GLOBALISATION AND NEW SOCIAL IDENTITIES:
A JIG-SAW PUZZLE FROM JOHANNESBURG

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Author’s note: This paper is a draft of an introduction for a book collection. Still in manuscript form, the book, edited by Marcelle Dawson, Meera Ichharam and myself, is provisionally entitled Globalisation and New Identities: A View From the Middle. Suggestions for improvements are greatly welcomed.

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

This juxtaposition is too stark perhaps, but in nuanced forms it is reflected in scholarly debate. Thus, for instance, Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michael (2000: 1-21) reject those understandings of South African society - which they regard as dominant - that ‘over-determined the political’ and exaggerated the significance of identities related to class and, especially, race-based resistance. Advocating the value of cultural studies, they ask us to focus on ‘everyday life’ and ‘transient’ forms of culture, and their edited collection contains chapters on topics like soap opera, hip-hop graffiti art and hair styling. By contrast, Abebe Zegeye’s edited collection (2001: especially 1 and 333-45) maintains a primary concern with political identity, providing essays on, for instance, Afrikaner nationalism and the meaning of ‘coloured’. Recognising that social identities are fluid, and drawing on South Africa’s new constitution, he argues for depoliticisation of ethnicity, and for a democratic nationalism that recognises the benefits of racial, religious and linguistic diversity. If the strength of the first approach is its analysis of popular innovation, and that of the second is its interest in political possibilities, the weakness of both is their inability to converse with each other. We are left with culture that lacks political relevance and a politics that lacks roots in everyday experience.

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

Our particular sociological approach adds a third dimension of analysis to that of culture and politics. This might be regarded as socio-economic, and comes from the attention we have given to ‘globalisation’. During the 1990s, globalisation was conceived as ‘time-space compression’ (Harvey 1989) and ‘intensification of worldwide social relations’ (Giddens 1990: 64); the focus was on, in particular, an integrated ‘world economy’ (Harris 1983) and an ‘information technology revolution’ (Castells 1997: 1); and controversy divided ‘radicals’ and ‘skeptics’ (Giddens 1999, and see Hirst & Thompson for a sceptical account). These were all aspects of, as David Renton (2003: 223) put it, the ‘horizontal’ axis of globalisation. In the new century, debate shifted towards its ‘vertical’ facet, often termed neo-liberal globalisation. For Renton, ‘the distinctiveness [of globalisation] is not that it intrudes widely [but] that it intrudes deeply,’ intensifying work, cutting the welfare state, privatising space and services, and expanding inequalities. Noam Chomsky (2000: 14) regards this vertical globalisation as Phase Two of post-war capitalism. Dating its onset to the early 1970s, he argues that it was ‘designed to unravel . . . [the] social democratic measures [of Phase One]’. In similar vein, Doreen Massey (1999: 7) describes the phenomenon as ‘a project maintained by . . . a discourse of inevitability, which precisely serves to hide the agencies and the interests which are producing it.’ Contributors to this volume have been strongly influenced by this second, vertical, understanding of globalisation (see Alexander 2001), but they have not ignored earlier, horizontal perceptions.

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

The metaphor of a jig-saw puzzle has been used to introduce this collection and present my argument. Unfortunately this particular puzzle is like some that I had as a child. The box that it came with has been lost, so there is no picture to guide us, and it is likely that there are missing pieces.
The chapters in this book are all based on research that was conducted as part of a project funded by South Africa’s National Research Foundation (NRF). The motivation for our original proposal was partly intellectual curiosity, but it was also partly opportunism. One strength of the NRF system is that bursaries are provided for postgraduate students who participate in its projects. Since these students are expected to write dissertations on issues related to the larger topic, we wanted a theme that was broad enough to provide scope for students, as well as staff, to conceive and design their own mini-projects. The hope was that each participant would benefit from discussions with a group of people considering similar problems, and that over time some generalisations might evolve. We called the project Globalisation and New Social Identities, GANSI for short, and before long the group had a nominal identity – we were the Gansians!

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

Michael Burawoy, and particularly *Global Ethnography*, which included chapters by nine of his Berkeley doctoral students, had a profound influence. Our intention was to use his extended case method, with researchers first extending themselves into the world of the participant, secondly extending observations over time and space, thirdly extending from micro processes to macro forces, and finally extending theory (Burawoy 2000: 26-28). But we are a bad advertisement for this approach. Few people, if any, have Burawoy’s expertise as an ethnographer or his talent as a supervisor, and we lacked the resources to undertake the kind of detailed fieldwork, with its emphasis on observation, that was employed by his students. Nevertheless, thinking about this method assisted us in a number of ways. First, we did not approach our fieldwork with preconceived notions about looking for particular identities – race, gender or whatever – but, instead, tried to develop interpretations based on lived experience and subjective explanations. Secondly, we were conscious that our cases
were neither bounded nor representative, but rather regarded them as vantage points from which to gain a view of complex phenomena. Thirdly, and this was especially important for a study looking at how globalisation shaped identity (and, possibly, was shaped by it), we tried to think about how identities within a particular setting might have changed between a time in the past, T1, and the present, T2. Fourthly, we began to think about linkages between the various mini-projects, and our interpretations were influenced both by this and by our reading-group discussions. Fifthly, we worried about the theoretical implications of all this.

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

The project was developed, and our Gansi identity maintained, through a series of workshops. In addition to thinking through problems on our own, we unashamedly twisted the arms of visiting scholars from whom we could learn. Burawoy provided inspirational support on two separate occasions and we received invaluable inputs from Gillian Hart, Thomas Hansen and Sujata Patel. We also ran a reading group, which, for me, was one of the most stimulating intellectual experiences ever. Debates were frequently continued, extended and concretised by means of email discussion within the group. The content of Gansi – its original research, sparking of new ideas and committed camaraderie – has been pleasurable and sometimes exciting. This introduction is a product of this collective endeavour.

CLEARING THE TABLE

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

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

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

Attempting to conceptualise the newly emerging relationship between various global flows and ‘the local’, Massey (1993, 1994) proposed a ‘global sense of place’. Places should be conceived, she argued, not as bounded areas but as nodes of interactions and as products of historical processes. Thus, a place like London’s Kilburn, where she lived, was the sum of the changing relationships between multiple linkages with the rest of the world - foreign newspapers, immigrants, email messages, exotic food etc. - and more local social relations. Because of the different positions of individuals and social groups with regard to the ‘overall complexity of social relations’, it followed that place and people would both have multiple identities (Massey 1993: 61-68, 1994: 121). Global flows – horizontal globalisation one might say - expanded the number of interactions and thus the multiplicity of identities. Massey (1993: 65) made clear, however, that ‘multiple identities can be either, or both, a source of richness or a source of conflict,’ the outcome depending upon one’s ability to control mobility and connectivity. She concluded (1993: 62): ‘The time-space compression of some groups can undermine the power of others.’ Massey echoed some of Hall’s approach, but - by showing how, at the level of the local, people might draw on global resources in the forging of new and potentially ‘progressive’ identities – she added a novel twist.
Arguably, Massey – like Hall perhaps – is ‘too British’ in her concerns, and writers with a stronger focus on the global South might, for our purposes, provide more useful insights. Arjun Appadurai (1996: 33-36, 47), a cosmopolitan scholar of Indian origin, proposed that we think about globalisation in terms of ‘five dimensions of global cultural flows’: movement of peoples, new technology, finance capital, electronically distributed information and images, and ideologies. He was particularly interested in the way that mass migration and electronic media, and their interaction, produced new identities through the work of ‘imagination’ (giving, as an example, the development of new ‘imagined communities’ - to use Benedict Anderson’s term - that draw together particular diasporas) (Appadurai 1996: 3-8). Whilst there are some stimulating ideas here, there are also considerable problems. Comprehensive attention to relationships between the five flows is lacking, so that, whereas for Anderson (1983: 46) the print-capitalism that underpinned his imagined communities was still capitalism, Appadurai’s media and its moghuls are divorced from the compulsions of competitive accumulation. Moreover, whilst, along with others, he (Appadurai 1996: 9, 19) sees the 1970s as a moment of significant change, he regards this as a complete ‘rupture’. This frees him from investigating continuities (unlike Hall), and allows him to conclude that ‘the nation-state . . . is on its last legs.’ Of course, there have been changes in the character of the nation state, but one is tempted to say to all those preparing themselves for its forthcoming burial: ‘Tell it to the Iraqis!’

