by the contention of Cheryl Glenn who states that 'silence can be as powerful as speech [as] silence and silencing deliver meaning' (Glenn, 2004: xi). In trying to theorise silence as a rhetorical act, Barry Brummett contends that 'strategic silence is a type of nonverbal behaviour' (1980: 289). Brummett argues further that 'failure to speak itself, under certain conditions, will have rhetorical influence' (Ibid: 289). Strategic silence is not just any form of silence as it relates to silence in situations where speech is ordinarily expected. In other words, it occurs 'when someone has a pressing need to speak but does not' (Ibid: 289). Perhaps the most instructive act of silence around the xenophobic violence in South Africa at the moment under observation here was the adoption of a denialist attitude by the state. Silence, it should be noted, negatively affects 'the ability to share experiences' (Felman, 1999: 205) which is not just needed for understanding selves but could also come in handy, in some cases, as a therapeutic ingredient in dealing with traumatic encounters.

In spite of the media hype around the ugly event, the initial response from the South African government was one of denialism. In this denial, the government rationalised the incidents as acts by a few criminal elements in society. In fact, it took almost three weeks before an official reaction was made to an event that had started as pockets of isolated attacks and was talked about in a hushed manner until it became somewhat more organised and ballooned into a national emergency around the middle of May 2008. The delayed official response came during the Africa Day speech of the then South African President Thabo Mbeki in parliament on 25 May, 2008 after the violence had assumed scandalous dimensions (Landau, 2008; McKnight, 2008). This denial can be seen as a practice of secrecy codified in silence to help produce the image of the 'good' person or a South African national identity which remains in tandem with the proclaimed humanistic agenda of *ubuntu*. The kind of silence imposed on the event by the state is a form of collective silence which is often a product of guilt or shame

(Albers, 2001; Scheff, 2000). Shame in itself produces a kind of exposure which tells negatively on the psychology of selfhood. There is a way therefore that the strategic silence inherent in denial can be seen as an attempt to grapple with the exposed self brought into being by the barbarism of xenophobia. More importantly, the subtext in the proclamation of a more significant social bond with Africa symbolised by the African Renaissance project of the Mbeki administration becomes a very important factor to consider in understanding the attitude of the state during this period.

The denialist attitude of the government was echoed by participants on both The Redi Direko Show' and 'The After Eight Debate'. On 'The Redi Direko Show' on June 2, 2008, for instance, some participants expressed the wish to know who the real brains behind the attacks were. As Redi Direko points out on this particular programme when she tried to respond to what appeared to be an anonymous sms by a listener to her show: 'No word on the perpetrators of violence....' Though the manner in which this message was read within the programme gave an impression that the sms might be longer that what the show host decided to read, Redi seemed to cut it short to give her own comments which reinforced what she considered the lukewarm attitude of government in bringing culprits to account:

> Well, the Minister of Correctional Services Ngconde Balfour said last week I've got plenty of space in my jails, he calls them his jails. I've got plenty of space, I'll lock them up. So, that's what he promised us but we haven't seen anything in terms of appearance in court or maybe I've missed it. Somebody knows? Please enlighten the rest of us. (Redi Direko Show, 2 June 2008).

As Fairclough has argued 'discourses include representations of how things are and have been, as well as imaginaries—representations of how things might or could or should be' (2003: 207). In making her comments, Redi generates and introduces a new discourse into the show which raises questions about the responsibility value of political office holders in the new South Africa. In addition she also perhaps inadvertently implicated the government of the day in the spread of violence against immigrants by laying bare its failure to do justice in the event of the crisis. It is worth mentioning here that the sender of the sms to which Redi responded, by questioning the efficiency of the minister and by extension the government in dealing with people behind the attacks, might actually have put his or her name as the listener was not given any information about the authorship of the text before Redi's response. The

effect of this is that a kind of muteness is imposed on the listener either deliberately or otherwise by the show host. As a form of discourse practice, the comments by the show host here tend to fall in line with Norman Fairclough's argument about the dialectic of discourse which provides representational value for deliberations in any society. Also, the cutting short of the sms itself by the host who reads only a part of it suggests another form of silencing as listeners and indeed the public arena are denied the opportunity of getting all the information contained in the message.

The first week of June 2008 actually saw a continuation of the discussion of the xenophobic violence on many radio programmes in South Africa. So, the same episode of 'The Redi Direko Show' referred to earlier is dominated by the issue of the xenophobic violence. It seemed probable that the violence was anticipated as the main topic for the day by the host and the producers of the show. However, there appeared a difficulty in directly introducing the topic of xenophobia as the major topic of the day. So, the host did not clearly itemise xenophobia as the main topic for the day. Rather, she attempted to veil the topic by tucking it in at the very end of the introduction of the day's programme after positioning other issues as the main focus for the day. Redi Direko opened the show by saying:

> Oh, it's so good to be with you and I hope that you have a lot to talk about this morning. There certainly is a lot to talk about, er the storm surrounding the Cape Judge President John Hlope, unprecedented in South Africa's legal history we hear. Twelve judges against one and all he can say is that the allegations against him are not true....We don't want allegations of ill repute against judges. Anyway that is the story the big story of the weekend. But other things are happening as well. Bafana Bafana, but come on people, you honestly didn't expect us to win. Anybody who is disappointed that we went down against Nigeria... The people I've spoken to have said no no no its not so much that we lost we knew we were going to lose but it's the manner in which we lost.... Maybe you want to comment on the game, you want to comment on judge Hlope and also the xenophobic violence and it has abated. But the aftermath of this violence we are still seeing people being relocated and so on. The headline in *The Star* is 'We Don't Want them Here' and that's what we are leading with as well. And I don't know if we can honestly maturely have a discussion about this. (Redi, 2 June 2008)

While the host spent a considerable amount of time elaborating on the other issues brought up for discussion on this programme, she spent less time on what is to become, at the instance of the audience, the major issue for the day: xenophobia. This approach to the introduction of the topics for discussion and the privileging of some topics over others even within a single programme speaks to the dynamics of the agenda setting role of the media which becomes important in framing national discourses. Evidence from the programme however showed that the agenda setting role of the media was no longer absolute in terms of domiciling with the show producers the power to decide what gets privileged in the media. The talk show format especially gives part of that power back to the audience through the interactivity it enables. Though Redi Direko mentioned xenophobia last in her trailing of the issues for discussion on the day's programme, the listeners who contributed to the show focused more on what appeared to be a matter of least consideration during the show. This was reflected through their calls and sms's.

A similar pattern is observed in 'The Redi Direko Show' broadcast on 23 May 2008. The specific topic chosen for the day was 'Definitions of leadership.' In this case, the host did not mention anything about xenophobia at the beginning of the show. However, participants in their calls and sms found a way of linking their contributions on leadership to the happenings around them thereby leading the discussion once in a while to the xenophobia happening in the country. There is a way therefore in which sensitive topics get handled carefully by the media especially electronic media, which are perceived to have far reaching influence among the people, in order not to create the impression of a nation in crisis. The success of such careful handling now depends to a large extent on the feelings of the audience as can be seen in listeners' response to this.

Contrary to the strategy adopted on 'The Redi Direko Show', 'The After Eight Debate' broadcast on the same day launched directly into the issue of xenophobia and integration of displaced people back into the communities. The opening statements of the show host, Tim Modise, actually left the listener in no doubt about what the major focus of the day's programme was:

> Xenophobic attacks that have spread across the country have claimed the lives of 60 people according to the latest police reports. The xenophobic violence began in Alexandra North of Johannesburg and then spread to other provinces earlier this

> month. Thousands of displaced foreign nationals housed in police stations and government buildings across Gauteng and South Africa are being moved to temporary shelters. The provincial government and the United Nations announced last week that they would set up ten new temporary sites for nineteen thousand foreigners displaced by the xenophobic violence. Now the main aim of government is to reintegrate them back into the communities. On The After Eight Debate we are asking how best can they be reintegrated back into those communities? (After Eight Debate, 2 June 2008).

The different ways in which the subject of xenophobia featured in the two programmes, it should be noted, shatters assumptions about the way freedom of expression is exercised in the media especially in Africa, in relation to the ownership and control structures. Though the idea of a public broadcaster in principle is that the state does not exercise direct control over the content or what is aired on the stations, there is a general assumption especially in Africa that a public broadcaster is more likely to be circumspect in dealing with volatile issues because of the different other means of control that the state exercises. This assumption needs a second look as evidence has shown that the nature of the programme in question or even the understanding of particular events that show hosts and producers have may also impact considerably on the way debates are structured. When the two show are placed side by side, Tim Modise appeared to have taken on a difficult topic head on in spite of the fact that his programme was running on an SABC channel inviting more serious and direct debate, while Redi Direko whose show ran on a privately owned commercial station appeared to be more careful in launching into the issue.

As a part of the representation of South African identity there is often the narrative of a national tendency towards violence or the pervasiveness of a culture of violence, in which case violence becomes more of a cultural norm in South African society. Redi attempted to re-inscribe this kind of image by pointing to the good deeds of South Africans even during the period of the violence:

> It seems to me *neh*, it seems to me that, we are generous, we South Africans. I saw that for myself when I went to the Germiston Civic Centre where a lot of the immigrants were staying. I saw that. South Africans dug deep in their pockets; money clothing books toiletries and all of that. It seems to me that we are happy to give assistance if it is goes *there*, somewhere *there*. (Redi Direko Show, 2 June 2008).

Here, Redi appeared to be caught between the ethical expectation of the media allowing for freedom of expression, 'their liberal democratic responsibility to act as honest, fair and neutral mediators—accessible to all and sundry' (Nyamnjoh, 2010: 62) and the general accusation against the media especially talk shows of sensationalism and magnification of events. Instead of dwelling on the gravity of the attacks which led to the displacement of foreign nationals in the first instance she picked up on the magnanimity of those South Africans who had shown kindness by offering assistance to those in the temporary camps.

This response by the show host becomes quite significant when approached from the angle of how belonging or inclusion and exclusion are constructed during arguments in the public domain. Redi Direko perhaps inadvertently presented an argument here that used alms giving to determine the fairness of the indigenous population to foreigners who find themselves in a precarious situation as a result of a crisis brought about by their supposed hosts , the same people who then extended kindness to them through alms-giving. With the statement, two opposing identities appeared to have come into being: that of the ultimate insider, or native South African and that of the excluded migrant whose fate depended not on his/her rights but concessions that the host population was willing to grant him/her in the face of excruciating crisis. In placing this kind of attitude in perspective, Nyamnjoh argues that:

> Belonging and identity based on the logic of exclusion are informed by the erroneous assumption that there is such a thing as the ultimate insider, found through a process of selective elimination and ever-diminishing circles of inclusion. The politics of nativity, authenticity, autochthony, indigeneity or citizenship, premised narrowly around cultural difference and the centrality of culture, are pursued with this illusion of the ultimate insider in mind (Nyamnjoh, 2010: 58)

The kind of description that comes across in the categorisation drawn by the host here produces a dialectical perception of the insider and the outsider. It potentially creates a partisanship of ideas by 'dividing citizens into the righteous and the wicked ... depending on their ethnic belonging' (Ibid: 62) and other factors. The essentialism that such attitudes like the intervention of the host represent in this instance above offers little or no value in the understanding of the cosmopolitanism of identity that characterises modernism or societies that seek to key into the new global order. It is important to note that part of the unwritten

code of ethics on radio talk shows is the avoidance of what can be construed to border on hate speech. It, however, becomes quite difficult to manage emotions in public discourses where hate action like xenophobia seems to have an upper hand. In other words, show hosts tend to exercise extreme caution which may in the long run blur the dimension of discussions as they keep avoiding pitfalls which may portray them or the nation in negative light. In addition to the unwritten code is an actual code of practice put in place in the South African case by the Independent Communications Authority of South Africa (ICASA) while there is also the Broadcasting Complaints Commission of South Africa (BCCSA) which also deals with matters relating to the abuse of the airwaves by broadcasters.

Another form of silence that comes to the fore in the two shows is in the composition of panelists and even callers-in. None of the show hosts featured people who were directly involved in the violence either as perpetrators or victims as invited guest, no caller was willing to identify himself or herself as part of the group that unleashed the violence even when they expressed the view that immigrants should leave South Africa. This signals a disjuncture in the discourse of xenophobia set up on the two radio talk shows. In other words, those who take part in the shows to discuss the issue of xenophobia are not actually the ones directly involved in the event. The direct actors and the discussants on radio are two separate social groups whose views on the matter are by virtue of their subject positions bound to be radically different. In this case, absence constitutes a major form of silence as we do not have the opportunity of hearing the views of people who were displaced by the violence or those who actively took part in attacking victims. The implication of this kind of silence is that the extraordinary stories on the major actors are missing in theses talk shows. At the same time, the major actors also miss out in the public sphere when the power and structures of authority that they need to negotiate themselves through are taken into consideration. In most cases, non-governmental organisations (NGO) came to speak for the victims of the violence relying on standard procedures laid down by their organisations to respond to issues raised about the victims and what their fate might be. For instance, the episode of 'The After Eight Debate' aired on 2nd June 2008 featured a discussion on the xenophobic violence in South Africa at that time. There were three guests invited to participate on the programme: the Regional Spokes person of the International Organisation for Migration, Nde Ndifonka, the Secretary General of the South African Red Cross Society, Mandisa Kalako Williams and, Government spokesperson, Themba Maseko. The marginality of the less privileged direct actors may have been informed by a series of factors. Apart from the fact that programmes featuring such

individuals might become exceedingly volatile, the medium of communication might as well constitute a barrier as not many of those involved are likely to be very versatile in the use of English which is the primary language of communication on both programmes. This point leads us to the consideration of the next major strategy adopted by participants in positioning themselves on radio talk shows: language.

Radio Talk Shows, Language and the Social Determination of Discourse

Language is important in how we represent things. In dealing with the media language becomes a major resource as it represents a major tool in the hands of stakeholders whose preoccupation is, in part, presenting to the world particular pictures or interpretations of events. The use of language in the media can be approached from diverse perspectives. In the South African context, the diversity of possibilities is further reinforced by the peculiar history of the country coupled with the way language was used in the apartheid policy which sought to maintain culturally distinct populations. This work adopts a sociolinguistic approach to the discussion of language as it relates to the media environment in contemporary South Africa. This kind of approach does not focus attention on the mechanical structures of language, but rather on how participants tend to use language to achieve certain objectives. This is the kind of approach Douglas Robinson describes as 'language-as-drama' as opposed to 'language as machine' (Robinson, 2006: 4). This performance centred approach allows for a better understanding of the discursive practices used by participants during talk shows as a means of representing the self and the other. Language, as Michael Billig argues, is, in any case, 'fundamentally both expressive and repressive' (Billig, 2006: 17).

In the light of this, the work is more interested in the social issues around the choice and use of language by media organisations and participants on the two shows analysed here (and by extension other media and programmes as the case may be). Language visibility is often thought to provide some form of agency. In the apartheid days, the establishment of Radio Bantu was a policy action put in place to keep different linguistic communities separate even in the provision of access to the media. The language visibility profile of the media landscape has since changed privileging a kind of multilingualism that attempts to reflect the different linguistic interests of the country though there are still allegations of some languages dominating the landscape more than others (see for instance Olivier, 2011; du Plessis, 2011).

What this allegations call attention to is the fact that the hegemony of certain languages is still possible even where there are legislations on multilingualism. As Jako Olivier argues, 'the existence of many languages within a geographical area [or even the legislation of such] may not automatically imply the equal use and treatment of languages' (Olivier, 2011: 225).

Today, radio stations broadcast in different languages drawn from the eleven official languages proclaimed in the country's constitution. It should be noted that this new approach to the choice of language derives a form of legitimacy from the 'democratic' constitution of the country. The choice of language by radio stations can also be said to reflect the kind of audiences they intend to address. By the choice of a particular language therefore a radio station constructs a certain public to which it intends to speak. 'The After Eight Debate' and the 'Redi Direko Show' are broadcast in English partly because they address an upwardly mobile urban community of listeners and it is in the light of this that some of the things that are said on the shows should also be understood. The importance of language, it should be noted, stems from the necessity of expression which needs to be done in a particular communicative medium to be able to reach the audience. While attempting to capture and give expression to the different social experiences and perspectives of the equally diverse social groups in South Africa, 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' illustrate the centrality of language in the determination of the direction of debates on radio. These shows should be understood as constituting a distinct language community which thrives on shared understandings of the way language should be used by participants. As Eli Desner argues, 'there are elaborate conventions that govern linguistic behaviour of the members of a given community, and these conventions help make linguistic interaction easy and efficient' (Desner, 2009: 125)'

The first issue to be considered in the way the shows were run during the period of the xenophobia is the way language is deployed for the purpose of naming. The way participants want events to appear to listeners seems to be a major driving force in the way they use language to construct their narratives. A good example of this has been cited earlier in the way the two programmes used different approaches in introducing the xenophobia. Another example occurred on 'The Redi Direko Show' of 2nd June 2008 where there was a direct argument about what name to call displaced victims of the violence. The show host referred to this issue while pointing out an email she had received from The South African Press Association, SAPA:

> And here is something else that I'd like you to consider. There was an email that was dropped on SAPA, The South African Press Association on the wires there. And there is this whole debate in the media about how we should be referring to displaced people. And we've been advised as the media to be cautious and stop lumping together displaced persons by calling them refugees. The United Nations High Commissioner for refugees issued this statement last week. Its spokesperson Yussuf Hassan said that the 42000 people affected by xenophobic attacks were not all refugees. He went on to say the media is abusing this term and this is feeding into the xenophobia mentality. He was saying the idea of lumping them together is very wrong. He went on to say those displaced included refugees, asylum speakers, migrant workers with valid work permits, students and economic migrants. He said others included permanent residents with valid documentation as well as illegal immigrant. (Redi Direko Show, 2 June 2008).

