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POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

Derek Earl

AUTEUR DE LA THÈSE / AUTHOR OF THESIS

M.A. (Political Science)

GRADE / DEGRÉE

School of Political Studies

FACULTÉ, ÉCOLE, DÉPARTEMENT / FACULTY, SCHOOL, DEPARTMENT

Credibly Conveyed and Genuinely Received: Reconciliation and the South African TRC Revisited

TITRE DE LA THÈSE / TITLE OF THESIS

Claire Turenne Sjolander

DIRECTEUR (DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS SUPERVISOR

CO-DIRECTEUR (CO-DIRECTRICE) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS CO-SUPERVISOR

EXAMINATEURS (EXAMINATRICES) DE LA THÈSE / THESIS EXAMINERS

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Gary W. Slater

LE DOYEN DE LA FACULTÉ DES ÉTUDES SUPÉRIEURES ET POSTDOCTORALES /
DEAN OF THE FACULTY OF GRADUATE AND POSTDOCTORAL STUDIES

Credibly Conveyed and Genuinely Received:
Reconciliation and the South African TRC Revisited

Derek J. R. Earl

Thesis submitted to the
Faculty of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies
In partial fulfillment of the requirements
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Abstract

This thesis revisits the South African Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) to explore societal-level reconciliation viewed as the reconstruction of identity. It argues that narrative processes of identity construction can contribute in a positive way to reconciliation when a message of reconciliation is credibly conveyed and genuinely received. This means that a message of reconciliation is communicated, that the content of the message responds to the needs of the socio-cultural context, and that the message has been understood and accepted. The TRC message of reconciliation is embodied in themes of human rights, forgiveness, and *ubuntu* which offer a vision to a peaceful, inclusive South Africa. The conclusions reached suggest some positive indicators of a developing process of reconciliation, but the long-term success of the construction of a peaceful, democratic, and inclusive South Africa will also be a function of success in the political and socio-economic sectors.

List of Abbreviations

African Christian Democratic Party	ACDP
African National Congress	ANC
Azanian People's Organisation	AZAPO
Black Consciousness	BC
Democratic Alliance	DA
Democratic Party	DP
Dutch Reformed Church	DRC
Gross Domestic Product	GDP
Human Development Index	HDI
Human Rights Violation	HRV
Independent Democrats	ID
Inkatha Freedom Party	IFP
KwaZulu Natal	KZN
Minority Front	MF
National Party	NP
New National Party	NNP
Non-Governmental Organisation	NGO
Pan Africanist Congress	PAC
South African Communist Party	SACP
South African Council of Churches	SACC
Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa	TRC
United Christian Democratic Party	UCDP
United Democratic Movement	UDM
United Nations Development Programme	UNDP
Vryheidsfront Plus	VF Plus

Introduction

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC) was a public investigation and documentation of some of the worst cases of widespread gross human rights violations (HRVs) committed during the apartheid and the early transition period in South Africa. The TRC was not the only possible course of action at the time, but it was a remarkable one that has had a profound impact upon theories of post-conflict reconciliation. Other policy options were available ranging from criminal trials to general amnesty as responses to deal with the widespread HRVs of the South African conflict. The TRC was called a “Third Way” and one of its objectives was to promote reconciliation.¹

The work of the TRC uncovered the widespread extent of gross HRVs committed by all sides of the conflict, and revealed some of the worst injustices that occurred during the long conflict in South Africa. The record of HRVs documented by the TRC has become a testament of the type of violent political conduct that cannot be accepted in a peaceful democratic society, which is an important benchmark to establish if a new society is going to emerge out of the conflicts of the past. The TRC led to widespread acknowledgement of the extent of HRVs and human suffering, and these are facts that cannot credibly be denied by even staunch opponents to the TRC process.

The intent of this thesis is to examine the TRC from a perspective cognisant of the role played by identity in the South Africa conflict. The thesis will “revisit” the experience of the South African TRC to offer a reading of this experience at the societal level of

¹ The term was originally associated to Desmond Tutu and Alex Boraine, but has come to be very widely used in this sense.

narrative identity construction.² The objective is to not only to recognise how narrative processes factor into the process of reconciliation at the societal level, but also to propose an approach to study the outcome of the TRC experience in South Africa in terms of societal identity reconstruction.³

The theoretical framework of this thesis is developed out of a literature review composed of three areas: reconciliation, identity conflict, and narrative identity theory.⁴ To begin, there is some consensus within the reconciliation literature under review that the reconciliation (a) is a process and (b) that it entails the construction of new and inclusive identities. The identity conflict theory suggests that when group identity becomes the central and defining feature of a violent political conflict, the role of identity reconstruction not only becomes heightened, but the problem becomes more complex overall. Within recent literature on the social construction of identities, there is a tendency suggesting that narrative is the key concept for understanding identity construction – individual or collective.

As will be developed shortly, the TRC will be looked at as a sustained, collective experience and assessed for the potential of forge new narratives and impart a message of reconciliation into the narrative processes of identity. The implication is that this message of reconciliation has helped facilitate the construction of new, inclusive societal identities in

² Identities are socially constructed and narrative is the process through which identities are constructed. The societal narrative is an aggregate “story” that emerges in a society over time. It informs collective definitions about what it means to be part of a society and it relates how the identities within society relate to one another, illustrating the substance of beliefs, values, and collective points of reference. Narrative identity construction is an *event-centred* process that establishes a sense of identity through a “layering and connecting” events and meanings in a relational process. See: Stephen Cornell, “That’s the Story of Our Life,” We Are a People: Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000): 42-43.

³ The societal level is the main interest of this paper insofar as reconciliation is concerned. This adjective is used often throughout to recall attention to this level of analysis.

⁴ Sources are documented in Chapter One of this thesis.

South Africa. The construction of an inclusive pan-South African identity in turn provides a basis for the consolidation of an open, tolerant, democratic and prosperous society.

The hypothesis of this research is that the narrative processes can contribute to the overall societal project of reconciliation, but *in order for the narrative processes of identity construction to contribute in a positive way to reconciliation, a message of reconciliation must be credibly conveyed and genuinely received by society at large.* In the course of developing this argument, this thesis will look at how one can analyse a message of reconciliation to say that it has been either “credibly conveyed” or “genuinely received.” Reconciliation as the reconstruction of societal identity is a process within a process, and showing evidence that a process of identity reconstruction is occurring becomes also a matter of showing that a larger process is occurring in society in the political and socio-economic sectors.

To be credibly conveyed means that the message is not only communicated to the intended audience (*i.e.* to society at large), but also that the content of the message of reconciliation is appropriate to the particular socio-cultural context. To be genuinely received means that the message of reconciliation has not only been understood but accepted as a working principle by the intended audience as evidenced by the reconstruction of identity. This will be evaluated by looking at emerging identities and themes in post-apartheid/post-TRC South Africa. Specifically, genuine reception of the message will be measured by looking at three types of indicators: desecuritisation, active reconciliation, and popular attitudes. The conclusions reached suggest that there are some positive indicators of the initial development of a process of reconciliation, but this does not discount the fact that the long-term success of the construction of a peaceful, democratic, and inclusive South

Africa will also be a function of success in the political and socio-economic sectors in the months and years ahead.

The research of this thesis undertakes an examination of the South African TRC experience, which, as alluded to above is unique in several respects. One of the objectives of this paper is to identify the role and potential of the narrative processes to contribute to reconciliation. The South African case will be used to identify the potential to contribute to reconciliation at the narrative level and propose a method to study and observe reconciliation when reconciliation is conceived as a process of identity reconstruction. However, because it is based in the one case study, the scope of the research is situationally specific to the context in South Africa.

Credibly Conveyed

The TRC captivated and engaged the widespread interest of South African society and was given extensive coverage in mass media. The topics of truth and reconciliation as well as the TRC continue to re-emerge in present-day societal discourse, and the experience of the TRC inspired an impressive amount of discussion and research on reconciliation both within South Africa and abroad. It was engaging, elicited reactions from all sides of the political spectrum, and prompted extensive dialogue and public debate. This dialogue generated widespread reflection into the question of reconciliation from all quarters of society in South Africa.

The experience of the TRC can be described as a *narrative experience*, or a collective, sustained, and consuming societal experience that provided a means to communicate a message across society (*i.e.* a message of reconciliation). A narrative

experience is both intense and widely diffuse as a collective experience and occurs in a significant way through the mass media.⁵ In simple terms, it can be thought of as a means of “getting the message out.” This concept will be developed further in the body of the paper, but because this is not necessarily a new conclusion, the content of the message of reconciliation within this vehicle will be the focus of greater attention in this thesis overall.

The symbolism of the TRC conveyed a message that gave specific meanings to reconciliation in South Africa. The *content of the message* of reconciliation of the TRC is reflected in a symbolism that reinforces certain principles that support the overall objective of reconciliation. Themes of human rights, forgiveness, and *ubuntu* are intertwined within the content of the message of reconciliation conveyed by the TRC.⁶ They form the core of the message that is hypothetically conveyed and received. These themes are reflected in the format of the TRC, in discourse of societal actors, and in popular images of the TRC.

The message contained within each of these themes, when looked at individually, supports reconciliation by conveying principles such as universalism, transformation, and unity. Symbolically, the thematic content conveys messages relevant to overcoming themes of division in general. Furthermore, this content is relevant to overcoming the major themes of division that characterised societal identities in South Africa historically. In South Africa, the historical construction of societal identities featured themes of ethnonationalism, race

⁵ This interpretation of the TRC as a narrative experience is a modified version of a concept called a “media event.” A media event is defined as “a new narrative genre that employs... the media to command attention universally and tell a primordial story about current affairs.” The media event is “an interruption to routine broadcasting” that is live, planned from outside of the media, presented with reverence and ceremony, and is “enthral[ling] [for] very large audiences.” The concept was originally employed in the context of media studies.

Krabill makes the argument that the TRC was unique as a media event in that it “stretched out over several years.” It therefore had unique potential to “penetrate the collective consciousness of South Africa.” See Ron Krabill, “Symbiosis: mass media and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa,” *Media, Culture, and Society* V23 n5 (2001): 569-571. The TRC is being called a narrative experience in this paper to call attention to the role of this experience in communicating a message to support reconciliation.

⁶ *Ubuntu* is a traditional African concept of justice based in principles of interconnectedness between victim and offender. For a comprehensive discussion, see Chapter Two of this thesis.

and racism. These themes are prominent within the construction of the apartheid society, which became the focal point of the liberation struggle.

Themes of ethnonationalism, race and racism played a role in legitimising the social and political division of apartheid South Africa. They were constructed in particularistic ways in support of racial and ethnic division. The message of reconciliation conveyed by the TRC is about overcoming the legacy of violent conflict, developing a basis for an inclusive society, transforming relationships between former adversaries. The content of the message of reconciliation, reflected in themes of human rights, forgiveness, and *ubuntu*. This thematic framework, it will be argued has symbolic potential to respond to the socio-cultural context of South Africa.⁷ On the basis of this analysis, the conclusion will be drawn that a message of reconciliation has been credibly conveyed, insofar as it is possible to discern positive indicators of a developing process of reconciliation in South Africa.

Genuinely Received

After presenting the aspect of credibly conveyed, the other component of the hypothesis will be examined, *i.e.* that of a message of reconciliation as genuinely received. The development of a working process and the ascendance of a general discourse supportive of reconciliation are a basic kind of evidence that a message of reconciliation has been genuinely received, which is ultimately important in order to be able to draw some minimum conclusions that reconciliation is occurring.⁸

⁷ For the purposes of this thesis, an identity conflict is defined as a violent political conflict in which identity is a central and defining feature of the lines of division of the conflict. For a comprehensive discussion, refer to Chapter One.

⁸ At this point it is necessary to further define reconciliation. For this thesis, reconciliation is defined as a working process aspiring towards an ideal and requires negative feelings and attitudes to be set aside in a process of identity reconstruction. This is to say that there is some working basis in the sense of a functioning

The analysis as laid out in Chapter Three employs a thematic analysis of post-apartheid South African societal identities. It selects aspects related to the notion of a South African national identity based on whether it supports or undermines the prospects for the political and socio-economic development of the “new” South Africa. The thematic analysis of post-apartheid South African identities touches upon four themes: Ethnonationalism, Race and Racism, Rainbow Nation and Two Nations. These themes are used as a basis from which to interpret collective behaviour and demonstrate that a process of identity reconstruction is occurring.⁹ Looking at the general message embodied in the theme provides an indication as to whether the narratives around the theme support the development of a working process of reconciliation and the reconstruction of historical identities.

Desecuritisation refers to the absence of securitisation. Securitisation is a change in discourse to incorporate the language of threat. It is observable in discourse in both political and popular contexts, as well as through actions, policies, and practices of collective actors. It reflects the introduction of a threat dynamic into a relationship, and it may introduce dynamics of fear and mistrust into the intersubjective processes of identity construction. It is important because a securitised issue becomes able to justify actions outside the bounds of “normal political interaction.”¹⁰ Desecuritisation is a movement away from securitisation that constitutes a minimal condition of reconciliation. The evidence of desecuritisation in post-TRC South Africa will be presented in reference to standard societal security indicators

and viable political and economic framework, without which it becomes much more evident that reconciliation is *not* occurring. This whole notion is explored in some detail in Chapter One. Further definitions to follow

⁹ When identity becomes embroiled in the nature of the conflict, or is a defining feature of a conflict, then reconciliation involves transition at the level of identity constructions, which may have justified feelings of hostility and the recourse to violent conflict.

¹⁰ See: Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 1998): 25.

such as political party discourse, political actions, and electoral support. Desecuritisation suggests that a basis from which a process of reconciliation is occurring in so far as a regression towards the conflicts of the past is not occurring. In other words, there is a basis of coexistence taking shape from which to move in the direction of reconciliation.

Active reconciliation refers to a range of activity and discourse that consciously works to support or promote the objectives of reconciliation. In the South African context, this refers to activity that follows in the spirit of the TRC. This includes participation in the TRC process itself on one hand, but also activity that has continued since the TRC has concluded its work on the other.¹¹ Participation in the TRC process on the part of the major political leaders was varied, with some supportive of its work and others protesting various aspects. Still, an impetus towards reconciliation has developed on many different fronts that continue into the present day. Evidence of active reconciliation can be seen, for example, in a discourse of reconciliation on the part of public figures and organisations, as well as in acts and gestures of reconciliation at the individual or community level.¹² Active reconciliation suggests that the message of reconciliation has been genuinely received to an extent greater than desecuritisation. It suggests the presence of a positive aspiration towards an ideal of reconciliation.

Finally, *popular attitudes* can be examined through the vehicle of public opinion surveys to round out the argument that the message of reconciliation has been genuinely

¹¹ Examples include measures like reparations, but also various gestures of reconciliation that have followed from the recommendations of the TRC Report such as apologies or the establishing of monuments.

¹² However, it would be naïve not to acknowledge that there are also acts and gestures that point to the opposite of reconciliation. For example, various speeches of President Thabo Mbeki speak of continued division like “Two Nations.” See Chapter Three of this thesis for explanation.

These would represent forces opposite in a sense. Narratives are functional to the social construction of identity, and because narrative can be viewed as a site of struggle in which meanings are negotiated, it is important to at least account for the presence of the positive forces, even while recognizing that the ultimate success of a process of reconciliation will be a struggle. Chapter One explores this aspect of the theory and explains where and how this fits into reconciliation.

received in South Africa. Public opinion surveys provide insight into popular attitudes in a way that is more nuanced than election results (discussed as an aspect of desecuritisation). The intent is to ascertain how people actually feel towards one another as societal groups or how people feel towards the new South Africa. The picture offered by public opinion results is not perfect, but the trends that are emerging do suggest more reason for optimism than pessimism that the message of reconciliation has been genuinely received.

Chapter One

Theory and Context:

Applying the Theories of Reconciliation, Identity Conflict, and Narrative Identity to Present a Thematic Approach to Reconciliation and the Background on South Africa's Identity Conflict

The theoretical framework of this thesis is drawn from a theoretical literature reconciliation, identity conflict, and narrative identity theory to suggest a combined approach. The hypothesis, to recall, is that in order for the narrative processes of identity construction to contribute in a positive way to reconciliation, a message of reconciliation must be credibly conveyed and genuinely received by society at large. A narrative approach is implicit to one aspect of social reconciliation. The focus is intended to be limited to a specific type of problem – violent political conflict where collective identity is a defining feature in terms of the lines of division of the identity constructions and the lines of division across which the conflict is made. This type of conflict has implications for the requirements of reconciliation when it is conceived as a process of identity reconstruction.¹³

This review summarises the key concepts for the purposes of their in this thesis research. Much of the reconciliation literature relating to the TRC acknowledges that identity plays a role in conflict, whether social or interpersonal. From this literature, a working definition of reconciliation is proposed below. Then, a brief explanation of the specific context of identity conflict explains why an identity-based approach is furthermore necessary. Finally, a review of narrative identity theory brings in some insights about the socio-political dynamics of societal identities and the narrative processes by which they are constructed. If reconciliation is about reconstructing identities to form a new, inclusive

¹³ A distinction to continue to bear in mind is that the interest is with the societal level, as opposed to the individual level.

South African identity, then understanding of the processes by which this might be accomplished is a necessary element. The combined theoretical approach is intended to revisit the South African TRC and offer another reading of this experience at the level of narrative identity construction.

Contribution of this Thesis

One of the problem areas in the literature on post-conflict theory overall is the aspect of making the transition from the short-term period of a post-conflict settlement to a long-term period of reconciliation. This is a problem not only for the literature, but a real problem for international politics in parts of the world even today.¹⁴ There is some consensus that reconciliation is a process that entailing the reconstruction of identity, but less attention given to the question of how to show this process occurring. The contribution of this thesis is intended not only to identify the potential of narrative processes to make a positive contribution to reconciliation, but also to propose a method to studying the reconstruction of identities at the societal level. The experience of the South African TRC is used as an illustrative case.

These trends can be studied around narrative identity themes, which also provide a basis from which to interpret the significance of societal-level behaviour and conclude whether a process of reconciliation is developing. For instance, South Africa currently has problems of high levels of crime, but if the crime is not being conducted in an organised, political way by one racial group versus another, then it does not imply a failure of the

¹⁴ A present day example would be the Balkans, where there are still ethnic tensions in Bosnia despite several years of intervention by the international community and peacebuilding initiatives. In this case, based on casual observation, there appears less in the way of a movement in the reconstruction of societal to an inclusive societal identity framework. There seems to be some persistence of mutual definition in the framework of historical enemies, which is potentially a more destructive framework.

reconciliation process itself. In this case high levels of crime suggest a problem of a different nature such that does not necessarily represent an indictment of the contribution of the TRC process of reconciliation in South Africa; it is a social problem, but one of a different nature.

Reconciliation Theory

Reconciliation is central to the research hypothesis. This section will review the literature to put together a working definition of reconciliation as an argument for what the process of reconciliation ought to include. The following passage taken from Louis Kreisberg's work on inter-communal reconciliation provides a description of reconciliation as a form of acceptance of new realities:

Reconciliation refers to accommodative ways members of adversary entities have come to regard each other after having engaged in an intense and often destructive struggle. They have become able to put aside feelings of hate, fear, and loathing, to discard views of the other as dangerous and subhuman, and to abandon the desire for revenge and retribution. To set them aside does not mean to have no such feelings, but not to make them paramount nor to act on them against the former adversary.¹⁵

According to this perspective, reconciliation does not require that negative feelings be eliminated entirely at all level of individuals because the level of analysis is the societal level. It does, however, require that negative feelings are not prioritised in framing the overall context of interaction, which itself requires transforming feelings attitudes, and relationships.¹⁶ This does not suggest that negative feelings do not exist, but that they not receive priority in framing the context of collective interaction.¹⁷ A minimum would be ensuring that collective action is not taken in the name of negative or hostile feelings or

¹⁵ Louis Kreisberg, "Coexistence and the Reconciliation of Communal Conflicts," The Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence (New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1998): 184.

¹⁶ Kreisberg, 184.

¹⁷ Kreisberg, 184.

attitudes. As a process, reconciliation becomes about coming to terms with new realities and (in some cases) former adversaries, and about beginning to work through the destructive feelings that may exist towards the other, and as a result developing new identities.