In contrast to Appadurai’s relatively up-beat account, the Africanist scholars James Ferguson (1999) and Birgit Meyer and Peter Geschiere (1999) offered pessimistic scenarios. Ferguson provided an ethnography of mine workers in Zambia, where, with falling copper prices, real per capita income in 1984 was only one third of that ten year’s before. He reveals the post-modern condition at its most dismal; a picture not of increasing connectedness but of disconnection from the world economy. Here there was a breaking-down of identities based upon distinctions between modern and traditional and urban and rural (which he suggests were never as sharp as generally assumed), and associated with this were changes in family structures, styles of dress and much more (Ferguson 1999: 14, 83-85, 250). Ferguson (1999: 236) calls this ‘abjection’, a humiliating experience of ‘being thrown aside, expelled or discarded.’ As an aside, one should add that, even on the Zambian Copperbelt, there is also another story; it is one told by Darlene Miller (2004) about recent South African investment in the retail sector and about the resistance by shop workers to their new masters. Meyer and Geschiere based their conclusions on a collection of anthropology papers that includes Meyer on pentacostalism in Ghana, Geschiere on witchcraft in Africa and East Asia, and Appadurai, now in more-gloomy mode, on the dangers of ethnic violence. They argued, very simply, that the homogenising tendencies of global flows were producing heterogeneous cultural closures, specifically at the level of identity. This is the down side of Hall’s ‘return to the local’, but without his imminent counter-politics based upon a unity of difference.

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

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

Whilst Castells’s typology can assist us in understanding some of the dynamics in the development of new identities, there is a danger that in its elegant simplicity it also oversimplifies. Burawoy, the second writer who had a considerable influence, ‘grounds’ appreciations of globalisation in experience, and in the process highlights further dynamics. He (2000: 339) criticises, rightly we felt, Castells’s assumption that ‘what is “now” is new’ (indiciting Anthony Giddens’s (1999) ‘runaway world’ on the same charge). His approach is more dialectical (like that of Hall, whose influence he acknowledges), and he concludes: ‘the Global Postmodern works with the preexisting capital, state, and identities . . . we speak of supranational forces, transnational connections, and postnational imaginations to underline the repositioning rather than
the demise of the nation state’ (Burawoy 2000: 348, original emphases). He explains (2000: 29) that ‘forces’ - which could be economic, cultural or political – are ‘felt through mediators that transmit [them] as their interest or as a subjective internalization of values and beliefs’. By contrast, ‘connections’ provide a direct experience of ‘the global’ by means of ‘flows of people, information, and ideas, and the stretching of organizations, identities, and families’ (Burawoy 2000: 34). There is, here, some overlap with our earlier distinction between vertical and horizontal globalisation. ‘Imaginations’ draw on the thinking of Appadurai, but, recognising that many of his ‘global cultural flows’ still have ties to the nation state, Burawoy (2000: 34-35) seems to accord them a more limited, though a more radical, meaning. My impression is that the imaginations are really extensions of the forces and connections.

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

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

PARTS OF THE FRAME

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

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

Various apartheid laws, including that affecting residential segregation, also distinguished nine sub-divisions of ‘bantu’, each based, though not entirely accurately, on language. Essentially these were the same as nine of today’s eleven official languages. The other two languages, English and Afrikaans, were the only ones used for official purposes under apartheid. These two are the main markers of ethnic division among whites, though Afrikaans is also spoken by a majority of coloureds, and Indians mostly speak English. In terms of numbers, the 2001 Census (Statistics South Africa 2003: 13-14) recorded a total population of 44,819,778, broken down as 79.0 percent Black African, 9.6 percent White, 8.9 percent Coloured, and 2.5 percent Indian. In terms of home language it recorded 23.8 percent isiZulu, 17.6 percent isiXhosa, 13.3 percent Afrikaans, 9.4 percent Sepedi, 8.2 percent English, 8.2 percent Setswana, 7.9 percent Sesotho, 4.4 percent Xitonga, 2.7 percent siSwati, 2.3 percent Tshivenda, and 1.6 percent isiNdebele.

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

Class identities have played, and continue to play, an important part in the life of South Africa. Class is partly about income difference, and the most recent report of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) (2004: 188-91) shows South Africa
as having one of the highest levels of inequality in the world, with only six small countries, all in Africa, having a higher Gini co-efficient (the principal measure of income inequality). Disparities have been closely associated with race. So, for example, in 1995, whereas the estimated per capita income for whites was R34,789, for Asians it was R16,793, for coloureds R6,931, and for Africans R4,678 (Terreblanche 2002: 393). Class is also about struggle, with working-class organisations, especially trade unions, playing a key role, arguably the key role, in the overthrow of apartheid. The most significant body has been the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU), established in 1985. Gender identities have also been very significant in South African history, with, for instance, the migrant labour system separating men and women, South Africa having one of the highest incidences of rape in the world, and women’s employment, particularly domestic work, being generally poorly paid. However, although men dominated leadership positions in liberation and labour movements, women were also influential, a fact reflected in ANC policy ensuring a high proportion of females in government structures, and in various pro-women constitutional and legislative provisions (see Hassim 2005).

Churches are, by far, the type of ‘grassroots organisation’ with the greatest following in South Africa (see below), and people often got involved in anti-apartheid resistance via these and other religious institutions. The 2001 South African census recorded affiliations as 78.1 percent Christian, 15.1 percent none, 1.5 percent Islam, 1.2 percent Hinduism and 0.2 percent Judaism (Statistics South Africa 2004c: 24). There are also some distinct generations in South Africa, at least among activists, with the Soweto uprising of 1976 marking one important break. Among our black students, there is a noticeable distinction between those old enough to have had direct experience of ‘the struggle’, and possibly had their education interrupted as a consequence, and those who are younger. Sarah Nuttall (2004) defines these as, respectively, ‘generation X’ and the ‘Y generation’ (the letter ‘Y’ suggesting a question mark, as well as a progression from ‘X’).