The politics of language which Redi's statement suggested here is closely related to the politics of representation which is a familiar feature of radio talk shows. In the first instance, the event of xenophobia, by its very nature, had called into being different kinds of publics for the South African media, or the media from other parts of the world reporting South Africa, which might not have been envisaged before the crisis. As different kinds of cognomen carry varying imports therefore, there was the need to be more careful in naming victims or even naming the event itself. This explains the initial categorisation of the attacks themselves by government officials as dissident action by 'a few criminal elements' in the townships.

While still discussing the issue of finding the appropriate appellation for the victims Redi Direko expressed the kind of difficulty that people confront during situations of crisis which call for the management of language use:

> So, this whole debate, how do we...I know, I've had a problem coming here every morning to chat to you about victims of xenophobic violence. It's been so easy to call them that. It's just so easy to fall into the temptation of using language that really encourages a certain mindset. On Friday I had two teachers and I didn't know what to call them. And I said foreigners. Someone sent an sms and said Redi stop it! What do

> we call them are they displaced people are they migrants? (Redi Direko Show, 2 June 2008).

There was really no clear-cut resolution of this naming debate on the show on this particular day. What is apparent however is that the naming of the self and the other has its own dynamics in the politics of representation and identity which is enacted on public media debates. Beyond the constitutional exclusion of immigrants from certain rights, the use of certain names in both the media and in popular public discourse has the potential for the 'devaluation of the figure of the alien' (Bosniak, 1998: 30) and in the process reinforcing different kinds of prejudice against the (immigrant) other.

As discourses play out on radio talk shows, we move from the realm of passive understanding of language or what Bakhtin describes as 'an utterance's *neutral signification* and not its *actual meaning*' (1981: 281) articulated in structural linguistic terms, into the realm of a more active and socially determined realm of language and discourse:

> The linguistic significance of a given utterance is understood against the background of language, while its actual meaning is understood against the background of other concrete utterances on the same theme, a background made up of contradictory opinions, points of view and value judgements—that is, precisely that background, as we see, complicates the path of any word towards its object (Bakhtin, 1981: 281).

As Bakhtin further argues:

> The living utterance, having taken meaning and shape at a particular historical moment in a socially specific environment, cannot fail to brush up against thousands of living dialogic threads, woven by socio-ideological consciousness around the given object of an utterance; it cannot fail to become an active participant in social dialogue' (276).

The kind of dialogic threads that Bakhtin refers to can be found in the different public spheres available in a community at any point in time. As he puts it, they will be noticed in 'discourse in the open spaces of public squares, streets, cities and villages, of social groups, generations

and epochs' (259). From the examples given above, radio talk shows appear to fit into the kind of spaces anticipated by Bakhtin in his postulations on the use of language in discourse.

Another thing to note in the way language is deployed in both 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' is the conversational nature of the openings of these shows. Most of the shows often open in a conversational manner drawing the attention of the audience into a somewhat relaxed encounter where they get to engage with issues of concern without necessarily being very formal about such engagement. A new vocabulary appears to have developed around discussions about xenophobia. This new vocabulary, which usually seeks to blunt the seriousness of the attacks or the threats of fresh attacks after the May 2008 incidents often finds its way into the media through radio talk shows. It reflects what Peter Geschiere describes as 'heavy language under heavy circumstances' (Geschiere, 2009: 9). Geshiere's idea of 'heavy language' relates in part to the way language can be laden with different or multiple forms of meaning when it comes to dealing with questions of identity and claim-making about citizenship. It relates to how language classifies belonging in terms of autochthony and how it can also be used to reflect the difficulty or complex nature of situations of crisis.

The shows are not just about saying things. The way things are said is important and so participants often look for appropriate language which at times has semantic implications. For instance, Adam Habib who is a regular guest on these shows, in an interview remarked that:

> I believe I say what I need to say. I'm obviously cognisant of how I say it. So I won't stand up and say the president is an idiot. I wouldn't say that. I'll say I do think that the president's extra-marital affairs have an impact on the legitimacy of state policy. So obviously..., now I don't do that because I'm scared but I don't think that we should conduct public discourse in a way that polarises the conversation or that is obnoxious and rude. I don't believe that. So I think in part that people listen to me because I say things that need to be said I do pay some attention to how I say things rather than, because I do think that sometimes the way you say things might close off people. People don't want to hear you. The reason that I appear on the shows is I want to be heard. So I do it in a way that will allow people to hear me. They might disagree with me, but I want them to hear me and say we disagree. I don't want them to say I

> don't want to listen to this guy because he talks nonsense. (Habib, Interview 8 September 2010)

In another instance, Tim Modise also in the interview I conducted with him gave the impression that the ability to use the 'right' type of language or say things in a particular way was important even for callers who wished to take part on the show. According to him:

> Remember that the caller would not necessarily explain every detail of what they say. They'll say no I disagree, I'm so and so, that person on air is not telling the truth then that's it, then they put the person on and then only when they engage with me would they explain what they mean by that. But, you know, you also have people you shouldn't have on air coming on air and saying all sorts of things that are not fit for broadcast. (Tim Modise, Interview 15 April 2011).

The possession and use of what is considered the 'right language' in the face of the perception of the reality of the moment by the show producers therefore becomes a major key to participation. What this translates to is the use of certain production techniques to mobilise participants around certain national imaginings. Where the expectations of such imaginations are not met, the language of anger is likely to set in.

The language of anger in most cases is noticeable in the tone of the speaker as well as in the choice of word. While show hosts themselves often try as much as possible to avoid an open display of anger, the same cannot be said of callers and other participants. An example of the importance that people attach to the image of the country both within and especially outside its shores, is demonstrated in the contribution of Wayne who called into the Redi Direko Show broadcast on 23 May, 2008. The caller expresses anger about a comment made by the show host about 'artificial black women.' The host in actual fact had merely attempted to read an sms from a listener who made some claim about 'artificial black women' and terminated the reading of the sms before it was completed: And..er... 'I've heard about artificial sugar, but artificial black woman perhaps..., [giggles] alright we won't get there, we won't go there.' (Redi, 23 May 2008). So Wayne calls in to point out to the host how distasteful it could be talking about artificial black women on radio:

> Hi, I just like to comment on the statement on artificial black women. I've never heard a more absurd comment in my entire life. I'm travelling from the airport with a foreign visitor. I've got an airport shuttle company. I feel embarrassed to even put the station on. I hope you are listening. You've got problems. If you gonna stand up and say you are a leader and make comments like that our country is into a hell of a high jump. That's my only comment (Redi, 23 May 2008)

What is important to note here is the emphasis that Wayne puts on the fact that he has a 'foreign visitor' listening to the programme with him in the airport shuttle car he was driving in. For him the most important thing at that point in time is the image of South Africa that the show projects when people, especially non-South Africans listen to it.

History on the Spot

History plays an important role in the violence that erupts from the tensions embedded in society. While describing history as 'the perennial conflictual arena in which collective memory is named as a *constitutive dissociation* between truth and power', Shoshana Felman (1999: 210), establishes a relationship between history and silence. According to Felman, the powerless are often deprived of voice either consciously or unconsciously in the historical philosophy of power. In the case of South Africa, the history and realities of discrimination, inequality and dispossession become key factors in making sense of constant violence and societal fragmentation. The xenophobic attacks provide a framework for the testing of the resolve of the South African 'rainbow nation'. They further expose the perception of the nation beyond what official discourses tend to put before the world. The hegemony of official accounts of history, it bears mentioning, has often been executed through the silencing of alternative accounts which seek to expose different paradigms of understanding human progress and events. But as popular cultural forms constantly challenge this hegemony of official narratives, radio talk shows become a crucial site for understanding the tensions between dominant and alternative narratives as can be seen in the way history surfaced in both 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' during discourses around xenophobia.

In what Jaques Depelchin (2005) calls ‘silences and related syndromes in African history’ the reinforcement and manicuring of the historical account of events often dominate the public sphere especially through the popular culture forms that relate closely with the masses. Such manicuring makes history to suffer from ‘the interfering distortions of power relations’ (Ibid: 5). There is, in fact, greater danger in the proliferation of manicured historical representations which is the calculated desire to dominate public space and public discourse. Such, hegemonic narratives, as Belinda Bozzoli cautions, need to be constantly challenged in South African history. In her words, ‘dominant, hegemonic ideologies, which seek to capture the hearts and minds of ordinary South Africans, provide a distorted image of our past and present, and there exists a great need to counteract them, by providing people with access to alternative accounts’ (1985). It should also give cause for concern when the kind of hegemonic ideologies of history which Bozzoli refers to seek to dominate the popular culture of any society. This is because the domain of the popular is indeed the place where the greater number of ‘the hearts and minds of South Africans’ can be located.

In bringing the issue of the xenophobic attacks up for discussion on their programmes, talk show hosts and other participants tend to deal with an issue that has a historical implication in South African society. Such implications become visible not only in the way in which the country’s modernity is constantly questioned but also in the cultural changes that occur as a result of the historicity of an event as graphic as xenophobia. As Francis Nyamnjoh argues, ‘culture changes because it is enmeshed in the turbulence of history, and because each act, each signification, each decision risks opening new meanings, vistas and possibilities (Nyamnjoh, 2002: 114). If this line of argument is anything to go by, then, a change in history is more likely to impact on the culture of a society as human agency presupposes the ability to adjust behavioural patterns and relationship structures from time to time. Two pertinent questions then come to mind: is the demise of apartheid represented by the political transformation of 1994 just a ‘holiday from history’ (Will, 2001: 31)? And are the xenophobic attacks and other incidents of violence in recent times an end to that holiday? It is against this background that it is important to look at the way history features in the different narratives playing out on both ‘The After Eight Debate’ and ‘The Redi Direko Show’ during debates about the 2008 violence.

Class has often been a matter of historical interest in public discourse. On the programme which discussed the relocation of immigrants who were displaced by the violence Redi

Direko betrayed a kind of class segregationist tendency as she tries to put in perspective the problems likely to arise from attempts to find temporary shelter for the displaced:

> Alright and eh...yeah we are in this together. Someone said how would you feel about it, Redi? Exactly the way those residents of Midrand are feeling this morning. I would not want to have a shack next to my house or a low cost housing and so on. And, it breaks my heart to be admitting to that but it's the truth, it's the truth. I put myself in a situation where I'm interrogated and I say ok fine I think government must be responsible for these people they must provide housing but do I have an idea of what I mean really? When I say they must provide housing where exactly? Is it in such a way that it is going to disrupt my own peace, my own calm world, my safe world that I have created for myself? It's a very difficult one, it really really is. And maybe we need to be bold and say and be sincere as well (Redi Direko Show, 2 June 2008).

In what seemed like an endorsement of the rejection of the immigrants by the communities in which they lived before the eruption of violence the show host, in an attempt perhaps to blame government for its failure in controlling immigration as well as providing adequate social services for the people, was found defending the position of the middle and upper classes who believed that their spaces, which they were entitled to under the law had been invaded by 'foreigners'. The linguistic implication of the word 'foreigner' which Redi Direko also used several times in the course of this particular programme needs to be understood in both social and ideological terms. In other words, the poor apart from facing the stress of their poverty will always be outsiders anytime they find themselves in spaces which have been reserved for the rich. In showing further the division of communities along the lines of economic power (which determines the ability to own property or live in certain spaces) Redi Direko attributed the violence to class to the exclusion of race. This she did in response to an sms from a listener who saw not just a class but also a racial dimension to the problem at hand. The listener whose name Redi failed to mention had written: 'Redi, these people were chased by black people from the townships; now they are being chased by white people from the suburbs.' In response to the sms Redi retorted:

> You know what, with respect to whoever sent that sms, this is not a black and white issue. It really, really isn't. In the townships, ok, they were fighting for resources with poor people. It was a class war, it was xenophobic I think. It was poor people just

> turning against each other, turning against poor people of foreign nationality, people who don't come from South Africa. So it was xenophobic, no doubt in my mind about that. But what sparked it off, I think, is a lack of service delivery, a lack of resource and housing and jobs and all of that. But I don't believe that this is a black and white issue. I remember when I was growing up in Orlando East in the 80s we started having *mekhukhu*, the shacks. You know, so you'd have people who would set up shacks in their backyards and had tenants living there. And you had other residents complaining that 'hey *go tlala mekhukhu'* [33] (Redi, 2 June 2008).

While racial discourses may not be openly included in discussions on talk shows, conversations like the one raised about point to the fact that the shows are not in any way completely devoid of racist comments or racialised readings of historical events. This kind of approach to racism which McMahon and Chow-White (2011) theorise as 'new racism' point to a lacuna in the reconciliation discourse within post-apartheid interactions in South Africa are usually framed. As McMahon and Chow-White argue, 'the new racism comprises several elements, including: increasingly covert discourses and practices; the avoidance of racial terminology; the invisibility of structural mechanisms that produce inequalities; and the re-articulation of old practices in new forms' (2011: 992). In avoiding an open confrontation with race, discourses of difference in South Africa derive more comfort in appropriating class as a category responsible for the conflicts rearing their heads among the different groups in society. One of the reasons why it is difficult to completely separate race from class issues in contemporary South Africa is the historical realities that prevailed before 1994. While a lot of attempts are being made especially through mainstream historical narratives to see the new South Africa as one in which race is no longer an issue, discourses in the public domain tend to throw up the problem of race perhaps as a reminder of the fact that racially determined policies have a hand in different ways in the fate of the people. As Daniel Hammett argues, 'race and ethnicity are being re-inscribed as central to debates about citizenship, rights, diversity, and claims to marginalisation in the new socio-political context' (2010: 250).

The memory of race and class in contemporary South Africa therefore becomes a thing that can hardly be ignored. Official narratives, however, try as much as possible to suppress constant references to racial divisions thereby creating what in Nigel Gibson's words can be

[33] 'Mekhukhu' is a Tswana or Sotho word for shacks, while the expression 'go tlala mekhukhu' means there are too many shacks.

called ‘virtual silencing for the sake of unity’ (2011: 3). The problem confronted by official narratives in attempts to suppress such memories stem from the intensity of the fragmentation which brutal pasts impose not just on the structural composition of society but also on the psyche of its inhabitants. This is what James Gibson refers to as the ‘special problems of historical injustices that confront regimes attempting to create a more democratic polity out of an authoritarian past’ (2009: 2). In a way the history of a dehumanising racial subjugation which apartheid represents continues to haunt public discourses in the present day South Africa. One interesting thing to note here is the fact that most of the voices that called in to complain about the relocation of the migrants to otherwise peaceful and attractive places were white voices, which were also mostly male. Most of them portrayed the displaced persons as filthy entities which should not be allowed near them. Such portrayals betray a form of biopolitical discourse with far reaching implications for the way people from different groups relate in society. In such discourses the outgroup or the outsider is viewed as ‘a biological threat’ (Savage, 2007: 404) capable of inflicting harm or even death on the ingroup. In most cases xenophobia becomes a form of cleansing rage which is often preceded by a systematic stigmatisation of the target population. The first step in this kind of instances is usually to paint a picture of otherness that makes the group either more violent than others in the same community or create the impression that the development and self actualisation of particular groups are being hampered by the presence of or the domineering character of a particular section of the population.

In trying to give a sense of his participation experience on radio talk shows generally in post-apartheid South Africa, Habib, who is a regular talk show guest and who has featured several times on both ‘The After Eight Debate’ and ‘The Redi Direko Show’ painted a picture that was in tandem with the question about class relations and the way they were reflected on these shows. According to him:

> In part it’s reflective of the power stakeholders in society and their concerns. So the question is do these talk shows represent the interests and voices and the concerns of the poor and the marginalised of the community? Sometimes, when those concerns dovetail neatly with those of the powerful stakeholders. But when they don’t I think the powerful stakeholders get their voices heard and their issues heard and reflected upon much more than perhaps marginalised communities do. (Habib, interview 8 September, 2010).

In a bid to understand the intricacies of the situations that produced the violence against immigrants in South Africa there is the need to unpack the idea of class which has been used by many people including scholars to find explanation for the anomie. In other words, class can no longer be seen as a unified one-size-fits-all concept which always sets the powerful against the weak. In any case, historical development has show that every modern society has different levels of power which reside in different categories of people and the amount of peace in communities seem to now rest on how the different levels of power in society are organised an d moderated to provide a synergy towards the aspirations of people in the community. During the era of the xenophobic attacks three dimensions of class can be identified in the various debates about the issue on radio. These dimensions include the standard of living dimension, the status dimension and the power dimension. While the standard of living dimension of class positions the rich at the top and the poor or very poor if we like at the bottom, the status class presents a scenario of the arrogant at the pinnacle and the humiliated at the base. In the case of class relations in terms of power we have dominators or the powerful at the top and the powerless at the bottom (Glaser, 2010). What Glaser describes as 'class defined according to standard of living or material conditions of life' (Glaser, 2010: 288) appears more apt in describing the conditions of victims of xenophobia who had to be helped with temporary shelter to protect them from the elements. This is a kind of class which 'grades people according to their access to material and other goods, including, for example, free time and decent conditions of work' (288). Put differently it refers to the relationship between rich and poor. But the description here aptly describes the South African situation because of the fact that the dimensions of class in that society continue to mutate such that the determinants of this category also shift constantly between race-based and politically motivated forms of privilege.