Charles Villa-Vincencio looks at reconciliation from the perspective of levels, whereby a level represents a greater depth of reconciliation, or varying degrees of success of the process ranging from coexistence to forgiveness.¹⁸ With coexistence, both sides set aside violent conflict and do not allow past grievances to undermine common process, but there is no real attempt to address the negative feelings. His definition of reconciliation goes further to imply the establishment and / or restoration of trust in a relationship as well as the developing respect for the rights and legitimacy of other identities. With forgiveness, there is movement to include some form of healing, yet forgiveness is more difficult to attain from a societal level perspective because in the end it is a personal, individual choice.¹⁹

Forgiveness represents an ideal form of reconciliation in so far as it entails a genuine inner psychological transformation that leads to healing. Coexistence, on the other hand, although a desirable step in the right direction towards developing a process of reconciliation, does not represent an ideal.²⁰ Coexistence might represent a basis from which reconciliation will develop, but it might not. Without this minimal degree, though, it is not possible to say that a working process is developing, a necessary component of

¹⁸ Using a notion of levels or degrees is not the same thing as claiming that the relationship between levels is either linear or causal in nature; it is simply to claim that there can be different degrees of reconciliation.

¹⁹ Charles Villa-Vincencio, "Getting on with life: a move towards reconciliation," Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000): 208.

²⁰ Worthington supports this approach in an article defining "unforgiveness." Unforgiveness is a "complex of resentment, bitterness, hatred, anger, or fear" and the polar opposite of forgiveness. Unforgiveness is a negative emotion whereas forgiveness is a positive emotion. Reconciliation occurs in a process whereby unforgiveness is reduced. See: Everett Worthington, "Unforgiveness, Forgiveness, and Reconciliation and their Implications for Societal Interventions," Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy and Conflict Transformation (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2002): 172-176.

societal reconciliation because there will not be reconciliation if the sides cannot work together collectively to ensure the basic functioning of society.

Reconciliation does not occur through a single act, but through a process over time. Developing a working process in society entails transition away from historical patterns of conflict, as former adversaries need to begin the process of working together in non-violent relationships as collective entities.²¹ The process towards reconciliation is neither linear nor automatic; a series of steps forward might well be followed by setbacks, and there is no guarantee that reconciliation will ultimately succeed. Reconciliation is a gradual process that occurs over the long term. People from all sides need to see the value in a working process to ensure future well-being and prosperity. Former adversaries must be willing to work together in a political process and forego the recourse to violence.

Promoting reconciliation becomes not merely a matter of ceasing violence, but also redefining how groups perceive of one another as collective entities. It becomes important for societal identities to break away from historical patterns of violence.²² This includes examining the roles that lead to negative attitudes or feelings of mistrust.²³ Once the conflict has ended, for example, victims cannot always remain victims, if reference to the victim identity provides justification to commit future injustice to others.²⁴

²¹ The question of relationship is very important. People in post-violent conflict situations need to develop trust in relationships. Ideally one would be looking for enough trust to form “decent relationships.” See: Trudy Govier, Draft Chapter One, Taking Wrongs Seriously: Struggling with Reconciliation (Forthcoming publication: Humanity Books, 2006).

²² Genviève Jacques, Beyond Impunity: An Ecumenical Approach to Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation (Geneva: WCC Press, 2000): 43; Kreisberg, 184.

²³ Jacques, 43.

²⁴ An example of this in the South African context is the Afrikaners. Historically, the Afrikaners carried a “victim” identity in that they perceived themselves as an embattled minority in South Africa, as well as victims of the concentration camp experience at the hands of the British during the Boer War. Once they gained control of the state, they set about to redress their historically subordinate position, yet eventually implemented a system enormously unjust to the non-white population.

A deeper form of reconciliation involves the construction of new identities so that reconciliation becomes about the construction of new, inclusive identities. The argument is that new patterns are established in relationships that lead towards the construction of identities that neither repeat nor perpetuate old patterns of conflict. Reconciliation can become about “building solidarity, finding shared values, or common commitments to overcome and prevent repetition of the past.”²⁵ The intent according to Chapman is to be able to come to terms with the past “in such a way that it will promote a new political culture and commitment to a shared future.”²⁶

Johan Galtung’s concept of cultural violence supports the approach to reconciliation as the reconstruction of identity. Cultural violence pertains to the ideational aspects within a culture that legitimate or perpetuate violence, such as religion, ideology, language, and popular culture.²⁷ Cultural violence is indirect in its effects in that it does not physically inflict violence, but it is related to beliefs and perceptions that “attack” the sense of justice or dignity.²⁸ In both cases, the violence occurs at the subjective level. To put it another way, societies can become constructed in such a way that “violent structures not only leave a mark on the human body but also on the mind and the spirit.”²⁹ Putting this idea in relation to the arguments for reconciliation presented above, this argument supports the call for the

²⁵ Rosemary Nagy, “Reconciliation in Post-Commission South Africa: Thick and Thin Accounts of Solidarity,” Canadian Journal of Political Science V35 n2 (June 2002): 326.

²⁶ Audrey Chapman, “Truth Commissions as Instruments of Forgiveness and Reconciliation,” Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy, and Conflict Transformation (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2001): 258

²⁷ To use a South African example, cultural violence can be found in the ideologies of racial superiority and Separate Development characteristic of the apartheid regime, but in a more abstract context, any sort of a jingoistic ideology of nationalism that roused support for nationalistic war would be an example of this phenomenon. See: Johan Galtung, “Cultural Violence,” Journal of Peace Research V27 n3 (1990): 291.

²⁸ Galtung defines cultural violence in contra-distinction to direct violence and structural violence. Direct violence is an event or a particular act that involves the use of violent force, *e.g.* military action, or mass shooting, or police torture. Structural violence pertain to social systems that dominate or subjugate a group to the disadvantage of another politically or economically, *e.g.* slavery and apartheid. See: Galtung, 291-295.

²⁹ Galtung, 294-295.

reconstruction of identities in a process of reconciliation because the above fit into what constitutes identity.

The construction of the new identity does not require one to abandon all facets of its former identities. It does require working through aspects of the societal narratives that potentially encourage hostile or violent attitudes. Forging a collective identity comes about in part through transformation of the relationship, through changes in roles and positions as societal identities come to regard one another through different lenses. Some changes could introduce new patterns into a relationship and genuinely transform the identities of the parties concerned, whereas others might be more peripheral to any self-perceived natures as self and other. The closer in proximity of a transformation to a “core sense of identity” the greater the potential for the long-term success of reconciliation.³⁰

Reconciliation, for this paper, means something more than simply coexistence. Basically, the belief is that way to attain the best possible outcome is not to strive for the minimum, but to strive for a higher ideal.³¹ The definition in this thesis stops short of requiring the outright attainment of an ideal (*e.g.* forgiveness) and locates in the middle ground of the spectrum. In sum, *reconciliation is a working process aspiring towards an ideal and requires negative feelings and attitudes to be set aside in a process of identity reconstruction.* This requires desire or will to reconcile on the part of those involved.³² In this respect, this thesis argues there is potential for a message of reconciliation to positively contribute to reconciliation through the reconstruction of identities. However, the definition

³⁰ Terrel Northrup, “The Dynamic of Identity in Personal and Social Conflict,” Intractable Conflicts and their Transformation (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1989): 77.

³¹ Examples of ideals in this context are

³² Jacques, 56.

also highlights the fact that reconciliation is a *working* process, meaning that it requires work, effort, and determination to make the process a success in the long run.

Identity Conflict Theory

The reconciliation literature is suggesting that the process of reconciliation requires forging an identity that will allow people on a widespread basis to move beyond historical patterns of identity construction that have held them engaged in conflict. The process of reconciliation must lead to the construction of new, inclusive identities. This emphasis on identity is especially relevant in the context of identity conflict as the following review of some identity conflict theory literature illustrates.

Identity is about a sense of self, sense of common values, or a sense of common purpose. Individual and collective identities share characteristics.³³ Collective identities are based in shared beliefs and common understandings among individuals and social groups.³⁴ Members of a collective identity view themselves as sharing some sort of commonality that provides a basis for perceptions of shared identity. They have a feeling of belonging to some group and this defines and differentiates them from members of other identities. Identities are also socially constructed entities defined through interactive dialectical processes. They are built in relationships between the “self” and the “other.”

Societal identities are one form of collective identity, and the major category of interest to this thesis.³⁵ They may be circumscribed in a variety of ways that could

³³ John McCumber, “Dialectical Identity in a ‘Post-Critical Era: A Hegelian Reading,” Nations, Identities, Cultures: The South Atlantic Quarterly V94 n4 (Fall 1995): 1155; Alberto Melucci, “The Process of Collective Identity,” Social Movements and Culture (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota press, 1995): 44.

³⁴ Northrup, 63.

³⁵ Societal identity has been defined as an identity broad enough in terms of its construction and with a sufficient following that it is able to compete with the territorial state as an organising principle of political life

encompass language, culture, and race, but the forms most commonly associated to their framework are ethnonational and religious identities, and as collective entities, these are factors in the political system in which they are manifest. However, racial identity does present unique challenges due to the fact that it is highly visible as a form of differentiation that is based in physical properties (*i.e.* skin colour). A legacy of racial categories would predictably be slower to overcome.³⁶

The term identity conflict is being used to define a type of violent political conflict in which group identity is the defining feature. The lines of the conflict generally mirror the boundaries between identity constructions and the dynamics of escalation often turn around matters of identity. Furthermore, identity conflict may take place at different levels, which impact in different ways upon perceptions of security requirements and upon the possibilities for reconciliation. At one level, the physical security of a societal identity is directly threatened. At another level, the subjective sense of common identity is the object of threat, at which the physical security is not necessarily at stake. They can both have repercussions on the dynamics of conflict escalation.³⁷ Such potential repercussions are important to bear in mind in considering a process of reconciliation conceived of as the

in a society. See: Barry Buzan, Ole Waever, and Jaap de Wilde, Security: A New Framework for Analysis (Boulder: Lynne Rienner Publishers, Inc., 1998): 22-23.

³⁶ Note also that even though, rationally, the old “biological” and “scientific” theories (characteristic to many 19th century European and imperialist ideas) are no longer creditable, and race has been thoroughly discredited as a viable category of social organisation globally, race still remains a potent category for social conflict and division around the world. See: Paul Spickard and Jeffrey Burroughs, “We Are a People,” We Are a People: Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000): 5.

Racial identity has characteristics that render it more impermeable than certain other categories of societal identity. For example, unlike religion, in which the act of conversion may allow a person to adopt a new religious identity, the same person may not very well change the colour of his or her skin and adopt a new racial identity. See: Adam, “Perspectives,” 33

³⁷ Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde (1998); Stuart J. Kaufman, Modern Hatreds: the Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2001).

reconstruction of identity because of the potential of generating new insecurities that could ultimately undermine the sought after reconciliation.

Another feature of identity conflict is that the lines of the conflict mirror the boundaries of the identities involved.³⁸ When violent political conflict involves societal identities, individuals and groups can become bound up in the fates of their collective identity.³⁹ This can be seen in the experiences of racial and ethnic conflict in many parts of the world.⁴⁰ If an identity conflict becomes “total,” then all members of one group would be engaged in the conflict against all the members of the other.⁴¹ These features call attention to the fact that, in this sort of an identity conflict wide numbers of people are being affected.⁴² This also reinforces the emphasis of finding reconciliation at the societal level in this type of conflict to be able to affect the widespread nature of the problem.

A third feature of identity conflict is that the dynamics of escalation in identity conflicts often revolve around identity issues, which seem to have a special capacity to invite mobilisation or spark conflict escalation. Events that prompt escalation in terms of mass action often relate to identity issues. People seem more willing to mobilise in defence

³⁸ These boundaries one hundred percent contiguous in reality, but the conflict implicates involve the vast majority of the members of each group.

³⁹ Even if they do not personally hold strong feelings of association to that identity. Membership may be defined for them from outside, *i.e.* from another group.

⁴⁰ A number of violent political conflicts of the post-Cold War era fit the model of identity conflict. Notable examples include the former Yugoslavia in which Croatian, Serbian and Bosnian Muslim identities were in conflict, and parts of the former Soviet Union such as Armenia, Azerbaijan and Chechnya.

Justifications for violent force, which lead to gross human rights violations, are often tied to fears for the well-being or even survival of group identity. See: Kaufman, Modern Hatreds (2001).

⁴¹ In reality, it would never be “total” because there are always at least some cross-cutting ties and dissenting voices that will exist within every collective identity. Edward Said’s philosophy of culture, hegemony and counterculture would apply here. See: Edward Said, Culture and Imperialism (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, Inc., 1993); Edward Said, “Introduction: Secular Criticism,” The World, the Text, and the Critic (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1983): 1-30; Edward Said, Orientalism (New York: Vintage Books, 1979).

⁴² As an example, the existence of “no-go areas” in a community in which a person from one racial group would fear to go because of violence to themselves could affect people who themselves have very open and positive attitudes. They may nevertheless be fearful and implicated in the effects of the intergroup conflict. For example, an open and tolerant white South African may still fear to go into certain areas of a township.

of identity issues which means that identity has the potential to become a potent force in escalating conflict situations.⁴³ Basically, any social dynamic of conflict escalation potentially represents a negative force to a process of reconciliation. It is significant to note because this factor is something that could potentially derail a process of reconciliation. To go back to the question of roles in a conflict situation, certain types of beliefs and attitudes seem more conducive to conflict than others, while others more conducive to reconciliation.⁴⁴ If they continue to view one another through a lens of conflict or in threatening, hostile, or fearful terms, then this would not be conducive to the prospects for reconciliation.⁴⁵

At certain junctures, societal identity narratives can be “thrust to the fore.”⁴⁶ This would represent a potential obstacle to reconciliation. Major transition forces all groups to reframe the dominant conceptions of where they are situated in relation to one another.⁴⁷ These junctures represent periods of change to status or position and can come from a number of factors. Examples include major change to economic conditions, major and rapid demographic change, large-scale migration, or the mobilisation on the part of a rival group. Major social transition that entails the rapid change of one political system to another, even though the old system may be regarded as repressive or unjust, can still have traumatic

⁴³ Kaufman’s study of ethnic war reflects this. See *Modern Hatreds* (2001).

⁴⁴ In general, ideologies based in exclusivist ethnic, racial, or cultural affiliation would be more conducive to conflict, while those that are inclusive and accepting of difference would be considered more conducive to reconciliation. Mythologies of ethnic chauvinism or racial superiority would also be problematic because they are less compromising and more conflictual.

⁴⁵ Conflict resolution in such cases is highly problematic. This is the basic idea behind Northrup’s concept of “intractability.” See: Northrup, (1989).

⁴⁶ Stephen Cornell, “That’s the Story of Our Life,” *We Are a People: Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000): 45.

⁴⁷ Cornell, 45-46.

effects on the population as the old beliefs and “predictability” of the old system vanishes.⁴⁸ Societal security fears have the potential to introduce a dynamic of escalation into the equation. At such instances, there may be a potential to engage a spiralling dynamic of conflict escalation.⁴⁹

The combination of such events and circumstances where the bases of societal identities are challenged or put to the test can impact the narrative development of societal identities. During “periods of rupture” a societal identity is faced with a crisis in which identities will attempt “to understand new problems or opportunities and make sense of them through normative arguments about identity.”⁵⁰ The basic idea is identities respond to crises with a search for order. In such cases, extremist discourse can seem appealing to groups that have suffered because it can appear to offer simple solutions to those feeling a great historical sense of injustice.

The reason for drawing attention to some of the features of identity conflict is that, in this type of situation, the problem is deeper than is often suggested by the reconciliation theory outlined earlier. While those approaches acknowledge that reconciliation must entail the reconstruction of identities, the literature does not really account for the specific problems brought into the equation when the central defining features of a conflict revolve around identity. Identity conflict is complex and problematic to reconcile because the

⁴⁸ Ivor Sarankinsky, “The Political Dynamics and Psychological Dynamics of South Africa’s Transition to Democracy,” Socio-Political and Psychosocial Perspectives on South Africa (Huntington: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2001): 29.

⁴⁹ This point will be developed in more detail in later in this chapter. See: Alan Collins, “The Ethnic Security Dilemma: Evidence from Malaysia,” Contemporary Southeast Asia V20 (December 1998): 261-273; Stuart J. Kaufman, “Ethnic Violence, Symbolic Politics, and the Security Dilemma,” Conference Paper – Annual Meeting of the American Political Science Association (Aug 30 – Sept 02, 2001); Kaufman, Modern Hatreds (2001); Barry Posen, “The Security Dilemma and Ethnic Conflict,” Survival V35 n1 (Spring 1993): 22-47; Paul Roe, “The Intrastate Security Dilemma: Ethnic Conflict as a ‘Tragedy,’” Journal of Peace Research V36 n2 (1999): 183-202; Paul Roe, “The Societal Security Dilemma,” Columbia International Affairs Online – Working Papers (June 1996).

⁵⁰ Cornell, 45.

conflict becomes engrained into the patterns of societal identity construction themselves. The following review of narrative identity adds insight into these processes of identity construction.

Narrative Identity Theory

Stephen Cornell's work is instructive in defining some concepts in this theory. In general, narrative is the process by which identities are constructed, and so a societal narrative is an aggregate of a sort of "story" that emerges in a society over time. At the societal level, narratives serve as a basis that informs core definitions about what it means to be part of a particular society and how one society relates to another. Societal narratives illustrate the substance of collective beliefs, values, and understandings of people.⁵¹ Societal narratives shape "a broad, collective understanding of how the world is, how it operates, and how it might be changed," what Cruz calls a "field of imaginable possibilities."⁵²

The content of societal narrative is a composite belief system of societal myths and symbols. People become attached through emotional and affective capacities, particularly when it comes to inner beliefs and core aspects of identity such as strong beliefs as a core component their societal identity.⁵³ Still, it is important to note that societal narratives are not homogeneous categories, and as Cornell captures, "Not every person with an ethnic identity has an ethnically constructed story to tell."⁵⁴

Narrative identity construction is also an event-centred process of identity construction. Events, interaction and circumstances impact upon the development of

⁵¹ Cornell, 42-43.

⁵² Consuelo Cruz, "Identity and Persuasion: How Nations Remember Their Pasts and Make their Futures," *World Politics* V52 (April 2000): 277.

⁵³ Spickard and Burroughs, 14.

⁵⁴ Cornell, 45.

societal narratives. The narrative process is ongoing over time, so societal identities are continually (re)constructed as circumstances and individuals evolve and change. Events are “selected, plotted, and interpreted” and *en gros* compose a story that interacts with the lives of people in societies. This is a process of establishing identities through “layering and connecting” events and meanings in a continuous relational process.⁵⁵

The ways in which collective perceptions intersect with events and shared definitions of meaning and evolve through time and history is neither fixed nor constant. The processes governing relations within and between societal identities are interactive and dialectic in two senses. Actors interact with other actors, and they interact with events. The cognitive and emotional linkages that generate understandings of self and other in this process are communicated through “roles” assigned to the various actors involved in the conflict.⁵⁶ The manner in which this process unfolds will be a function of the actors and the events themselves. Although this process is not predictable in the end, one can nevertheless identify broad themes, which provide a lot of information about the significance of collective behaviour.

Reconciliation theory presents an argument for reconciliation as a working process aspiring towards an ideal and requires negative feelings as well as attitudes to be set aside in a process of identity reconstruction. The negative feelings and attitudes derive in part from societal identity constructions and in part from roles in the conflict. An approach to promoting reconciliation ought to account for both aspects. Narratives play a role in both

⁵⁵ Cornell, 42-43.

⁵⁶ Cornell, 42; Douglas Ezzy, “Theorising Narrative Identity: Symbolic Interactionism and Hermeneutics,” *The Sociological Quarterly* V39 n2 (1998): 46; Courtney Jung, *Then I was Black: South African Political Identities in Transition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000): 20.

aspects, which ties in to the utility of adding insights from narrative identity theory to advance our knowledge of the theory and practice of reconciliation.

Tendencies can be observed around societal identity issues. One way to evaluate whether social trends support or undermine the construction of open, inclusive societal identities, is by looking at whether identity themes tend to reflect ideals more particularistic or universalistic in nature. Particularistic ideals prioritise a more exclusivist vision of a societal identity such as chauvinistic nationalism or ideologies of racial or ethnic superiority. Those that exclude, dominate, or oppress would be destructive to the construction of new, inclusive societal identities. Universalistic ideals include visions such as equality, universal human rights, or non-racialism. Universalising discourse is open, constructive, and positive and more conducive to the construction of new, inclusive societal identities.

A policy to promote reconciliation cannot directly incorporate the whole of a mass society, which would potentially entail millions of people in a society who have been affected. Therefore, the communication of the core message and intent of societal reconciliation would be done through a symbolic process in order to have its impact at the societal level collective belief system. The purpose and meanings of the experience would have to be presented in such a way that they are understood by the intended audience, and significant enough that they can inspire and promote transformation, reconciliation on a genuinely widespread basis.