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

The HSRC also asked questions on sub-national identities and on participation in civil society. These showed, firstly, that ‘race’ – the survey uses the term ‘ethnicity’ – was the most powerful sub-national identity. However, whereas, in 1997, 47 percent of respondents had described themselves in terms of racial categories, by 2000 the figure had fallen to only 12 percent. In the same period, support for gender and class-related identities also declined, though to a lesser degree, and for religious identities it had increased slightly. ‘The real growth’, according to the authors, ‘was among a whole
range of individual, personalised descriptions. Obviously people’s self-descriptions reflected a process of personalisation’ (Klandermans, Roefs & Olivier 2001: 93, 100). Secondly, whilst, in general, participation in ‘grassroots organisations’ – which covers everything from churches, through trade unions, to hawkers associations – declined between 1994 and 1996 (1995 for whites, coloureds and Asians), there was generally increasing support from then until 2000 (when the study ended). Thirdly, the category ‘burial society or stokvel’ had the second highest level of participation after churches (in 2000 the respective figures were 23.6 percent and 43.2 percent). These organisations - which are basically savings clubs, though often with a social dimension - are uncommon outside of black African and, to a lesser extent, coloured communities. Fourthly, the one type of organisation with a significantly reduced degree of participation was political parties, from 20.6 percent in 1994 to 10.5 percent in 2000. This decline was matched by a reduction in the level of political identification over the same period (Klandermans, Roefs & Olivier 2001: 98, 115—18). The ANC’s 2002 Congress noted that over the preceding two years there had been ‘a further decline in the growth and quality of our branches’ (quoted in Barchiesi 2004: 3).

In South Africa, the principal context for recent shifts in patterns of identity is what Eddie Webster and Glenn Adler (1999) called a ‘double transition’; that is, the overthrow of apartheid combined with neo-liberal globalisation. Many cultural aspects of globalisation affected South Africa before 1994, but because of the high level of struggle most of its economic attributes were delayed (and high levels of migration fall into the latter category). One might add that, in part, the end of apartheid was determined by the ‘post-communist’ balance of global forces, and hence by globalisation. Initially, the new government’s economic policy was shaped – at least rhetorically – by its election manifesto, the mildly redistributive Reconstruction and Development Programme. However, two years into democracy there was a change of tack marked by the launch of the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) strategy, the central premise of which was, to quote John Saul’s (2002: 39) poetic formulation, ‘not what capital can do for South Africa, but what South Africa can do for capital’. Government spending was restricted, inflation was reduced to the minimum, exchange controls relaxed, import tariffs cut or abandoned, primary listing of major companies outside South Africa permitted, and privatisation encouraged. Arguably, as Karl von Holdt (2003: 3) has proposed, because of continuing resistance, compromises, conservatism and general messiness, it would be more accurate to speak of a triple transition. Linking this train of thought to Hart’s critique, perhaps we should even think of a two dimensional model, with transition from above and transition from below along one axis, and horizontal globalisation and vertical globalisation along the other (Alexander 2004: 3). However we conceptualise the relation between globalisation and transition, changing social identities cannot be adequately understood on the basis of globalist reductionism.

Since 1994 the South African economy has grown at a rate of about 3.0 percent a year, which, allowing for population growth of roughly 1.8 percent per year, is rather modest by international standards (and especially so in comparison to GEAR’s optimistic forecasts) (Statistics South Africa 2004a, UNDP 2003: 12; and see Gelb 2005: 367). Nevertheless, it has grown, and some people are certainly better-off. Improvements, however, have been patchy. A major problem has been joblessness. According to the standard, ‘narrow’ definition of unemployment, there was an increase from 20.0 percent of the economically active population in September 1994 to 27.8 percent in March 2004, and with the ‘expanded’ measure, which includes people who
have been discouraged from looking for work, the increase was from 28.6 percent to 41.2 percent over the same period; this last figure representing 8.4 million people (Altman 2003: 160; Statistics South Africa 2004b). Rates of unemployment are especially high for black Africans and young people, and higher for women than for men.

Between 1995 and 2001, whilst the number of professional employees increased by 7.0 percent a year, the number of employees in elementary occupations declined by 5.7 percent a year (with the reduction especially sharp in the mining industry, where many of the workers were migrants from outside South Africa). Among skilled and semi-skilled workers, whilst there was a 1.0 percent a year increase in their numbers during this period, the proportion who earned less than R1,000 per month rose from 21 percent to 26 percent - and the real value of R1,000 had declined to R690 (Makgetla & van Meelis 2003: 92, 95). Moreover, between 1994 and 2002, whilst the share of GDP that went to profits increased by about two percent, the wages share declined by almost the same amount. The net effect of various changes was to increase inequality. The Gini-coefficient – which measures income inequality between 0, representing absolute equality, and 1, meaning absolute inequality – showed an increase from 0.596 in 1995 to 0.635 in 2001. The figure for black Africans was considerably higher than for whites (UNDP 2003: 5-6). In sum, then, there has been relatively little economic growth, increased unemployment and redistribution to the wealthy.

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

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

**ADDING NEW PIECES**

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

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

Rabe’s analysis uses globalisation as an explanatory factor, but interweaves this with resistance (itself involving class and racial dynamics), changing forms of work (some to ‘fordist’ rather than ‘post-fordist’ production), and domestic arrangements (which sometimes rest, in part, on pre-modern relationships). Chapter 3, van Rooyen’s discussion of women employed on two flower-exporting farms in Northwest, contains certain analytical similarities. Situating her study within the context of a global market for cut flowers (hers mostly go to Dutch auction houses and British supermarkets), she demonstrates how a new form of oppression - flower exports really took off in the early 1990s - produces a new identity. All the ordinary workers on the two farms are black Africans and the farm owners are white, but because the team leaders and supervisors are also black Africans, race is not a prominent part of the workers’ everyday experience and consciousness (though clearly it structures their identities). Class and gender are more salient aspects of the women’s relationships. They labour under wretched conditions — and, we are told, could probably never afford to decorate their homes with the nice flowers they cut and pack — so exploitation is obvious, and many of the women belong to a union (even though they regard it as ineffective). Nearly all the menial work is undertaken by women, and they are controlled in a more repressive manner than the men, but gender is also about the traditionalism of the women’s male-dominated home lives. Whereas, for the miners, work experience once produced a racialised class identity (they were black workers), in this instance it has produced a gendered class identity (as women workers). Whilst, again, one can discern the firm hand of globalisation and the often brutal arm of patriarchy working together in the shaping of a new identity, here the significance of a specific aspect of mediation — the racial identity of supervision — is also apparent.

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

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

In Chapter 6, Masenyama attempts to shed light on national identity using the South African Broadcasting Corporation’s (SABC’s) television output as a lens. SABC faces at least two dilemmas. Firstly, it is a public broadcaster charged with promoting a sense of national identity, but also needs revenue from advertising global brands and must show foreign programmes to cut costs and maintain audiences. Secondly, given the massive and multiple divisions within South African society, there is no consensus about what is meant by South African identity. Masenyama is struck both by the vague
definitions of national identity held by senior staff, and by the relatively weak form of South African distinctiveness presented on SABC television. Whilst this amorphousness may be a pragmatic response to obvious difficulties, it might also prove the most effective means of encouraging national unity. If social identity is, in effect, ‘shared experience’, it is important that the SABC is enabling South Africans to share the same news, weather forecasts and sports events, even if these are watched in different languages. The broadcaster also provides, for example, a common experience of ‘soapies’, many of which utilise a variety of tongues, though often with sub-titles in English. Moreover, by reflecting the divisions in South African society, SABC is creating a common experience of those divisions, and, even if people are watching Hollywood movies, it is a nationally-shared selection with a common time of viewing. Of course there are contradictions, but it is worth us remembering that when people tune into SABC to engage with the global flow of Law and Order or Sex in the City, their imaginations are those of South Africans and they probably do not dream in English.