The different ways in which participants respond to the plight of immigrants during xenophobic attacks also reflect a kind of plurality of opinions which in some cases are driven by the social location of the contributors. This polarity shows a kind of plurality and fragmentation of social life brought into the open by the laying of emphasis on social difference (Chouliaraki and Fairclough, 1999: 7). The implication of this is the fact that the idea of the public sphere which media discourses tend to eschew continues to shift from an understanding of the public domain as one unified entity such as we have in Habermas' theorising of democratic participation to that of the presence of multiple public spheres

highlighted by different kinds of social movements and interests. History can also be used to legitimise the practice of power or the deployment of violence. The present is usually a contingent product of the changes in relations of power in any community. In the case of South Africa political and economic powers are closely linked to the peculiar historical trajectories of the country. The discourses that these trajectories generate often find themselves landing almost inevitably in the corridors of apartheid politics which continues to define South Africa's recent past while at the same time remaining discursively visible in the interpretations of contemporary everyday life events.

Most of the historical accounts of violence that we encounter in scholarship often come up long after the events might have taken place. In most cases such accounts are rendered several years after. One distinctive feature that deliberations on talk shows offer is the ability to not just record the event as it happens but also the chance it offers for comment on such an event. The talk show therefore draws upon the broad historical ruptures in society (Muson, 1993) to create a new media genre. In a way this instantaneous engagement with history also provides some kind of material that has not been over-mediated by a long period of reflection which tends to impose certain colourations on such narratives as a result of political or social considerations which producers of historical accounts may have taken into consideration in the course of their work. Though this rendering of history on the spot, exposes the narrators to a kind of pressure as they struggle to modify their views in order to remain politically correct, its beauty lies in the offering it makes of textual material coming on the spur of the moment through a media form that relies on immediacy while at the same time trying to capture the significance of events happening in the community for a better appreciation of the bigger issues involving such a community.

The discourse of peace, which is usually an attempt to repress the visibility of the discourse of violence, is somewhat hegemonised by official historical accounts of the South African miracle. This discourse of peace is being blunted by violent incidents of crime and xenophobia which by implication throw up new discourses that challenge the status quo. The past, no matter how glorious or tragic, embodies particular lessons that become useful in the ordering of the present and in envisioning the future. In other words, it is essential to have an awareness of the past in order to comprehend the present and anticipate the future. Injustices, for instance, are often generally referred to as belonging to the past. This tries to exclude injustices of the present, which are inherent in the continued perpetuation of exclusion on the

basis of race, class and gender. Instances such as the xenophobic violence often provide opportunity for the re-interrogation of history through the prism of present discriminatory practices. 'Neck-lacing' a man, as an act of the performance of hatred, for instance, is tantamount to re-opening the archive of the apartheid past in spite of the various efforts that have taken place towards reformation and integration of South African society into a more tolerant and humane one. The ambivalence of a common past against a different past is reflected in the contributions of participants on radio talk shows who attempt to justify the attacks on the basis of the difficulties of life and the failed expectations of politics. For such people, immigrants should not be seen as part of the common past that defines South African identity.

The hosts of both 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' often attempt to, as much as possible, mobilise participants around certain national imaginings. These imaginings in the main seek to represent South Africa as a community not completely averse to the presence of foreign elements. It seeks in fact to construct an image of a people full of love and kindness for neighbours without discrimination. The major techniques employed here seek to blur the intensity of the hate and exclusionary politics inherent in the xenophobic attacks by downplaying the rage in expressed by participants especially callers and people who sent sms's. This kind of image and identity management conflicts with the forms of reporting in other media forms in the country on the same subject. Redi Direko, for instance, quoted the *Star* newspaper headline 'We Dont Want them Here'. Such a headline, unlike what the talk show host did in representing the anger of the indigenous population as mildly as possible paints an image of a definite decision not to allow 'them' (aliens) remain in the country. This kind of conflicting representation, in the first instance, is indicative of how problematic the representation of identities, whether individual or national can be during crises or national emergencies. It shows an inherent fragmentation of the self which further troubles the composition of unified identities and the fostering of community. In a way there could be a struggle between the private beliefs of people who have to speak in the public sphere and what the dynamics of their situations allow them to say publicly. In other words, the need for the observance of political correctness in public discourse may well be a motivating factor for show anchors to speak in particular ways when they address the public. Though there is no accurate parameter with which to discern the personal views of talk show anchors themselves, the direction of the discussion as can be deduced from the contributions of the public is often a pointer to how people feel generally about a particular issue. In this

instance, it is evident that in managing the show for the day, Redi Direko tries to steer the discussion to assume a more humane dimension than what contributors attempted to suggest. In other words certain aspects and interpretations of the event itself become silenced. The danger in silencing and repressing certain aspects of history, however, is in the possibility of a depletion of the communal cultural archive which is important in a proper understanding of the evolution of society.

One other thing to note is that this kind of situations in which it can be sensed that a show host and the public (participants on the show especially) disagree silently on the way to go about a particular event raises salient questions about the perception of nationalism. For the callers and the people who sent sms denouncing immigrants in South Africa, there is a perception of nationalism that seeks to emphasise a protection of the resources of the land for the use and if possible exclusive benefit of the local population. The show anchor on the other hand, also with a perception of nationalism seeks to protect the image of the country and its people by dismissing any attempt to portray the people as hostile and violent especially against foreigners. This way, the talk show becomes a site of struggle of sorts while the host tries to encourage listeners to see the issue at hand from a particular, potentially positive, prism. In a way, the identities of both the nation and that of its different inhabitants are then renegotiated based on the situations on ground. Identity, in other words, becomes a shifting entity which takes on different understandings at different times in the nation's historical trajectory.

As Sanem Sahin argues, 'the categorisation of who national identity includes or excludes changes depending on the national project pursued or the context of its production' (2011: 585). For the nation, the internationally acclaimed image of a return to peace and the fostering of a democratic all inclusive society becomes threatened hence the need for the show host to be on guard. For the inhabitants, the crisis at hand becomes a rubric in separating the indigenous population from the migrant population in a place ordinarily portrayed as not just a home to all but a bastion of equal treatment and access to equal opportunities. In a way therefore, the contributions of people who insist that immigrants constitute a menace to the growth of South Africa and therefore deserve to be expelled can be said to be a reflection of public attitude towards the foreign other in the country. Such attitudes may not reflect an official policy on the question of migrants. However, when expressed in the public as done on this particular talk show, they rub off on the perception of

the country in the long run. The politics of identity that plays itself out in the kind of exchange taking place between Redi Direko and some of the vexatious participants on her show clearly reminds us of the complexity of identity and the difficulty of the task of creating a unified national image which in itself is more of a mythical construct. The next section of this chapter looks at how media rely on one another for material in representing major events in contemporary South Africa.

Intermediality: a Paradigm of Mobility

Intermediality is indeed a complex phenomenon. It is brought about when narratives and images travel across media spaces. Here I dwell on the common sense application of the term which suggests a symbiosis among different media forms in the process of composition. As Jay Bolter and Richard Grusin point out, media have become very much interdependent on one another. According to them, 'a medium in our culture can never operate in isolation, because it must enter into relationships of respect and rivalry with other media' (1999: 65). In adopting this kind of approach to understanding intermediality, Leonardo Quaresima, proposes that intermediality 'involves confronting a text B with a prior text A, where both texts *belong to the same medium*' (2002: 77). With intermediality, or what Quaresima prefers to call 'remakes', 'we are in the presence of a basic technique: the fact that the story already exists gives greater force to the new version' (Quaresima, 2002: 79). During intermedial referencing older forms are given freshness or currency and become invested with new meaning. It should be noted however that what is done in terms of meaning during recourse to intermediality is not a complete alteration of the meaning of texts. Rather 'what is emphasised is updating meaning rather than transforming or reinterpreting it' (Quaresima, 2002: 79). In other words, 'the text is put in a different network of meaning and different cultural systems' (Ibid: 81). With intermediality in talk shows especially, issues are kept alive and more people are then given opportunities to becoming participants in the process of deliberations that often lead to decisions affecting the lives and identities of citizens. The re-enactment of previously publicised events through radio talk shows can therefore be understood in the light of the provision of a second opportunity for a particular text or events around such text to be further digested and understood by the audience. In other words, memories of previous events are retained through intermedial references as the processes of

recollection and deliberation create an extension of the issues previously featured in other media forms.

The major question here is how debates are generated on radio talk shows. Radio talk show debates do not just emerge as a leap in the dark. They have sources or various things that inspire them. As Tim Modise points out during my interview with him, there is a considerable amount of reliance on other media forms in preparing for talk show:

> Sometimes if those things do not come from news reports themselves I would be reading something and thinking about it and say I wonder if people are aware of certain developments in the world, let's say climate change for instance. The debate around it, that lets bring people who hold different views or who can help us understand what the whole global movement towards climate change and new approaches to energy and so on are all about because those are very detailed things and they require experts and people who are better knowledgeable to help us understand them (Modise, Interview 15 April 2011)

It has indeed become difficult for any media form or genre to insulate itself from the rest of the media forms made available by technological transformations. What goes on in the case of radio talk shows therefore can be described as mediation and remediation of events as we have seen in the way material are sourced during the production of these programmes as well as the attestation by the host of one of the programmes on which this research is based. A medium or even cultural genre defines its own ontology by relating itself to other media. In the light of this, it is now almost impossible to define the specificity of any medium or even programme category in isolation except through a dialogical encounter with other media (see de Zepetnek et al, 2011; Schroter, 2011).

A direct reference to the role of other media is evident in the next response by Modise:

> Yeah, I mean most of the information would come as a result of that. Otherwise how else would I know about the developments in China or the developments and thinking in the Paelstine/Israeli conflict or the relationship between the Unites States and South American countries? A whole number of issues that come to mind, you know, require that you definitely do a lot of reading. (Modise Interview 15 April 2011)

Talk shows seek to mediate discourses in the public sphere to produce different types of consciousness, which could be either similar to or at variance with official consciousness. In taking on the role of mediation the two talk shows enter into 'intercourse' with different other forms of media available at the time of xenophobia.

Different forms of media continue to rely on one another to be kept up to date with the discourses surrounding major events like xenophobia. The example that follows shows how 'The After Eight Debate' relies on newspaper reports in the production of the discussion on xenophobia:

> The question is how best can those who have been displaced be integrated back into society and how? Let's start with you Mr Maseko looking at the newspaper headlines that we are seeing this morning there have been attempts, there are on-going an on-going process to move them to safety shelters but it looks like there is still resistance from some quarters. (After Eight Debate, 2 June 2008).

The xenophobia discourse has travelled across various media. It has moved from the immediate medium of radio to print, cinema (eg District 9, A Small Town Called Descent), book texts, to new media (eg Facebook, YouTube). In this movement different media have had to rely on one another to tell the story of an event that clearly jolted the nation. The difference in approach across media and indeed across different genres is precipitated by the fact that different media or different genres do have different protocols of production which serve as stylistic vehicles for their representational agenda. Stories are therefore reworked when taken from other media to suit the particular production peculiarities of the media using them.

Intermediality is a strategy of participation even for listeners and callers on the show. For instance, an anonymous sms read by Redi Direko on her programme on 23 May, 2008 aptly illustrates this: 'The type of government we need is clearly spelt out in Chapter 16 of Andrew Feinstein's book After the Party. Every South African citizen must read it' (Redi Direko Show, 23 May, 2008). This contribution of the listener who sends this sms is clearly linked to material from another media form and even though other listeners might choose to or not to interact with such material after the programme, the point is made that the issue being discussed as become a subject for different public spheres or different platforms. The

divergence of platforms in this manner also tries to reinforce a sense of pervasiveness and hence the need to act to make things right. Interestingly, Chapter 16 of Andrew Feinstein's book, After the Party: A Personal and Political Journey inside the ANC (2007) is titled 'An Unfinished House.' The chapter title is taken from polish poet and novelist, Adam Zagajewski' work. Above all, it is through intermediality that a radio talks show 'attains its importance in and as a nexus of all sorts of "talk"—journalism, fiction, criticism, politics, research' (Muson, 1993: 6). The explanation for the ease with which radio talk shows criss-cross other media forms can be found in the simplicity or little complexity in the technology of radio itself.

The identity of radio itself becomes quite mobile just the way fluidity is reflected in the different genres of programmes brought before the audience. Radio broadcasts are no longer fixed shows taking place from the studio setting which are beamed to heterogeneous audiences. They are becoming more live events that are taken out into wider public spaces where they engage physically with the people while still keeping their distant audiences. For instance, Talk Radio 702 has been involved in many such outside broadcast ventures like broadcasting from the Johannesburg Art Fair or 'The Brain of Brains' programme which is a quiz programme originating from different malls around the city. In a more recent example of taking radio shows out of the traditional studio setting, many episodes of 'The Redi Direko Show' have recently been broadcast as political debates involving different political parties contesting the 2011 local council elections from the Soweto campus of the University of Johannesburg. This project which is a collaboration with the University of Johannesburg illustrates the shifts in identity of radio and its patterns of programming in contemporary times. Intermediality, therefore, presupposes a boundlessness of forms while offering a refashioning of representation. In bringing different forms of media closer to one another, new processes of narrative organization emerge based on the diversity of genres.

Conclusion

This chapter has tried to look at the issues of contestations on 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' during debates around the xenophobic violence that engulfed South Africa in 2008. Some salient points have come to the fore in the course of examining these contestations, One of such is a better understanding of how speakers, in this case participants

in the public domain of talk radio, negotiate relations with the public. Another point is that difficult issues like xenophobia often draw on emotional discourses when brought into the public domain, and the different subject positions of individuals contributing to such debates may also influence the way they speak during participation. In other words, the level of responsibility that a person is deemed to carry for instance may be a factor to consider in the kind of language used and the point at which to even join the discussion or initiate a part of it. Also, the flurry and fury of debates during this period indicates that xenophobia brings to the fore fragility in people's identity and confidence as new citizens of the 'new' South Africa. The politics of identity played a very important role in the rise and sustenance of xenophobia and the discourses around it as can be seen through its construction and constant negotiation in the debates on 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show.' Popular discourses on radio talk shows constitute one of the major avenues through which we can begin to understand many of the functionalities and dysfunctionalities of contemporary South African life. The composition of identities, which is a major determining variable in the task of both individual self fashioning and collective nation building, is often done in a situation of highly contentious political manoeuvring. South Africa's postcolonial modernity needs to develop bearing in mind the kind of images produced by individual and group struggles for citizenship and belonging.

In contradistinction to Derrida's philosophical counsel of hospitality which thrives on 'an unconditional commitment to receive and welcome the unexpected visitor—be they a stranger, an immigrant, a refugee, an asylum seeker—whenever they may arrive and without imposing limits on that welcome'[34] xenophobia and its constant featuring in the media creates a condition of fear which further traumatises the citizenship claims of both native and non-native members of the national community. Such traumatising of identity also puts a strain on the claims to humanism common especially in official narratives of the national attitude and attributes on the new South Africa. Artificial nation-building practices deployed mainly by state actors and in certain cases talk show hosts may not be effective enough in explaining away actions of violence which are antithetical to the identity of the nation and its constituents. The mediation and representation of violence on talk show debates point to a major aspect of the public sphere which contributes to the determination of national identity which in itself is not in any way stable. The constant destabilisation of official narratives and

[34] Quoted in Ramadan (2011)

sometimes myths about the nation makes social and political hierarchies mutate ceaselessly. In such mutations, new cultures emerge and are circulated through the media. The contributions people make on these shows are, therefore, not just ordinary speeches, they are rather more of 'well crafted discursive interventions' (Sinha and Gasper, 2009) mindful of possible outcomes which ultimately impact on identity and accruable benefits of belonging. In doing this, silence and silencing become major tools in the hands of participants just as much as they also make use of language, history and intermediality as strategic entry points to skew representation in predetermined directions.

CHAPTER FIVE

TALKING TO THE POLLS: ELECTION DISCOURSES IN 'THE AFTER EIGHT DEBATE' AND 'THE REDI DIREKO SHOW'

Introduction

The importance of media to the cultivation of cultures of democracy can never be over-emphasised. Since elections seem to have become the standard and acceptable procedure through which regime changes can be effected even in the contemporary postcolonial state, elections continue to occupy a central place in the larger picture of a new modernity to which nation-states hope to subscribe. Much of the work on media and elections in Africa has dwelt on issues of freedom of the media during election coverages, the use of media during election campaigns, the avoidance of bias and the handling of election results by the media (Blankson, 2007; Debra, 2011; Esipisu and Khaguli, 2009; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Ogbondah, 2004; Teshome, 2009; Tettey, 2001). This chapter takes the discussion of media and elections into a new realm that deals with the questions of representation and identity politics which become noticeable in talk shows during elections or in periods close to elections in transitional democracies such as that in South Africa. Drawing on material from two radio talk shows, 'The After Eight Debate' (SAFM) and 'The Redi Direko Show' (Talk Radio 702) which featured discussions about South Africa's fourth democratic elections held in April 2009, the chapter attempts to show the ways in which identity politics is re-enacted on radio among different socio-political groups in a context of grave political contestations arising from the peculiar historical realities of the country. The chapter highlights the dynamics of these contestations and negotiation of identity. It also shows how discourses in the public domain constituted by radio talk shows during elections constitute useful political messages aimed at constructing identities for the mobilization of citizens towards specific objectives. In other words, it shows the significance of people's contributions on issues dealing with the political beyond 'mere talk' on radio.

The focus on representation and politics of identity is premised on the relationship between politics and popular culture whereby popular media forms such as talk shows provide the platform for the exhibition of the intricacies and power relations involved in the political

manipulations present in society. As John Street argues, 'the intimacy in which politics and popular culture exist' (1997: 3) calls for more scholarly examination of the relationship between the two. In short, 'popular culture has to be understood as *part* of our politics' since in so doing we have an opportunity to 'link popular culture directly to our histories and experiences' (Ibid: 4). In South Africa, this link between popular culture and politics is not only becoming more and more ubiquitous, it has also attracted scholarly inquiry in recent times (see for instance Coplan, 2005; Gunner 2009). This link which is exemplified in the everyday life performance of politics seems to have inspired Jim McGuigan's (2005) theorisation of 'a cultural public sphere' following on the tradition of Jurgen Habermas' (1989) idea of critical-rational debate as a transformative ingredient of deliberative democracy. McGuigan's concern with the cultural public sphere helps to considerably free the public sphere of a form of elitism and invest it with much immediacy characteristic of people's lived experiences. This way, popular cultural forms like talk radio become shared spaces where elites and ordinary people compete for space allocated to them by show hosts who have to 'manage' participation (Carpentier 2001; 2009).