Thematic analysis of societal narratives in contemporary discourse as well as the collective interaction can be used to interpret the significance of ongoing developments and emerging trends. These insights identify key values and principles that may guide collective

behaviour (*e.g.* a political movement) in either positive or negative directions.⁵⁷ This narrative framework looks at the level of influencing the will and desire to partake in reconciling with one another – feelings, attitudes, etc. There are certain conditions that seem to likely favour or make less favourable, which are covered in Chapter Two. The next section explains the specific indicators that form the basis of the method to study how a working process of reconciliation (when conceived of as a process of identity reconstruction) is developing in a post-conflict environment, *i.e.*, post-apartheid South Africa.

Observing Reconciliation in a Thematic Framework: Applying the Analysis in a Case Study of Reconciliation

The proposed contribution of this thesis as an avenue of research is to examine the narrative processes of reconciliation to illustrate the potential of a message of reconciliation to contribute to reconciliation as identity construction. However, this must be able to answer the question of how societal identities in South Africa are evolving in terms of identity reconstruction. The method will be to apply a thematic analysis to draw conclusions about the narrative processes of identity reconstruction to both aspects of the hypothesis – credible conveyance and genuine reception.

To consider reconciliation at the societal level, it becomes important the extent to which negative feelings or attitudes frame the context of collective interaction, or whether they undermine reconciliation, and it becomes important how South Africans are engaging with one another collectively. Individuals can accept to participate in a working process of

⁵⁷ A positive direction would be on a course of action towards genuine reconciliation. A negative direction would be a course of action towards renewed violence.

reconciliation at the societal level even though they may not be able to forgive someone a particular individual or group. To illustrate, even if an individual South African cannot forgive a police officer who tortured and killed a family member, or a liberation combatant whose bomb killed a loved one, it does not follow automatically that he or she would work to undermine a collective process of reconciliation and political transition that is under way. If, however, a group were against the very notion of forgiveness, and acted in a collective, organised way to escalate violence or undermined the overall possibilities of reconciliation, this would suggest that reconciliation is not occurring because of the opposition to the new South Africa and pan-South African identity. In this instance, a message of reconciliation has not been received.

In general, the development of a working process and the ascendance of discourse and behaviour supportive of reconciliation are evidence that a message of reconciliation has been genuinely received. Desecuritisation, active reconciliation, and popular attitudes provide indications about how South Africans are engaging with the political processes, with one another collectively, and how they perceive one another collectively. They gauge how the processes of narrative identity construction are evolving and how South Africans are engaging with one another, which provide a basis from which to conclude that the message of reconciliation is being genuinely received, even though many critical issues lay in the road ahead.⁵⁸

The societal security framework of Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde is important to interpreting the results. Securitisation is a change in discourse that incorporates a language

⁵⁸ Evidence will be presented for each aspect to show that reconciliation is occurring, but because the greater interest of this chapter is to explain the method, the evidence presented for each is not exhaustive. It would of course be possible to pursue each of these aspects in greater detail, but this would go beyond the scope of this paper's objectives.

of threat. It signals the introduction of a threat dynamic into the processes of intersubjective relationships.⁵⁹ It can exert important effects politically.⁶⁰ A “securitised issue” becomes able to justify actions “outside the established rules of the game” of political behaviour.⁶¹

Securitisation can occur in degrees and it becomes a measure for interpreting certain patterns of societal behaviour. Mobilisation is the process by which groups “actively acquire resources and put forth concerted effort in pursuit of collective ends.”⁶² It begins to be accompanied by organised political activity. This is a significant indicator of the salience of an issue or cause. Militarisation is more extreme because it entails a willingness to use violence or force to achieve in order to counter the security threat. Therefore it is an indicator that reconciliation is not occurring. Securitisation in the societal sector can exhibit “profound political function” because it has the capacity to incite people to take action and commit resources to issues framed as security threats.⁶³ Societal security fears have a capacity to induce securitisation or mobilisation.⁶⁴

Recalling the earlier discussion of identity conflict that narrative identity processes can produce a powerful effect in intergroup politics, Kaufman reaffirms this premise. He cites myths justifying hostility along identity lines and the presence of societal identity fears are among the necessary conditions for identity conflict war.⁶⁵ The manipulation of societal

⁵⁹ Security is a subjective concept. Therefore securitisation can occur around any number of issues in the military, political, economic, environmental, or societal sectors, for example. See: Buzan, Waever, de Wilde, 8.

⁶⁰ Buzan, Waever, de Wilde, (1998).

⁶¹ Buzan, Waever, de Wilde, 23-25.

⁶² Joane Nagel. “The Political Construction of Ethnicity,” Competitive Ethnic Relations (Orlando: Academic Press, 1986).

⁶³ Buzan, Waever, de Wilde, 4.

⁶⁴ This is true even in cases where individuals do not adhere closely themselves to the narratives and mythologies of their societal identity group because they may still become classified as a part of that group by others.

⁶⁵ Fears of ethnic existence are important to understanding group hostility. Extreme fears justify hostile attitudes towards the other including extreme measures for self-defence or even political dominance. See: Kaufman, Modern Hatreds, 31.

narrative symbolism for political reasons has proven to be a powerful force politically when aligned with factors of “ancient hatreds, manipulative leaders, and a spiral of insecurity.”⁶⁶ For example, nationalist mythology citing historic grievances against another group could be used to generate support for violent action. This would be another indication that reconciliation is not occurring.

Securitisation around societal identity themes suggest that societal reconciliation is not occurring. It is an indication of potential re-escalation towards violence. For instance, if the majority of white in South Africans support a political party proposing a return to apartheid or a new separate homeland, or a militant version of a nationalist theme was gaining momentum or support *en masse*, this would suggest that reconciliation (as the reconstruction of identity) is not occurring. Tones of hostility in public discourse, calls for vengeance based on historical or mistreatment injustices, the airing of past grievances in present-day disputes, are other examples of securitisation that might occur around societal security issues.

Basically, if *securitisation* is occurring around societal identity themes, it indicates first of all that a message of reconciliation is *not* being received, or potentially worse that a message of reconciliation is being rejected. It signals an opposition to acceptance of a working process of reconciliation, even though it may occur for defensive as much as aggressive reasons. This represents the potential introduction of a dangerous or destabilising trend and it suggests that a positive reconstruction of identities is not occurring.

⁶⁶ Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds*, 24; Horowitz supports Kaufman’s point. Societal symbols like the status of languages, names of towns or states, officials in honorific positions, and national anthems can become explosive issues. See: Donald Horowitz, “Symbolic Politics and Ethnic Status,” *Ethnicity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996): 285, 287.

Desecuritisation is about the reverse. It is a tendency whereby issues are removed from the security agenda and returned to “normal politics.”⁶⁷ One way to show evidence of this process would be therefore the absence of securitised identities in a post-conflict environment. The absence of negative portrayals of other identities in public discourse would be a positive indicator for societal reconciliation. Conducting this level of analysis permits the conclusions that these conditions represent a first step towards reconciliation. This tendency is also a minimum condition to say that a working process is developing, at least in the form of a non-violent, functioning political system.

Both securitisation and desecuritisation are observable via the same general set of indicators, which is to say that they are primarily observable in discourse, collective behaviour, and the political constellations of a society.⁶⁸ Specifically, this paper is going to look at data with respect to political discourse, political comportment (collective behaviour, practices, *etc.*), and election results as aspects of the political constellations. These three aspects have been chosen because of the context of identity conflict in the South African case.

The examination of political discourse looks at the major post-apartheid political parties. It is an indicator of the way collective interaction is framed and the significance of certain themes relative to others. The discourse can be examined in light of whether it supports or undermines the construction of an inclusive pan-South African identity. Political comportment is the term chosen here for collective behaviour and posturing of various groups. The comportment is also useful to look at because “actions can speak louder than words” in terms of revealing collective attitudes. Finally, South African election

⁶⁷ Buzan, Waever, de Wilde, 4.

⁶⁸ Buzan, Waever, de Wilde, 4.

results from 1994 to 2004 are fairly significant indicators of the relative balance of political forces within the democratic framework. These three factors are used as measures that desecuritisation is occurring, thus supporting the conclusion that a necessary condition for reconciliation is developing.

Looking at “active reconciliation” is a way to extend the analysis to determine whether there is a trend or movement towards an ideal of reconciliation. If people are accepting the new visions circulating for a future of peace, reconciliation, and prosperity, there should be some evidence activity in this regard. Some examples of this activity include participation in the TRC proceedings, acts or gestures of forgiveness, reparations, or ceremonies. Reconciliation is a *working* process, which means twofold that the outcome is not predetermined to succeed in the long-run because it requires a commitment to work to make the outcome successful. In terms of drawing conclusions that there are positive signs of reconciliation in South Africa, it is important to account for the presence of the positive forces if the process is going to have a chance.

Popular attitudes are another way to measure the development of trends or movements in support of or against reconciliation. Mass attitudes play a role in this process because they are important to the overall legitimacy of the political system.⁶⁹ Therefore, even though political transition is part of developing a working process of reconciliation as a society, the mass attitudes are also important to the success of the project. Popular attitudes provide indicators of whether or not negative feelings or attitudes are framing the context of interaction.

⁶⁹ Scarlett Cornelissen and Steffen Horstmeier, “The social and political construction of identities in the new South Africa: an analysis of the Western Cape,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* V40 n1 (2002): 62.

However, they provide only a snapshot at a moment in time and longer term trends cannot always be reliably inferred from poll data. Still, assessing popular attitudes in this way is useful to provide another perspective to desecuritisation and active reconciliation. These latter two are concentrated at the elite level (political parties, leaders, social organisations, religious institutions, etc.), so it is important to also try and get a look at popular attitudes *en masse* to provide a more balanced perspective on the reconstruction of societal identities.

These factors together form the basis for applying this framework to the results of the case study of this thesis. The method entailed in this framework offers a way to examine the South African TRC from a novel perspective by viewing the TRC as a vehicle to convey a message of reconciliation. It looks at the TRC in terms of symbolic themes prominent within the collective experience of the South African TRC and looks at their potential to credibly convey the message that will contribute in a positive way to the narrative processes of reconciliation as identity reconstruction.⁷⁰

Context of the Case Study: Identity Conflict in South Africa

The South African experience fits the model of identity conflict presented earlier, and it is a profitable case to study identity conflict and reconciliation for two reasons. First, the apartheid experience represents an example of what an extreme identity conflict can become in that the social and racial division corresponds with lines of conflict because the apartheid system enforced and institutionalised these divisions. Second, the process of reconciliation appears to have had some initial success, and so one there is the potential to see what might be learned from the experience. The following summary portrays the South

⁷⁰ This is a major subject of Chapter Two of this thesis.

African experience as an identity conflict, and expands upon the societal identity themes that supported the identity conflict.

Before launching right into the case study, this section will briefly sketch some details of the socio-economic context in South African. Overall, South Africa has a diverse multiracial population. The 1996 Census provides a picture at the time when the major political transitions had taken place and, conceptually, the process of reconciliation was getting underway.

At the time of the Census '96, South Africa had a population of 40.6 million.⁷¹ In the 1996 Census, 77 percent South Africans identified themselves as African, compared to 11 percent as white, 9 percent as Coloured, and finally 3 percent as Indian or Asian.⁷² The racial breakdown does not fully capture the diversity of the population. Among Africans, there are a number of different linguistic groups. The largest group in the African population was the Zulu at 9.2 (million; the next group was the Xhosa at 7.2 million, followed by the Afrikaners at 5.8 million; the next groups were Sepedi at 3.7 million, followed by English-speakers at 3.5 million, Setswana at 3.3 million and Sesotho at 3.1 million people.⁷³ In total, South Africa has eleven official languages.⁷⁴

In terms of religion, a majority of South Africa's population is Christian. Many of the Europeans that initially settled in South Africa were a mix of Dutch Calvinists and

⁷¹ Statistics South Africa, "Achieving a better life for all: Progress between Census '96 and Census 2001, (Pretoria: Statistics South Africa, 2005): 16-17. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/Publications/Report-03-02-16/Report-03-02-16.pdf>.

⁷² Statistics South Africa. The People of South Africa: Population Census '96. Census '96: Overview: National Results. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/Census96/HTML/default.htm>.

⁷³ Statistics South Africa. The People of South Africa: Population Census '96. Census in Brief. The Population of South Africa. 2.9 Home language by population group. <http://www.statssa.gov.za/census01/Census96/HTML/default.htm>.

⁷⁴ These are Afrikaans, English, isiNdebele, isiXhosa, isiZulu, Sepedi, Sesotho, Setswana, siSwati, Tshivenda and Xitsonga. See: South African Government Information. The Land and its People. Languages. <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/landpeople.htm#languages>.

French Huguenots, however much of the African population has been Christian since the earlier periods of contact. In fact, 72.6 percent of South Africans overall were estimated to be Christian in 1911.⁷⁵ At present, the South African government estimates 80 percent of the population is Christian, with the remaining 20 percent divided among, though not exclusively, traditional religions, Hindu, Muslim.⁷⁶ It interesting to note that Christianity runs across racial lines in the country.

To consider the economic sector briefly, the Human Development Index (HDI) of the United Nations Development Program (UNDP) provides one measure used “to produce internationally comparable data of the ability of individual to live long, informed, and comfortable lives.”⁷⁷ The HDI measures of life expectancy, levels of education, and income. The score ranges from zero to one where zero is low and one is high.⁷⁸ HDI is a sufficient measure to look at the socio-economic sector for the aims and objectives of this thesis because the intent is to focus on political and identity processes, not economic processes.

Comparing with the numbers in 1981 to 2003 illustrates a couple of trends in the socio-economic sector. During the period from 1980 to 1991 the overall HDI in South Africa increased from 0.56 to 0.68.⁷⁹ From 1991 to 1996 the overall HDI did increase slightly from 0.68 to 0.69, but increases were not measured in every province. There were

⁷⁵ Richard Elphick, “Introduction: Christianity in South African History,” Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 1.

⁷⁶ South African Government Information. The Land and its People. Religion.
[http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/landpeople.htm#religion.](http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/landpeople.htm#religion)

⁷⁷ Statistics South Africa. Human Development Index, 1996.
<http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/information.asp?ppn=fqqr>. p.2.

⁷⁸ Statistics South Africa. Human Development Index, 1996.
<http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/information.asp?ppn=fqqr>. p.3.

⁷⁹ To provide a comparison to put these number in perspective. Over this period the HDI for Canada, a country in the top ten comparatively, was 0.87 in 1980 and rose to 0.94 in 1995. One of the lowest countries on the scale is Niger, which measured 0.243 in 1980 compared to 0.27 in 1995. See: United Nations Development Report. Human Development Reports. Human Development Index Trend.
[http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/cty_f_SLE.html.](http://www.undp.org/hdr2003/indicator/cty_f_SLE.html)

slight increases in Eastern Cape, Free State, KwaZulu Natal, Northwest Province, and Limpopo, but actually some decreases in Western Cape, Northern Cape, Gauteng, and Mpumalanga.⁸⁰ The period of 1991 to 1996 witnessed major political transition of the South African state from the white-minority apartheid system to a universal democracy. Yet, the HDI shows that the transition over this period did not translate into socio-economic improvements as of 1996. In 2002, the HDI for South Africa actually 0.67, which actually marks a decrease from 1996.⁸¹

Clearly, the socio-economic picture indicates that any process of reconciliation is going to be challenged by the ability to promote development and enhance the prosperity across the board in South Africa. These processes are interconnected. However, despite this reality, reconciliation a role to play in the ability of South African society to develop as an inclusive democratic society. The failure of reconciliation and breakdown of the South African state to new ethnic or racial violence would equally be detrimental for the prospects for socio-economic development. With this picture in mind, the historical background of political violence will briefly be reviewed.

For many years, South Africa was engaged in a long and violent struggle pivoted around apartheid. Apartheid policies contributed to drawing clear boundaries between identity groups in that it imposed a socio-political system of white minority rule. This system divided the country along racial and ethnic lines, and a range of civil, political, social, and economic means to classify and stratify populations. Apartheid policies were at

⁸⁰ See: Statistics South Africa. Human Development Index, 1996.
<http://www.statssa.gov.za/publications/information.asp?ppn=fqqriv>. P.4

⁸¹ United Nations Development Report. Human development Report 2004. Country Fact Sheets: South Africa. http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/country_fact_sheets/cty_fs_ZAF.html.

times applied through coercive means.⁸² The effect was a crystallisation of societal identities and the racialisation of the conflict. The depth to which this occurred makes the South African experience unique in this regard.⁸³ The lines of the conflict were clearly delineated by virtue of respective positions towards apartheid.

Not only were the groups divided along racial and ethnonational lines, but the dynamics of conflict escalation were also tied to societal identity issues. In general, the violence levels escalated from the 1960s through the 1980s. Two events, occurring in Sharpeville in 1960 and Soweto in 1976 are widely cited as turning points in the escalation illustrating how identity issues were also at the forefront in terms of violent confrontation between the state and opposition.

The “Sharpeville Massacre” occurred on March 21, 1960. A crowd of over 300 protesters were marching in opposition to the apartheid pass laws. The police opened fire with live ammunition, killing 67 and wounding 186 in total including forty women and eight children.⁸⁴ The key issue motivating the protest at Sharpeville was opposition to new restrictive pass laws, according to which blacks were required to carry their identity pass with them at all times and people could be arrested for not carrying a pass. They were

⁸² The realities that accompanied the application of apartheid policies were severe in their effect upon the non-white population. Concrete examples include the restrictive pass laws and Group Areas legislation. See: Nelson Mandela, Long Walk to Freedom: The Autobiography of Nelson Mandela (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1994).

⁸³ David Black, “The long and winding road: international norms and domestic political change in South Africa,” The Power of Human Rights: International Norms and Domestic Change (Cambridge: Cambridge University press, 1999): 80.

⁸⁴ According to reports of the incident, many were shot in the back while fleeing scene of the riots. See: Gail Gerhart, “Massacre at Sharpeville, 1960,” The Anti-Apartheid Reader: South Africa and the Struggle against White Racist Rule (New York: Grove Press, 1987): 213-215.

widely seen as unjust and imposed an inferior status upon the black population. Effectively they constituted an assault upon the collective identity of black South Africans.⁸⁵

A second turning point occurred in Soweto on June 16, 1976. In the township of Soweto outside of Johannesburg, students came out to protest policies that would make Afrikaans the language of instruction in black schools. The protest led to a violent clash with state forces in which 69 students were killed by police forces.⁸⁶ The black population in Soweto was already receiving an inferior quality of education under the apartheid system, but now the government was then proposing that the language of instruction was be replaced with Afrikaans. These moves were widely opposed as a form of cultural assimilation, and furthermore into a language with a real minority status globally. Again, an identity-related issue (language of scholastic instruction) was a part of the rationale prompting the willingness of the people to protest and mobilise in response to what was viewed as a hostile act.

Apartheid policies faced widespread internal opposition from the non-white population and opposition strategies increasingly became militant once it became clear that non-violent opposition was being met with violent repression; intensified resistance was matched with greater crackdown by the state. By the 1980s, the South African government was conducting a “Total Strategy” according to which South Africa faced a “total

⁸⁵ In general, many of the apartheid laws are like examples of Galtung’s concepts of “structural violence” and “cultural violence,” which are aspects of a cultures or social systems that legitimate injustice or oppressive structures that “leave marks not only on the human body, but also on the mind and the spirit.” See: Galtung, 294.

The apartheid pass laws imposed the status of inferiority on the affectees and represent a form of identity violence. They provoked vigorous response from the black population and people showed themselves willing to engage in civil disobedience to protest their cause. See: Galtung, 291-305.

⁸⁶ Black, 88.

onslaught” from the opposition. This strategy was referred to justify any measures necessary to counteract the security threat.⁸⁷

Another turning point came in the early 1990s. Changes in political direction led to negotiations and eventually to the transformation of the political system in South Africa from apartheid to a universal democracy. South Africa has not been engaged in identity conflict, in the sense of violent political conflict, since 1994 officially. The structures of the apartheid system were transformed with the adoption of a new constitution and the successful passing of universal democratic elections. However, transformation of the structures of the apartheid system does not address the other aspect of the identity conflict, which pertains to the ways in which societal identities are mutually constructed, and the beliefs and ideologies that supported such identity constructs. The themes around which these identities have been constructed in South Africa will now be presented.