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

Chapters 8 and 9 are both concerned with religious identities, respectively Islam and Judaism. In the first of these, McDonald’s essay on the Tabligh Jamā’ā (TJ) provides a useful antidote to radical interpretations of globalisation. Although it has attracted little scholarly or media attention, the TJ is probably the single largest movement within Islam, both internationally and in South Africa. Its presence in Johannesburg has two sources, neither of which is related to our notion of globalisation. First, there is a Muslim community that traces it origins back, in the case of coloureds, to ‘Malay’ slaves and travellers who arrived in the Cape from the late-seventeenth century, and, in the case of Indians, to indentured labourers and merchants who landed in Natal from the late nineteenth century. Then, secondly, there is the TJ itself, which originated in India in 1927, and still has its principal centre there, spreading to South Africa in the 1960s. Organising only among Muslims, the TJ draws its adherents on the basis of being ‘good Muslims’, people who live their lives according to ‘a literal interpretation of Prophetic authority’ (Vahed 2000: 5). Whilst some Muslims disagree with this interpretation and others note that the TJ’s dress code owes more to India than Arabia, the movement’s conformism has allowed it to secure considerable influence within Johannesburg’s mosques and, in particular, within its seminaries or madrasas.
The TJ is apolitical, implicitly it is opposed to globalisation (though many of its supporters have been beneficiaries), and its practices are unchanging. It is possible that this very conservatism has helped it to attract those Muslims – particularly Indians perhaps – threatened by the tumultuous changes that have occurred in South Africa over the past decade and more. Engaging theoretically with Massey and Castells, the thrust of McDonald’s argument is that the TJ has succeeded in constructing an identity by creating and sustaining a place of shared experience.

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

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

Chapters 11 and 12 deal with aspects of youth and student identity. In the first of these, Nkuna explores the Y-generation culture of The Zone, Johannesburg’s hippest mall. This relatively small, northern-suburbs centre is aimed at a very specific market: the sons and daughters of the post-apartheid black elite and their white contemporaries. It is a space where a new upper middle-class identity is being forged. Just under six in ten of Nkuna’s survey respondents were black Africans, but nearly eight in ten said they preferred to use English when speaking to friends. The average age of those interviewed was under 20, overwhelmingly they were the products of formerly-white schools, and most of their spending money was provided by parents. At first sight, The Zone seems to be calm, friendly and multiracial, but just below the surface there are also differences and tensions. Levis and R&B music are popular with everyone, no matter what their racial background, but there are labels and hair styles that only appeal to black Africans, and some that only appeal to whites. Also, whilst there is racial mixing, black Africans are still more likely to socialise with black Africans, whites with whites and so on. Socially, at one end of the spectrum there are the township girls, who nearly always arrive in groups and are desperate to ‘fit in’; at the other end, there are the local celebrities, sometimes DJs from the adjacent and very popular radio station, who are cool, collected and set the trends. Those trends are predominantly American, but there is also another dynamic. The most widely-liked artists are South African, and some of the most prestigious labels are local ones offering a crossover between Western styling and traditional African or township themes. Even the English – often spoken with an American twang – frequently incorporates African words. This, then, is a class culture with global outlines, yet shaded with local tensions and inflections.

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

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

OUTLINES OF A PICTURE

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

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

Whilst these first two outlines reflect concerns previously raised by other writers, the third is rather different. Whilst all the chapters have focussed on the novel components of social identities, I am struck by the re-emergence of some old identities, albeit with new content. This is not something we had predicted, nor is it easy to detect by looking at any one of our studies in isolation from the other evidence presented. With class, gender and race, there can be little doubt that globalisation has produced fragmentation (with the transition also playing a part in the process). For instance, on the mines – which have been, and continue to be, a major factor in South African life – there have been many retrenchments, with those who are directly affected either developing a new experience of what it means to be a worker, or, perhaps, falling out of the working class altogether. At the same time, there are some workers who have moved into skilled or white-collar jobs - becoming ‘new emerging fathers’ perhaps - and, slowly, women miners are increasing in numbers, even underground. Similarly, during the 1990s the civics crumpled, with many leaders becoming upwardly mobile in government and business. Meanwhile, the old, overwhelmingly white ruling and upper-middle classes have been fractured by the transition.

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

In terms of race, however, the trends appear to be different. The most marked development is that almost nobody now talks about an inclusive black identity; black Africans often describe themselves as ‘black’, but it is rare indeed to hear coloureds and Indians define themselves in this way. Also, whilst there is still a strong association between race and class (with implications for the Positive identity for example), the growth of inequality among black Africans has been rapid, weakening race-based workplace and neighbourhood solidarities. In addition, there is more socialising across the colour line, at least among young people (though there are still very few mixed couples), and the demise of the NNP has weakened the political identity of whiteness. However, we should be cautious about saying too much about race at this stage. In terms of religion, from the earlier evidence, it is likely that there has been increased support for churches over the past period (possibly in response to increased hardships and uncertainty). Whilst there was no direct evidence that the TJ has grown in this period, Thomas Hansen (2003) has argued that among Indians there has been a shift from an ethnic identification (with other Indians) towards religiously-based associations, and the TJ must have played a part in this process. Certainly the TJ and orthodox Judaism appear to be vibrant. Finally, the old South African nation - which, by implication, was white – has gone, but a new national identity is materialising.

**ADDITIONAL AND MISSING PIECES**

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

**Nation**

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

Whilst the multiculturalism implied by ‘rainbow nation’ is transparent, the meaning of ‘African Renaissance’ is opaque. Peter Vale and Sipho Maseko (1998, 2002) have suggested that the concept - first mooted by Mbeki in a 1997 speech to parliament – has two distinct meanings; and Tom Lodge (2002: 227-40), upon whom I also draw, presents a similar interpretation. The first connotation is avowedly modernist, as in the proposal for an African ‘information super-highway’. In this form, it has provided an ideological underpinning for another Mbeki initiative, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD), which was formally accepted as an off-shoot of the Organisation of African Unity in 2001. NEPAD, sometimes described as ‘GEAR for Africa’, is identified with encouraging neo-liberal globalisation, conflict resolution (where there has been some success), democratisation (a failure), and securing more aid from wealthy countries (with disappointing results) (see Bond 2002; also Adesina 2004). In this form, the African Renaissance has been welcomed by South African businesses, which, in many cases – including the mining, banking, property, retail, beer brewing, electricity supply and telecommunications sectors - have been highly successful in expanding into the rest of Africa. As a consequence of the association with South African economic and political ‘leadership’, there is continent-wide scepticism about African Renaissance and NEPAD. The converse of this is - ironically perhaps - that this dimension of a pro-continent ideology has added to a sense of national unity among both whites and blacks within the business and political elites. It may also have contributed to a popular discourse that treats ‘Africa’ as excluding South Africa (a usage that is now common among black as well as white South Africans). Proudly South African – the subject of a forthcoming Gansi master’s dissertation by Iain Milne – also enhances national identity by encouraging local capitalist interests. This campaign, largely aimed at persuading consumers to buy South African goods and services, is strongly backed by COSATU.