The chapter demonstrates that though attempts at manipulation may occur in radio talk shows especially during seasons of political processes, the possibility of 'an engaged audience' (Kaarsholm and James, 2000: 197) participating in the processes of integration and nation-state formation points to a far more robust public sphere than the proponents and followers of the pacification theories of the Frankfurt School might have imagined. As Kaarsholm and James argue, popular cultural forms such as radio talk shows rather than imperialise, may in fact 'enable people to engage with present difficulties in a creative manner, in part by expressing a yearning for a better, more "modern" or less parochial life' (Ibid: 197-198). The enablement of participation that talk offers goes some way to providing more meaning and credence to the electoral process and raises the bar in the attempt to make democratisation the pillar upon which societal innovations rest. As Patrick Murphy has argued, 'it is through the media that public discourse about the scope and nature of democracy is circulated, even—or perhaps, especially—in fledgling democracies' (2007: 2).

In the course of interviews gathered for this study, one idea seemed to crop up from time to time. This is the idea that people's appetite for self-expression keeps rising with the opportunity to talk. This appetite becomes more volatile during crucial political moments such as elections. The evidence for this was expressed by some of the respondents

interviewed for the study. While responding to the question of what things motivated them to listen to radio talk shows, a good number of them often cited moments of controversy or important national political events (especially elections and matters related to them) as the push factors. For instance, Mmathapelo's reference to the attraction which the discussion of political issues on talk radio held for her is quite instructive in this regard.[35] Thulani, who lives in Fourways, Johannesburg, made a pointed reference to the political nature of many of the talk shows on radio:

> You actually get a sense that most of the talk shows on radio are quite political. I'm not saying that there is anything bad in them being political, I just think that they really give a lot of time to politics these days. For example I was listening to Tim Modise's show almost on a daily basis during the elections. It's really interesting the kind of arguments you get to hear from politicians and even the general public on those kinds of shows. It was the same during the Malema and the shoot the Boer thing as well. (Thulani interview, 22 October 2010)

Another listener, David, who resides in Randburg, Johannesburg, said:

> You get to hear a lot of things on these shows during say the election period. We were hearing so many things about Zuma, COPE and what not during the last elections and I'm beginning to feel we might still hear a lot again during the forthcoming municipal elections especially now that the Manyi issue is being brought up again. I think with those kinds of things happening one wouldn't want to miss out (David Interview, 25 February 2011).

There were different kinds of issues coming up on radio talk shows shortly before and during the elections. Though issues of race, like the Manyi issue referred to by David here, crop up once in a while in a somewhat politicised manner, the broad issues that dominate debates on talk shows can be categorised into issues about crime and corruption, service delivery, poverty and the economy, education, the Zimbabwe issue, political party dominance or proportional representation and the need for electoral reform.

[35] See Mmathapelo's interview where she makes reference to politics cited in Chapter Two.

Elections, Democracy and Popular Participation

The rapidly growing literature on democratisation in Africa continues to pay attention to the role of the media in the process (Ogbondah, 2004, 2007; Nyamnjoh, 2005; Hyden and Okigbo, 2002; Soola, 2009). Most of these efforts however dwell more on issues such as the role of independent media, legislations concerning election coverage and release of results, ownership and control, pre-election popularity polls and modes of reporting rather than the real discourses or issues being raised through the popular media during periods of election. This is in spite of the need to maintain a vibrant participatory character in democracies, a need best served by the institutionalisation of free speech and association before, during and after elections. There is the need for the public to constantly deliberate on societal progress and make contributions as to the alternatives for progress in order to enrich the polity and at the same time assist representatives of the state who in the first instance derive their mandate from the populace. The platform for such deliberations is often provided by radio talk shows and other forms of media thereby making them important elements in the governance process.

Elections become one of the ways, if not the most crucial way, to involve the public in the governance process. In other words, elections underscore the principle of citizen participation is the plank on which democracy itself rests. This explains why the absence of elections, their delay or manipulation becomes yardsticks for defining dictatorial tendencies of governments. As Said Adejumobi (2000) argues 'the discourse and theories of democracy, especially in its libertarian form place election as a core variable, which bears an organic linkage with the concept (i.e. democracy)' (p.242). While taking the argument beyond earlier scholars (Sandbrook, 1988; Schumpeter, 1947; Dahl, 1991) Adejumobi concludes that:

> The key properties or elements of liberal democracy are; political participation of the citizens, competition among political agents especially parties and the granting of a host of civil and political liberties, which include the freedom of expression, association and the press, sufficient to ensure the integrity of political competition and participation (2000: 243)

The idea not to see an election as self-sufficient in the engendering of democratic culture is validated by the perceived limitations of the process of choosing leaders. The Marxist

argument which sees the structure of society along lines of hegemony and domination for instance, perceives elections as 'a system of political and ideological reification of the hegemony and power of the dominant class' (Adejumobi, 2000: 244). In spite of the doubts that exist over the propriety of elections a harbinger of the culture of democracy, they still remain a major barometer for the measurement of citizen participation in the process of decision making on a good number of issues that affect their lives. It is in this regard that the failure of elections or even the inability to conduct elections has become a yardstick for theorising the pervasiveness of autocracies and personalised rule in Africa. The point needs to be made however that public deliberations in the media act as a major complement in broadening participation in the democratic process. As Arnold De Beer argues:

> The very roots of democracy are understood as an active sphere of praxis with individuals participating in debate and argument about the nature of the basic structure of the society they share. Indeed, the sphere of activity raises a whole set of questions about inclusion and participation that act as the basis of civil society (De Beer, 2004: 78)

The vibrancy of democracy evidenced by public debate and constant questioning of status quo reminds us of the idea of a deliberative public sphere where issues are brought into the public domain for consideration. Radio and indeed talk shows have become part of this deliberative public sphere as people's thoughts and views are constantly mediated and transported into an arena for debate. The mediation of the process of elections, therefore, becomes a crucial trope through which we can further understand the various intricacies that define relationships between the people and the state on the one hand, and that among the various groups of people who make up the national community on the other. It is through such mediation that the contestations for power and the assumption of agency which take place during seasons of transition can be further analysed.

Advantage, Disadvantage, Urgency and Election Discourses

In writing about the political milieu in American society, Charles Lindblom (1982) urges scholars to see modern democracy as 'an institutional struggle between advantage and disadvantage' (p.10). Lindblom's argument is to the effect that political contestations don't

just happen. They form part of an organised struggle towards the capturing of power as part of the social armoury for negotiating privilege. And in this privilege is implied the marginalisation of certain other individuals or groups who would then have to concede visibility at least for the tenure of the incumbent. This visibility, it bears mentioning, often comes with a lot of advantage to the individuals or groups who achieve success at the polls. In Africa especially such advantage may have as much significance as to spark off envy from the opposition. Political contestations are also a reflection of the differences in society in terms of economic power. So as they re-enact the conflicts about citizenship and the nature of the state and its relations with its subjects, an economic dimension to the question of belonging comes into the picture as a form of power index which determines how much influence people wield in society.

In the case of post-apartheid South Africa, political contests when looked at on the surface reflect a struggle within the African National Congress (ANC) which has remained dominant in the political space since it won the first non-racial elections held on 27th April, 1994. The party has also won the majority in all the past four general elections held in the country since the start of non-racial rule. In the 2009 elections the ANC won two hundred and sixty-four seats in Parliament with 65.9% of the votes. The major opposition party, the Democratic Alliance (DA) won sixty-seven parliamentary seats with 16.6% votes while the Congress of the People came third with thirty seats in Parliament having achieved a 7.4% victory at the polls. These victories, however, did not come without challenges in the form of fierce confrontations manifesting in media discourses around the polls as would be seen in the last general elections held on 22nd April 2009. It is indeed significant that the ANC percentage victory in 2009 fell short of the 69.69% it achieved in the 2004 general elections as the issue of party dominance or what the DA championed as the 'stop the ANC two-thirds campaign' became a common currency in the media during electioneering campaign.

In addition to the contest on the political terrain is the larger picture of social and economic inequalities that are visible in contemporary South African society. To a large extent, political debates which dominate the media during periods of elections tend to manifest these positions of advantage and disadvantage as people occupying different strata of society find an opportunity to air their view in the open thereby challenging the status quo. In trying to situate this conflict in critical perspective Lindblom (1982) advocates that scholars pay attention to the 'tense conflict between popular demands and the needs of business [and] the

viability and efficacy of democracy' (p.17). This kind of approach is necessary considering the influence which capital in form of organised business wields on political leaders in the contemporary world. The important thing that should be noted therefore is the fact that debates and contestations take the form of a challenge of undue advantage, or the perception of it, and the call for equity in the polity for the sustenance of a democratic order which is expected to have its foundations built on opportunities for participation and the pursuit of an ethical distribution of resources. This position is in consonance with the argument by Robert Mattes (2002) that 'a country's political culture does not develop in a vacuum. Rather, it is against a backdrop of economic and political trends and developments that public opinion about a democratic regime, a political system, and citizenship must be assessed and understood' (p.28-29). The route to the assessment and understanding of the way people relate with the political system lies in the different kinds of discourses that are thrown up during participatory media engagements in the public domain. In contemporary South Africa radio talk shows manifest these kinds of discourses in the two broad senses namely, discourses of power and discourses of time.

Discourses of Power in Talk Shows on Election

Participation in talk shows which discuss politics and elections bring to the fore a number of issues which may help us to further understand the reasons for the tensions generated during election periods. In order to steer clear of the numerous contestations surrounding the definition of power which continue to further complicate the concept across disciplines, I adopt a conflict theory approach to the understanding of the concept. Such an approach, as put forward by Max Weber (1978) and Steven Lukes (2005) among others, should be seen as useful to the discussion here in view of its recognition of the relational sense of power 'where there is both conflict and inequality between interacting subjects' (Rigstad, 2006). So in dealing with the question of power there is ample consideration for the social inequalities which define different participants on the talk shows analysed in this chapter. In most cases, such inequalities can be said to be the root cause of conflicts which manifest in both public discourse and real life situations in contemporary South Africa.

During these shows from which evidence was taken in election and pre-election periods there are controversies around how to rebuild or reconstitute the state that is ever considered either

fractured or inadequate in meeting the aspirations of its citizens. In this process of reconstitution, the state is expected to take on a new identity in terms of how it responds to both local and global challenges which characterise modern political units. Talk becomes a significant element in the articulation of the available options for the process of reconstitution and the institutionalisation of the state or the crusade to make the public buy the alternative idea. In other words people have to talk to make others understand their positions or make them see reason about why things need to be done differently from what the status quo offers. One of the things which come into the open during open debates is how people express their preferences during times of election. This expression of preference manifests itself in people's support for political parties or even the drawing of analogies between the way things are done locally and how they evolve in other cultures. An example of this is seen in Redi Direko's discussion of the Obama victory concert on her programme on January 19, 2009. The show host clearly expressed her preference for a political culture which has produced a kind of result she would like to see in her own country:

> We want to get to a point where you agree with people on principle even if they come from a different party, even if they come from a different culture. You want to able to say the DA's Hellen Zille says ABC even if you are in ANC and vice versa DA giving praise and credit to ANC when is due. That's the kind of unity that came through for me. (Redi Direko Show, 19 January 2009).

The above statement by the show host linked to the South African Presidential election which was due in less than four months from the date of broadcast of the day's programme. The expression of preference in this case relates to the making of choices which is very important during elections and discourses surrounding them. The implication of this is that people want to act or live in a democratic space. This wish to be democratic is however not just an ordinary wish but rather a desire to be able to exercise some form of influence or power in the space they occupy. This is what is often reflected as the people engage in different kinds of talk when they have the opportunity especially through popular media. On radio talk shows, these different kinds of talk manifest in voice calls, sms's and even emails. The understanding of talk here is to see it as a form of expression of one's mind or ideas which can be done either verbally or no-verbally. In a sense, therefore, sms's and emails also constitute forms of talk since they are also avenues through which people express their opinions depending on the circumstances guiding their choice. The importance of other forms

of communication other than voice calls as a way of expression on talk shows is underscored by the way show hosts often invite contributions from participants. On the Redi Direko Show for instance, it is common to hear the host introduce the show in this manner:

> You may just want to start thinking about your questions, your sms's, your emails. It's best if you call because then we can deal with your questions and answer immediately. But I do have some emails left over from last week and I will do my best to read them and post your questions to the scientist. But right now, what are we doing? We are opening up our lines. You put the issues on the agenda and we start talking, 0214460567, 0118830702. I am taking your sms's on 31702 and 31567 as standard sms rates apply (Redi, 23 January 2009).

In this kind of scenario the listener is also empowered to choose and this sense of the importance of choice is heightened in pre-election or election time. There are at least three possible avenues through which a listener may be part of the programme: by calling, sending an sms or sending an email.

The power to choose is a very significant form of power which comes to the fore during election discourses. The desire for the exercise of this power is evident in the contributions of listeners on the two talk shows selected for this study on the day of the 2009 presidential elections in South Africa. On 'The After Eight Debate' for instance short messages sent in by listeners reflect largely the desire to express the power of their freedom to choose. One of the messages read by the show anchors was sent by a listener who was identified as Funani. According to him, 'AZAPO survived humiliation and blacklisting by the media for far too long. I'll go and show my concern by voting AZAPO for the sake of the country.' (After Eight Debate, 22 April 2009). The interesting thing about Funani's comment is his sympathy for the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) which comes as a result of perceived marginalisation of the party by the media. Though he might not be convinced about the ability or the likelihood that AZAPO would win the election Funani chooses to vote for the party to show his sympathy and appreciate its steadfastness. Another example is that of a listener who chose to identify himself as In Soweto: 'I don't like corruption and that is an

understatement. I hate it. I've always voted ANC but now I'm going to vote COPE[36] to make sure that the ANC does not get a two-thirds majority'. The wish of this listener to stop corruption in South Africa is here given expression through his choice of a political party other than the one he had voted for in the past. From the tone of the message, In Soweto does not have high hopes that COPE might win the Presidential elections but he exudes some kind of confidence and would be satisfied by the exercise of his 'power' which in his estimation might deny the ANC an overwhelming two-thirds majority in parliament. There is ample evidence here to show how identity politics plays out in the choices people make. In making political choices people tend to identify with certain individuals and parties because they tend to share certain characteristics, or such individuals or parties are structured in particular ways, or espouse some kind of views that attract. Identity politics is then used to obscure the ordinary political and economic choices that the people need to make were they not to consider some of these factors linked to their subjectivities.

Another listener who chose to remain completely anonymous sent an sms which read 'Vote ANC, COPE is power hungry, they want to remain in power at all costs and that's what is happening all over Africa, they think they are Messiahs.' This message speaks directly to the question of power and the quest for it which define political contestations in most contemporary African states. A faction of the ruling party, the ANC, had broken away to form a new party named Congress of the People (COPE) after the incumbent president Thabo Mbeki had lost the party leadership elections at the fifty-second national conference of the ANC held in Polokwane and was subsequently recalled from the presidency by his party. The promoters of the new party which was formed just about five months before the Presidential election were thought to have defected as a result of their perceived loss of power which they wielded in the ruling party before pitching their tent against the eventual winner of the party congress, Jacob Zuma. The struggle for power which became evident in the ANC itself seemed to have become too simmering for the leadership to contain, leading to the decision of the COPE faction to form a new party and seek elective office through it. What seems obvious in the COPE crisis is that political power is a very significant form of power which different people and groups struggle to possess. Such power often resides in the hands of the ruling elite which more often than not use it to acquire different forms of advantage for its members. In this instance, different factions of the South African political cum power elite

[36] Acronym for Congress of the People, a new political party formed by a splinter group from the ANC just before the general elections

simply broke away thereby creating a semblance of plurality and in the process providing the people with a choice between two sides of the same coin.

In dealing with the question of power C. Wright Mills argues that 'the power elite' are more or less a unified class who as 'critics of morality and technicians of power' (2000: 4) determine the faith of the people while maintaining the hegemony of their constituency. Though Mills's assessment of power is based on experience in American society, similar paradigms exist and have been documented in the contemporary African setting (Karlstrom, 2003; Mbembe, 2001). Both Mbembe and Karlstrom situate within the discourse of power in postcolonial African states a power elite (ruling class) which displays similar traits in the production and deployment of power. Though Mbembe and Karlstrom take different positions on how to understand power relations in the African postcolony, they are unanimous about the existence of a power elite around whom issues affecting the progress of such societies revolve. While Mbembe adopts a pessimistic view of the power elite on the one hand, Karlstrom rationalises some kind of redemptive characteristics into the political power elite based on what is considered the positive aspects of their cultural practices.

For the voting public, it becomes a game of both hope and despondency as they try to use the period of elections to seek the attention of the power elite. During such periods, talk on radio becomes a means of expressing views on basic needs such as housing, health, education and so on. For example, a group of people in the townships who had been agitating to own their own houses but had faced disappointment from the government which they had expected to give them houses choose the period of election to exercise their power of withholding their votes and by implication withholding their civic responsibility to the state. For them, the time of elections appears to be a period when politicians and policy makers listen to the people whose only source of power might be their votes which ultimately produce the mandate that validates the political power with which the leaders are invested.