Societal Narrative Themes in the South African Conflict

The origins of the apartheid state can be traced to the ethnonational liberation movement of the Afrikaners. The quest for “Afrikanerdom” was constructed around a mythology that portrayed the Afrikaners as an embattled minority struggling for its survival, and the quest to for a homeland on the African continent. The Afrikaner identity grew out of this history filled with the struggle to establish a new homeland in the Southern African wilderness and to overcome the challenge of British imperial dominance.⁸⁸ The mythology

⁸⁷ *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report*, (New York: Grove’s Dictionaries, 1999): Vol.2, Ch.1, Par.105. Note: For the balance of this paper, the short form *TRC Report* will be used instead of the full title *Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report* for citations involving this source.

⁸⁸ Various accounts highlight themes of struggle and victimisation, but also victory and destiny. For example, Barbara Villet’s more popular historical account of the tragic plight of Afrikaners evokes these images clearly. The people were pushed out of their settlements on the Cape and forced to search for a new

includes a legacy of historical episodes such as the Great Trek, the battles with the African tribes and Blood River, as well as the concentration camp experiences under the British during the Boer War.⁸⁹ There was also a spiritual theme of Afrikaner destiny as a “chosen people.”⁹⁰

The Afrikaners came to power for the first time in the modern history of South Africa through the 1948 elections, in which the National Party (NP) was elected to government. This marked a new stage in the development of the apartheid state. The NP

homeland in the wild. This became known as the Great Trek. From there began a perpetual struggle for an Afrikaner homeland. See: Barbara Villet, Blood River: the Passionate Saga of South Africa's Afrikaners and of Life in their Embattled Land (New York: Everest House Literature, 1982).

For another perspective, and for a more detailed account of the political mythology and societal symbolism that defined the Afrikaner ethnonationalist movements, Leonard Thompson has two works of interest. See: Leonard Thompson, A History of South Africa (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1995) and The Political Mythology of Apartheid (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1985).

⁸⁹ Cornell argues that the Afrikaners constructed a “heroic narrative of Afrikanerdom” based in these sorts of narrative themes. See: Cornell, 46.

⁹⁰ Religious themes are widely cited to have provided justifications for the apartheid system and its policies of Separate Development. The Dutch Reformed Church (DRC) is the major church of the Afrikaners and preached a theology supportive of apartheid. For example, Klaaren described the religious themes as “a broad theology of culture, stitched together from neo-Calvinist rigour and evangelical piety [that] ensured the dominance of the Afrikaners and apartheid.” See: Eugene M. Klaaren, “Creation and Apartheid: South African Theology since 1948,” Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997): 374.

The Battle of Blood River is an episode that occurred during the Great Trek that highlights the religious connotations of the mythology. According to the story, a caravan of Boer emigrants set off into the heart of the Zulu kingdom to mount a response to the raids and skirmishing of the Zulus against the Afrikaner settlers. On the night of December 15, 1838, with wagons latched together in a defensive circle, they were attacked by a force of Zulu warriors, estimated to be as many as ten thousand strong, armed with *assagis* (traditional spears). When the battle ended, approximately three thousand Zulus lay dead, whereas the Boers did not lose a single person. The victors named it the Battle of Blood River because the waters of the adjacent stream ran red with Zulu blood. See: Thompson, History, 151.

Adding to the religious element of the mythology is the fact that the Boer trekkers, prior to the coming battle at Blood River assembled together in prayer for the coming trials. They swore that day under the leadership of Andries Pretorius that should God grant victory to the Afrikaners, “they would celebrate the day thereafter in His name” as an annual day of thanksgiving. After the victory, the day became known as the Day of the Covenant and became a centrepiece of the nationalist repertoire. It also helped to feed a “chosen people” mythology. See: Marianne Cornevin, Apartheid: Power and Historical Falsification (Paris: UNESCO, 1980): 60; also Villet, 86.

One hundred years later, another event occurred in the upsurge of Afrikaner nationalism during the centennial anniversary of the Great Trek in 1938. A caravan of eight wagons named after popular heroes such as Piet Retief and Andries Pretorius travelled across South Africa and was greeted enthusiastically in virtually every white town or village through which it passed. The culmination of the centennial celebration took place on December 16, 1938 in Pretoria, on the anniversary of the Battle of Blood River, at a ceremony attended by over 100,000 Afrikaners to lay the first stone of the Voortrekker Monument. See: Thompson, Political Mythology, 39.

moved swiftly to implement a number of policies to redress their historical situation and “Afrikanerize” the state.⁹¹ They also enacted a wide range of apartheid legislation.⁹² The NP came to power on a platform of racial segregation, arguing for minority retention of political and economic control in the country because of the dangers faced by the white minority living in the midst of a more numerous black African population.⁹³ Ethnonationalism was a major theme of the initial development of the apartheid state and was a central part of the mobilising discourse for the political movement that came to power.⁹⁴

Going back to the 1950s, race was becoming a more prominent identity theme than ethnonationalism. As internal opposition to apartheid grew, the NP sought to broaden its constituency to deal with the so-called “black problem.” The themes of the mobilising discourse emanating from pro-apartheid institutions became more “inclusive” in that they became less exclusively about an Afrikaner ethnonational identity and more about a white racialised identity.⁹⁵ They sought to maintain the support of the white population as a

⁹¹ For example, the NP appointed Afrikaners to positions throughout the civil service, army, police, and major state corporations, assisted Afrikaner business to help “close the gap” between themselves and English-speaking South Africans who had traditionally been the most dominant and affluent group in South Africa. Initially these were moves of consolidation of Afrikaner control over the state. See: Thompson, *History*, 188.

⁹² Examples: The *Population Registration Act (1950)* and the *Group Areas Act (1950)* classified South Africans by race and indicated where they could and could not live; the *Prohibition of Mixed Marriages Act (1949)* and the *Immorality Act* aimed at maintaining the ‘purity of the white race’ by preventing marriage or sexual intercourse between them and “non-whites”; the *Native Resettlement (Western Areas) Act (1954)* sought to regulate “squatter towns,” deport blacks from white areas, and destroy so-called unsightly houses around Johannesburg forcing many people to Soweto; the *Bantu Education Act (1953)* denied blacks the opportunity to obtain the same education as whites; the *Promotion of Bantu Self Government Act (1959)* denied political rights to blacks in white areas, thus limiting such rights to their Homelands. See: Toyin Falola, *Key Events in African History: A Reference Guide*, (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 2002): 200-201.

⁹³ Robert I. Rotberg, “The Ascendancy of Afrikanerdom,” *The Anti-Apartheid Reader: South Africa and the Struggle against White Minority Rule* (New York: Grove Press, 1987): 78.

⁹⁴ “Mobilising discourse” is defined as “the language used by political elites in the attempt to construct a worldview that makes a particular set of identities and affiliations more accessible and apparent than others.” See: Courtney Jung, *Then I was Black: South African Political Identities in Transition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000): 27-28.

⁹⁵ Pro-apartheid institutions include more than simply state institutions. Churches, schools, universities and mass media, for example, all played a role in supporting the apartheid ideologies and state policies.

whole.⁹⁶ The themes often became couched in defensive terms and became more about protecting the South African “way of life.”⁹⁷

The discourse of Henrik Verwoerd, NP politician and architect of “Grand Apartheid,” illustrates this type of discourse: “The white man must further expect to lose his possessions and see his hard-won farms, well-developed areas and businesses fall to pieces....”⁹⁸ The implementation of the apartheid project, as well as the growing racialisation of societal identities, led to the structuration of the identity conflict around the collective positions vis-à-vis apartheid, and the conflict became increasingly a racial conflict.

The themes of the opposition identities evolved in response to the patterns described above. Over the same period, the societal themes of the opposition identities show a corresponding de-racialisation, in terms of referring to racial and ethnic identities as the basis for anti-apartheid opposition. Broadly speaking, the liberation movement came to represent principles of non-racial democracy and universal human rights.⁹⁹ The Freedom Charter vision was not the only vision, but it became central to the ideologies of the

⁹⁶ Thompson, *History*, 223.

⁹⁷ A number of images portrayed threats to the white “way of life.” References were made to neighbouring states in which black populations had taken control of the state through decolonization, and in which there was greater instability and political violence. The Cold War context provided additional legitimacy to this view in that the liberation movements were linked to the global Communist threat, a view which was made credible in part through the close ties of the ANC to the South African Communist Party. A combination of negative imagery and racist beliefs were used to sustain these beliefs and garner support for NP apartheid policies. See: Desmond Tutu, *No Future Without Forgiveness*. (New York: Doubleday, 1999): 236.

⁹⁸ H.F. Verwoerd, 16.

⁹⁹ Most opposition organisations came to support the principles of the Freedom Charter. The Freedom Charter was adopted by the African National Congress (ANC) at the Congress of the People on June 26, 1955. It outlined the guiding principles of the ANC, but the ethos embodied in the Charter became central to the liberation movement as a whole. Described by Nelson Mandela:

The Freedom Charter was a mix of practical goals and poetic language. It extols the abolition of racial discrimination and the achievement of equal rights for all. It welcomes all who embrace freedom to participate in the making of a democratic, non-racial South Africa. It captured the hopes and dreams of the people and acted as a blueprint for the liberation struggle and the future of the nation. See: Mandela, 151.

liberation movements as well as the visions for the new South Africa that guided the transition process.¹⁰⁰

Black Consciousness (BC) was another theme that emerged in the 1970s, and also illustrates the trend of de-racialisation of opposition identities. The basic idea behind BC was psychological liberation and the formation of an “ethico-political ideology” capable of liberating blacks from their own sense of inferiority to white dominance, and break the psychological bonds of apartheid.¹⁰¹ BC represented the idea that “blackness” represented more than simply the colour of one’s skin; everyone designated as non-white by the apartheid system could be united by this ideology that preached unity on the basis of common oppression.¹⁰² BC was about a definition of blackness as a socially exploited, not simply black as skin colour. Defining blackness not as a racial category of identity, but as an anti-apartheid identity was significant in articulating an inclusive identity that included Indians, Coloureds, and Africans. In this sense it played a role in the overall de-racialisation of the opposition identities.¹⁰³

¹⁰⁰ Another current within the opposition identities was *Africanism*. The principles reflect more the idea of “Africa for Africans,” *i.e.*, *black* Africans. By definition, it is less inclusive, and has more potential to pose a threat to the minority white population. It is a theme that would have been more conducive to racial conflict because it is less accommodating to differences of racial identity; rather, it sought a superior position for black Africans. As a social movement, Africanism was represented by the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC). Although at times heated rivals of the ANC as leaders of the opposition movements, they never did achieve the widespread support of the Charterist movements. See: Robert Fatton, Jr., Black Consciousness in South Africa: the Dialectics of Ideological Resistance to White Supremacy (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1986); Anthony Marx, Lessons of Struggle: South African Internal Opposition, 1960 – 1990 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992).

The Inkatha movement could be mentioned as well. Inkatha initially began as a culturally-based Zulu movement. As a political movement, Inkatha has primarily been a regional force, although it has had some influence on the national political scene. The movement has kept a regional identity in post-apartheid South Africa.

¹⁰¹ Fatton, 69-70.

¹⁰² Jung, 65.

¹⁰³ As Jung notes, though, while this definition was salient as political identities, this definition of black was not necessarily meaningful in the sense of cultural identities. See: Jung, 168-176.

In sum, the South African conflict qualifies as an identity conflict based on the understanding of this concept laid out earlier in this chapter. Group identities were a central and defining feature of the conflict, and identity issues were linked to the dynamics of its escalation. Furthermore, as an identity conflict, the nature of the societal identity constructions themselves, and the ways in which these identities were manifest in the apartheid system, created conditions conducive to conflict. Apartheid emerged as the culmination of the Afrikaner ethnonationalist movement, and evolved into an increasingly racialised system that pitted the white minority against the non-white majority in a violent, widespread struggle.

However, the conflict came to a negotiated end and the political system of South Africa has been radically transformed. As South Africa moves forward in a process of reconciliation, and as it deals with the legacy of human rights violations that the conflict engendered, it is necessary to monitor the development of societal identity constructions over time. Determining whether the narrative themes support or undermine the development of an inclusive pan-South African identity is essential to drawing the conclusion that reconciliation (as identity reconstruction) is occurring in post-apartheid South Africa.

Chapter Two

Credibly Conveyed:

Analysis of the South African TRC as a Message of Reconciliation from the Perspectives of Communication and Narrative Symbolism

To recall, the hypothesis is that in order for the narrative processes of identity construction to contribute in a positive way to reconciliation, a message of reconciliation must be credibly conveyed and genuinely received by society at large. This chapter develops the aspect of credibly conveyed from two perspectives: the communication of a message and the narrative symbolism of that message. First of all, for a message to be conveyed, it must be communicated, and therefore requires some vehicle to get the message across to the intended audience. The message must also be appropriate to the socio-cultural context of the society in question.

The experience of the South African TRC is a central part of the case study to illustrate the components of the hypothesis. The chapter begins by looking at the communication aspect of conveying a message of reconciliation via the societal narratives. First, a general introduction to the South African TRC provides some background. Then, the TRC is presented as a vehicle to communicate the message of reconciliation at the level of societal identity construction by suggesting the notion of *narrative experience*.

The quality and extent of the diffusion of the message is important to the communication aspect being credibly conveyed. Indicators in this regard include the numbers of people exposed to the TRC narratives, and whether or not the message was communicated in a sustained and profound way. There would need to be a certain reverence to the experience, so that the key ideas would be given the seriousness of reflection for the

acceptance of reconciliation to occur. In simple terms, people need access to be able to hear the message, time to become aware of the significance, and to make sense of the broader social transformations taking place. This was a part of narrative experience the TRC.

The other aspect to the notion of being credibly conveyed examines whether the message of reconciliation is appropriate to the socio-cultural context in which the identity conflict occurred. This speaks to whether the message can be *credibly* conveyed. This chapter will provide analysis of the message conveyed by the TRC in light of the three major themes of the TRC experience, and in light of the characteristics of South Africa's historical identity conflict. The message of reconciliation within the TRC centred on themes of human rights, forgiveness, and *ubuntu*. This section also answers the question of how the themes of the TRC respond to the specific issues of reconciliation dictated by the lines of division of societal identity constructions as well as the lines of division of the conflict. Each theme in the message has its issues, but the conclusions from this "objective" analysis will be that the message makes sense for the context.

The TRC of South Africa

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (TRC) was a post-conflict policy approach to deal with the widespread legacy of human rights violations (HRVs) engendered by the conflict in South Africa. The TRC was a truth commission, but one that sought to do more than uncover and document the facts. The architects of the TRC sought to promote a climate conducive to national reconciliation in a deeply divided society.¹⁰⁴ The *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act* sums up the objectives.

¹⁰⁴ Geneviève Jacques, *Beyond Impunity: An Ecumenical Approach to Truth, Justice, and Reconciliation* (Geneva: WCC Publications, 2000): 22.

The purpose of the TRC was:

*To provide for the investigation and the establishment of as complete a picture as possible of the nature, causes and extent of gross violations of human rights committed during ... the conflicts of the past, and the fate or whereabouts of the victims of such violations; the granting of amnesty to persons who make full disclosure of all the relevant facts relating to acts associated with a political objective committed in the course of the conflicts of the past during the said period; affording victims an opportunity to relate the violations they suffered; the taking of measures aimed at the granting of reparation to, and the rehabilitation and the restoration of the human and civil dignity of, victims of violations of human rights; reporting to the Nation about such violations and victims; the making of recommendations aimed at the prevention of the commission of gross violations of human rights.*¹⁰⁵

Truth commissions in general are investigative bodies that are set up to uncover the facts pertaining to acts of massive or systemic human rights violations.¹⁰⁶ Their purpose is to investigate and document HRVs committed in the course of a violent struggle to provide a comprehensive record of past atrocities and human rights violations, and to uncover the truth about a period in time or regime and to acknowledge the legacy of the violence and its impact upon the many people affected.¹⁰⁷

The TRC was mandated to investigate *gross* HRVs defined as “killing, abduction, torture, or severe ill treatment.”¹⁰⁸ Operationally, the period under investigation dated from 1960 to 1994 because this was the “period of the worst of human rights violations.”¹⁰⁹ The year 1960 was the starting point because of the Sharpeville massacre and the cut-off year was in 1994 with the first universal democratic elections being held. The TRC offered a

¹⁰⁵ *Promotion of National Unity and Reconciliation Act, 1995*. Government of South Africa. Office of the President. No. 1111. 26 July 1995. http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/trc_frameset.htm.

¹⁰⁶ Heribert Adam, “Divided memories: Confronting the Crimes of Previous Regimes” *Telos* V118 (Winter 2000): 102.

¹⁰⁷ Audrey Chapman, “Truth Commissions as Instruments of Forgiveness and Reconciliation,” *Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy and Conflict Transformation* (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2002): 257-258; Audrey Chapman and Patrick Ball, “The Truth of truth Commissions: Comparative Lessons from Haiti, South Africa, and Guatemala,” *Human Rights Quarterly* v23 n1 (February 2001): 2.

¹⁰⁸ *TRC Report*, Vol.1, Ch.2, pp. 29.

¹⁰⁹ *TRC Report*, Vol. 1, Ch.2, pp.25.

limited and conditional amnesty in exchange for the full and complete disclosure of information on the part of perpetrators of gross HRVs.

The model of the TRC was based on the belief that uncovering the truth and disclosing the full extent of gross HRVs committed during the course of struggle offered greater potential to promote reconciliation. The TRC was intended to promote reconciliation in post-apartheid South Africa. It is now widely referred to as the “Third Way” because it represents a middle ground between a general amnesty on one hand, and Nuremburg-style criminal prosecutions on the other.¹¹⁰ The range of post-conflict options is more nuanced than these two options, but the TRC marked a departure into novel middle ground.¹¹¹

Assessment of the South African TRC

This section will review a range of literature in the form of various moral, legal, religious, philosophical and historical arguments that have been brought to bear on the South African TRC.¹¹² Much of the initial literature on the TRC was about the Commission itself

¹¹⁰ Alex Boraine, “Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: The Third Way,” Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 143.

¹¹¹ General or blanket amnesty for all perpetrators of gross HRVs has occurred in some cases. Dubbed by Adam “collective amnesia,” is not viewed as conducive to promoting reconciliation because there is no acknowledgement, but only silence and denial, and acknowledgement is widely viewed as an important element of reconciliation. However, general amnesty may at times be necessary to avoid further violence. See: Adam, 89-95.

Trials and tribunals are set up to prosecute the perpetrators of gross HRVs. The classic example is the Nuremburg tribunals, at which Nazi officers were put on trial for war crimes and crime against humanity. The intent of this approach is to punish and impose criminal sanction. They respond to a call for retributive justice. However, trials are not necessarily viable options on a mass scale, as was the case in South Africa. They can be both long and costly affairs to conduct. See: Adam, 95-97.

Other options have included lustration, which refers to actions taken against collaborators, affiliates, or active members of a regime responsible for gross HRVs. It attempts to include those who have committed, supported, or profited from the actions of the regime. In contrast to trials and tribunals, there is no criminal punishment *per se*, but other measures are taken such as disqualification from public office or from government employment are examples. See: Adam, 97.

¹¹² For example, the following compilations present pieces covering a full range of approaches. See: Wilmot James and Linda van de Vijver (Eds.), After the TRC: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation in

and explaining objectives, philosophies, and procedures. The daily media reportage covering the TRC at that time echoes this trend as well.¹¹³ A review of the literature will show that the TRC, although a positive force for reconciliation, was contentious and provoked vigorous societal debate as South Africans were engaged with this process and digested its meanings. Highlighting some major arguments for and against the TRC provides the backdrop against which to present the TRC as a narrative experience that credibly conveyed a message of reconciliation.

Pro-TRC Arguments

The TRC format was seen to have potential to be more effective than a prosecutorial format in encouraging the participation of perpetrators in the process.¹¹⁴ The assumption is that perpetrators will not participate as willingly in a criminal format where they face prosecution and criminal sanction. There would be more incentive to participate and disclose fact with the potential reward of amnesty. One of the key objectives of the TRC was to disclose as much of the truth as possible.

The format of the TRC is seen to be more victim-oriented than trials. A prosecutorial system is adversarial and focuses on the accused because the intent is to prove their guilt or innocence. The TRC format meanwhile, was able to focus an equal attention on the victims in order to capture their experiences. In a prosecutory system victims are often subjected to harsh interrogation and cross-examination, which was not the case for

South Africa (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2001); Robert I. Rotberg and Dennis Thompson (Eds.), Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000); Charles Villavincencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd (Eds.), Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000).

¹¹³ See: SAPA Media Archive. http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/trc_frameset.htm.

¹¹⁴ Alex Boraine, "New Paths to Justice: Reconciliation after Gross Violations of Human Rights," Living Law Series. Proceedings of a Conference [Unofficial]. 21 November 2002. University of Ottawa.