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

One response to perceived exclusion has been to emigrate, notably to London, where, according to one estimate, there are now 750,000 South Africans (van Huyssteen 2004). However, there are also significant pull factors at work in this migration. Many Londoners have moved out of the capital because of high property prices, and qualified South Africans can usually earn considerably more there than at home, sometimes doing so with the aim of returning and buying a house with cash. In addition, South Africans who emigrate usually speak good English, a large number take advantage of a special work-permit scheme for young Commonwealth citizens, and many welcome the experience. Although most of the emigrants are white, a high proportion is black. Whilst some of these whites are racists, an observation made by GANSI members who have spent some time in the UK is that there appears to be an element of bonding between black and white South Africans in the country, especially around sport. So, perhaps ironically again - though in keeping with emigrations elsewhere - this movement out of South Africa is strengthening national identity.

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

From our research, it seemed that black South Africans showed little hostility to white foreigners (who were thought to be bringing useful skills or foreign currency),
and, contrariwise, white South Africans exhibited less hostility towards African foreigners than towards those from, for instance, eastern Europe (perhaps a reflection of the whites’ inability to make distinctions between local and foreign black Africans). In terms of identity, many foreigners, at least from Africa, have joined organisations associated with their home country or area (sometimes these are also burial societies). In addition, we should list ‘Makwerekwere’ as a new nominal identity in South Africa; it certainly exists at the level of ‘naming’, though there are also signs that there may be an element of ‘claiming’ the identity, at least ironically, though probably not yet as a political statement similar to Hall’s notion of ‘blackness’ (Mate 2004). Anyway, there is clearly strong evidence of a xenophobic nationalism in South Africa, and this extends from significant state officials and some members of the public, to certain politicians (for example, see Michaels 2004).

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

Race and ethnicity
At first glance, racial identity appears to be declining in relevance for most South Africans. There is evidence to support this suggestion in the HSRC survey already mentioned, in chapters that follow, and in opinion surveys undertaken from 1998 to 2004 that consistently show people saying that ‘racial relations’ are improving (Markinor 2004). Moreover, on the basis of extensive focus-group research conducted in the Western Cape, Simon Bekker and Anne Leildé (2003: 7) concluded: ‘race is rarely the primary source of meaning and indeed only becomes primary in specific circumstances . . . Otherwise it persists as one identity among many.’ Recent journalism exploring some of the psychological problems experienced by upwardly mobile black Africans has demonstrated the continuing impact of race, but it also highlights the social divisions now associated with blackness (Tshoagong 2004; and see Mageza 2004).
However, cutting against this trend, ‘race’ can still have utility for politicians. In the 1999 general election, the white-led Democratic Alliance (DA) ran a campaign around the theme ‘Fight Back’, which identified with white fears about ‘black crime’. More recently, Mbeki (2004) chose to racialise a debate on rape, possibly to divert attention from the government’s failure to reduce the scale of the problem. In the longer term, ANC leaders probably have more to gain than DA politicians from stimulating concerns about race. If played carefully, the ‘race card’ is a powerful means of re-establishing a connection with poorer voters, particularly at election time. The card works mainly because, despite improvements, there is still segregation (the legacy of the Group Areas Act), only a minority of top jobs are held by black Africans, and nearly all of the country’s poorer people are black (see Moleke 2003: 210-20). Nevertheless, so long as the ANC is committed to neo-liberal globalisation there will be constraints on its willingness and ability to engage in racial politicisation.

For opponents of the present government, ethnic politics has limitations. In the ten years prior to the 1994 election result being announced, more than 13,000 people lost their lives in violent clashes between supporters of the ANC and those of the Zulu-nationalist Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP). Threats of continuing violence and political instability convinced the ANC to accept a fraudulent IFP victory in KZN, to appoint IFP leaders as government ministers and to allow traditional leaders, especially in KZN, to maintain a considerable measure of power. However, co-option and conciliation, coupled with the possibility of coercion, weakened the IFP, and in 2004 it lost control of KZN. In addition, as Shula Marks (2004) has shown, the IFP’s hold over Zulu society was undermined by generational, class and gender divisions. If ethnic political mobilisation has failed for the IFP, which has the most numerous language group as its base, it is unlikely to work for others.

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

The implication is that apartheid-defined ethnic identities, generally regarded as four ‘races’, may be giving way to new ethnic identities based, in particular, on language and religion. These new ethnicities, which are cultural rather than political, are easier to defend in terms of democratic discourse and practice, but they are also more meaningful to people in a context where politics have become less significant. The shift should be understood within the framework of the ending of apartheid, but can also be associated with the new ideologies, linkages and inequalities associated with globalisation. This analysis might lead one to rework the distinction between race and ethnicity. In the future, as in the past, if race is mobilised as an identity it is most likely
that this will be done by those who are politically dominant. In contrast, ethnicity represents, as Hall suggested, ‘a return to the local’ (though, as I hope to show, it is only one form of such a return). With militant Zulu and Afrikaner nationalism now quiescent, ethnicity is primarily cultural and apolitical. This need not remain so. One can certainly envisage the possibility of economic and/or political crises producing a re-politicisation of ethnicity. Language affinity might, for example, be utilised to advance the claims of particular politicians within the ANC; this has certainly happened before. Alternatively, opposition politicians from the DA, the IFP, the largely isiXhosa United Democratic Movement, or the mainly Setswana United Christian Democratic Party could find a way of forging a particular understanding of Christianity around which they might unite. There are, then, two key points. Firstly, racial identities may be waning, but they are very far from being finished. Secondly, whilst linguistic and religious identities might provide spaces within which people can understand the world, find friendship and secure material support, if politicised they are likely to take a reactionary direction.

Working class
We have already seen that class identities are re-emerging in new forms, but I wish to probe a little deeper in terms of the working-class. South Africa not only has deep class divisions, it also has strong working-class organisations, and these are likely to remain a pole of attraction for many of those adversely affected by the ‘double transition’. Much the most important of these bodies are the trade unions. South Africa’s union density stands at about forty percent (excluding agriculture), which, compared to most other countries, is very high. COSATU, by far the largest of the union federations, has a total affiliated membership of about 1.8 million. This figure has altered little since 1994, but there has been a marked change in the composition. The National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) is still the largest union (though its membership peaked in 1996); but whereas the next three largest unions were all in the manufacturing sector (in the metal, clothing and textile and food industries), now the second and third largest unions are both in the public sector (with schools and hospitals particularly well represented). Two main factors explain this shift. Especially in the public sector, the transition and new legislation provided more protection and increased opportunities for collective bargaining. Against this, unions in the mining, engineering and clothing and textile industries have suffered from retrenchments, most of which have been directly related to the removal of tariff barriers and exchange controls (i.e. to globalisation). Other considerations include the elimination of the main racial dynamic from worker militancy and various internal factors (with, for instance, the food workers’ union experiencing debilitating divisions and NUM benefiting from relatively strong organisation) (COSATU 2000 and 2003; see also Buhlungu 2003, and von Holdt 2003). The transformation in the character of union membership also affects non-COSATU unions (even to the extent that academic staff in my own university are now unionised). The core of the union movement still consists of black manual workers, but over the past ten years there has been a decline in the proportion of members who are migrants and a rise in the proportion of white-collar unionists, including a small yet significant number of whites (though the number of white unionists in skilled and other manual occupations has declined).