The issue of housing is a very crucial one in South Africa. It has been a recurring decimal in the numerous service delivery protests witnessed across the country as people argue that the ANC had promised them housing in return for their votes but had failed to fulfill its part of the bargain after spending fifteen years in power. The victims of homelessness therefore organised themselves into a pressure group called Homeless People or Abahlali baseMjondolo (Shackdwellers' Movement). Groups of this nature are populated by people

who live in settlements where houses, services and amenities fall far below expectation (see, for instance, Harber, 2011; Sinwell, 2010, 2011). They were reported on the Election Day episode of 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' on 22 April, 2009 to be staging street protests in areas such as Diepkloof in Soweto and Alexandra insisting they would not vote until they were provided with houses by the government. A female member of the group who was featured in a report from Diepkloof on 'The After Eight Debate' said:

> Me I can't vote, the ANC promises and doesn't deliver on them. Right now I'm sleeping at my parents home when I should be sleeping under my own roof. So who should I vote for? (After Eight Debate, 22 April 2009).

The rhetorical question posed by the lady in question strongly signposts the betrayal of expectations which people are likely to feel when political leaders whom they believe have the capacity to ameliorate their sufferings fail to deliver. This expression of disillusionment with the state and its policies signal the importance of the power to choose through the ballot which the people have when it comes to the season of elections. The interesting thing though is the fact that there is always a diversity of views during significant political moments like election periods as can be seen in the plurality of opinions expressed by citizens on how to exercise the power inherent in their ballots.

While the Homeless People became reluctant citizens as a result of their decision not to vote, a few others saw some form of capacity in power of their ballots and decide that they would use it to turn things around in the country. An unidentified man from Soweto said on the same show, for instance:

> I am voting for change. There has to be a change. I'm voting for my children so that they can get employment after school. We are suffering but our children should succeed even though we the parents are suffering. (After Eight Debate, 22 April 2009).

Amid the prevailing level of economic and social inequalities in the South African society some people, like the man who opted to vote for the sake of the future (his children being an embodiment of that future), opt for a positive interpretation of the situation. For such people the 'politics of hope and possibility' (Cameron, 2007) which they opt for invests the electoral

process with the power, at least in their minds, to make positive impact on society. On both sides, elections then become an instrument for the exercise of power by people ordinarily thought to be on the edges of power in society. For the 'downtrodden' like the hopeful man I have just quoted, talk becomes a major instrument with which their preferences and expectations are brought into the public domain. In this domain, the political actors in and out of government as well as a sizeable percentage of the community become aware of people's aspirations and may be able to give consideration to such aspirations in extended discourses even after the elections.

While elections could be used to change political leaders who are deemed to have let the people down, they can at the same time serve as the weapon to retain political office holders whose perform the electorate adjudge satisfactory. Power, in its different dimensions, is then seen generally as a form of capacity basically concerned with the relationship between the wielder of power and the person or people subjected to that power (Lukes, 2005). In this kind of situation power is in constant flux. In other words, power is constantly moving such that who is powerful or who is powerless is not very clearly separated.

The major hidden danger to the understanding of the dynamics of power is the fact that power relations get more and more complex as situations or conditions of people change in society. One of the points that emerge during election debates, as will be demonstrated here, is how parallel institutions wrestle with the state especially during periods when crucial political choices have to be made by the people. In the new South Africa these parallel institutions come in different forms and can be categorised into two major strands: state bases of power and non-state bases of power. The state bases of power are usually to be found in the political structures and institutions that govern the state like the executive, the parliament, the judiciary, the police, and all other statutory bodies which have the mandate to act on behalf of the state and its citizens. Non-state bases of power, on the other hand, are to be found in various interest groups which continue to position themselves for power in the wake of the changes brought about by the transformations which have occurred in the political space. They include interest groups, professional bodies, opposition parties, non-governmental organisations and the like. These groups survive mainly by claiming to be concerned about 'care for the people' as they seek to constitute power blocs in the polity. In the real sense of the word, however, both state bases of power and non-state bases of power are usually part of the power elite. While the state bases of power are statutorily empowered, the non-state bases

of power in society use different kinds of means to command attention and influence government policies which at times are just for the benefit of a few or even their members. Through sustained participation and, at times criticisms, different interest groups acquire relevance to the extent that both government and the public tend to place much value on their views in matters of public concern.

Radio talk shows, particularly in election or pre-election periods, also tend to draw a good number of their invited participants from the two bases of power identified above. In other words, an invited guest is often either from a government institution or s/he is representing a particular interest group. For instance, the only guest that the producers of 'The After Eight Debate' invited into the studio on election day was Zamikhaya Maseti. He was introduced as a contributing analyst at *The Thinker* Magazine and a part-time Political Economy lecturer. He was engaged as the 'Resident Analyst' for the day. Zamikhaya, it can be argued, was able to get the privilege of an invitation to be a studio analyst on this very important occasion because of his membership of certain social groups and networks which hold some form of power. Being a magazine columnist first and foremost makes him a part of the fraternity of the media which in South Africa is a very powerful group. In addition to this, the academic community also enjoys considerable privileges with people respecting the views of members of that community a great deal. So, to belong to that community is to also command some form of respect and be a beneficiary of the privileges of the power elite. In trying to put the issue in perspective as the power to be heard in society, Adam Habib, an academic and regular guest on the two talk shows used for this study pondered:

> Do for instance we have enough conversations around the conditions of rural women and consequences that they have to bear by systems of patriarchy and chieftaincy in the rural areas? No. Do we talk a lot about crime? Yes. Why? Because not that crime is simply a rich person's issue but it's an issue that cross class divides. The conditions of poor rural women in rural areas and they have to carry buckets on their heads for water and walk two and a half kilometres; it's not an issue until there is a service delivery protest. And then it becomes an issue for the privileged classes if you like (Habib Interview, September 8, 2009).

From Habib's argument, it becomes clear that even the power to be heard in the public domain cannot be taken for granted just the same way that issues that are brought up for discussion would depend on whose interest is at stake. More often than not the power elite usually have their way, with issues affecting them either directly or indirectly getting priority attention during most of the debates taking place in the media. In other words, when the discomfort of the less privileged goes as far as constituting a nuisance to the powerful, the underlying issues begin to receive some kind of attention with the impression created that the interest of the mass of the people is the subject of concern after all. This kind of approach to burning issues was noticeable in 'The Redi Direko Show' broadcast on January 7, 2009. The programme of the day tried to look at the issues of the ANC's manifesto as the party prepared to launch its election manifesto for the forthcoming elections. In opening the show, the host said:

> I'll tell you what we are going to talk to Gwede Mantashe neh ah who is the Secretary General of the ANC. The ANC is launching its election manifesto. This is your opportunity because I'd like you to call What I want to do is this , the ANC itself extended an invitation to all South Africans to help the party draft its election manifesto. I don't know if that was just a PR exercise If you were to advise the ANC, make requests or make demands what area would you like them to address? (Redi Direko Show, 7 January 2009)

It is obvious that issues in the ANC manifesto will affect almost every South African if the party eventually won the general elections. However, the person who gets invited to the studio to discuss the manifesto of the party is the secretary of the ANC who is part of the power elite. Though the show host invites listeners to call in to 'advise' the party on its manifesto such opportunity is incomparable with the prominence, limelight and airtime advantage that an invitation into the studio confers on an invited guest.

In many instances political parties may transform into state bases of power the moment they acquire the mandate to rule. The point being made here is the fact that a political party which wins an election ceases to be like just any other political party by virtue of that victory. At the same time, such a party must also begin to think about how it manages a dual identity as a political party with structures like any other party on the one hand and a party that has the responsibility of directing state affairs on the other. A party that emerges victorious at the

polls invariably combines to streams of power as it becomes the face of the state at the same time it retains its initial identity as a political organisation set up principally to take control of the affairs of the state. At the personal level, those that the party may have nominated to occupy political office at various levels also become powerful entities that have to negotiate relationships with party leaders who continue to man the structure that gave them their new identities. So power relations become a complex lot that require adequate management in tandem with the new identity of the political party and some if not most of its members. What is unique about the situation in South Africa is that even within the ruling party, the ANC, conflicts arise from time to time which show that the party itself cannot be completely classified as the centre for the exercise of state bases of power. The Polokwane experience is illustrative of a conflict between the state as a power base and the political party as a parallel entity. It is indeed more than an intra-party conflict which 'brought the potential for harsher contestation and conflict, on a more systematic level than before' (Booysens, 2009: 8). It symbolises the deeper level of conflict which arises from the clash of visions that sometimes lead to party fragmentation.

'The After Eight Debate' which had the Secretary of the ANC, Gwede Mantashe, as guest presented an illustration of the kind of conflict which can result between the state itself as a centre of power and the political party which had the mandate to exercise such power as the question of the recall of former president Thabo Mbeki was brought into the dialogue between the show host and his guest:

> **Tim**: Now, the ANC recalled its president, the president of the country. Right? Well, he's no longer the president. Would you propose...?
> **Gwede**: [interrupts] Actually let me tell you, Tim....
> **Tim**: Let me just...could I ask you this question. As one liberation movement to the other would you... I just want to....
> **Gwede**: Don't ask the question. Let me deal with it this way. The ANC has recalled a number of people. It recalled Raymond Mhlaba, it recalled Terror Lekota as premiers of the two provinces. It has recalled a number of people. So the question of recall is not something unique is not something new. I want you to locate the question within the understanding that the ANC has always deployed and recalled.
> **Tim**: Let me pose my question then. You will see where I'm going with my question. I'm not asking about it in the context of South Africa now. I'm saying given the

example that you've given of Zimbabwe, if you were to give advice to ZANU PF would you say to ZANU PF recall Robert Mugabe? (After Eight Debate, 9 January 2009).

The sensitive and burning nature of the recall of Thabo Mbeki at the Polokwane conference of the ANC preparatory to the 2009 elections can be adduced in the way the dialogue between the host and his guest had been conducted with each of them trying to 'corner' the other and adopting ambushing strategies to either make a point or prevent the direct posing of questions. But beyond this, it symbolises the fact that in situations where political parties are strong as in the case of the ANC, they can influence the exercise of the powers inherent in the state. It also shows that power itself is not static. It keeps shifting such that who is powerful or who is powerless is determined by the circumstances at a particular point in time[37].

The main argument with which the ANC had justified its recall of the former president, which the extract above hints at, had been the institution of policies by the state under the leadership of Mbeki which appeared to favour business concerns to the disadvantage of the larger population of the poor who constantly resort to street protests commonly referred to as service delivery protests in the country. Gwede Mantashe gave a hint of this as he tried to answer questions related to the contestations for power within the ANC fielded by the show host, Tim Modise:

Gwede: Eh... Tim, we've answered this question hundred times. Let me explain. I don't want to speak for a breakaway party. I want to speak for the ANC. But the reality of the matter is the way I always characterise Polokwane is that Polokwane was a revolt against the elitist control of the ANC where the leadership was becoming elitist, arrogant, aloof and distant from the masses...

Tim: [interrupts] Which leadership?

Gwede: And that revolt... and that has come back and take the ANC back to where it belongs to the people....

Tim: [interrupts again] Can you... Can we just pause...?

Now you say what happened in Polokwane was a rebellion by the members against an elitist leadership. Did I hear you correctly?

[37] The politics of power within the ruling ANC in South Africa has been the subject of a few recent publications. See for instance Feinstein (2007) and Gumede (2007).

> **Gwede**: It was a rebellion about elitist control of the ANC whether it is political or business elite and members of the ANC were saying bring back our organisation to us let us be involved and that is exactly what we have been doing. (After Eight Debate, 9 January 2009).

The attempt to eliticise the ANC which Mantashe referred to here is a common problem with political parties especially when they secure the mandate to rule. This alienation of the party from the people at the grassroots usually becomes a liability at the time of elections as we can see in the attempt by Mantashe to create the impression that those responsible for such alienation have paid dearly for their sins and are either out of the ANC at the moment or have lost a controlling hold on the party.[38]

The efforts made by Gwede Mantashe to defend the ANC and its policies at this point in time are indicative of a brand positioning strategy which is often visible in political discursive practices. He engaged in identity marketing which is a form of branding process. A brand, as has been observed by many scholars, is the unique essence of a product or entity (see for instance Aaker, 1991; Mitsikopoulou, 2008; Klein, 2002). It is that quality that sets it apart from the others and hence makes it preferable. In effect, the brand is much more than the product itself. It is that essence that 'gives the product meaning and defines its identity in both time and space' (Kapferer, 1992: 17). Such brands, which are often produced and circulated through the media in society become symbolic especially in political discourses tend to shore up the image of personalities and organisations that have to be seen at least as entities that embrace 'change while remaining the same' (Ibid). While Mantashe struggled to present his political party as a dynamic organisation that is open to change and innovation in terms of the realities of the moment he also strove to make the party appear to still retain the quality that made it appeal to the mass of the people—a grassroots party or a party not given to elitism and thus the best to vote for in the coming election.

As Bessie Mitsikopoulou argues, 'a brand adds an emotional dimension to the product' (2008: 355). In other words, 'brands could conjure a feeling' (Klein, 2002: 6). This emotional dimension, which is evident in the way Gwede Mantashe talked about the ANC as a political

[38] The formation of a new political party, the Congress of the People (COPE), by an aggrieved faction of the ANC at after the Polokwane conference and its launch about three weeks prior to Mantashe's appearance on 'The After Eight Debate is an important point to note in this whole scenario.

party different from others in contest with it, is usually aimed at self validation in the political arena. The ANC Secretary in marketing the party as a people-oriented party thus brings in emotion in order to appeal to the mass of the people from whom the party expects patronage in form of votes. Branding therefore becomes a form of 'recontextualized discourse' (Ibid: 357) as it is conscripted into the domain of politics as seen in the case of Mantashe's contributions here on 'The After Eight Debate'. Such recontextualisation tends to have implications for power relations as branding possesses the capacity to ultimately invest the political party and personalities being paraded on these talk shows with more power. While the use of marketing techniques in politics further problematises the power discourse, those who are able to use it like Gwede Mantashe did for himself and his party could gain more political mileage through the management of identity which such a strategy permits. This is often made possible through the condensation of meaning inherent in branding as a marketing strategy.

On the part of the listeners who chose to phone in, the response to Mantashe's branding effort was quite instructive. Most of them still continued to question the altruism of the party and that of its representative who had come to speak on its behalf on air. One of such callers was Marcel from Durban. In his contribution Marcel attempted to position the ANC as a corrupt political party which needed to be properly scrutinised before being considered above other parties in the elections:

> I'll like to ask the minister, eh... Mr Mantashe please, what are they going to do about the corruption in their midst. The ANC has several rotten apples including the 6 members of the highest board the NEC. It is such a bad example. How can we believe a government that contains all these crooks? The NEC members, the 6 members of the NEC. It's appalling, Tim. We can't have a government that is full of crooks (After Eight Debate, 9 January 2009).

Responses such as the one from Marcel here point to the fact that contestations are possible on the spot and speakers on talk shows can be held to account in respect of things they say on talk shows. In other words, views expressed on talk shows, do not always go unchallenged.

One of the major events that happened in South Africa just before the April 2009 elections was the announcement by the National Prosecuting Authority (NPA) just about two weeks before the polls that it was dropping corruption charges against Jacob Zuma who was then president of the African National Congress (ANC) and the party's presidential candidate in the forthcoming elections. Zuma had been standing trial for corruption charges and the case had dragged on for eight years. In discontinuing with the case, the head of the National Prosecuting Authority, Mokotedi Mpshe, had argued there was government interference in the prosecution process seeking to prevent Zuma from becoming president of the country[39]. The dropping of charges by the NPA then became the topic discussed on the SAFM's 'The After Eight Debate' two days later on 8th April, 2009. The show featured representatives of the political parties considered as the major contenders in the forthcoming election and the debates were framed around the question of fighting crime and corruption in government. The ANC was represented on the show by its spokesperson Jessie Duarte who was physically present in the studio while Helen Zille of the Democratic Alliance (DA), Patricia de Lille of the Independent Democrats (ID) and Phillip Dexter of Cope were linked to the studio on phone. The heated nature of the day's show signals the seriousness of the issue of corruption and crime and the apprehensions of the people about this. It also points to the fact that talk assumes a frenzy dimension in the hands of politicians when they seek to convince the electorate on certain burning issues.

Talk in this radio context itself becomes a powerful tool which political actors deploy in presenting a picture that will make the electorate see them as better than their competitors. Therefore, while Jesse Duarte argues fervently in favour of Jacob Zuma and the ANC, all other three guests on the programme are unanimous in faulting the NPA for dropping the charges and criticised Jacob Zuma himself for not subjecting himself to the entire judicial process required to completely prove his innocence in the matter. One interesting thing to note in this programme is that each of the participants on the show spent a considerable amount of time defending his or her position as evident in their initial comments. While responding to the show host's question of what her initial response was to the announcement by the NPA to do away with the case, Jessie Duarte said:

[39] See *Mail and Guardian* April 6, 2009; *The Times* April 6, 2009

> This case was tainted from the start when the public prosecutor announced that there was a prima facie case of corruption against Zuma, but that he would not prosecute because the case was unwinnable and they went on to encourage editors to work with him to have a public trial by media. One of the editors, ah..., the former editor of *City Press*, Vusi Mona, described it as one of the worst days in the history of the media. That's what he said. And also said that Bulelani Ngcuka's attitude was one of very..., was indefensible, because he described himself as Pontius Pilate who would wash his hands off the matter and allow the media to deal with it. For eight years the media have found Comrade Jacob Zuma guilty, have dealt with him as if he was a guilty person and now that this new evidence is brought about there is a kind of a wanting to wish away the fact that we have a very logical constitution and a law that allows the NPA to take representations and in the light of those representations to change their mind. They're the only institution that can prosecute. There's no other institution in the country that is able to prosecute persons (After Eight Debate, 8 April 2009).