TRC victim testimony. The TRC was open for them to reveal their story in an environment that was less threatening and to be included as a crucial part of the reality that the TRC was trying to reconstruct.¹¹⁵

One of the stronger arguments in favour of the work of the TRC was that it was *owned* and *conducted* entirely in public. The TRC engaged in widespread consultation and gathered testimonies from across the country in a process of public hearings. It was an open and democratic process because of the engagement of South Africa at large within the process.¹¹⁶ These featured widespread live television and radio broadcasts of the HRV Committee where these hearings took place. People could listen from anywhere in the country, in their own language, and participate to the degree in which they personally felt capable.¹¹⁷ This sustained public experience becomes the reason why it can be accurately described as narrative experience.

Overall, the TRC scored favourably on arriving at the truth and establishing general picture of what happened. The TRC broke the silence and is widely credited to have revealed the vast extent of the violent consequences of maintaining the apartheid regime as well as violent acts in the name of liberation. The acknowledgement that came from the process afforded victims a certain dignity that would allow them to consider living in a reconciled society. The acknowledgement brought about by the TRC is important to

¹¹⁵ Colleen Scott, "Combating myth and building reality," Looking Back and Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000): 110.

¹¹⁶ Although it is true that this Commission, or any such commission, cannot include everyone affected by mass societal strife. For it to be able to function it must necessarily limit the number of formal participants.

¹¹⁷ Boraine, "New Paths to Justice," Conference [Unofficial].

reconciliation. The TRC offered national acknowledgement and made people think of the pain experienced by the victims and survivors of gross HRVs.¹¹⁸

Implicit to this approach is an analogy of collective psychology to individual psychology. The idea is that it is equally important for societal identities as for individual identities “not to suppress horrible memories from the past.”¹¹⁹ Part of the argument for the TRC is that truth is important to promoting reconciliation, both from the perspective of victims as it is from perpetrators. The TRC becomes part of the process of “opening up the wounds” and allowing the nation to work through the traumas of the past. The TRC in this regard was a part of an experience of “national catharsis” that offers the potential to be cleansing and healing for South Africans.¹²⁰ The hope was that the TRC would fulfill this function and be a positive force for reconciliation in South Africa.

Critiques of the TRC

There is a range of comparative studies that have looked at the operations of the TRC in terms of mandate, procedures, etc. or comparing the TRC to other truth commissions.¹²¹ One criticism is that the scope and mandate of the TRC was too large to be effectively contained within the limited framework of the operations. The TRC was confronted with the task of fulfilling too many conflicting functions, and “it did not have a clear mechanism by which reconciliation could be achieved within its mandate.”¹²²

¹¹⁸ Nomfundo Walaza, “Insufficient healing and reparation,” Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000): 252.

¹¹⁹ Boraine, “New paths to Justice,” Conference [Unofficial].

¹²⁰ Boraine, “New paths to justice,” Conference [Unofficial].

¹²¹ Chapman and Ball, 1-43; Elizabeth Stanley, “Evaluating the Truth and Reconciliation Commission,” Journal of Modern African Studies V39 n3 (2001): 525-546.

¹²² Walaza, 252.

Furthermore, the amnesty question was controversial. The amnesty provisions contained within the *TRC Act* and its powers to grant amnesty were subject to legal and constitutional challenge.¹²³ Not everyone shared the same conception of post-apartheid justice, and some felt that perpetrators ought to be punished. For some, amnesty was not necessarily palatable to satisfy their own needs for justice; they would have preferred to see a form of retributive justice served.¹²⁴

Another critique is that the TRC was not able to incorporate all the victims in the proceedings. Despite its efforts, the TRC could not directly include everyone adversely affected by even gross HRVs in South Africa. There were many more victims of gross HRVs than could directly participate and there were some who were not able to access the proceedings and tell their story. Therefore, not every victim's story was able to be included in the *TRC Report*.

The TRC came about as part of the larger process of political negotiation between the apartheid regime and opposition parties. The amnesty-for-truth format of the TRC represents in part a political compromise in that certain elements in white society, notably the conservative Afrikaner factions and the security establishment, would never have supported full prosecution of perpetrators.¹²⁵ Had the opposition insisted outright upon full prosecution, there may have been an increased possibility of further violent conflict, rather

¹²³ Note: The TRC was subject to legal challenges on several grounds. The main categories of challenges pertained to the constitutionality of the TRC, the impartiality of the Commissioners, challenges to amnesty decisions, as well as various technical questions. See: *TRC Report*, Vol.1, Ch.7, Par.7-101.

¹²⁴ For example, see: Kader Asmal, Louise Asmal, and Ronald Suresh Roberts, *Reconciliation Through Truth: A Reckoning of Apartheid's Criminal Governance* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997).

¹²⁵ Right-wing elements of the Afrikaner population along with the South African security forces represented a potential threat to the chances of a peaceful transition. The Afrikaner security forces were firmly in control of the means of continuing violence and would have opposed the full prosecution of their leaders.

than the peaceful transition that ensued from the negotiations.¹²⁶ The fact that full prosecution of perpetrators was likely not an option from the start limits the value of the compromise of accepting an amnesty-for-truth trade-off, at least from a victim perspective.

Another set of critiques against the success of the TRC stems from the fact that in post-apartheid South Africa, there are still a number of ongoing social problems that pose a challenge to the government and the prosperity of the new South Africa. Despite far-reaching transition on many fronts, South Africa still has ongoing problems to manage including extreme economic inequality, unemployment, crime, and a massive HIV/AIDS epidemic. These are continuing obstacles that remain potential threats to the development of a stable, prosperous, and democratic South Africa.¹²⁷ On the economic front, the reality is that there is still widespread poverty and underdevelopment in many parts of the country. Depending on how this is portrayed, it can become part of the argument that from these perspectives reconciliation is not occurring.

The TRC as Narrative Experience

The experience of the TRC can be described as a *narrative experience*. This is a collective, sustained, and consuming societal experience that potentially provides a means to communicate a message across society, like a message of reconciliation. A narrative experience is both intense and widely diffuse as a collective experience and occurs in a significant way through the mass media. This concept will now be explored further.

¹²⁶ At the time there were some real fears for the potential escalation of the conflict. See: Dan O'Meara, Forty Lost Years: The Apartheid State and the Politics of the National Party, 1948-1994 (Randburg, South Africa: Raven Press, 1996): 7-9.

¹²⁷ Barnaby Phillips, "South Africans stay loyal to democracy," BBC NEWS - UK Edition (April 15, 2004) <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/africa/3629953.stm>.

As an approach to promoting societal reconciliation, the TRC embodied at the same time both a top-down and a bottom-up approach. The TRC was top-down in the sense that the communication of its message, reflected in its thematic content, sought to inspire reconciliation at the mass level. It was also bottom-up in that it provided opportunity for a large number of individuals to participate directly in the proceedings within their own communities. This paper is primarily interested in the top-down aspects of symbolic communication of a message of reconciliation.

Gerwel has described the TRC as:

*...an event of story-telling, confession and forgiving, within a quasi-judicial framework, it represented a unique moment in the country's history – an interstitial pause for a nation to acknowledge its unity and intimate inter-connections also in perversity and suffering.*¹²⁸

The TRC was a collective, sustained moment in the history of post-apartheid South Africa. This collective moment is juxtaposed in between the apartheid past that was and the future that is beginning to take hold. Through the experience of the TRC the wounds of the past were reopened and a common past was acknowledged, a past of which all South Africans were a part.

The TRC has been described as a media event in one author's study. In this sense, it is an event in society played out through the mass media, yet an event of significance such that it falls outside the typical range of daily media reportage.¹²⁹ It is "an interruption to routine broadcasting" that is "live, inspired from outside the media realm, and is presented in a particular reverence and ceremony."¹³⁰ A media event is significant in that it has a

¹²⁸ Jakes Gerwel, "National reconciliation: holy grail or secular pact?" Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (Cape Town: Cape Town University Press, 2000): 280.

¹²⁹ Ron Krabill, "Symbiosis: mass media and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa," Media, Culture, and Society V23 (2001): 569. Krabill cites Dayan and Katz for his definition of a media event.

¹³⁰ Krabill, 569.

character making it “something more than regular day to day reportage” because it is sustained, extensive, and engaging in nature, to an extent that most day-to-day media reportage is not. A media event provides a “moment of common experience for which the audience as a whole interrupt their daily routines to consider the importance of the media event and its meaning.”¹³¹ It has a character about it that makes it something beyond the daily concerns of social life.

The TRC was a sustained experience that occupied the public stage over a five year period.¹³² The proceedings of the TRC were broadcast widely throughout South Africa, and were able to reach audiences in local communities in every region of the country. As mentioned earlier, the TRC was conducted in public, involving wide diffusion of the proceedings through live radio broadcasts, translated into all the official languages, and newspaper and television coverage. From the perspective of the architects of the TRC, the hope was that the maximum number of South Africans as possible could follow the proceedings and learn from the experience.¹³³

Extending this concept in a hypothetical vein, the intent is to propose a *narrative experience*, which is a special kind of media event with potential to impart a message of reconciliation into the societal narratives. It is a moment of common experience that can become instilled into the narrative processes of identity construction. This ties back to the hypothesis in that the narrative experience becomes the vehicle through which the message of reconciliation can potentially be conveyed. The dialogue and debate surrounding the experience are a part of the narrative experience, so that the narratives are something more

¹³¹ Krabill, 570.

¹³² The most intense TRC activity occurred between 1995 and 1999, but even today the subject of the TRC continues to re-emerge as part of the ongoing debates on reconciliation.

¹³³ Boraine, “New Paths to Justice,” Conference [Unofficial].

than the discourse of any one “official” source, *e.g.* the *TRC Report*. The experience of the TRC becomes a part of the societal narratives as a new shared history.

The narrative experience of the TRC is constituted both of event and message. As event, this becomes a common experience that has engaged all of South Africa’s identities in a process aimed at reconciliation as the basis for healthy relationships in the new South Africa. The narrative experience is significant such that it becomes incorporated into the societal narrative, and thereby contributes to the reconstruction of societal identities as part of the process of reconciliation. The communication of the message is what helps to instill the will to reconcile into the population at large. The next section will look at the TRC from the point of view of the content of the message and will focus on the symbolic themes of reconciliation communicated by the narrative experience.

The Content of the Message of Reconciliation

Once again, in order for reconciliation to occur, a message of reconciliation must be credibly conveyed and genuinely received. The message of reconciliation was conveyed through the narrative experience of the TRC, but in order for the message of reconciliation to be *credibly* conveyed, the content of the message of reconciliation must be appropriate to the South African socio-cultural context. Therefore it is important that the message of reconciliation translate in a meaningful way to the intended audience. Three themes embodied within the content of the TRC symbolism communicate visions of how society can move towards attaining reconciliation. These themes are (1) human rights, (2) forgiveness, and (3) *ubuntu*, which collectively establish principles conducive to reconciliation.

Human Rights

The entire format of the TRC was based in investigating HRVs. The HRV Committee was responsible for documenting victim experiences with gross HRVs, the Amnesty Committee reviewed the amnesty applications of the perpetrators of gross HRVs, and the Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee was responsible for recommending measures for reparations or rehabilitation for victims of gross HRVs. The TRC acknowledged the widespread gross HRVs that occurred as part of the conflict and illustrated what cannot happen in a peaceful society. The principles of human rights offer a vision to developing a working process of reconciliation, and contribute to overcoming aspects of certain apartheid-era themes of identity construction.

An important outcome of the TRC process as a whole is that people can no longer claim ignorance. The TRC revealed the extent of gross HRVs that were committed. Many were done in secret by the police or security forces that people were not aware (or could claim not to have been aware) of the full nature and extent of these practices. Thanks to the TRC, all South Africans have been forced to acknowledge that gross HRVs were widespread and that these practices were a part of maintaining the apartheid system. People can no longer deny or ignore the realities of the past.¹³⁴ Even staunch opponents of the TRC cannot credibly deny the widespread human rights abuses of apartheid. Mentioned earlier as well, this was one of the important outcomes of the TRC.

¹³⁴ For example, Paris writes: “The TRC appears to have successfully drawn a line between the old and the new South Africa at a crucial transitional time. The recovery of the past and the obscured fate of many individuals emerged almost immediately after the events from the mouths of the perpetrators themselves. Not even the staunchest pro-apartheid supporter disputes that these events happened.” See: Erna Paris, Long Shadows: Truth, Lies, and History (Toronto: Vintage Canada Edition, 2000): 307.

The legacy of the TRC amounts to a moral judgement about acceptable standards of collective interaction in South Africa. The record of HRVs documented by the TRC has become a testament of the type of violent political conduct (*i.e.* causing HRVs) that cannot be deemed accepted in a peaceful democratic society. The extreme nature of the gross HRVs uncovered by the TRC, and the widespread undesirable nature of these practices, illustrates the need to respect the basic rights of *all* South Africans.

One of the principles underlying human rights is equality. The language of human rights establishes a foundation of equality as a principle governing appropriate of treatment individuals or societies. The common denominator of human rights is the fact of being human, which values the dignity and intrinsic worth of the human being. The language of human rights does not in and of itself favour one identity over another. Equality is an important principle for a society that was governed according to a racial hierarchy according to which one's rights and privileges in the society were determined by race.

The principles underlying human rights are universalist in nature, which are important to the construction of new, inclusive societal identities. This is important for a society such as South Africa's that is not only multiracial and multiethnic but also was rigidly polarised along racial lines for so many years under apartheid. A universalist principle, if widely adopted, stands as a counterpoint to the themes of societal identity that constructed the apartheid society that excluded, divided, and oppressed.

The principles of human rights are also based in mutual respect. The way to ensure one's own human rights is to respect the rights of others. In this sense human rights promote mutual respect, which would be an important facet to instil in a relationship between former adversaries.

The personal narratives that were revealed through the TRC experience offer some potential to overcome aspects of the identity conflict in South Africa. The apartheid system was built upon racist ideologies, which relied on dehumanising beliefs that place the other in a position of inferiority. The black population was consistently portrayed as “savage” or “evil.” One of the ways to overcome the dehumanising element of racism is to generate new feelings of empathy between identities formerly constructed in patterns of conflict.¹³⁵ Demonstration of human suffering has potential to generate empathy because, in an interesting way, it is revealing of a common humanity.

Through the live broadcasts of TRC hearings, people listened to real stories of human suffering, and could see the pain and emotions experienced by the victims. These were real experiences that revealed *human* suffering through the narratives of victims. Those who listened would have had opportunities to wrestle with these facts and to confront their own feelings and attitudes in this regard.¹³⁶ Confronting the gross HRVs represented an opportunity to generate new empathies for a formerly dehumanised other.

Human rights and the violations of human rights symbolised one theme that was credibly conveyed by the narrative experience of the TRC. The theme of human rights offered a vision to the development of a working process of reconciliation by establishing principles such as equality, universalism, and mutual respect. These principles offered a basis of a working process even though the ideal of reconciliation would seek more. Still,

¹³⁵ Donald W. Shriver Jr., “Forgiveness: A Bridge Across Abysses of Revenge,” Forgiveness and Reconciliation: Religion, Public Policy and Conflict Transformation (Philadelphia: Templeton Foundation Press, 2002): 160.

¹³⁶ It is not necessary that everyone hear or read all the gruesome details of each case in order for these experiences to generate empathy. In fact, specialists would argue that repeated listening or exposure could result in a secondary trauma, in which the fact of listening to the horrible details of the HRVs could actually prove counterproductive to a healthy recovery process. Source: *Community Trauma Postvention: “When Bad Things Happen to Good People.”* Proceedings of a Workshop [Unofficial]. University of Winnipeg. 25-26 October 2004.

the establishment of a society that respects the basic human rights of all its members represents a positive step on the road to societal reconciliation.

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is another theme that was central to the message of reconciliation conveyed by the narrative experience. Forgiveness is a powerful symbolic theme with a message of transformation that can be conducive to promoting reconciliation. The theme of forgiveness was a consistent feature of TRC discourse, a prominent subject of discussion and debate all the way through the TRC experience, and a hotly debated topic today. There are some questions relating to the concept of forgiveness, but it does represent an ideal of reconciliation as well as a vision of how to transform relationship of conflict into a state of reconciliation.

The theme of forgiveness was central to the direct proceedings of the TRC. Victims who testified before the Commission at the HRV Committee hearings were encouraged to forgive the perpetrators of the acts in question. The HRV Committee hearings were conducted in a very religious atmosphere that included at times prayers, candles, and hymns. People were confronted by these images on a daily basis. It has become a part of the societal narratives in post-apartheid South Africa.

Forgiveness was a central message at the HRV hearings. The Commissioners presiding over the hearings tried to encourage and promote forgiveness throughout the proceedings of the HRV Committee. The message of forgiveness was pressed to the point where some people may have even felt they were being pressured or compelled to forgive

the perpetrators. However, this only supports the claim that forgiveness was a prominent theme of the message.

The discourse of forgiveness applied to individuals as well as groups. In reflecting on forgiveness in the South African context, the Archbishop Desmond Tutu, Chairperson and principal figure of the South African TRC was asked by author Erna Paris:

Question: *Do you believe in collective guilt, Archbishop?*

Desmond Tutu: *Human beings live in communities; a solitary human being is a contradiction; so, yes, I believe groups must acknowledge their part in the past through spokespersons. But that does not remove individual responsibility.*

Each has to say, 'This is what I did, or what I ought to have done.' And because we can't get at every person, there has to be a kind of symbolic confession and forgiveness of one another that happens collectively, reflecting the solidarity that each individual has within his group.¹³⁷

According to this perspective, where HRVs are systemic and pervasive, there must be acknowledgement of collective responsibility because many bear responsibility for maintaining the system. Forgiveness acknowledges this responsibility. It is a vision showing a way to transform the relationship of the collective victims and the collective perpetrators of the HRVs. As a transformative vision, it has the potential to contribute in a positive way to reconciliation in promoting the reconstruction of identities by showing a way to move beyond victim and perpetrator identities.

During the TRC, examples of forgiveness were occurring at different levels. It occurred between individuals saying how they could forgive an agent or police officer that tortured or killed a family member or loved one. There were examples of various leaders, spokespersons, or organisations making statements or declarations about forgiveness. In terms of symbolic forgiveness, examples of these acts may have helped inspire forgiveness on a more widespread basis. Overall though, results were mixed with respect to the extent

¹³⁷ Quote taken from Paris, 281.

to which this occurred; some refused or were unable but some bought in to the process as well.¹³⁸ At the least, there were numerous examples available for one to emulate.

The principles behind forgiveness are supportive of a process of reconciliation. Forgiveness is a valuable ideal in the pursuit of societal reconciliation. Inherently, forgiveness conveys a non-threatening response if granted freely by the victim, so re-enforcement of the message on a widespread and sustained basis would be a positive factor towards advancing the process of reconciliation.

A positive aspect of the message of forgiveness is that in South Africa people understand the concept, broadly speaking.¹³⁹ They understand how they are supposed to relate to one another after the process has occurred, and by implication how the country's mutual societal identities are supposed to relate to one another after the TRC is over. If forgiveness occurs, the violent conflict of the past should not continue to frame the context of collective interaction, and especially should not frame South Africa's contemporary social problems.

For reconciliation to occur, it is vitally important that people understand the outcome of the process in order to take that road themselves. Understanding the message is crucial to saying that the message has been credibly conveyed. The message of forgiveness makes sense in the South African context insofar as the theme is prominent within the cultural repertoires of a majority Christian population, and the theme is one that translates as well as a secular principle. There are a number of conceptual problems pertaining to the concept of forgiveness, but these will be addressed in a later section.

¹³⁸ This point is covered in detail in discussion of the problems associated to forgiveness.

¹³⁹ Even if forgiveness is understood in its most Christian sense, there is still a solid argument to be made that the concept is well understood in South Africa, on the basis of a majority Christian population. This point is taken up in greater detail later in this chapter.

Ubuntu

Ubuntu is the third theme of the content of the message of reconciliation in the narrative experience of the TRC. It represents another guiding vision to arriving at a working process of reconciliation. *Ubuntu* was also displayed by the format and actions of the TRC as an operating concept for the decision-making procedures. The discourse of *ubuntu* is referred to clearly in the *TRC Report*, in media rhetoric, and consistently voiced by leaders of the TRC process.