Another development has been, as Sakhela Buhlungu (2003: 189) observes, that union leaderships have become less accountable to their rank and file, with internal democracy generally weakened ‘by new forces driven by individualism.’ Nevertheless, by a large majority, most COSATU members agree with their leaders’ support for the
ANC (Molele: 2004). This backing has not, however, prevented major conflicts between COSATU and the government. The former opposes GEAR, and it has held a number of well-supported general strikes against government economic policies (with the effect that privatisation of state assets has been slowed); in September 2004 some 700,000 government employees, mostly COSATU members, participated in the largest industrial stoppage in the country’s history; and there have also been well-publicised differences over HIV/AIDS and Zimbabwe. In the past, major COSATU unions have voted in favour of the formation of a workers’ party, but it is unlikely that such a party will be formed in the foreseeable future. Given the present level of support for the ANC among COSATU members, if a new party were formed it would lead to most affiliates splitting, and thus to a weakening of the labour movement. It is probably more likely that COSATU will seek to advance by working more closely, and perhaps integrating or merging with, the two smaller federations (one associated with the unions of skilled and white-collar workers, many of whom were white, coloured and Indian, the other connected with the black consciousness tradition). So then, working-class identity, as reflected in union membership, remains strong, but the content of that identity has altered in two important ways. First, the composition of the organised working class has changed significantly. Secondly, whereas before 1994 the mainstream of the labour movement was opposed to the government in virtually every respect, now it refrains from forging a separate political identity for workers. These key changes are related to both globalisation and the transition (and, of course, the two cannot be entirely disentangled).

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

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

The trade unions and the new movements clearly have different social bases, histories and dynamics, but there are also political differences. Significantly, COSATU and the main social movements held separate marches outside both the WCAR and the WSSD. However, within the social movements there are different views about how to relate to trade unions. At one end of a spectrum, there is SANCO, which is part of a formal alliance with COSATU, the ANC and the South African Communist Party (SACP); at the other end there is the APF, the main leaders of which have been expelled by one or other of the alliance partners; and somewhere in the middle there is the TAC, which has a close relationship with COSATU. The LPM and the SACP recently co-operated in organising a protest against landlessness (which also received some trade union support), though it remains to be seen how long their united front will last. For some activists on both sides of the union/social movement divide, the political difference is regarded as one of principle – in effect either ‘the opponents of the ANC are our enemies’ or the allies of the ANC are our enemy’ – but for most it is one of making tactical assessments around common interests. At the time of writing, my impression is that the SACP is beginning to reposition itself with an identity that is more obviously pro-working class, thus distinguishing itself more clearly from the ANC (see SACP 2004). Especially given that most COSATU leaders are SACP members, if this is more than a cosmetic shift it could pave the way to the development of a more cohesive working-class resistance identity. Significantly, most of the main social movement leaders have at least a theoretical commitment to working-class unity; there is little of the autonomism to be found in Europe, especially Italy.

This brief consideration of the contours of working-class consciousness in South Africa touches on significant theoretical concerns. First, I find little basis to support the claim, pace Burawoy (2003: 242), that ‘in the postcommunist era progressive struggles have moved away from distributional politics to focus on identity politics’. In Burawoy’s next sentence there is an implicit distinction between ‘identity’ and ‘class’, so the former should be understood as meaning gender, ethnicity and so forth. From the evidence presented here, if we take ‘progressive struggles’ to be those associated with an expansion of democracy and equality, then, in South Africa today, these are principally about the distribution of resources; about who gets electricity, land, anti-retroviral drugs or, indeed, decent pay. One cannot fully appreciate such struggles without an awareness of gender and race, but these are not central. Where ethnicity is a
primary identity, as in some of the cases examined earlier, there is a good chance of it playing a reactionary role (though this is not inevitable). Secondly, and this time in response to Castells, it would be premature to assume that communal movements are more likely than trade unions to generate the kind of resistance that provides a basis for the emergence of a new project identity. Clearly some communal movements - Zulu nationalism for instance - can be highly conservative, but also COSATU has actively supported the TAC, the struggle for land redistribution in South Africa and the democratic rights of Zimbabwean workers, and in each case it has done so against its ANC ally. Whilst there is a danger of confusing the forms of organisation with the content of their practice, it is also possible that Castells exaggerates the differences between trade unions and social movements. Thus, he (1997: 362) tells us that ‘a networking, decentered form of organization and intervention [is] characteristic of the new social movements’. He is doubtless right about some social movements, even in South Africa, but the movements I have mentioned, and they are the most significant ones, have hierarchical structures within which leaders are held accountable to the members (though, as with trade unions, there are also anti-democratic pressures).

I do not regard the notion of ‘working class’ as unproblematic; it is rather that the problem lies elsewhere. As with most writers concerned with this matter, my starting point is provided by Karl Marx. For him, a chain of concepts provided a link between capitalism and a working class that was conscious of itself as a class. Of course, he went further, thinking through the relationship between the working class and socialism, but that is not the issue here. For Marx, the exploitation of workers by capitalists lay at the heart of his understanding of capitalism (it was this that provided the possibility for individual capitalists to accumulate and thus compete successfully with other capitalists). He was aware of other ‘subaltern’ classes – the self-employed, slaves, peasants, and lumpenproletarians – but these were analytically distinct from the workers, the wage labourers, who, along with their families, constituted the socially dominant component of the subaltern masses, the working class (see also van der Linden forthcoming). Working-class consciousness, effectively self-ascribed identity, was regarded as a product of the common experience of exploitation and of struggle against aspects of that exploitation. Especially in the latter years of apartheid this map provided a rough outline of reality (though, of course, there were no slaves, and the existence of peasants was debated). Now, however, the reality has become more complicated. First, we have the example of SEWA, which has contributed to the development of a worker identity among self-employed women; i.e. among people not previously regarded as workers (and not just by Marxists, but by legislation as well) (see also Webster 2004: 388-90). Moreover, prostitutes generally regard themselves as sex workers (even when they are not employed), and from an undergraduate project based on participant observation, we learnt that local beggars, the archetypal lumpenproletarians, talk about ‘coming to work’ in the mornings. Then, secondly, there is the example of SECC, which, as we have seen, consists overwhelmingly of people who are unemployed, yet presents a strong sense of being part of the working-class. Perhaps, because these individuals are dependent on family members with jobs, this is less of a problem, but I suspect matters are not that simple. There is the problem of separation from the mainstream working-class movement, but, also, the rate of unemployment is qualitatively higher than anywhere in the ‘first world’ (and there are no welfare benefits for people who are merely jobless).