In Duarte's response we can adduce to at least three different levels of power. The first is the power of state institutions to determine a person's fate in terms of assigning guilt or dispensing freedom. This is evident in the exercise of the power of the NPA and by extension the judiciary not to proclaim Zuma guilty because of a strong suspicion that the process of the case and the integrity of the prosecutors might have been compromised. The second level of power is the one exercised by Duarte herself as someone who speaks for an entire organisation as big as the ANC. In other words, there is some amount of power ascribed to speaking for or talking on behalf of a ruling party. It should be noted that other guests from the opposition parties also wield some form of power as they represent their different political parties as well. The third level of power which is very significant in Duarte's contribution is the power of the media. In making reference to Jacob Zuma's 'public trial by media' the ANC spokesperson hints at the power of the media to influence public opinion, a role that is quite significant in the determination of the identities of individuals and groups. So, as far as Jessie Duarte is concerned, it is the media that have used their latent power to construct Zuma's guilt in the public domain which has now been overturned by another level of power: that of the state institution, the NPA. It is this kind of power that causes Tettey to describe the media as 'conduits for democratic expression and consolidation' (2001: 5).

In responding to the issue at hand, the DA's Helen Zille also invoked the powers of the judiciary to express her displeasure at the turn of events:

> Well, actually Tim we approached the courts yesterday with a thick dossier. Our lawyers worked on it all night because the statement by Advocate Mpshe of the National Prosecuting Authority was so illogical and so irrational and gave no ground for withdrawing a prima facie case with evidence collected, 93000 documents on over 783 charges of corruption, fraud, money laundering, and you name it. The reasons given for withdrawal were so irrational and illogical that it requires a judicial review. What Mpshe would say was that the conversation or two conversations carefully selected we don't know where from we don't know how many tapes there are we don't know how those little bits were edited out and chosen, we don't know whether they were legally or illegally acquired, we don't know how they landed up in Jacob Zuma's lawyers hands, but nevertheless selectively pushed into the public domain of conversations that discussed the date of recharging Jacob Zuma either at the end of 2007 or the beginning of 2008. Now, that in no way had any bearing whatsoever on the merits of the charges in the case against Jacob Zuma. But for that reason they somehow think that they can throw out the case that has been on for eight years (After Eight Debate, 8 April 2009).

As far as Zille is concerned, it would serve the interest of democracy better to allow all those institutions of state that possess the powers to deal with allegations of corruption to exercise those powers against an accused person, in this case Jacob Zuma, with whom she contests for power to lead the country rather than a seeming acquittal that tends to portray an image that the fight against corruption is not being given enough muscle when it comes to matters involving people perceived to wield power in society.

On radio talk shows the powers that individuals and groups command becomes less absolute. Such powers become constantly challenged as debates are thrown open to the public for comments. In the case of this particular programme, the first caller, Mwoya from the Eastern Cape, refused to reason along the line of the three opposition party representatives on the programme:

> Eh... Tim one of the things that are quite interesting about our political parties, particularly opposition parties here is their double standards. You know in the outcome they are not taking any interest in the allegations of manipulation of the process by Mcarthy and Ngcuka. Now my question to them is that do they take a similar position if this manipulation was targeting Helen Zille and Holomisa or Lekota? Would they respond exactly the same way and ignore it and focus on other issues? (After Eight Debate, 8 April 2009).

With the questions posed by Mwoya, Helen Zille, Patricia de Lille and Phillip Dexter again need to further convince the audience by defending their position in order not to be deemed unnecessarily vindictive in the way they assess the situation at hand simply because it involves an individual whose political party and interests are in opposition to theirs. In a sense, Mwoya insinuates that Zuma is being victimised by those in opposition who seek to render him powerless simply because they are in contest for political office. Mwoya's position is reinforced by an sms sent by Michael Moon: 'Zille harbours such a strong hatred towards Mr. Jacob Zuma. Why is that?' Such insinuations as we see in Mwoya and Michael's contributions have the potential to generate a kind of sympathy for the supposed victim when bought by the public. Naheem claimed to call from Alberton and further complicated issues about conspiracy:

> Firstly, it is difficult to prove conspiracies because, you know, all the access to information all the nexus of power are in the hands of government and government agencies from where the conspiracies originate. So we need to keep that in mind.... Secondly it's surprising that some sections of the media and some political sadists are applying double standards here. When it was the Health Minister you know and the *Sunday Times* came with the information, the *Sunday Times* was totally unapologetic about how it got this information and it was prepared to use this information then the media weren't so strict and others... some political parties weren't so strict on you know how did you get this information and all of that. Then it was fine because then the target was the Health Minister. And suddenly now the issue at hand becomes relegated and how does it surface then becomes the main issue (After Eight Debate, 8 April 2009).

In South Africa conspiracy theories still continue to gain currency in public debates especially when matters involve political contestations among political parties. Though conspiracy theories offer a base upon which subalterns seek to challenge the status quo in situations fraught with inequality, the major problem with such theories is often the burden of proof. Conspiracies by their very nature are never brewed in the open. As such talks about conspiracy remain at the level of suspicion in most political discourses. They are often produced by the hierarchies of power on the one hand and the hierarchies of oppression on the other, especially in societies where claims to identities are closely linked to claims to power and resources.

The discourses of power manifested in the two talk shows can be viewed from three different dimensions. These include political power, economic power and social power. While the examples given earlier might suffice for pointing out instance of contestation over political power on talk shows in South Africa, the question of social power manifests in the way different social groups seek to position themselves in the course of debates on these shows. The SABC, for instance in its broadcast on Election Day (April 22, 2009) broke the tradition of the usual structure of 'The After Eight Debate' to feature special news reports about how and when people in certain social classes would vote. The programme for the day shifted from the normal studio in Johannesburg to the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC) broadcast centre in Pretoria. A reporter was stationed in Killarney, for example to capture the moment that former president Thabo Mbeki and his wife would vote while another was in Cape Town to capture the moment when the leader of the Democratic Alliance (DA) Helen Zille would vote. In the same way a reporter monitored the situation in Ulundi where the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP) leader Mangosutu Buthelezi was to vote. One of the show anchors for the day, Tim Modise, makes it clear that some categories of people would be followed closely or more closely than others:

> We've got a whole number of journalists deployed throughout the country monitoring the situation for us and some of them will be following prominent political leaders for us (After Eight April 22, 2009)

A combination of both political and social power may have been at play in the case of party leaders or prominent political actors mentioned by Modise. The more crucial thing though is the fact that people in different social categories get attention for different reasons. While

most of the prominent people monitored by the deployed journalists are men reflecting the preponderant male domination of the political space in South Africa, women seem to have less attention in the overall discussion on election matters. In some cases when issues about women are raised such issues may not even be about the more pertinent problems they face in society as can be seen in a report about women using nail polish, which was said to be obstructing the voting process. This part of the discussion for the day actually becomes a banter between the show hosts for the day, Tim Modise and Tshepiso Makwetla:

> **Tim**: Women at the Shell Cross booth found using nail polish on their finger nails were asked to remove it today before they could cast their vote. Devrash Naidoo, the electoral officer there said that the nail paint has to be removed from the left hand thumb only because that is where we use the ink to say that this person has already voted. Women staying in line held their hands out as Devrash went around inspecting for nail polish. There was one 74 year old woman who wasn't impressed and said 'I don't know what this nonsense is about?' but unfortunately women had to use things like their car keys to scrape off their nail polish others were biting off their nails with their teeth and so on. So this can be serious painting
> **Tshepiso**: Well you see they still get to improvise so nail polish remover gentlemen or perhaps a nail cutter to avoid this kind of serious ... (giggles)
> **Tshepiso**: what can we do to that?
> **Tim**: This is my community service announcement so that you don't get yourself worked up or something and....
> **Tshepiso**: what can we do to that? (After Eight Debate 22 April, 2009)

The report read by Tim Modise mirrors the fact that women can be discriminated during actual voting and such discrimination can even generate anger as can be seen in the reaction of the seventy-four year old woman. Though the humorous tone adopted by both presenters in this part of the discussion tends to make it look less serious, the import of such events in the understanding of gender relations in politics cannot be overlooked. In addition, media representations are important in understanding how gendered identities are constructed. When media depict gender relations through the selection or privileging of certain narratives during particular moments, they generally produce meanings which point out dominant views reflected in identity stereotypes. They also create a space through which feminist discourses can be articulated and where new identities are created in terms of the understanding of the

imbalance that exists especially in male-female relations in the different spheres of social life. The expression of inequality between women and men in South African society that the report on this show represents further reinforces the general view that gender issues, which are ultimately implicated in power relations, often enact themselves within the framework of social and political contexts.

Discourses of Time in Talk Shows on Election

In debates around politics and the electoral process, time becomes a crucial resource not only for the participants on the shows but also for the owners or managers of the particular radio station which provides the space for deliberation. The national community is made up of individuals and groups who are engaged in different forms of activity simultaneously though the mediation ability of talk shows may bring them together on the same platform of deliberation. The simultaneous diverse actions of the individuals in the community has been theorised by Benedict Anderson as moving through 'homogeneous, empty time' (1991: 26). Here, some of the activities in which individuals are involved are, at times, brought to the centre-stage of community life because of the implications they may have for the entire society.

In the case of elections, we can say that their timing constitutes nodes along the time spectrum since they are events occurring at regular intervals of time, a resource which in itself is invested with a linear topology. These time nodes generate discourses which bring out into the public domain temporal relations among issues and events while at the same time exposing the dynamics of power relations that exist among different groups of people. In the case of South Africa, general elections are held every five years with the possibility of party elective conferences, municipal elections and by-elections coming in-between. The most momentous debates are usually witnessed during presidential elections when people expect to see a significant change in the profile of leadership with an expectation in respect of the policy directions in the country. In a way therefore, the time in-between one election and another generates considerable material for discourses which happen in the media. The people expectedly take note of the activities of their political leaders and turn their areas of strength and weakness into instruments of debate which form the benchmark against which they hold their leaders to account.

Another dimension of time is in the trilogy of the past, the present and the future which is often invoked in such debates. In discourses around elections, events of the distant past and the immediate past are called up as part of the determinants of the direction of the debate. For instance 'The After Eight Debate' which aired on January 9, 2009 featured the Secretary General of the African National Congress (ANC) and tailored the debate around the 97th Anniversary of the party. The anniversary celebration, an event of the immediate past meant to evoke memories of the distant past had taken place a day earlier and the party was also preparing to launch its manifesto the following day in preparation for the general elections which were just a few months away. The show host, Tim Modise, in trying to set the stage for the discussion for the day against the backdrop of how people might have perceived the performance records of the ANC during the period it controlled power, relied on the specificity of time:

> We would be looking at the achievements, the successes of the ANC over the ninety-seven year period as well as the challenges facing the organization now that it has been in power in South Africa as the ruling party for the past fifteen years. (After Eight Debate, 9 January 2009).

This statement clearly takes a look at the trajectory of the party from the past (when it started as a nationalist movement), the present (as a ruling party) and the future (the challenges will have implications for the party's vision for its members and the country at large). The use of the two numbers, ninety-seven and fifteen, by the host creates a scenario of the measurement of achievement in relation to time. This significance of time is further demonstrated in the first question that the host puts across to the guest on the show:

> Mr Gwede Mantashe, almost fifteen years that the liberation movement has been in charge, it has been in existence for the past ninety-seven years. Is the ANC comfortable playing this dual role of being liberation movement on one hand and ruling party on the other? (After Eight, 9 January 2009).

In a way, the dual identity of the African National Congress which the host alludes to and which is also a product of time, becomes a crucial determinant of the expectations of the public as far as the party is concerned. This dual identity was played upon later on the programme by Faizal, a caller from Mayfair:

> You spoke of the contestation between the ANC as a liberation movement and the ANC as a party, to myself, I agree with Gwede Mantashe that there is no contestation there. For different reasons, I think the ANC as liberation movement has died a long time ago. In the actions of the state we only have the ANC as a party. And the ANC as a party acts in no difference to all other parties throughout the world. It acts only first in its self interest. When you see the self interest of the ANC in action, when you look at for example Zimbabwe, ANC as a liberation movement would want to liberate the people of Zimbabwe, ANC as a party takes sides in defending Mugabe. Again with respect to, in the perception of corruption, the ANC as a liberation movement would want to root out corruption, ANC as a party would with respect to self interest works in maintaining that corruption. (After Eight, 9 January 2009).

The talk about time also carries with it a sense of urgency. The citizens obviously have great expectations and thus expect governance to achieve milestones quicker than those in authority are prepared to believe they can go. When such expectations delay in coming, a sense of failure develops and the shame of failure and attempts to conceal it begin to manifest in discursive spaces which bring authority figures and the public together like we have during electioneering campaigns. South Africa, at least for now, has not manifested serious signs of failure comparable to some other countries on the continent but the persistence of different forms of social crises causes anxiety among the people as manifested in public discursive spaces. The fear of the curse of failure in postcolonial African states heightens this anxiety as South Africans attempt to draw on the socio-political experience of other African countries especially close neighbours. In this case, the example of Zimbabwe, as Faizal mentioned in his contribution, becomes a default for the postcolonial malaise which South Africa hopes to avoid. There is a kind of lukewarm attitude towards democracy as practised in South Africa or at least towards the individuals in government that Faizal betrays in his contribution. In identifying this kind of attitude Mattes (2002) contends that:

> South Africans' support for democracy is lukewarm and has not grown in any substantial way over the past five years. With increasingly tenuous connections between the voters and their government and increasing policy disaffection, trust in government and satisfaction with economic and political performance are declining sharply' (p.29).

Perhaps the most serious consequence of the shame of failure, which at its most extreme becomes a kind of collective predicament, is a wobbly image of the self or 'a shaky sense of the self' (Elder, 1989: 377). Such experiences are also characterised by a kind of volatility which is reflected in the main in serious political manoeuverings. Again conflicts may also arise in political parties or among members as a result of the adoption of different positions on the best ways to approach the daunting tasks which previous and subsisting inequalities have brought upon society. This kind of conflict is evident in the cycle of divisions that happened within the ANC culminating in the creation of the Congress of the People (COPE) in November 2008. But beyond this is the urgency in the tone of participants on talk shows which is symptomatic of a perceived race against time.

On 'The Redi Direko Show', the host in a racy tone often ran through a number of issues cropping up on the political scene, especially in relation to the coming elections. Though most of these issues were not discussed in detail, the sheer number of issues of concern which the show threw up each day was indicative of the significance of time in the movement towards transformation of society. For instance, the episode of the show which aired on 14 January, 2009 touched on at least five issues relating to politics and elections. In introducing the show, the host made it clear that she was interested in discussions around proportional representation in parliament, questions of direct election of representatives and the president of the republic, the independence of parliament, the hegemony of the ruling party and the arms deal (corruption). Also on 13 January, the show features a debate on the judgment in the Jacob Zuma corruption trial but still finds time to touch on some other issues like the South African judicial system and the influence of youth leagues on political organisations.

Another dimension of the significance of time is in the decision about when to air programmes of this nature which tend to impact on the effectiveness of such shows and the way they are able to attract audience. As Jeremy Sarkin (1994) argues 'the decision about what time of day should be allocated for political broadcasts during an election campaign is a complex one. It is further complicated in South Africa by huge differences in access to the various broadcasting media on the part of disparate communities' (172). This dilemma over time of broadcast is made worse by the unpredictable commuting and work habits of the potential listeners. Again Advertising is one other time-related element which affects the eventual output of the shows. The constant breaks which are taken on 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' ultimately compresses the time available for both

invited guests and the callers to make contributions even when they have strong points which keep agitating their minds and which may also help illuminate the issues being discussed.

The fast speed with which Redi Direko and Tim Modise deliver sms's especially also point to a constraint when it comes to time affordability on their programmes. This tendency which is common to many talk shows on commercial FM stations especially requires further unpacking in order to understand the dynamics of the economy of production and the impact of a mercantile vision of programming and the deliberative space. The problem of time management impacts on the shows as James, a regular participant who had featured as guest on 'The after Eight Debate' and other radio and television talk shows in South Africa observed:

> Most of the times I turn them down because they don't give you enough notice. They expect you to drop whatever you are doing and just rush to the studio. The other thing is that you go there and you've interrupted your work for a whole, you know, almost three hours you go there for five minutes and you are out...In certain cases, these guys are simply not prepared, the producers. I've gleaned that a lot from the interviews I have with them where, you know, the producers interview you before you actually go into the studio and you go into the studio and you find that what you say becomes the by-line. (James Interview, 21 May 2010)

The scarcity of time is in some instances reflected in the quality of preparation which goes into the production of talk shows to the extent that lapses are noticeable by guests or even discerning listeners. James recollected two moments when he saw evidence of a lack of preparation on the part of the producers (which in this case implied the entire production team) betrayed a lack of preparation for the issues to be discussed:

> Sometimes they are very badly prepared. I remember a show where I was invited to talk on the Zimbabwe land issue. And the journalist himself had decided that I was from Zimbabwe, I'm a refugee here, you know, and he was asking me so how are people at home, what what, what do you, so, how are they, are they safe? And I say which people. Oh! I thought you're from Zimbabwe. You'd expect that basic background work should have been done on whoever is being interviewed but sometimes they don't do this. Incidentally the bulk of the work is done by the

> producers. So they just throw the paper at them; you can actually see them fumbling around with the papers. I also remember a case where I was called to comment on an article which was written on African Literature in Britain. And this, you know, this lady had not read the article, yeah, she had assumed that I am the one who wrote the article and this article was actually, you know, basically, was quite a negative critique of African literature and its teaching, how we are preoccupied with, you know, very old issues and bla bla bla, you know. So I was coming to respond, so I had to be quick we were already live. So I said no I'm not the one who wrote it. That's the kind of some of the things you deal with. (James Interview, 21 May 2010)[40]

Time therefore becomes of essence in several ways making it crucial resource in radio talk shows. In this regard talk about election debates take on the character of a time-bound enterprise. In other words, deliberations on talk shows become cultural practices which are constructed not just across space but through and over time (Baucom, 2001).