Ubuntu is a complex notion. To use the words of the Archbishop Tutu:

*We Africans speak about a concept difficult to render in English. We speak of ubuntu or botho. You know when it is there and it is obvious when it is absent. It has to do with what it means to be truly human, it refers to gentleness, to compassion, to hospitality, to openness to others, to vulnerability, to be available to for others and to know that you are bound up in them in the bundle of life, for a person is only a person through other persons.*¹⁴⁰

Ubuntu is a social concept in which there is a connectedness in relationships between individuals. *Ubuntu* starts from the premise that relationships between individuals in a community begin from a state of wholeness. There is a unity between victim and offender because they are bound up in a common humanity. These principles are potentially valuable to guide the process of reconciliation in a society as historically and culturally divided as South Africa.

It is a concept that derives culturally from traditional African jurisprudence. As Tutu explains:

*...the central concern is the healing of breaches, the redressing of imbalances, the restoration of broken relationships, a seeking to rehabilitate both the victim and the perpetrator, who should be given the opportunity to be reintegrated into the community he has injured by his offense.*¹⁴¹

¹⁴⁰ Desmond Tutu, *The Rainbow People of God* (New York: Doubleday, 1994): 125.

¹⁴¹ Desmond Tutu, *No Future without Forgiveness* (New York: Doubleday, 1999): 55.

An offence is seen as rupture or a break in the relationship. *Ubuntu* seeks to bring the offenders back into the community and to restore relationships between the victim and the offender as well as between the offender and the community. It is a restorative approach to justice that leads towards healing.¹⁴² It offers another vision to convey the message of where the process of reconciliation must lead by illustrating how South Africans must relate to one another as individual and collective entities.

Finally, *ubuntu* is an African principle, which becomes important in light of the historical European dominance of race relations in South Africa. It offers the inclusion of an African perspective into a history that has been dominated by European influence. Within the symbolism of the TRC, the theme of forgiveness is quite strongly tied to Christian symbolism.¹⁴³ For the message of reconciliation to be credible in the South African context, aspects deriving from traditional African cultural repertoires as well would logically offer potential to reach out to the African population.¹⁴⁴ In this sense, the narratives of *ubuntu* offer another vision of inclusion as part of a message of reconciliation with the potential to appeal to a majority of the overall population specifically.¹⁴⁵

Although a complex concept, it translates well enough in terms of its principles that it makes sense in a wider capacity. Symbolically it is a powerful and positive transformative

¹⁴² Though similar in some respects to the Western concept of restorative justice, the spirit of connected and unity that is not necessarily captured by the Western concept.

¹⁴³ Particularly in light of the specific experience of the TRC's hearings. The hearings were very Christian in nature, often presided over by the Anglican Archbishop Desmond Tutu, and featuring prayers and hymns as part of the proceedings.

¹⁴⁴ The point will be explained further, but the Christian symbolism of confession and forgiveness permeated the experience of the HRV Committee hearings, and in fact this aspect became the subject of some criticism of the TRC.

¹⁴⁵ Any theme or aspect of a theme that tends towards exclusion would be viewed as potentially a negative force to a process of reconciliation. If it undermines the process of reconciliation, it is negative.

concept that offers another vision to repair relationships, and a positive ideal of reconciliation that offers a vision of something to strive for in developing a working process.

The picture thus far highlighted the ideal potential of the symbolism within the content of the South African TRC narrative experience. Human rights impart a message of equality, universalism, and mutual respect to provide a basis for the transition towards a working process of reconciliation. Forgiveness offers a vision of transformation that addresses feelings and attitudes, and conveys a vision of how South Africans are ideally supposed to relate to one another as individuals and as collective entities after the process. *Ubuntu* is based in principles of the interconnectedness and interdependence of people in society, and suggests healing and restoring relationships that address negative feelings and attitudes.

Problems with the Content of the Message

The themes presented above all communicate aspects of a message of reconciliation. They have been presented in a positive light to highlight their potential to credibly convey the message of reconciliation. However, there are some problems and critiques associated to each of these themes. These will be discussed, but a response to these various challenges will be presented in defence of the overall hypothesis. The last section of this chapter briefly considers problems associated to a narrative approach as a whole.

Problems with Human Rights

Human rights are increasingly a global norm, whose value will not be extensively justified in this paper. With respect to the theme of human rights in the TRC, one critique

was that it focused *only* on gross HRVs. For operational reasons, the investigation of the TRC was limited to a definition of gross HRVs (killing, abduction, torture, and severe ill treatment).¹⁴⁶ Limiting the focus in this way ignored the day-to-day injustice of a system built on unequal rights that millions of South Africans were forced to endure for decades under apartheid.

In ideal conditions, the TRC would have had a bigger scope of inquiry, been able to investigate more types of HRVs, or had greater resources to directly involve more people in the process. However, a larger mandate would have required more time, more resources, and would have made the job of compiling its report more difficult, costly, and time-consuming. These critiques above raise valid points, but this does not deny the fact that the TRC still conveyed the message of the importance of human rights as fundamental to developing a peaceful, functioning political system. At this level, the symbolic communication of the message is more important than direct participation because the interest is in identifying the process the societal narrative level.

Problems with Forgiveness

Forgiveness is more contentious than human rights, and has a greater range of problems and critiques associated to it. One pertains to the analogy equating the TRC process with the notion of forgiveness, another to the place of confession in the analogy, and another to the notion of collective guilt. Despite the range of critiques, forgiveness still represents an ideal of reconciliation that can inspire reconstruction of identities if the holders of these identities accept a process towards reconciliation.

¹⁴⁶ TRC Report, Vol.1, Ch.2, p. 29.

Symbolically, the amnesty-for-truth model approximates a secular or political version of confession and forgiveness in a number of respects, but this analogy does not equate in several respects. The format of the TRC was not really set up to accommodate a linear model whereby the offender confesses and the victim forgives. The TRC was divided into three committees with separate functions (HRV Committee, Amnesty Committee, Reparation and Rehabilitation Committee). This division of powers separated the “confession” and “forgiveness” functions between committees. Confession corresponds more to the Amnesty Committee who dealt with amnesty applications from perpetrators, while forgiveness corresponds more to the HRV Committee who dealt with victim testimony.

Confession is a theme of the TRC symbolism linked to forgiveness. The act of making a formal disclosure to the TRC of implication one’s involvement in gross HRVs only represents a confession to the Commission.¹⁴⁷ In this light, the granting of amnesty by the TRC equally represents a sort of official forgiveness granted on behalf of the state. Amnesty applications were made to the TRC and by extension to South Africans at large, because the process was open, public, and visible.

The confession analogy is secular in that it is not a religious sort of confession, but is about freedom from prosecution from the state. This is problematic because forgiveness was not really being asked of the victims of the gross HRVs, but of the state. The problem lies in the fact that the TRC cannot really forgive on behalf of a victim because forgiveness is a personal choice, and amnesty is not the same thing as forgiveness.

Although the amnesty applicants were required to make a full and complete disclosure of facts pertaining to the commission of gross HRVs, the TRC did not require that

¹⁴⁷ Shriver, 159.

the perpetrators register an apology for their acts. Furthermore, the applications may have been submitted for self-serving reasons to avoid future prosecution, in which case the true spirit of confession is not a factor. The calls for confession and forgiveness on the part of the leaders of the TRC were not always matched in reciprocity by individual amnesty applicants. In fact, there is a sense that perpetrators did not exactly confess since they did not have to express remorse, and often did not do so. The problem is that in such cases, if forgiveness is being asked of the victim in exchange for an insincere confession, a lot more is being asked of the victim. This poses a challenge to the perceived validity of the process

Still, the theme does imply an acknowledgement of responsibility on the part of the perpetrators of gross HRVs. By submitting an application to the Amnesty Committee, the perpetrator admitted to the gross HRVs that they aided, committed, or of which they had knowledge. The facts pertaining to these cases of gross HRVs were made available to the public, and in the end there is an official record of admission of responsibility. There is still some value in this more limited sort of “confession.” Even if the motives were self-serving, and there was no genuine motive of apology, a certain admonition of responsibility is made nonetheless, therefore an acknowledgement of responsibility is made. At the very least, it does fulfill a function of acknowledgement.

Guilt is also a problematic concept tied to forgiveness. The granting of forgiveness implies that something has been done to require forgiveness; therefore someone is guilty of something. Notions of collective guilt can take on a negative aspect if broadly applied to an entire group, for example: “All Germans are Nazis.” This is negative in the sense that it judges and broadly labels the entire society as guilty. Collective guilt can become part of a

negative discourse of blame, and such a discourse is detrimental to societal reconciliation because of the way it translates into societal narrative.¹⁴⁸

The TRC tried to avoid such an outcome. In the *TRC Report*, this point comes from its treatment of the notion of just cause. The *Report* made a distinction between *jus ad bellum* and *jus in bello*. The TRC identified anyone who conducted the struggle via unjust means as perpetrators, regardless of what side of the struggle they were on.¹⁴⁹ Even though apartheid was internationally recognised as a crime against humanity, actions in the struggle against apartheid could still be recognised as unjust.¹⁵⁰ Basically, wrong conduct can occur within a just cause and vice versa. These distinctions helped to avoid a broad label of collective guilt by focusing on conduct within the conflict, and pointing out that this occurred on all sides. Although at the same time this distinction pointed out that the cause of the liberation movements was just and there is still a question of larger social responsibility to be acknowledged of those who supported and benefited from apartheid.

Another critique of the forgiveness theme in the TRC pertains to the religious nature of the TRC itself, as illustrated in the following description:

At the TRC's first victim's hearing (East London, 19 April 1996), one Mrs Nomonde Calata, the widow of Fort Calata, (one [of an infamous group of personalities of the struggle known as] the 'Cradock Four'), was momentarily overcome with grief, while relating the story of her husband's abduction and murder. Her anguish filled the hall.

The audience and the Commissioners at the table were shocked into silence. When [the Chair of the proceedings the Archbishop Desmond] Tutu, after allowing a few minutes for Mrs Calata to compose herself, needed to start the session again, he intoned in his own voice the Xhosa hymn Senenzi na ('What have we done?').

Everyone, even the journalists and the security personnel, joined in the singings. Tears flowed. But the atmosphere was set for the rest of the day. The

¹⁴⁸ Boraine, "New paths to Justice," Conference [Unofficial].

¹⁴⁹ *TRC Report*, Vol.1, Ch.4, Par.66.

¹⁵⁰ Many were highly critical of this distinction in practice. Many on the side of the liberation movement felt that the struggle was just and that it was wrong to be associated critically with the actions of the forces defending apartheid. See: Chapter Three of this thesis for further discussion.

*lesson properly learnt and at many future meetings, in a particularly difficult situation, the singing of a hymn or prayer saved the day.*¹⁵¹

The religious aspect was sometimes helpful to victims and audiences in the proceedings. People were putting forth personal accounts of experiences of suffering they had experienced, or spoke of events involving lost family members or loved ones. The singing of hymns and the intonation of prayers would be used at difficult moments in the hearings when victims were having a difficulty speaking of their experiences and giving their testimony.¹⁵² Inevitably, this is a difficult or even a painful process. In this context, spiritual appeals were sometimes made to help facilitate testimony and lend moral strength to participants.

One of the other charges against the TRC was that it was simply too Christian. Not all Africans are Christian and therefore TRC discourse imposed a Christian moral framework upon many non-Christians.¹⁵³ Furthermore, the imposition of a Christian morality would continue to privilege the European-Christian view over the African, which contributes to continued subordination of African identities.¹⁵⁴ From an identity conflict perspective, the imposition of one societal identity over another would potentially represent a negative force to a process of reconciliation.

A response to this critique is that advocating an ideal of forgiveness can be argued from solid ground in a non-religious context, and it is not exclusively a Christian

¹⁵¹ Piet Meiring, "The *baruti* versus the lawyers: the role of religion in the TRC," Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000): 126.

¹⁵² Meiring, 126.

¹⁵³ Chapman and Ball, 18.

¹⁵⁴ During apartheid, one of the factors supporting the societal identity conflict was the promulgation of a discourse in support of apartheid ideologies by the Dutch Reformed Church (DRC). These ideologies played a role in legitimating policies and practices of racial superiority and Separate Development.

principle.¹⁵⁵ Moreover, a message of reconciliation framed in Christian symbolism is not necessarily inappropriate for the South African context.¹⁵⁶ In the words of the *TRC Report*, "The Faith communities enjoy a unique and privileged position in South African society. They are widely respected and have far-reaching moral influence."¹⁵⁷ Furthermore, a majority of the population are self-declared Christians.¹⁵⁸ And, although Christian, the spiritual symbolism was invoked in an inter-denominational and inter-faith spirit, and even provided some common spiritual terrain between the sides opposed in the conflict. Furthermore, the Christian argument does not invalidate the role that forgiveness can play as a message of reconciliation because it has the potential to lead to a positive outcome.

Finally, a critique of the TRC was that the Commissioners imposed forgiveness on the victims during the hearings. Encouraging forgiveness should never produce new trauma for the victims involved. Pressuring a victim to forgive might have this sort of effect, so the ideal experience would avoid producing these effects. This issue raises the question of whether the TRC, or any such commission, has the right to impose forgiveness on victims.

However, the response would be that forgiveness cannot really be imposed. In the end it requires personal choice on the part of the victims involved. A victim may be encouraged to forgive by the Commissioners of the TRC, even strongly encouraged, but in the end he or she cannot be forced to forgive. Even if the victims feel compelled to say the

¹⁵⁵ Trudy Govier, *Forgiveness and Revenge* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

¹⁵⁶ See: Richard Elphick, "Introduction: Christianity in South African History," *Christianity in South Africa: A Political, Social, and Cultural History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1997).

¹⁵⁷ *TRC Report*, Vol.5, Ch.8, Par. 32.

¹⁵⁸ Certain estimates place between 70 to 80 percent of all South Africans as self-proclaimed Christians. See: Peter Gastrow, *Bargaining for Peace: South Africa and the National Peace Accord* (Washington: Unites States Institute of Peace Press, 1995): 15.

Moreover, South Africans are still churchgoing and religious as illustrated, e.g. one author's experience while in South Africa during the latter part of the TRC experience, was that she was asked repeatedly if she was a "believer" by the ordinary people she was meeting and interacting with along the way. See: Paris, 269.

words in the context of the hearing, this does not mean they have made or will make the inner psychological transformation that is forgiveness. Viewing the TRC as a narrative experience, it is more important that the message of forgiveness is promoted as the ideal to be attained, even if not everyone will be able to forgive. The TRC was successful in conveying this message.

Problems with Ubuntu

The critiques relating to *ubuntu* stem largely from differing conceptions of post-conflict justice to deal with gross HRVs or crimes against humanity such as apartheid. Some would have preferred to see perpetrators punished for their actions, rather than receive amnesty. Not everyone could accept that perpetrators who had caused injury directly or to loved ones might be granted amnesty simply for disclosing the facts. For others, the question of reparations or economic justice was paramount, and this was another basis for criticism of the TRC. Still, the argument of this thesis stands firm that as an ideal of reconciliation, *ubuntu* offers another vision to transform relationships and reconstruct societal identities in developing a working process.

Ubuntu is an African concept that suggests restorative principles of justice. Restorative justice places the focus on rehabilitating the dignity of victims and perpetrators alike, and restoring equitable human relationships.¹⁵⁹ The belief is that “crimes cause injury to people and to communities,” so the approach “insists that justice repair those injuries and that all the parties be permitted to participate in that process.”¹⁶⁰ The central concern of

¹⁵⁹ Jacques, 44.

¹⁶⁰ Prison Fellowship International. “What is Restorative Justice?” Restorative Justice Briefing Paper (February 2000). <http://www.restorativejustice.org/rj3/Introduction-Definition/WhatisRJ/What%20is%20Restorative%20Justice%20--%20revised1.doc>.

ubuntu is not retribution or punishment *per se*, but on restoring relationships between victim and offender, and therefore healing the breach in society.

One of the first arguments against a model based in restorative justice is revenge. Calls for vengeance or “an eye for an eye” are a possible response to violence, and may even seem quite understandable in the face of horrible violence, particularly if the would be avenger feels some personal attachment to the victim. The fact that there are calls for vengeance from various individuals does not alone invalidate the claim that reconciliation is occurring. This would not be true if a theme of vengeance begins to frame the course of collective interaction, or politically-organised groups were acting out calls for vengeance. However, the argument can be made that revenge is not conducive to reconciliation because this leads only to further violence or escalation, and therefore not reconciliation.

Reparations are about compensation for the victims who have suffered gross HRVs, and as a response, they are based in repayment for losses to property, for injuries, or for social conditions. Reparations may be either symbolic or material in nature. A drawback of the TRC is that it did not have the capacity to provide reparations to victims of gross HRVs without reliance on the South African government for the funds. It was charged with making recommendations to the government concerning financial reparations to victims, but ultimately the government was responsible for providing the funds to the victims identified as deserving reparations.¹⁶¹ With respect to reparations:

[The TRC recommended] reparations that would provide upwards of R120 000 as financial compensation to the 22 000 recognised victims. Approximately 14 000 victims had already been given Urgent Interim Reparation of 2500 to 7500 rand, paid through the President's Fund, a fund operated through the Department of Justice for the purpose of paying out reparation. President Thabo Mbeki announced

¹⁶¹ Adam, 99.

*that the government would give a one time payment of R30 000 to each person or family officially recognised as a victims of gross HRVs by the TRC.*¹⁶²

A further critique in this regard is that the operational definition of victim in the TRC was too limited. The scope was limited to victims of *gross* HRVs (killing, torture, severe ill treatment). Compensation handed out only to the “officially recognised” victims might be a potential source of envy for millions of so-called “ordinary” victims of apartheid who did not meet an “official” definition of gross HRVs.¹⁶³ Many more South Africans perceived themselves as victims of HRVs that did not satisfy the official definition. Millions of South Africans suffered daily under injustices caused by the aspects of “petty apartheid,” which occurred daily in widespread areas including health, education, housing, and employment.¹⁶⁴

As one begins to broach the larger social issues, this question becomes not so much a question of reparations issued by one commission, but a broader question of economic justice. There is definitely an apartheid legacy of vast socio-economic inequality to overcome in South Africa, and economic arguments calling for equality in terms of economic well-being and standard of living are certainly justified. However, in looking at the transition to long-term reconciliation, the question becomes less about reparations paid out by a commission, and more about socio-economic development. Therefore, even though financial reparations will be paid out to a limited number of victims, it was never the task of the TRC to also be in charge of widespread economic development, so additional financial

¹⁶² Warren Buford and Hugo van der Merwe, “Reparations in Southern Africa,” Originally published in *Cahier d’études africaines*. V44, n1-2 (2004). Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation website. <http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papwbhv.htm>.

¹⁶³ Adam, 100.

¹⁶⁴ “Petty apartheid” was a phrase used to refer to the day-to-day injustices associated to being black in South Africa, which included everything from pass laws, Group Areas legislation, and the general, institutionalised inferior status. This is a violation to many basic human rights and dignities that is not directly addressed through the TRC. See: Lazarus Kgalema, “Symbols of Hope: Monuments as symbols of remembrance and peace in the process of reconciliation,” Occasional paper written for the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation (October, 1999) <http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papkgal1.htm>.

reparations to a larger number of victims would not have held all the answers to economic inequality.

The reparations issue is not limited to financial reparations. The TRC proposed a range of measures intended to promote symbolic reparation. These include issuing death certificates for relatives of those who had died or been killed, providing exhumation, reburials and ceremonies as necessary because many of the people who died were often buried in unknown or unmarked graves, headstones and tombstones should be provided where appropriate, and criminal records acquired from political activity should be cleared.¹⁶⁵

Reparations are important in potentially alleviating pro-conflict feelings, in granting closure that can be crucial for reconciliation to begin, but they are not the only important factor. Recent non-governmental organisation (NGO) research is suggesting that “[g]enuine reparations... do not occur [alone] through the delivery of an object (e.g. a pension, a monument, etc), but through the *process that takes place around the object*.”¹⁶⁶ Ultimately, it is important to keep the *process* of reconciliation moving forward. The way to do this in South Africa post-TRC is to continue to work for the overall economic inclusion, development, and prosperity for the country as a whole for the future. Therefore, calls for reparations should not be seen as an indictment of the TRC because reparations are not the whole answer to the economic problems of South Africa.

Perhaps the most significant challenge to the principles of *ubuntu* has come from the perspective of retributive justice. The basic idea behind retributive justice is punishment.

¹⁶⁵ “A Summary of Reparation and Rehabilitation Policy, Including Proposals to be Considered by the President,” TRC Website. http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/trc_frameset.htm.

¹⁶⁶ Author’s emphasis. Quote taken from: Kgalema, “Symbols of Hope,” <http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papkgal1.htm>.