One solution would be to adopt a definition of ‘worker’ and of ‘working class’ that simply reflected the self-identifications that are developing, at least in South Africa.
Politically, this has the benefit of providing a unifying identity for the various subaltern classes, at least in the urban areas (i.e. something akin to Hall’s example of ‘blackness’). An example of this kind of reasoning is the assertion by Chris Bambery (2004: 7), the editor of the British Socialist Worker, that ‘the millions who marched against the [Iraq] war make up the new working class of 2004.’ If this approach were adopted, it would then be necessary to think through both the consequences in terms of the relationship between ‘worker’ and ‘exploitation’, and, then, the further implications in terms of the uneven distribution of social power within the class. A second solution would be to work from the social base of the new movements, developing a concept that either blurs the distinction between the unemployed and informally employed on the one hand and the employed on the other, or incorporates the latter into the former. In essence, this is the approach adopted by Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri (2000, 2004) when they speak of the ‘multitude’, and by Ashwin Desai (2002) when he draws on his experience as an activist intellectual in Durban to write about the ‘poors’. Whilst generally sympathetic to this second approach, Franco Barchiesi (2004: 8) is uneasy about the way in which, by abstracting a social form from social structure, the concept of multitude can become ‘all-encompassing and self-explanatory’. There is, perhaps, a similar danger with the first solution as well. Nevertheless, because it builds on the self-fulfillment people gain by making a contribution to society though work, as well as the implicit rejection of production based on exploitation, my inclination is towards building on this first approach. Empirical and theoretical work in this area is, though, much needed.

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

**USING JIG-SAW THEORY TO FINISH THE PUZZLE**

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

Two considerations are particularly pertinent. First, several writers – including Neil Smith (1984), Harvey (2000) and Hart (2002) – recognise the importance of uneven development in explaining the temporal and spatial variation of social processes, including identity. Few among them – and Smith (1984) is an exception - acknowledge Leon Trotsky’s contribution to the theorisation of uneven development, which he linked, dialectically, to combined development (using this approach to defend the idea
of permanent revolution, i.e. the view that, because there was a connection between capitalism in less developed and more developed countries, it was possible for a revolution to spread from the former, where its hold over society might be weaker, to the latter). After Joseph Stalin used his own formulation of the law of uneven development to argue that because China was fundamentally different from elsewhere, it was possible to achieve socialism in that one country, Trotsky (1969: particularly 148) clarified his position. Writing in 1930, he argued: ‘But the specific features of national economy, no matter how great, enter as component parts and in increasing measure into the higher reality which is called world economy’. For half a century, this view may have seemed implausible, but with the collapse of ‘socialism’ in Eastern Europe, the development of western-style markets in China, the general advance of neo-liberal globalisation, and, significantly for us, the end of apartheid, Trotsky’s approach appears justified and even, perhaps, prescient. Clearly there is still considerable unevenness - though in its most obvious aspect, increasing inequality of incomes, this is taking a global form (Arrighi 2004) - but the main thrust of globalisation is towards combined development.

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

Antonio Gramsci’s (1971: 333) invaluable concept of ‘contradictory consciousness’, which dates from his time in one of Benito Mussulini’s prisons, is an attempt to comprehend the way people handle, and only sometimes resolve, the conflicting sets of meanings associated with two primary identities (such as catholicism and communism).

Nor were earlier Marxist writings limited to an interest in class identity. An especially insightful contribution was made by Abram Leon in *The Jewish Question* (1970), a work now largely ignored. This volume, completed two years before the author died in an Auschwitz gas chamber (aged only 26), set out to explain the longevity of Jewish identity. The notion of fluidity is implicit in Leon’s thesis, which shows people both ceasing to be, and becoming, Jewish. For Leon, the essential character of Judaism changed with time and space: moving to a close association with long-distance trade in early-Medieval Europe, surviving through usury once producer-capitalists were out-competing Jews as merchants, and eventually crystallising as resistance to the racialised oppression of ‘decaying feudalism’ and ‘rotting capitalism’. A more influential source has been the work of the Manchester school of social anthropology, a major influence on Burawoy, though not read sufficiently widely.
among sociologists in South Africa today. My own early intellectual development was shaped by the work of the school’s founder Gluckman (e.g. 1963), which, among other innovations, grasped the dynamics of Zulu identity through critical use of Marxist theory, taking cognisance of socio-economic constraints and unravelling a history of internal political conflict; by that of A. L. Epstein (1958) in explaining the material basis of urban ethnicity and class consciousness on the Zambian Copperbelt; and that of Abner Cohen, my undergraduate tutor, notably on the value of ethnic identity for Hausa traders (Cohen 1969). To this list of key materialist writings on identity, one must clearly add Anderson’s (1983) *Imagined Communities*, his treatise on nations and nationalism.

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

In attempting to understand some of the dynamics involved in our emerging picture of new identities in South Africa, I would like, then, to make two propositions: firstly, we should be contemplating both similarities and differences with patterns found elsewhere in the world (anticipating an increasing proportion of the former), and, secondly, that we need to be looking for both continuities and breaks in forms and types of identity. Before considering the present situation, it is worth reflecting on the moment in the early 1970s now widely regarded as marking a turning point in both the development of globalisation and the character of identities, dividing what might be regarded as late modernity and post-modernity.

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

This period of struggles culminated in the mid-1970s with proletarian insurgency in Italy, a British miners’ strike that forced the resignation of a Tory government, and worker-led defeats of a military dictatorship in Greece and fascist regimes in Portugal and Spain. It ended, however, with major class compromises that would pave the way to the defeats of the 1980s. The overall effect was similar to that described by Hall (even if the analysis is somewhat different): an early and continuing weakening of national identity, an intensification and then decline in working-class identity, and a shift away from black and women’s radicalism towards more quiescent forms of racial and gender identification. The change cannot, however, be understood without an assessment of the rise and fall of popular movements, whether these are national or labour or more broadly social. Moreover, introducing agency and the balance of class forces helps one detect a link to world economy and the rise of globalisation. The movements of the 1960s were partly a response to an emerging crisis in post-war capitalism; this highlighted the fact that whilst most people had benefited from the long boom, many had not. The 1971 ending of fixed exchange rates – which would have a dramatic impact on financial speculation, and hence the development of both dimensions of globalisation – was a product of the growing economic crisis made worse by political unrest. With the benefit of hindsight, 1971 might be regarded as the pivotal year, but there was a period of transition between what we have characterised as the late and post-modern eras, rather than a sudden rupture.

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

The scale of political resistance in South Africa, as well as the country’s different history of political economy, ensured that the rate of economic growth in the country was much lower during the 1970s than was generally the case in Africa, which received substantial loans from investors disappointed with returns from the industrialised North. Inability to repay these loans was a key factor contributing to structural adjustment (in effect, vertical globalisation in Africa). Partly because of its
different economic trajectory and partly as a consequence of the anti-apartheid struggle, and then attempts to resolve the conflict in the 1990s, the chief aspects of globalisation’s impact were postponed as far as South Africa was concerned. That is, differences between South Africa and most of Africa, as well as between South Africa and the major northern countries, are clearly apparent (though it should be noted that in many African countries structural adjustment was fiercely resisted by new working-class movements, and that these movements often took inspiration from South African struggles). The point is, though, that in contrast to our northern and African comparators, strong working class, racial and (anti-apartheid) national identities persisted into the late 1990s. The question is, to what extent have the various effects of 1994 - particularly vertical globalisation - had an impact on the creation of new South African identities? Does our jig-saw puzzle now look more like that of other countries? This is the issue to which, in conclusion, I turn.