Radio Talk, Elections and Participation

A former judge at the Constitutional Court of South Africa, Kate O'Regan, while speaking recently about the role of the media in sustaining democratic governance in Africa, argues that 'democracies are noisy places where deep conflicts are audible, and as a key participant in the democratic process, the press, like all institutions, needs continually to reflect upon its own role and responsibilities' (O'Regan, 2011). By making reference to noise, O'Regan reminds us of the primacy of participation by the populace in the democratic process In other words, it is 'the engagement of citizens that gives democracy its legitimacy as well as its vitality, as something propelled by conscious human intentionality, not just habit or ritual' (Dahlgren, 2009: 12). The amount of participation or opportunity for involvement in the process of decision making which a government allows for its subjects has always been an issue of concern in any democracy. This kind of attitude is manifested on 'The After Eight Debate' when Mabuto, a caller from Mpumalanga, decided to challenge contributors who

[40] The point being made about the lack of time here is without prejudice to other intervening factors like personal laziness, poor motivation, lack of resources and the like which may contribute to poor showing on the part of individual or entire members of a talk show production team.

insinuated that the ruling ANC had not done enough to carry the people along in its governance programmes:

> I think whatever decision that the ANC has taken they never make any mistake. And also, for people to claim that the ANC does not involve its members and the people generally in its decisions I think it is wrong. Quite recently the ANC had requested people to comment on the manifesto. That alone, it means people are involved. And lastly I want to make this submission, I think journalists of South Africa must stop to call 'Shikota' a breakaway organisation. The only organisation that broke away from the ANC was PAC on the basis of the policy differences (After Eight, 9 January 2009).

While the first part of Mabuto's contribution referred to the recall of the president of the Republic Mr Thabo Mbeki which was a highly contested decision in the South African public sphere at that time the second part deals with the dumping of the ANC by two of its strong members Mosioua Lekota and Mbazima Shilowa after the recall of the president a few days before the general elections. Mabuto, in opening his contribution first of all positioned the ANC as a party that believes in and operates the tenets of democracy which revolve around inclusion and popular participation. He then goes ahead to create a particularly negative impression about the disgruntled members of the party who have decided to leave to form a new political party, the Congress of the People, COPE. The naming of the two most prominent members of the dissenting group as 'Shikota' can be said to be a deliberate linguistic manipulation used to disparage the new political group and make it look unserious. This kind of framing is what Sabine Marschall (2008) describes as 'the hegemonic framing of memory through the politics of naming' (119).

The derision inherent in the corruption of the names of the two leaders of COPE and the insistence that they cannot be regarded as a breakaway group from the ANC publicly advertises the founders of the new political party, initially expected to pull a significant followership from the ruling party, as self-seeking politicians who do not have much to offer the electorate. Such situations of conflict also reignite the contestations on identity which become visible during political battles. During such periods identity becomes a resource which is not just contested but also manipulated in order to positions individuals or groups in particular ways in the minds of the public. It is also possible to argue that the political scene

has taken on a spectacular character which results in the questioning of the unfamiliar. In trying to put the relevant questions in this scenario in perspective John Frow (1999) queries: 'What mechanisms of consenting or dissenting identification sustain a democratic public sphere when politics becomes spectacular? And isn't the representation of publicness always the performance of a division, an exclusion, a minoritization?' (p.423). All the mechanisms pointed out by Frow are clearly present in Mabuto's contribution pointing to the fact that the spectacular in political affairs manifests itself more clearly during time of division when the 'politics of grievance' (Frow, 1999: 423) becomes the order of the day.

Conclusion

The discussion so far has tried to show how popular culture in forms such as talk shows provides avenues for discourses. It also shows that elections, on their own, may not transform to political freedom or liberal democracy. More public participation in the political process through the media then becomes an important ingredient in seeking to deepen democracy and the practice of it in contemporary society. Since the opposition is perceived to be weak in South Africa 'media pressure may even prove to have a greater impact on policy decisions than that of opposition parties' (De Beer, 2004: 78). In relating this to debates on radio talk shows during periods of election in the South African context, we can conclude that such radio debates have become a lens through which we may begin to understand the organised combat being enacted in the media. We are also able to grasp the dynamics of an evolving political culture of debate laden with several attempts at the representation of individual and group interest in particular ways in order to either remain relevant or score a point over the opponent during elections.

What come out in this process are the dynamics of power and a better understanding of power structures and power relations in South Africa especially as it concerns the jostling for political space. In addition to this is the urgency that defines the socio-political moment which exerts pressure on both the power elite and the mass of the people thereby creating conflicts that have the potential of degenerating into violent crisis if not properly managed. The narratives of disillusionment which surface in the course of contestations on these talk shows speak volumes about the state of development and the sense of fulfillment or the absence of this which the democratic order has brought upon the citizens of the republic.

Even though South Africa prides itself as the 'most democratic' country in Africa and perhaps in the developing world, sobering questions are still being raised by its own citizens about the efficacy of democracy in addressing the basic challenges thrown up by the existing system. The concerns expressed by participants on the two talk shows examined here become major pointers to fresh problems created by the emergence of new centres of power in the democratic 'new' South Africa. In other words, power is constantly moving such that who is powerful or who is powerless is not very clearly separated. What is clear and what creates the crisis of trust and the concerns expressed during talk shows is the fact that a new class of elites has been formed by the different processes of transformation taking place in the country. These concerns as Lawrence Jacobs (2010) observes 'mark a sharp and notable departure from the celebratory conclusion of openness' (p.245) that contemporary South African politics and even the radio talk show format seek to propagate. The problems inherent in this departure cannot be ignored if we have to properly understand what it means to practice democracy based on a seasonal election of representatives of the people. As the political gladiators struggle for power and also carry on their struggles on the public sphere through their participation in open fora like radio talk shows, time will continue to be of essence both in terms of the historical demands of temporality and the urge of the people to see a commitment to the actualisation of their dreams.

CHAPTER SIX

CONCLUSION

MEDIATING SILENCES AND THE EMERGENT SELF IN SOUTH AFRICA

This thesis has set out to explore the ways in which identities are represented in radio talk shows in post-apartheid South Africa through an examination of two radio talk shows. It has attempted to understand the dynamics of self representation that shape everyday life in the 'new' South Africa as seen through the lens of the talk shows. It has attempted to explore the impacts of radio talk shows on representations of the self in post-apartheid South Africa. It also tried to show how the different contestations that take place on these shows reflect the broader socio-political context of the country, and how the hosts, callers-in and guests position themselves in the public sphere of talk radio as a way of relating to the new reality. The research has shown that there is a considerable level of self consciousness which leads to the adoption of several self mediation or self representation strategies by most participants on radio talk shows. It argues that the discursive cultural sociability reproduced on radio talk shows (which does not necessarily translate to democratic participation *per se*) provides a useful barometer with which to make sense of individual and collective identities in the ethos of post-apartheid South Africa.

The advent of talk radio has signaled a very important historical change in popular culture in South Africa. It has provided an avenue for deliberation and at the same time attempts to claim a crucial place in bringing radio closer to the people through the enablement of participation through interactivity. How much of empowerment such interactivity guarantees, however, is still a matter for further research. The thesis began by conceptualising radio talk shows as popular cultural productions aided by new forms of technological input for the enhancement of interactivity. It is in the light of this that it has sought to throw more light on the cultural dynamics defining both the producers and the consumers (audience) of this programme form.

Radio talk shows, through the enablement of participation, play a prominent role in making self-expression possible as a crucial part of the democratic order. Lynette Steenveld's (2004)

work on media, culture and society identifies two major polarities concerning the role of media in South African society. The first which stems from the liberal approach presupposes that media are independent 'neutral' mediators (transmitters) of culture which 'mirror' society reflecting all that takes place. As she puts it the media:

> are deemed to be neutral 'transmitters' of information in a society in which citizens are dependent on this information in order to make various kinds of democratic decisions. The media are thus seen as facilitating the process of citizenship. The premises are that power is equally distributed throughout society; that citizens have equal access to the media and that the media are 'neutral' with respect to power (Steenveld, 2004: 92)

The second, more radical, view sees the media 'as the means by which powerful social classes maintain their control over society' (Ibid: 92). In other words, the media are also involved in the struggles for power that define contemporary society where the acquisition of different forms of power becomes the motivating factor for people's actions and strategic positioning in the public sphere. Embedded in this second view is a clear implication of the media in the struggles for power as the media themselves are seen as technological assets in the structuring of power and the perpetuation of hegemonic tendencies. Beyond these two polarities, Steenveld argues, we need to look in the direction of a cultural approach to understanding media-society relationship in order to make a better sense of the dynamism of the cultural agency of media, its products as well as stakeholders. This Gramscian approach holds much more promise in understanding the role of radio in a socially textured society like we have in contemporary South Africa.

The idea of representation or mediation is taken against the background of the understanding of mass media as a major component of the 'technologies of mediation and institutions' (Schultz, 2007: 188). In creating meaning about the everyday life experiences of the different categories of people in a particular community therefore the media both in content and technology become part of the process which may at times 'complicate official invocation of national community by furthering [citizens'] subjective experience of local particularity' (Ibid: 188). In most cases the complications may even arise from what John Fiske describes as 'semiotic democracy', a concept implying the generation of a multiplicity of meanings from things and events in a community as agency is returned to the audience in a more

dramatic way (Fiske, 1987). This argument can then be extended, in a practical sense, to the way people through radio talk shows evaluate their membership of the national community and the impact that this may produce in their understandings of their belonging or citizenship of that national community. In other words, it is important to make sense of the 'new terrain of democratisation' (Chouliaraki, 2010: 227) which comes into place on talk shows as people try to position themselves in the public domain. In this positioning, the self can be revealed, reaffirmed or reinvented through the discovery, consumption, and experiencing of the narratives of numerous 'others' encountered in the public sphere.

One of the core ideas of the public sphere itself is about participation. This is usually enabled by openness. Participation is often thought of as a process that has the capacity to create an inclusive polity where people become much more involved in decisions affecting their lives. In short, participation envisions 'a citizenry self-consciously imbued with increased voice and agency' (Kim and Jackson, 2011: 8). Evidence in this research has shown that though talk shows may be better than other programme formats in terms of allowing people some form of space to express their views, they cannot be said to be completely democratic in allowing people participate equally. While dealing with the question of participation Greg Goldberg has argued that 'participation is not a form of freedom from power, but rather a form of subjugation to power' (2011: 744). In other words, it is not enough to say people become empowered through participation. The way the participation process and experience is structured really matters in determining the distribution of power among participants and the sections of society they represent. Evidence from the shows analysed in this thesis indicate that access inequalities still exist: the talk shows cannot be equated to a completely free forum where social status or other forms of difference does not matter. Participation in these shows therefore, 'embeds users within relations of power, rather than... liberating them from power or empowering them' (Ibid: 740). In most cases, those who hold power try to 'talk' with the less powerful on a platform such as the talk show only when such appearances become imperative for the process of self validation or promotion. As Kim and Jackson argue:

> 'Jurgen Habermas's conception of "the public sphere" is but one contested story about the origins of modern democratic possibility amid the potential for failure—a story that extends from an Enlightenment inheritance that insists on the central importance

> of rationality to any and all legitimate and inclusive political projects' (Kim and Jackson, 2011: 7)

So the quest for legitimacy is what makes a lot of people, especially those in the political class, entertain discussions on participation in the first instance. Should they have to make a choice, the public sphere of radio talk shows would probably be deemed too rancorous and rowdy for them to feature in. The necessities that bring the powerful to come down to the arena as has been seen in the case of South Africa will include major political events like elections and party anniversaries or emergency implosions like xenophobia.

The shows owe a lot to the improvement in information and communication technologies which make it possible for the rate of participation to be shored up. ICT's, however, do not necessarily guarantee access to radio (participation) by most of the minority groups in the public. For instance, the poor and the marginalised will not be able to access participation because they cannot afford the cost of doing so. In a similar manner, political minorities may not have enough access because they do not get as many frequent invitations to come onto theses programmes. This kind of exclusion is further validated by the analysis presented earlier in the third chapter of this thesis pointing to the fact that politics is number one in the string of topics that these talk shows pay attention to. With the various dimensions of exclusion possible in the talk radio arena, it becomes an aspect of the public sphere susceptible to domination thereby becoming more or less 'a realm for privileged men to practice their skills' (Papacharissi, 2002: 11). In other words, while radio talk shows provide an opportunity for interactivity, they do not necessarily empower the citizenry or change the power equation prevalent in society at a particular point in time.

The medium of radio, just like any other media form, has seen different forms of transformation in Africa. These transformations have occurred both in the policies governing the use of media as well as in the technologies that produce them and make them available to their audiences. In the process of doing this, media consumers, or what is generally known as the audience, have also mutated from passive receivers of media content to become active participants and more interestingly producers of content that keeps each medium going. As we move from the understanding of media as a phenomenon directed at a unified audience to the appreciation of the diversity of different publics at which media messages are directed, it becomes important to view audience as a form of problematised entity whose practices of

reception dwell both in the technological presence of a particular medium coupled with the social context in which individuals or groups of receivers attempt to use media messages. As scholars like Lawrence Grossberg, Debra Spitulnik and others have observed, both technology and social context determine the reading of media texts or the reception of messages sent out through the media (Grossberg, 1987; Spitulnik, 2002). Though questions of 'the economics of ownership' (Spitulnik, 2002: 340) are important in understanding the level of access which different people have to media, there is a broader sense in which this question also relates to the kind of social relations that exist simultaneously with media technologies in each society. What should be understood more importantly in this regard is that 'talk does not always imply voice' (Fivush, 2010: 90). In order to understand the essence of radio talk shows therefore, there is the need to consider what John Fiske (1987) calls semiotic democracy, the idea that there is often a plurality of meaning in any cultural production. Semiotic democracy is applied in the context of radio as the re-working of cultural (and historical) imagery by listeners and other contributors other than the producers of the shows. Fiske's ideas are premised basically on the agency of the audience in modern cultural enterprises. The power to make meaning no longer resides exclusively with the producers of shows. In other words, listeners' identity shifts from being beholders of spectacle to become witnesses and part of the experience of culture. This social mobility signposts the fluidity of subject position as a crucial determinant of identity. Identity(ies) are both socially and historically produced and are transmitted through popular cultural forms as mediated messages in the different public spheres. Radio talk shows are one of such forms.

The agency of the audience is made possible by the mixing of technologies in radio (convergence, etc). By inviting participation there is a 'delegation of the production of meanings and pleasures' (Fiske, 1987: 236). In other words the audience no longer absorbs messages in unmediated form. This draws attention to 'the textuality of representation' (Ibid). According to Fiske such 'new' meanings are often made in resistance to 'the forces of closure in the text' (ibid). The homogenisation of meaning and by extension identity is then challenged in the process. In order to be active in the sense enumerated above, though, a form of literacy of the medium is required of participants. This literacy extends to but is not limited to a grasp of the technology of the medium of radio as well as the production protocols of talk shows that impact on its generation of meaning in the long run. Talking about technology, a regular participant who has featured several times as invited guest on 'The After Eight

Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' gives a sense of what kind of understanding of the technology a participant should have for meaningful participation:

> If you have a telephone line and you know the telephone number, they are fairly open, although, of course, the limitation is time. You often hear when the talk show host is speaking, that she says that a lot of people have lined up to speak and she has to cut off some people. So, the technological or time limits and constraints also have to do with the people who have access to a telephone in order for you to be able to call in. There is another limitation which people don't know of say a qualitative kind. You have to know and understand that you can call in. Not everybody knows that they can call in and knows how to actually call in. Because it is quite an interesting number that you have to acquire. They keep repeating it on air. I don't think most people have the..., let's put it this way, the cultural social capital and know-how to understand that the opportunity is available for them and to keep at it if they are told that the line is blocked because sometimes they will tell the listeners, keep hanging there you will get your chance and they are packed up and lined up. (Tawana, Interview 4 June 2010).

Since there is no formal process of acquiring the kind of literacy that Tawana referred to in this interview, it becomes more of an uphill task for the less privileged to be at par with people in other social brackets. Such lack of literacy is also likely to affect the way in which messages are created and interpreted on the medium, an in the long run affect the creation of meaning which semiotic democracy promotes. This is the point at which public sociality needs to be more critically examined in order to appreciate the way sociality structures people's capacity to integrate themselves into cultural practices which ordinarily may exclude them. One of the ways out of the predicament of literacy therefore is through a habitual engagement with the format, technologies and participation protocols of talk shows. As Paul Harrison argues, 'from the embodiment of habit a consistency is given to the self which allows for the end of doubt' (Harrison, 2000: 503). Habits (like listening or participation regularly on radio talk shows) organise life for individuals and bring them together in groups such that as Frykman and Lofgren (1996) argue, 'cultural community is often established by people together tackling the world around them with familiar manoeuvres' (10-11). Though consensus might be difficult to achieve in this kind of space the sense of community that attends the existence of a deliberative public domain such as is present in radio talk shows provide both knowledge and affect which become crucial capital in seeking ways out of

private or collective predicaments. Though semiotic democracy has its own limitations, it still plays an important role in the making of cultural meaning and the mediation of representation of identities in radio talk shows.