The amnesty provisions of the TRC tie into the retributive justice argument. As mentioned earlier, the amnesty issue was controversial. Once the details of many of the specific acts of torture and killing came to light through the TRC hearings, there were many objections to the fact that the perpetrators of these acts could go free. Many felt that these people should be punished. This question was also central to some of the legal and constitutional challenges to the TRC, but ultimately the constitutionality of the amnesty provisions were upheld.¹⁶⁷

Aside from the controversial nature of the amnesty provisions of the TRC, there are other arguments in favour of the retributive model. The criminal trial of perpetrators of gross HRVs distinguishes between individual and collective guilt. When specific perpetrators are clearly identified, the burden of collective guilt is removed from the group as a whole. In other words, criminal trials help make the distinction between the “ordinary” members of the community and those responsible for the violence, and can mark a symbolic break with the practices of the former regime.¹⁶⁸

However, the retributive punishment or criminal trial model for post-conflict justice poses problems of its own. For example, by identifying a select few individuals as responsible for HRVs also removes the collective aspect of responsibility. In South Africa, there was an entire social system that supported apartheid. A majority of white South Africans consistently supported government policy over the years, which included support for government programs to counter the liberation movements. Therefore, there is a wider

¹⁶⁷ The TRC was subjected to several legal challenges. The first such challenge was filed by Azapo, Ms NM Biko, Mr CH Mxenge, and Mr C Ribeiro who contested the constitutionality of the TRC. They did not feel the Commission was entitled to grant amnesty. The Constitutional Court upheld the constitutionality of the section of the *National Unity and Reconciliation Act of 1995*, which permitted amnesty to be granted under certain conditions. See: Scott, 109.

¹⁶⁸ Jacques, 36.

collective responsibility that has to be addressed in such cases that the criminal model is not necessarily equipped to address.

There was also another layer of justice incorporated in the TRC model. Amnesty applicants were required to satisfy several conditions, the first and foremost was the full and complete disclosure of information pertaining to gross HRVs. The details of these cases were published in the national media, so if someone confessed to an act, the facts were made known to the public. In many cases this would have entailed revealing this information to family, friends, co-workers, and the wider community at large. This entailed an aspect of justice via public shame, which represents another layer of justice in the South African TRC model. Therefore, even in cases where amnesty was granted to perpetrators, there was a form of public sanction.

Throughout the South African TRC experience, there were debates relating to the question of justice. Principles of *ubuntu* were challenged with arguments from two other perspectives on post-apartheid justice (reparations/economic justice and retributive justice). The critiques that arise from these approaches to justice to raise some important issues, yet this paper showed a counterargument to each.

Once again, it is important to return to the central argument of the thesis. Even though there were other conceptions of justice in the debates surrounding the TRC, this does not remove the value of the message being communicated of *ubuntu*. The point is that *ubuntu* offers one more vision of an ideal of reconciliation. Even if there are some who disagree with *ubuntu* model of applied justice, it still provides a vision for transforming relationships and identities and provides a basis upon which to develop a working process because it communicates the ideal outcome of the process.

Problems with the Narrative Approach

This final section will address potential problems with the narrative approach. The central argument, that in order for reconciliation to occur the message of reconciliation must be credibly conveyed and genuinely received, relies on narrative theory. The TRC has been portrayed as a narrative experience that communicated a message composed of themes of human rights, forgiveness, and *ubuntu*, which provide visions to promote a working process of reconciliation, and thereby the reconstruction of societal identities. A narrative approach assumes that identities are socially constructed, but the intent here is not to offer a defense of the theory of social constructionism. The intent is more simply to deal with a couple of issues that relate specifically to the TRC and the narrative process of reconciliation.

There are various problems associated to the concept of truth as well as the relationship between truth and reconciliation.¹⁶⁹ The nature of the truth uncovered by a truth commission can vary according to its mandate.¹⁷⁰ One of the problems is associated to the question of “the official narrative” of the Commission. Writing up the *TRC Report* was a process of “selecting” an official truth about what happened.¹⁷¹ There were several challenges associated to this task, including operational matters like a limited timeframe, a massive volume of information out of which to compile a report, and evidentiary considerations. Bundy even argues that the role of the TRC in shaping history has the potential to “narrow, constrain and therefore distort” by ignoring the wider social realities in

¹⁶⁹ Chapman, 262.

¹⁷⁰ Chapman and Ball, 12.

¹⁷¹ Charles Villa-Vincencio and Wilhelm Verwoerd, “Constructing a Report: Writing up the ‘Truth,’” *Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 281.

focusing on a limited period and limited definitions of victims.¹⁷² The work of the TRC has uncovered only a partial truth insofar as history is still under construction.¹⁷³

The theory presented in Chapter One is that attempts to alter, manipulate or reconstruct a societal identity through *any* sort of policy or practice designed to effectuate transition to the identity inherently carries some potential to introduce threat dynamics. The idea is that this would be true even if the intent behind the reconstruction of the identity is benign (*e.g.* in support of reconciliation). A problem is that, the very act of selecting the new narratives can generate its own new set of problems, if the selecting winds up as the imposition of one identity over another.¹⁷⁴ This is not to say that societal identity reconstruction should not be promoted post-conflict, but there are limits to avoid doing new harm to the situation. There needs to be a spirit of openness and inclusion in the new narratives, but also space within the new direction to allow for some inevitable resistance to the change, as identities makes sense of new developments.

However, there is an important distinction to be made between the narratives of the TRC experience and the *TRC Report*. The *TRC Report* documented the testimonies, presented the facts, and acknowledged the issues it faced. This was an open process that took place under continual media coverage as well as a steady range of criticism and opposition.¹⁷⁵ The narratives of the TRC experience include the larger societal dialogue that occurs around the TRC, so that it is more than the pages of the *TRC Report* by itself. Ultimately more important is not the “official” report, but the fact that the TRC was

¹⁷² Colin Bundy, “The Beast of the Past: History and the TRC,” *After the TRC: Reflections on Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2000): 16-18.

¹⁷³ Janet Cherry, “Historical truth: something to fight for” *Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa* (Cape Town: Cape Town University Press, 2000).

¹⁷⁴ Cherry, 134-143.

¹⁷⁵ Villa-Vincencio and Verwoerd, 284-285.

established in the first place, because it is the experience of having gone through the collective experience of the TRC that generates the narrative processes by which the message of reconciliation would be incorporated into the societal narratives and contribute to reconciliation.

A narrative experience such as the TRC must avoid imposing one narrative identity on South Africans. The following passage sums it up clearly:

The South African Truth Commission is only one of the structures through which we should hope to dismantle the old regime of truth in order to replace it with new and multiple narratives. We must remain aware of the dangers of replacing apartheid's false utopian historicism with our own new orthodoxies.

As we construct new historical narratives, it will be in the currency of heterotopias, multiple idealisms, rather than with the single-mindedness of utopia; it will be with an awareness of the pain that is inflicted when one ethical world conflicts with others nearby.¹⁷⁶

The TRC does not complete the task of developing the new narratives, and as we move away from the TRC in time, the task falls to the historians and the educators to continue to interpret and contextualise the TRC within project of national reconciliation, “synthesising new narratives, yet without degenerating into a new domination.”¹⁷⁷

The question of the narrative of the TRC imposing a master narrative on multiple identities has not really become a question of new domination, insofar as it becomes about communicating a message of reconciliation. The TRC has walked a fine line in avoiding the imposition of one identity. The themes of the TRC make a statement about human rights that gross HRVs are not acceptable in a peaceful, democratic society, and they convey ideal visions of how to transform relationships as a basis for the construction of new, inclusive societal identities through forgiveness and *ubuntu*. The message offers a transformative

¹⁷⁶ Asmal, Asmal, and Roberts, 214.

¹⁷⁷ Charles Maier, “Doing History, Doing Justice: The Narrative of the Historian and of the Truth Commission,” *Truth v. Justice: The Morality of Truth Commissions* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2000): 266, 275.

vision of a process that can benefit South Africans from all sides in working towards a peaceful, equitable, and free society.

To conclude, this chapter used the experience of the TRC to illustrate aspects of a credible message of reconciliation for the specific context of post-apartheid/post-TRC South Africa. First, the TRC was presented as a narrative experience able to communicate the message of reconciliation, which is a necessary element of conveying a message. The TRC engaged with South Africans from across the spectrum as either an event or concept in a profound and sustained way at the individual and collective levels. As such, it has become a part of the narrative experience of the South Africa; it has become part of a shared post-apartheid history. Despite various problems associated to the themes of human rights, forgiveness, and *ubuntu* as they existed in the South African TRC, the combined message contains these themes that offer visions for transforming relationships and identities in support of the development of an inclusive, pan South African societal identity. The next and final chapter will talk about a message of reconciliation being genuinely received.

Chapter Three

Genuinely Received:

A Thematic Approach to Illustrating Acceptance of the Message of Reconciliation and Identifying Trends in Support of Reconciliation

Recalling the central hypothesis, that for the narrative processes of identity construction to contribute in a positive way to reconciliation, a message of reconciliation must be credibly conveyed and genuinely received by society at large, this chapter examines how the message of reconciliation has been genuinely received in South Africa. This chapter will explore the South African experience to illustrate how it is possible to conclude that a message of reconciliation has been genuinely received. Once again, the method in this chapter will employ a thematic analysis.

Earlier, reconciliation was defined as a working process aspiring towards an ideal and requires negative feelings and attitudes to be set aside in a process of identity reconstruction. It is important to recall that there is no absolute guarantee of the long-term success of the project of reconciliation. The process towards reconciliation is neither linear nor automatic and a series of positive steps might be followed by later setbacks. Reconciliation as the reconstruction of societal identities is a gradual process that occurs over a long term, but the process can possibly be undermined by new instabilities in the political or economic sectors, for example. This discussion highlights the political sector because the central concern is with reconciliation of the identity conflict, *i.e.*, the violent political conflict, so, in this light, the political actors are given priority in the analysis.

The data presented will be used to infer that a working process of reconciliation is developing in South Africa based on some positive indicators. The first section highlights

significant post-apartheid identity themes, explains their importance, and that political desecuritisation supports the conclusion that the message of reconciliation is being genuinely received; people are accepting to work within the established political processes, while not resorting to violent mobilisation.

The indicators presented in this chapter highlight the political sector in South Africa. In sequence, political discourse, political comportment, and election results will be discussed as indicators of *desecuritisation*. The main sources for analysing the narratives and the behaviour are the major political parties, spokespersons and public figures associated to the parties, as well as the relative electoral positions in the democratic system based on successive elections in 1994, 1999, and 2004.

The next set of indicators highlight two different aspects of *active reconciliation*. The first pertains to the participation within the TRC proceedings. The second set refers to types of activities that have been occurring since the TRC. The sources here include political figures and organisations, but also include various types of community and individual measures that constitute active reconciliation. There is ongoing activity that continues in the spirit of reconciliation.

Finally, this chapter reviews a selection of survey-based data to provide indicators of *popular attitudes*. Some specific indicators are general attitudes towards the government and political system. Once again, these indicate overall support for the minimum conditions of reconciliation as a working process. Some attitudes towards race provide indicators of racial reconciliation in terms of attitudes towards the other. Lastly, data from a study of post-apartheid narrative identities of white South Africans provides additional indication that the reconstruction of identities is occurring.

Thematic Analysis of Post-Apartheid South African Identities

Societal identities are constructed around narrative themes and symbolism. This chapter will highlight the themes of Ethnonationalism, Race and Racism, the Rainbow Nation, and the Two Nations. As explained earlier, Ethnonationalism and Race and Racism were central to the historical construction of apartheid and the identities around which the groups mobilised in the conflict. The Rainbow Nation and Two Nations are prominent visions in the post-apartheid period. These themes provide a basis around which to examine how South Africans are engaging with one another to examine the emergence of patterns of collective interaction. These themes are to be kept in mind while examining three additional indicators: desecuritisation, active reconciliation, and popular attitudes.

In discussing each of these indicators, the paper will give some specific focus to the comportment of the white population in this process because they have experienced the greatest upheaval throughout the transition. According to the logic of narrative identity theory, periods of major upheaval or “rupture” constitute periods of risk in which societal identities may feel threatened on a widespread basis.¹⁷⁸ The general assessment at the outset

¹⁷⁸ Cornell uses the term “rupture” to refer to periods of crises in which identities and feelings of security associated to these identities are called into question. The idea is that identities respond to crisis with a “search for order” in which there may be greater temptations to lay blame on others or to become more easily used and manipulated by political leaders. They may therefore be more likely to support conflict. See: Stephen Cornell, “That’s the Story of Our Life,” *We Are a People: Narrative and Multiplicity in Constructing Ethnic Identity* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2000): 45

Kaufman also argues that the loss of power or the upheaval of a group’s relative situation has the potential to create fear and uncertainty in the population. Fears of ethnic extinction are cited as one of the conditions for ethnic war to occur. He also notes that the fears alone are not sufficient condition for ethnic war, but that they can be used and manipulated, which becomes the link to an escalation towards the outbreak of war. See: Stuart J. Kaufman, *Modern Hatreds: The Symbolic Politics of Ethnic War* (Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 2001).

Sarankinsky echoes this theme as well. Major social transition that entails the rapid change of one political system to another, even when the old system is regarded as repressive or unjust, can still have traumatic effects on the population because the old beliefs and “predictability” of the old system vanish. See: Ivor Sarankinsky, “The Political Dynamics and Psychological Dynamics of South Africa’s Transition to

of the whole transition period was in part that right-wing elements of the Afrikaner population posed the greatest security concern to the transition process. It was also widely acknowledged that the participation of the white community is necessary for the realisation of a non-racial and united South Africa.

However, the non-white population constitutes the majority and potentially wields the greatest influence on the political direction of South Africa under the new democratic system, so it is certainly important to observe how the majority is behaving.¹⁷⁹ Reference will also be given to other minority groups where appropriate. Limiting the focus in this way oversimplifies matters somewhat, but it is done to relate the major themes and identities to what is happening with respect to collective behaviour and popular attitudes.

Ethnonationalism

Ethnonationalism is a societal identity theme that has shown potential historically to lead towards particularist or exclusive ideologies. As a rule, any theme of societal identity construction that excludes or divides in ways that are perceived as threatening by other identities potentially undermines the development of a new inclusive identity. The thing to look for whether the present trends related to this theme plays with respect to the development of the construction of an inclusive pan-South African identity.

The theme of ethnonationalism has a long history in South Africa. As the first chapter illustrated, Afrikaner ethnonationalism and the nationalist movement were central to

Democracy,” *Socio-Political and Psychosocial Perspectives on South Africa* (Huntington: Nova Science Publishers, Inc., 2001): 29.

¹⁷⁹ If voting patterns unfold in bloc formation occur according to lines of racial divisions in South Africa, then the black African population could theoretically hold the democratic majority. Therefore they could control government and the political direction of the country. However, some of the research is suggesting that ethnic and racial identities alone are not necessarily indicators of electoral behaviour. See: Courtney Jung, *Then I was Black: South African Political Identities in Transition* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2000).

the establishment of the apartheid state. These were powerful narrative themes in the historical construction of the major societal identities of the identity conflict. Yet, Afrikaner ethnonationalism is not the only variant of an ethnonational theme in South Africa. The Inkatha movement is another example of an ethnonational-based societal identity repertoire.

The negotiation period and the first ten years of democracy in South Africa have been a period of transition of relationships among South Africa's societal identities. Relative positions have been affected in different ways. By and large, ethnonationalism has receded as a mobilising discourse from the framing of political identities. It was becoming less prominent even in the later stages of apartheid, but is less relevant as a societal identity theme in the present day.

The status of the Afrikaner identity has undergone a profound transformation through the political transition of South Africa. One of the major concerns according to observers of South Africa's political transition was that calls for a separate ethnic homeland from right-wing Afrikaners potentially represented one of the most dangerous forces for the new South Africa.¹⁸⁰ Furthermore, the Afrikaners will likely continue to experience identity-related issues that always have the potential to rouse fears of assimilation or "ethnic extinction."¹⁸¹

For example, the Afrikaners collectively must deal with a stigma of being the group identified as most responsible for apartheid, or most to blame, and it will be important to monitor whether there is a place for the Afrikaner identity in the new South Africa. The potential burden of collective guilt assigned to for the apartheid system cannot forever frame

¹⁸⁰ Jakes Gerwel, "National reconciliation: holy grail or secular pact?" Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa, (Cape Town: Cape Town University Press, 2000): 283.

¹⁸¹ "Ethnic extinction" *à la* Kaufman, Modern Hatreds, (2001).

their relationship with other identity groups. The greater the extent that forgiveness can occur, this will contribute in a positive way to the process of reconciliation (as the reconstruction of identity).

Ethnonational themes have also featured prominently within the mobilising discourse of the Inkatha movement. Politically, the movement is represented by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP), which is an important actor to monitor because the IFP was a principle figure involved in some of the most serious violence during the transition period in the course of rivalry with the African National Congress (ANC) in KwaZulu Natal (KZN). Overall, the IFP is seen primarily as a Zulu party, and therefore as an ethnic identity on one hand, but the Zulu population is concentrated in KZN, so it is also seen as a regional identity on the other hand. Either way, it has not and does not appear likely to emerge as a broad-based opposition identity capable of representing South Africa on the national scale. As a factor in national politics in South Africa it will likely remain a regionally based opposition party.¹⁸²

The Coloured population has received little attention thus far, but this is another identity group in South Africa. Along with the Indian population, they were recognised as a distinct racial group under apartheid. However, the Coloureds never did develop an ethnonational-based movement as the basis for collective mobilisation during the anti-apartheid struggle. Rather they tended to identify in terms of common oppression and pressed for the Charterist ideals of the wider liberation movement.

Still, the Coloureds have experienced some dislocation of status throughout the transition. Under apartheid the Coloureds were a minority group in a category beneath the white population in terms of rights and privileges, but with a certain protected status

¹⁸² Opinion polls demonstrate that 43 percent of South Africans tend to equate the IFP with a party that looks out for Zulu interests. See: Jung, 105.

nevertheless compared to the plight of the black population. Now, they remain a minority group, but their relationship with the group in power has changed. The Coloureds no longer have a “privileged” status ensured through the constitutional structures like under apartheid, and now represent their interests within the democratic system. According to identity theory, the Coloureds potentially represent another group at risk for perceiving societal security fears under these conditions, yet empirically this is not reflected in an exclusivist ethnically based mobilisation, which would suggest rejection of reconciliation as the construction of an inclusive pan-South African identity.

In general, ethnonational themes in the post-apartheid era do not appear to be developing in such a way that they are undermining the construction of an inclusive pan-South African societal identity. This represents a positive sign for the development reconciliation in terms of the reconstruction of societal identities. In and of itself, this does not permit the conclusion that this form of reconciliation is occurring, but it does suggest that ethnonational identities, to the extent that they continue to hold meaning for South Africans are finding ways to be accommodated in the new South Africa.

Race and Racism

Historically, race and racism are very prominent societal identity themes in South Africa. Apartheid was a severe socio-political system of racial division that was justified in part through ideologies of racial superiority, but racism was pervasive in South Africa well before apartheid came into existence.¹⁸³ The racial division remains one of the major obstacles to overcome in post-apartheid South Africa. It is important to know how

¹⁸³ Desmond Tutu, No Future Without Forgiveness (New York: Doubleday, 1999): 252.

racialised themes are evolving because the potential for renewed conflict is an ongoing concern, particularly if a message of reconciliation were not received.

Racist ideologies are exclusivist in nature. They not only promote difference but they also are based in the belief that certain groups are superior to others. In the context of apartheid, racism was engrained into the basis of the political system. If racist discourse becomes prominent in the discourse post-apartheid South Africa, this would suggest that the construction of an inclusive pan-South African identity is not occurring. A racist political movement would be divisive and it would mean that negative attitudes continue to characterise intergroup relations. This could undermine the process of reconciliation.

Yet, the racial question is still prevalent in post-apartheid South Africa, and the issues are complex, so even though the apartheid era is over, racial constructs continue to hold meaning for South Africans, and many people make sense of their existence through racial lenses. Part of the reason may stem from the rigid territorialisation of racial division under apartheid, which produced a highly divided society in physical and spatial terms, and reinforced the psychological division of the population.¹⁸⁴ The problem can occur when debate around pragmatic issues sometimes involves race.¹⁸⁵ For example, even legitimate criticism of blacks by whites may be called racist, and blacks appear sometimes to play the “race card” and present themselves as the disadvantaged victim.¹⁸⁶ The reduction of political processes to racially based conflict would suggest that reconciliation is not occurring.

¹⁸⁴ Cornelissen and Horstmeier, 64.

¹⁸⁵ Scarlett Cornelissen and Steffen Horstmeier, “The social and political construction of identities in the new South Africa: an analysis of the Western Cape Province,” *Journal of Modern African Studies* V40 n1 (2002): 63, 79.