CONCLUSION: A POST POST-MODERN ERA

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

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

To the extent that there appears to have been some decline in racial identities, this might not only be related to the end of apartheid and reduced levels of political participation. It could also be connected to the rising importance of other identities in people’s lives. This appeared to be the implication of the 2000 HSRC finding that there was an increase in the level of ‘personalisation’. In the absence of further information, one is left to hypothesise about this process, doing so partly on the basis of casual observations and discussions with students. My impression is that the phenomenon is associated with age, with the Y generation having more interest in consumerism and other aspects of culture than in formal politics and racial identities. This is the trend that Nuttall and Michael have observed, and it is also reflected in this volume’s chapters on The Zone and students. Some readers might interpret this, doubtless negatively, as young South Africans joining their contemporaries around the world in turning their back on the plight of poorer citizens and endorsing globalised commodity fetishism. This is the ultimate fragmentation of identities, a kind of post-modern nihilism, and one can certainly find evidence for its existence. However, I also detect a more positive side to the phenomenon. This is about students battling to create some space for themselves in a world of high unemployment, of trying to make a difference in circumstances where politics have been devalued, and of questioning the world created by ones parents’ generation (demonstrating this by dressing and, sometimes, talking differently). Within this culture there can be highly sophisticated discussions of ‘soapies’, ironic considerations of politicians, and, especially notable at present, a rise of public poetry that enables men to talk about personal feelings and assists everyone to reflect on the social problems of the day. If there is not yet, in South Africa, the same level of youthful mobilisation around the counter politics of ecology and anti-imperialism that one finds in many other countries, it would also be wrong to equate personalisation with consumerism. Whilst Politics with a capital P is out, politics as a groping for critique - and, perhaps, eventually, a new identity - is alive and kicking.

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

Finally, in terms of labour and social movement identities there are also important linkages with other countries: the International Confederation of Free Trade Unions (ICFTU) and World Social Forum (WSF), to give but two examples. Whilst the ICFTU is a product of earlier eras it has attempted to adapt itself, albeit rather weakly, to new problems associated with globalisation, and, of course, the WSF is a child of anti-neoliberal resistance. If anything, despite some fragmentation, working-class identity is probably stronger in South Africa than in most other countries. The unions are not immune to the seepage of membership experienced elsewhere, but the decline has been less than in most places, and the number of people who regard themselves as workers is probably greater than the number of people employed (which is quite unlike the United States, where a large proportion of ordinary employees regard themselves as middle-class). In part, the new social movements can be linked to the post-Seattle phenomenon that has affected countries around the world. However, the issues are somewhat different to those that predominate, at least in Europe and North America; though even within these continents there is considerable variation, and there is a case for treating the United States as an exception (something its sociologists should take seriously when attempting to generalise). Anti-imperialism and environmentalism have made less impact in South Africa, and AIDS and poverty (including service delivery and land) have been more significant.

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

However, secondly, globalisation is having the effect of making South Africa’s jig-saw picture of identities look more like those of other countries. The post-modern era may have come later, but it did arrive, encouraging individualism and some fragmentation of old identities (especially race, but also class and gender). Moreover, whilst the spontaneous response to unwelcome affects of globalisation is usually in the form of a ‘return to the local’, this can lead onto unities and identities of difference. Actually, this dynamic is present in many cultural reactions, such as white and coloured Afrikaners making common cause, as well as in most of those related to class, such as people from different localities forming social movements. As argued earlier, in South Africa the development of new identities involves the re-emergence of old identities, such as class, but in new forms. Now, though, there are greater opportunities – mainly through new information technologies and cheapened air transport – for this process to occur at an international level. Car workers in the Eastern Cape know about conditions in plants in Lower Saxony, the Johannesburg TJ is in frequent contact with India as well as Durban, young South Africans work alongside young Australians in London, and social movement leaders attend conferences in distant capitals. Of course this process is uneven, with the degree and character of international identifications related to resources, though also to options. Tehlim is now global but flower pickers are not. We should be weary, though, about assuming that wealth is the only issue here, for there is
probably a higher proportion of Zimbabweans than South Africans working outside their country. Thus, Castells (1997: 11) surely overstates his case when he asserts: ‘the network society is based on the systemic disjunction between the local and global for most individual and social groups.’ There is a real sense in which a global sense of place is emerging, and that sense is at least as strong in South Africa as South Carolina.

This leads me, thirdly, to the view that we are now moving beyond the global post-modern. We are entering a post post-modern era. The critical defining feature of this era – its name – has yet to come into focus, but two of its contours are clear enough. Globalisation is no longer seen as a faceless set of inevitable, and mainly economic, flows and forces. One of the effects of Seattle was to draw attention to the politicians whose decisions impact on poverty around the world. The importance of politics has been further underlined and highlighted by forceful assertion of US domination. For the first time in history we are living in a mono-polar world, and whilst this has been true since the collapse of the USSR its significance was not fully apparent until the twenty-first century. The US government has no qualms about ignoring the internationally-agreed Kyoto protocol on global warming and it brazenly invaded Iraq without United Nations (UN) support. Reactions to this new imperialism come in different shapes and sizes and with various implications for identity. There is still scope for nationalist responses, such as that led by Hugo Chavez in Venezuela and anti-occupation resistance in Iraq, but more interesting, perhaps, is the internationalisation of Muslim and social movement organisation. There are now annual gatherings of the WSF, activists routinely cross borders to participate in protest marches, and 15 February 2003 witnessed an unprecedented, internationally-coordinated mobilisation, with about eleven million people joining anti-war demonstrations in more than 600 towns and cities around the world (Indymedia 2003). 1 Alex Callinicos (2003: 13) makes a related point. Arguing that, whilst postmodernism may not be dead, it is dying, he claims that ‘the debate has moved on, less because of some decisive theoretical refutation . . . than because the worldwide rebellion against capitalist globalization has changed the intellectual agenda.’

Finally, in terms of identity the post post-modern is about a shift from fragmentation towards the emergence of new unities of difference, and increasingly these are evolving on a global scale. This does involve the rise of new identities, but the most powerful, those related to religion and class politics, entail a re-visioning of old identities. Whilst South Africa’s entry into the post-modern era came late, its involvement in the post post-modern is only a step or two behind those parts of South and North America and western Europe that are leading the way. Combined development of identities is becoming the dominant trend. There can be no doubt that new international resistance identities have taken shape, but what of new international project identities? All religions do, of course, have their own projects, but these can hardly be understood as new. As I write, however, it does appear that new left projects are materialising. The global justice movement no longer contents itself with being anti-globalisation and anti-imperialism, but is increasingly concerned with developing a political alternative. Whilst the outlines of this alternative are contested and different emphases dominate in different countries, its themes include a deepening of democracy, redistribution of wealth, environmentally friendly development, and toleration of minorities. Castells may have been correct in assuming that such new project identities

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1 I am grateful to David Renton for this information. Some estimates have suggested that the demonstrations involved as many 25 million people.
would principally arise out of new social movements rather than trade unions. However, from developments now taking shape in a number of countries – including Britain, Italy, France, Germany and Brazil – it seems that such alternatives are converging from a variety of sources. These vary according to country, but include important elements of the anti-war movement, left-wing Greens, non-sectarian Trotskyists, fragments of old communist parties, militant trade unionists, expelled and disillusioned social democrats and, at least in Britain, a good number of Muslims. It remains to be seen how far these project identities will advance, but they should be regarded as further evidence for the development of a new era.

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

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


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