The process of consciousness on talk shows seems to begin with a kind of self awareness on the part of participants. The ways in which talk hosts try to 'measure' their speeches reflects a kind of awareness of the publicnesss of their contributions which requires them at times to be circumspect in what they say. In addition listeners to talk shows especially those who eventually decide to call have a belief that their participation is capable of generating for them a kind of edge or symbolic capital which may come handy in their interactions in other domains of the public sphere. Responses from a good number of participants including listeners, callers in, and invited guests interviewed in the course of this research shows that there is a self awareness as to the possibility of being either more informed or more visible in their communities as a result of their exposure to and through talk shows. It is indeed interesting that about eighty-three percent of the listeners and callers spoken to give responses which suggest this level of self-awareness. For instance, Nkosinathi who lives in Lenasia and Lean from Midrand both say they are regular listeners to 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' but have never called in. Yet they have a feeling that the mere act of listening gives them some kind of visibility as they are able to relate better to happenings around them. For Nkosinathi:

> It [listening to talk shows] keeps me updated as to what's going on it kind of gives me the perspectives of the opinion makers as to what they think about the current affairs and the situations and their take and their predictions as well. That also helps me as I interact with my co-workers and people later on in the day. I feel like it gives me an edge as to what's going on. (Nkosinathi Interview, 11 February 2010)

In Leans's case:

> I feel cool when I talk to my friends. I think listening to these shows makes me feel well updated about things going on in South Africa and beyond. You know one can really feel so stupid when friends are talking about vogues in town like celebrities and movies or even what's happening between the ANC and COPE and you don't know what they're talking about (Lean Interview, 16 February 2010).

There is therefore a desire to make use of the opportunities offered by radio for information gathering and sociability. What remains an issue, though, is how much of such opportunities can get to the less privileged in view of the power relations that determine access to the media in contemporary South Africa. Even where conversations on these shows involve only the hosts and the callers, it is possible to notice power inequalities (Hutchby, 1996). Findings in this research have so far indicated the existence of such power inequalities that tend to give advantage to some categories of participants over the others.

Radio as a platform of cultural revolution in contemporary South Africa provides a radical departure in which culture sets the pace for the reception practices of the different publics that make up the new South Africa. Access to radio for instance, may not be limited to questions of just whether or not the radio signal is available or whether or not particular groups of listeners could afford a radio set, to such broader issues as the attitude of the people to listening to radio at particular times of the day. An example of this can be observed in the listening practices of taxi drivers in Johannesburg some of whom prefer to play music with the radio sets attached to their vehicles especially in the early evening hours. Talk is mediated not just by technology and genre but also by a form of circumspection and the self-fashioning practices of participants on talk shows. In this way the driving forces in the development of interest in participation are no longer limited to technology and social context but also extend to the domain of individual attempts at self making. This self representation as has been noted in previous chapters of this work is done in relation to the way community life is structured and the implications of such for citizenship.

Radio talk shows should then be understood more as a performance genre. The performance element is important in understanding the various forms of acting and role playing that take place on these shows. Performance and performativity both produce texts about the self. In addition to this they produce and reproduce both individual and national identities produced that position people in particular ways. This kind of positioning as has been seen in this study is to either create advantage or gain some form of edge in both public perception as well as citizenship of the ‘new’ South Africa. In most cases participants have to produce a self that is aligned with the interests and logic of existing power structures, maintain the status quo of power relations or try to tilt the balance of power in favour of the self through performative discursive acts where possible. In the performative texts generated on radio talk shows therefore, there inheres more meaning than what is ordinarily said or made visible in the text.

The deployment of performativity in the shows helps participants in masquerading themselves and even the meaning(s) of their contributions while at the same time re-establishing the dramatic essence of the shows.

The emergent self in contemporary South Africa is, therefore, a product of both speech and silences. Strategic silence provides participants with opportunities to create meaning without participation. A broader implication of silence is that so many things are still left unsaid in spite of the proclamation of freedom which dominates the socio-political landscape in contemporary South Africa. In the light of this it is possible to further theorise that the silences and silencing reflected in society have the potential of incapacitating disadvantaged individuals and even social groups for whom the ethos of democracy and freedom purport to speak or enable through enhanced participation and legislations. It should also be noted that strategic silences, repetitions, and the expansion of the discursive circuits invest ideas with great staying power in order to perpetuate certain modes of thinking in society. In other words, certain ideas become more widely circulated and others, because of the strategic or imposed silences, are overlooked.

Social infractions such as the occasional racist outbursts, xenophobia and other forms of tension among different categories of people constantly shatter the myth of the rainbow nation which post-apartheid South Africa is supposed to represent. The idea of the rainbow nation emanates from a perception of the way South Africa values and upholds its diversity as an asset in the journey towards becoming the centre of an Africa-centred globalisation. In other words, difference, rather than detract from the cohesion of the nation and its different peoples, is supposed to become capital for the economic and social engineering of a new inclusive national ethos. National unity therefore becomes a myth, as identity formation, self-fashioning and sub-nationalisms take centre stage in the new South Africa. The rupture brought about mainly by gross inequality, stiff competition for resources and discontent among the locals who see themselves as being on the fringe when it comes to access to opportunities arising from the triumph over the past defeated and exposed the long held myth and placed the South African nation once again within the boundaries of African nations that need to be scrutinised by people especially foreigners who relate with them. It throws a challenge to the very idea of community propagated through the philosophy of *ubuntu* in the South African nation. The inhumanity that the xenophobic attacks tend to represent actually raises questions about the constantly proclaimed humanism defining the national identity of

South Africa. The crisis and violence show that gains made in South Africa since 1994 are fragile and tentative in a way.

A distinguishing feature of periods of change is an acute sense of self-consciousness. This self-consciousness gains currency in the media as we have seen in the talk radio shows examined in this thesis. With the awareness of the changing post-apartheid paradigm individuals and groups engage in a process of self-discovery and positioning in order to fit into the new social and economic order. As this happens, radio becomes a fertile medium through which different thoughts are expressed. More specifically, the radio talk show offers great opportunity as people's appetite for talk escalates. The realities of the 'new' South Africa apparently results in an increasing fluidity of citizenship and by extension identity. As cosmopolitan citizenship, brought about by globalisation and local societal reforms attending the transition agenda, replaces old forms of subjectivity people seek new ways to express themselves in order to either remain relevant or create new thresholds of influence within the system. This cosmopolitan citizenship or what can be called a universalistic inclusion is however 'limited in its reach and import by identity politics' (Amuwo, 2007) as has been seen both in the volatility and measuredness of participants contributions on 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show'. There is a clear attempt at setting up norms for the creation of a new national identity based on principles of modernity and civilisation without necessarily erasing the imprints of the local built around questions of autochthony. Pietisms such as 'rainbow nation' liberal democratic' etc merely evade the presence of contrary or unpalatable internal realities which indict the managers of the affairs of the 'new' national community. The kind of legitimation required to participate in Habermas' dialogical community cannot be wished away when we consider the evidence provided by radio talk shows and the qualification for participation in them. On the surface these shows may appear ordinary, especially as the show hosts frequently urge the listeners on to join in, but a closer examination of them tends to reveal underlying structural manipulations which make them pointers to the dynamics of social power in society.

Indeed there are times when radio talk shows appear to be framed up like the bourgeois public sphere which post-Habermas scholars often tend to deride as less representative, less democratic and even less participatory. This kind of framing is noticeable in the way talk shows are 'built upon powerful mechanisms of exclusion' (Urla, 1995 :245). It can no longer be assumed that fixed cultural practices shape people's participation on radio talk shows, and

by extension how they imagine themselves and others within same community. Rather new cultural practices keep emerging and evolving through the public sphere of radio talk shows as a form of response to the necessity for different individuals and groups to negotiate and wade through existing power structures that characterise contemporary South African society. In the light of this, radio talk shows can be seen as important elements in shaping a vigorous public sphere as they open avenues for challenging the status quo or the questioning of orthodoxy in contemporary society. What should be carefully noted however is that a more careful analysis of the interactions and discursive practices seen on the shows examined in this research point in the direction of too much careful staging of these shows in order to meet certain expectations. Such structuring has the potential of encumbering an otherwise open deliberative arena capable of enhancing democratic practices.

For all categories of participants in radio talk shows the idea of self mediation has become a very important factor in playing the different roles they have to take on in the course of participation. Contemporary and historical conditions in South Africa seem to have created a social reality which make citizens ' 'problematize' what they are, what they do, and the world in which they live' (Foucault, 1992, cited in Pozhidaev: 2007: 329). Such problematization often reflects in contributions of the different participants on radio talk shows as they seek to position themselves positively in order to overcome adversities and contradictions of identity inherent in the 'new' nation. In other words the particular conditions of the South African community produce different kinds of South African citizens as the existing realities with their attendant solutions determine the way people think of themselves and others with whom they are meant to share not just the space of the nation but the available resources as well.

Thus, the different contestations by participants on 'The After Eight Debate' and 'The Redi Direko Show' reflect the socio-political reality of the 'new' South Africa in terms of the understanding of the self. The analysis so far has shown that the politics of citizenship and belonging constitutes a major determining factor in the struggles for identity that are manifest in these shows. It also shows that cultural identity in South Africa is ever evolving and never a complete project as Stuart Hall (1994) has noted. But while Hall's idea of unstable cultural identity deals with the diaspora experience, identity in the 'new' South Africa contends with contradictions imposed by varying subject positions of both the self and proximate others, as well as insiders and outsiders who all have to compete for power and resources for actualisation. It keeps evolving in response to intervening socio-political developments.

There is a considerable level of self awareness going on in these shows with the adoption of various discursive strategies to position both the self and the 'other' in different ways in order to secure privileged publicity which impacts on both individual and collective identity. Popular discourses on radio talk shows therefore constitute one of the major avenues through which we can begin to understand many of the functionalities and dysfunctionalities of contemporary South African life. The composition of identities, which is a major determining variable in the task of both individual self fashioning and collective nation building, is often done in a situation of highly contentious political or ideological manoeuvering. In view of this, post-apartheid South African sociality needs to be assessed bearing in mind the kind of images produced by individual and group struggles for citizenship and belonging. In fact, the contributions people make on these talk shows are not just ordinary speeches, they are often more of 'well crafted discursive interventions' (Sinha and Gasper, 2009) mindful of possible outcomes which ultimately impact on identity and accruable benefits of belonging. Above all, it is not just that not everything is said in the public sphere as evidenced on the two shows examined, the bit said is often carefully articulated in the hope that it will impact positively on the emergent (post-apartheid South African) self.

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APPENDIX A

PARTICIPANT INFORMATION SHEET

Hello,

My name is Jendele Hungbo and I am a PhD student at Wits University. As part of my studies I am doing a research project entitled *The Public Sphere and Representations of the Self: Radio Talk Shows in Post-Apartheid South Africa*. The study focuses on the relationship between media and society. It examines how different forms of identities are constructed in the new South African nation through the production and consumption of content on radio talk shows. It also looks at how new forms of relationships or relations of power emerge through radio talk shows in South Africa.

My target participants include talk show hosts, listeners, callers-in and invited guests. If you fall in this category I would like to humbly invite you to participate in this study.
Your participation will entail that you will be interviewed by me. The interview will be conducted at a place you deem convenient and comfortable for you to share your experience as a participant on talk radio. The interview will take about an hour or less and will be conducted once.

I am interested in talking to you about your talk show participation experiences like how, if at all, you build ties with other participants on radio talk shows, why you participate in talk shows either by just listening or calling in, what kinds of topics interest you in these shows. Other issues may come out of these conversations and you would also be free to share any additional information with me concerning your participation experience.

There may not be personal benefits arising from your participation in the study. The information you share with me will however help us better understand the dynamics of radio talk shows and the benefits they have on society at large.

Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. You are free to decide whether you wish to take part or not. There will be no negative consequences if you decide not to participate. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time you feel like doing so. In the event that we are recording an interview, you are also free to request that the recording be stopped at any time.

I do not foresee any risks arising from your participation in this study. The information you share with me will remain confidential. Contents of recorded interviews will be locked in a cabin where I only have access. The information you provide will also be grouped with information from other participants such that it cannot be traced to you should you prefer to remain anonymous. While I will know your name I may not use your full names in interview reports (transcripts) and in the study report especially where there is need to conceal and protect your identity.

For further information regarding this project please feel free to contact me on 0820807291. This number is available all day. You may also contact me on email at Jendele.Hungbo@wits.ac.za. Thank you for taking time to consider participation in the study.

Sincerely,

Jendele Hungbo

APPENDIX B

INFORMED CONSENT FOR PARTICIPATING IN AN INTERVIEW

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. Do you have any questions concerning the study?

Please read and sign the following:

I hereby confirm that I have been informed about the nature and conduct of the study. I have also read and understood the Information Sheet for study participants. I may not benefit personally from participating in the interview.
I may, at any stage withdraw my consent and participation in the study, without there being any negative consequences for me. The information that I give will be treated as confidential and can only be used for the purposes of this study and for any other related academic activity such as publication of the findings in a scholarly journal.
I have also been afforded the opportunity to ask questions about the study.
I declare that I am willing to participate in the study.

Name of Participant: _____

Date of Birth: (optional) _____

Signature: _____

Date: _____

I, Jendele Hungbo, hereby confirm that the above participant has been fully informed about the nature and conduct of the study.

Signature: _____

Date: _____

If verbal consent is given, the interviewer must sign below in the presence of the participant.

_____ Date: _____
(Signature of interviewer certifying that informed
Consent has been given verbally by respondent)

APPENDIX C

INFORMED CONSENT FOR TAPE RECORDING

Thank you for agreeing to participate in this study. I would like to make one more request before we start the interview: that we record this interview. I would like to record the interview so that I can get an accurate account of the interaction. This will help me in accurately reporting and writing up the interview.

You are free to decide on whether you want this interview recorded or not. Your objection to a recording will not negatively affect your relationship with me. You are also free to request me to stop the recording at any time during the interview, or ask me to switch off the tape recorder for a while if you don't want certain information to be recorded. You are also at liberty to request an erasure of parts of the recorded information.

Would you like us to record the interview?

(If no), I respect your choice, we can now start.
(If yes), kindly sign this form to indicate your consent.

Informed consent for tape recording

I understand that the interview is being recorded to facilitate the writing and reporting of my responses. I have had all of the above information explained especially about how my confidentiality will be guaranteed. I understand the explanation. I can stop the recording at any time when I feel the need to do so. I hereby agree to the recording of the interview.

_____ _____

Participant's Name Date of Birth (optional)

_____ _____

Signature of Participant Date

If verbal consent is given, the interviewer must sign below in the presence of the participant.

_____ _____

(Signature of interviewer certifying that informed Consent has been given verbally by respondent) Date

APPENDIX D

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR SHOW HOST

1. For how long have you been a talk show host and since when have you presented the one you currently handle?
2. What purpose do you think your show serves for your listeners?
3. How do you decide on which calls to take and which calls to leave out in during your programme?
4. What makes you feel a particular episode of your programme has been successful or not successful?
5. Do you pre-listen to people's views before putting them on air?
6. Why do you pre-listen or not do so?
7. Do you think of your personality or the conceptions people may have about you in the course of anchoring debates on your show?
8. Do you wish to or actually take some calls because you know who the callers are and feel they might enrich the quality of your programme?
9. Are there callers you leave out during the course of your show?
10. Do you always have a desire to please the audience in the course of anchoring your show?
11. Are there any other individuals you wish to please in during your shows?
12. Is there a desire to be impartial in the course of anchoring debates on your show?
13. Does you preparation for your show involve a pre-planning meeting?
14. How are topics selected for each day's show?
15. How do you exercise control over participants on your show?

APPENDIX E

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR INVITED GUESTS

1. How often do you get invited as guest on The After Eight Debate or The Redi Direko Show?
2. When was the last time you took part in a radio talk show as an invited guest?
3. Do you feel comfortable being an invited guest to take part in debates or would you have preferred participation out of your own volition?
4. Do you feel that there is anything you gain by participating in such programmes?
5. How open are the debates you have taken part in on talk shows?
6. Are their certain guidelines you are given before you start your participation on any of the shows?
7. Do you feel free to say just anything when you participate on the show(s)?
8. Do you feel constrained in any way when you speak on radio talk shows?

APPENDIX F

INTERVIEW SCHEDULE FOR LISTENERS AND CALLERS

1. How often do you listen to talk shows?
2. Which particular talk shows do you listen to and how frequently do you listen?
3. When was the last time you listened to either SAFM's 'The After Eight Debate' or 702's 'The Redi Direko Show'
4. Do you call-in when you listen to talk shows?
5. What's the main reason why you call-in to talk shows?
6. What impact do you think your contributions make on such shows?
7. Do you gain anything by listening or calling in to The After Eight Debate or the Redi Direko Show?
8. Do you look out for any particular guests or fellow callers on the shows?
9. Are there other callers you relate with on the show
10. Are there callers you wish to also hear their voices on the show?

APPENDIX G

UNIVERSITY OF THE WITWATERSRAND, JOHANNESBURG

Division of the Deputy Registrar (Research)

HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (NON MEDICAL)
R14/49 Hungbo

CLEARANCE CERTIFICATE	**PROTOCOL NUMBER H100 301**
PROJECT	The public sphere and representations of the self : Radio talk shows in post apartheid South Africa
INVESTIGATORS	Mr J Hungbo
DEPARTMENT	African Literature
DATE CONSIDERED	12.03.2010
DECISION OF THE COMMITTEE*	Approved Unconditionally
NOTE:	

Unless otherwise specified this ethical clearance is valid for 2 years and may be renewed upon application

DATE 25.03.2010 **CHAIRPERSON** .....
(Professor R Thornton)

cc: Supervisor : Prof L Gunner

DECLARATION OF INVESTIGATOR(S)

To be completed in duplicate and **ONE COPY** returned to the Secretary at Room 10005, 10th Floor, Senate House, University.

I/We fully understand the conditions under which I am/we are authorized to carry out the abovementioned research and I/we guarantee to ensure compliance with these conditions. Should any departure to be contemplated from the research procedure as approved I/we undertake to resubmit the protocol to the Committee. **I agree to a completion of a yearly progress report.**

_____
Signature

PLEASE QUOTE THE PROTOCOL NUMBER IN ALL ENQUIRIES