¹⁸⁶ Kogila Moodley and Heribert Adam, “Race and Nation in Post-Apartheid South Africa,” *Current Sociology* V48 n3 (July 2000): 54.

Race continues to be a factor in politics in post-apartheid South Africa, but in general the "character" has changed.¹⁸⁷ An illustration of the new character of racialised politics can be seen with respect to competition between the now defunct New National Party (NNP) and the ANC for the Coloured vote. The NNP has tried to appeal to the Coloured vote in a reversal of the traditional Black Consciousness (BC) premises of a non-racial definition of the black identity as both socially oppressed and *non-white*.¹⁸⁸ The discourse of the NNP on the other hand was attempting to portray itself to the Coloured population as *non-black*.¹⁸⁹ The idea was to use racial identity as a means to widen the base of support of the NNP, but in a reverse fashion from its application during the apartheid era.

Finally, white South Africans are gradually undergoing a collective redefinition of identity and re-negotiating the salient meanings of whiteness as they search to come to terms with their place in the history of the new South Africa. Old white identities are being challenged.¹⁹⁰ The white population is now an electoral minority in the new democratic system and must find new roles and new ways to exercise its influence on South African politics. Overall, the younger generation appears more supportive of the new directions than the older generations, which would be an encouraging sign for the prospects of reconciliation.¹⁹¹

Race and racism have not gone away as problems for South Africa. Race has the potential to "colour" many other issues, which could prove demanding to the development

¹⁸⁷ William Gutteridge, "South Africa: Potential of Mbeki's Presidency," Conflict Studies V319 / 320 (June / July 1999): 20.

¹⁸⁸ BC is discussed in detail in Chapter One of this thesis.

¹⁸⁹ Jung, 203.

¹⁹⁰ Melissa Steyn, 'Whiteness Just Isn't What it Used to Be': White Identity in a Changing South Africa (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001): 151.

¹⁹¹ Gunnar Thiessen, "Between Acknowledgement and Forgiveness: How white South Africans have dealt with the apartheid past," Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation. Research report based on a CSVr-public opinion survey (March 1996) <http://www.csvr.org.za/papers/papgt4.htm>.

of a stable working process of reconciliation. South Africa is a multiracial society, so race will continue to be a social issue in South Africa, and race will also likely remain a theme around which societal identities are constructed in the new South Africa. The important thing to note is the particular ways that race is manifesting itself in terms of framing collective interaction because this will determine whether the tendency appears to support or undermine the construction of an inclusive pan-South African identity.

Rainbow Nation

The theme of the Rainbow Nation became prominent during the transition period in South Africa. It was prominent in the discourse of Nelson Mandela, ANC leader and president of the first democratically elected government of South Africa, but the theme was also a part of the Archbishop Tutu's discourse since the late 1980s, which includes references to "the Rainbow People of God."¹⁹² The language of the Rainbow Nation offers a vision for the identity of the new South Africa. The theme predates the TRC, so it did not derive from the message of reconciliation expressed by the narrative experience of the TRC, but the message of the Rainbow Nation is supportive of the ideal of societal identity reconciliation.

The message behind the Rainbow Nation is open and inclusive. The theme offers a vision of unity through difference as the basis for a new national identity. It offers the potential to accommodate all of South Africa's racial and ethnonational identities. This is likely an important factor given the historical legacy of exclusivist racial and ethnonational identities in South Africa. This vision is able to include all the identities of the peoples of

¹⁹² Grossberg, 65; Desmond Tutu, The Rainbow People of God (New York: Doubleday, 1994).

South Africa. It is compatible with the ideals of TRC symbolism because it offers a vision for the reconstruction of societal identities to a new inclusive identity.¹⁹³

As Moodley and Adam accurately describe, “There is an ongoing tension between the ideal of colour-blindness and the need to recognise race in order to diminish the reality of colour inequity.”¹⁹⁴ For example, there has been some commitment voiced by the ANC government to work towards building “non-racial higher education institutions” reflective of the “new values” of the “new democracy.”¹⁹⁵ Non-racialism is an ideal that could be important to overcoming the legacy of a racially circumscribed identity conflict. However, non-racialism may yet be challenged by demands for recognition from sub-national minorities as a laissez-faire doctrine that privileges the status quo, *i.e.*, will privilege the black African majority.¹⁹⁶

Demands for recognition of linguistic and cultural difference play out in different ways politically. For example, the government has taken some steps towards promoting a multi-racial vision of the country by working to put certain ideals into practice. For example, it has adopted various policies with respect to official languages and funding for public education designed to assist all of South Africa’s official languages. The purpose was to offer support to the status and the development of traditional languages in education, thus supporting a multi-racial vision compatible with a Rainbow Nation theme.¹⁹⁷

¹⁹³ As Kreisberg argues, the promotion of “superordinate” goals and identities is an important part of the reconciliation process, which includes developing institutions, practices, and policies that promote a sense of unity and common purpose. The rainbow nation theme offers such a vision. See: Louis Kreisberg, “Coexistence and the Reconciliation of Communal Conflicts” The Handbook of Interethnic Coexistence New York: The Continuum Publishing Company, 1998: 192.

¹⁹⁴ Moodley and Adam, 55.

¹⁹⁵ “Institutional Restructuring: Higher education leapfrogs into non-racial future,” ANC Today (13-19 December, 2002).

¹⁹⁶ Jung, 224.

¹⁹⁷ “New policy champions development of African languages,” ANC Today (8-14 November, 2002).

The ideals behind the image of the Rainbow Nation theme support the construction of an inclusive pan-South African identity. The Rainbow Nation offers an inclusive vision that can accommodate all of South Africa's societal identities and allow for multiple narratives. Multiracial ideals are generally compatible with the Rainbow Nation vision because they recognise and support multiple identities within a single vision. Non-racialism is a principle that may be valuable in overcoming the racial divide, but it is not entirely clear how non-racialism will fit into the Rainbow Nation. It appears that there is at least some interest for a multiracial South Africa, so the most important factor becomes how demands for multiracialism are played out in terms of framing collective interaction. If it develops in the spirit of an inclusive vision such as the Rainbow Nation, then this will be compatible with the development of a process of reconciliation.

Two Nations

The theme of the Two Nations is a more recent development in the post-apartheid narratives in South Africa, emerging initially from President Thabo Mbeki in an address to parliament on May 29, 1998. The following excerpt explains:

... South Africa is a country of two nations. One of these nations is white, relatively prosperous, regardless of gender or geographic dispersal. It has ready access to a developed economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure...

The second and larger nation of South Africa is black and poor, with the worst affected being women in the rural areas, the black rural population in general and the disabled. This nation lives under conditions of a grossly underdeveloped economic, physical, educational, communication and other infrastructure. It has virtually no possibility to exercise what in reality amounts to a theoretical right to equal opportunity, with that right being equal within this black nation only to the extent that it is equally incapable of realisation.

This reality of two nations, underwritten by the perpetuation of the racial, gender and spatial disparities born of a very long period of colonial and apartheid white minority domination, constitutes the material base which reinforces the notion that, indeed, we are not one nation, but two nations.

*And neither are we becoming one nation. Consequently, also, the objective of national reconciliation is not being realised.*¹⁹⁸

In general the Two Nations theme presents the vision of a divided South Africa. It is a bipolar image that highlights the contrast between two quite different social realities that continue to persist in present-day South Africa – a prosperous, well-off white South Africa on the one hand, and an underdeveloped, poverty-stricken black South Africa on the other. It captures the sense of many of the challenges continuing to face the country today in a vision of a dichotomy.

The socio-economic division of the country is glaring, and for many people, their situation has not changed noticeably since the transition from apartheid. The theme of Two Nations emphasises that there is still much work to be accomplished so that all groups can benefit out of the new South Africa. The question of reconciliation in reference to the theme is tied very much to the question of economic justice. In this sense, despite an element of division, the existence of this theme is not necessarily problematic in and of itself because it highlights the need to remain united and to work together to solve the problems. On the positive side, there is evidence of public discourse that recognises the economic situation in that it is consistently identified as one of the pressing tasks facing the South African government.

The key factor is the way the narratives of the Two Nations theme develop over time. The greater the extent that the Two Nations image becomes a racialised in a way that either blames or is outright racist would undermine the potential of the process of reconciliation. The Two Nations image does not necessarily have to have negative connotations entirely because it can also serve as positive motivation to confront the

¹⁹⁸ Thabo Mbeki. Statement of Deputy President Thabo Mbeki at the Opening of the Debate in the National Assembly, on "Reconciliation and Nation Building," National Assembly (Cape Town, 29 May 1998).

undeniable socio-economic problems that presently face South Africa; it serves as a vivid reminder present challenges to overcome. The point is that if the message of reconciliation is being received, then the theme will not be framed in the lens of victims and perpetrators.

Desecuritisation in South Africa

The proposed method to observe the reconstruction of societal identities to be able to say that the message of reconciliation is being genuinely received in South Africa is to examine political discourse, political comportment, and election results. These three indicators show how South African identities are interacting in the political sector. They suggest that one is witnessing a “returning to normal” of political processes.¹⁹⁹ The evidence is intended to suggest that there are positive signs that a process of reconciliation is occurring in the political sector, which are important conclusions to be able to draw in light of a historical legacy of violent political conflict.

Political Discourse

In general, political discourse shows the message that the major political parties are promoting an inclusive vision for the future of South Africa. The discourse shows that what they are saying, at least on the surface, does not advocate violence or rejection of peaceful means. The major political parties are promoting an open, democratic vision for South Africa. This section looks at the key parties and surveys their respective official discourse.

None of the major parties are advocating a platform or vision for South Africa that would exclude basic principles of human rights, equality and universal democracy. A few parties have exercised the most influence on the direction of South African politics since

¹⁹⁹ See Chapter One of this thesis for the definition of desecuritisation.

1990. The most important to the transition period from 1990 to 1994 were the African National Congress (ANC), the National Party (NP), and the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP).²⁰⁰ These parties were those most directly involved in the violence.

However, as of the 2004 elections, the political landscape has shifted. The ANC remains the most important party and holds its third consecutive majority government. The Democratic Alliance (DA) has become the second major party and official opposition, while the IFP maintains a presence through a regionally based constituency. The New National Party (NNP) has not only lost ground in terms of overall support since 1994, but after the poor results in 2004, has recently voted to disband as a party and join up with the ANC.²⁰¹ Several other parties also hold seats within in the National Assembly after the 2004 elections. The most significant in terms of overall percentage of the vote are the United Democratic Movement (UDM), the Independent Democrats (ID), and the African Christian Democratic Party (ACDP).²⁰²

The ANC has historically followed the principles adopted in the Freedom Charter. The basic guiding principles have not really changed. For example, in the Preamble to the party constitution, it states that the ANC remains committed to a “united, non-racial, non-sexist and democratic South Africa in which the people as a whole shall govern and all shall

²⁰⁰ These were the most important parties in terms of the identity conflict. The ANC was engaged in an armed liberation struggle against the NP-led apartheid regime. During the transition period, the violence between the ANC and the state was decreasing as negotiations superseded the armed struggle, but violence increased between the ANC and the IFP.

²⁰¹ The National Party was re-branded as the New National Party (NNP) following the transformation to the democratic system. The NNP Federal Council voted on 09 April, 2005 to disband the party. NNP members will join with the ruling ANC. See: “NNP votes to disband,” *Sunday Times* (09 April 2005).

²⁰² Based on 2004 General Election Results. These latter three parties account for only 22 out of 400 seats in the National Assembly. The remaining parties to hold seats after 2004 include the Vryheidsfront Plus (VF Plus), the United Christian Democratic Party (UCDP), the Pan Africanist Congress of Azania (PAC), the Minority Front (MF), and the Azanian People’s Organisation (AZAPO), yet together these parties account for only 20 out of 400 seats, and not one of these latter parties took more than one percent of the overall vote. See: National Election 2004. Independent Electoral Commission. http://www.elections.org.za/elections2004_static.asp.

enjoy equal rights.”²⁰³ With respect to reconciliation of identities, ANC discourse espouses principles that generally support a pan-South African identity. Confronting racism has been a significant part of the discourse of the presidency under Thabo Mbeki as it was under Nelson Mandela.²⁰⁴ In Mbeki’s words: “Persisting racism and racial disparities in our country constitute an obstacle to the achievement of the goal of national reconciliation.”²⁰⁵

The DA has become the most prominent opposition party in South African politics. They form the official opposition to the government in the National Assembly. The DA has consistently promoted a discourse of a loyal opposition party. The leaders of the party reflect this clearly, as with the words of leader Tony Leon: “The political opposition is not opposed to the state. It is loyal to the Constitution. And yet it may oppose the governing party, criticise its behaviour, and recommend alternatives.”²⁰⁶ The DA party literature echoes this general stance.²⁰⁷

The IFP has always been a regional party with a Zulu identity. In terms of discourse, the IFP has consistently represented an opposition to the ANC, during the negotiations in the transition period through to the present government. The party constitution advocates humanistic principles for individual and collective rights, equality before the law, and social equality in a system of direct and participatory democracy.²⁰⁸ IFP leader Mangosuthu Buthelezi portrayed the party in 2004 as the “voice of ANC’s bad conscience.” He suggested

²⁰³ Quote taken from the Preamble to the 1998 Constitution as published on the ANC Website. See: African National Congress Website. <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/const/constitution98.html>.

²⁰⁴ Arlene Grossberg, “Race Relations,” *Public Attitudes in Contemporary South Africa: Insights from an HSRC Survey* (Cape Town: HSRC Publishers, 2002): 63.

²⁰⁵ “Mbeki reacts to ‘race-card’ allegations,” *Mail and Guardian* (19 June, 2003).

²⁰⁶ “Leon Muses on the test that faces South Africa,” *Mail and Guardian* (16 December 2003).

²⁰⁷ Democratic Alliance Website. <http://www.da.org.za/da/Site/Eng/About/principles.asp>.

²⁰⁸ Constitution of Inkatha Freedom Party. Inkatha Freedom Party Website.

<http://www.ifp.org.za/Info/constitu.htm>.

they “have the great responsibility to become the moral and constructive opposition of South Africa.”²⁰⁹

The NNP was the reincarnation of the party that once ruled apartheid South Africa. With mainly in an Afrikaner base of support, their influence declined steadily since the 1994 elections. While they did exist, the NNP platform of principles promoted political, religious, economic, individual and cultural freedoms, and the party constitution officially supported a democratic multiparty system under the South African constitution. They did advocate safeguarding the collective rights of minorities under the new constitution and avoiding simple majoritarianism.²¹⁰

The UDM has never played a major role politically in South Africa, although it was the fourth most popular party in the 2004 elections.²¹¹ The UDM subscribes to the principles of the Constitution of South Africa, which makes it a loyal opposition party. According to the UDM constitution, “The Party commits itself to the establishment of a true South African constitutional democracy, which rejects racial domination, and which respects, upholds and protects human dignity, life, liberty and the prosperity of its citizens.”²¹²

At times, various allegations of racism in the back and forth between parties in the daily media, as seen for example, in media headlines such as the Mail and Guardian headline: “DA fuelling racism, says NNP”.²¹³ This sort of exchange does occur from time to time, but it seems to be more associated with political manoeuvring and general point-

²⁰⁹ “IFP as ‘voice of ANC’s bad conscience,’” Mail and Guardian, (28 June 2004).

²¹⁰ Federal Constitution of the New National Party of South Africa. Programme of Principles. <http://www.nnp.co.za/HTML/ProgramOfPrinciples.asp>.

²¹¹ National Election 2004. Independent Electoral Commission. http://www.elections.org.za/elections2004_static.asp.

²¹² United Democratic Party Website. <http://www.udm.org.za/default.asp?id=107>.

²¹³ “DA fuelling racism, says NNP,” Mail and Guardian (29 January, 2004).

scoring than it does to any sort of systematic campaign along racist lines from any of the major parties.

This is not to say that political tensions do not exist in South Africa. They do exist, but as Gutteridge noted their "character" has changed.²¹⁴ Political discourse can be harshly critical of other parties, yet not more severe than what one could expect in any open democratic polity, but this is true in any other modern democratic society.²¹⁵ None of the "mainstream" parties in South African politics represent movements that go against the system itself or advocate any sort of militant or hostile platforms. The discourse suggests the narratives of the process of reconciliation is developing do not show evidence of securitisation around societal identity themes.

Political Comportment

Political comportment is another indicator of desecuritisation. The brief survey of political discourse above showed some official societal discourse of the major parties. Political comportment is about actions and activities taken by the political parties, leaders, and organisations. Again, the relevant actors to analysing political comportment this area are situationally contingent. In practice in South Africa, the parties are working within the rules and structures of constitutionally-defined political procedures.²¹⁶ This discussion

²¹⁴ Gutteridge reached this conclusion in 1999 and it holds true today. See: Gutteridge, 20.

²¹⁵ There are a number of ongoing and very pressing issues continually facing South Africa. Economic development, crime, HIV /AIDS epidemic are probably the. Economic inequality remains a top priority, specifically unemployment. Crime is another problem for example, the continued existence of "no go areas" such as the N2 route in the Transkei which is regarded by locals as a dangerous. These are major problems and can be expected to generate passionate debate politically. See: "Everybody is suspicious in South Africa," *Mail and Guardian* (16 December, 2003); also Moodley and Adam, 62.

²¹⁶ One development that could be investigated further in this regard is the relatively recent issue of "floor-crossing" in which candidates are constitutionally allowed to "cross the floor" of the National Assembly to switch parties after the election. This has been one of the more contentious political issues in South African politics and a constitutional change that has come about since the transition period.

highlights certain constitutional structures, practices, and conduct of both political parties and the electorate since the transition to the new system in 1994. The intent in this discussion is not to offer an exhaustive survey, but to highlight some of the types of comportment that suggest desecuritisation.

The post-1994 political system contains mechanisms to accommodate of the South Africa's societal identities. For instance, the South African government recognises eleven official languages.²¹⁷ The country's nine provincial boundaries reflect some of the major ethnolinguistic divisions of South Africa's diverse population, and provide another level for the representation of regional or ethnic interests, thereby allowing another mechanism for multiple identities within a pan-South African framework.²¹⁸

The democratic elections that have been held to date in South Africa – 1994, 1999, and 2004 – unfolded peacefully. This is still an important factor to consider with respect to desecuritisation because the first concern to ever get to reconciliation must be avoiding regression to the political violence of the past; foregoing violence is a minimum basic requirement. Peaceful elections do indicate that both political actors and the general public support the system. In conjunction with societal identity reconstruction, reconciliation, this is a step to establishing a basis from which a working process of reconciliation may continue to develop in constructing a new South African society.

Cooperative governance is another indicator that an overall desecuritisation is occurring. Cooperation was a practice of participatory democracy has been developing throughout the transition, first of all through the Government of National Unity. There has also been experimentation with cooperative and collaborative governance (*e.g.* ANC-IFP

²¹⁷ See p.33 in Chapter One of this thesis.

²¹⁸ Cornelissen and Horstmeier, 56-57.

coalition government in KZN). Taking a collaborative approach to government shows a willingness to work within the system. The comportment of the political parties in this regard shows a willingness to participate in the system that is expressed through actions as opposed to merely words.

The NNP-DA relationship is an illustration of the principles of cooperative governance in another setting. The NNP experimented with formal cooperation with the Democratic Party (DP), as they were then called, and became rebranded as the Democratic Alliance (DA). The NNP has worked closely with the ANC in certain areas of government, for example power sharing in the Western Cape Province.²¹⁹ The NNP has since collapsed, having voted to disband and join together with the ANC in 2005.²²⁰

The rivalry between the ANC and the IFP is a special case with which to speak about participation in South Africa. The ANC-IFP conflict in KZN was violent during the transition period of 1990 to 1994. Yet, in spite of the violent history and a tense relationship, the IFP has nevertheless formally participated in government by holding positions in Cabinet.²²¹ The IFP has participated in formally in coalition government with the ANC at the provincial level in KZN.²²² The ANC, meanwhile, have publicly appeared open to participative and a cooperative principles to the relationship with the IFP, for example acknowledging a need to “rebuild their relationship of cooperation” in 2003.²²³

²¹⁹ The ANC has also shown some interest in engaging Afrikaners in various cooperative efforts. See: “ANC extends a hand to Afrikaner leaders,” Mail and Guardian (17 October 2002).

²²⁰ See: “Nats acknowledge end of the road,” Sunday Times (01 March 2005).

²²¹ The IFP held three positions in Cabinet as of June 2003. See: “Buthelezi ‘embarrassed to be a member of Mbeki’s Cabinet,” Mail and Guardian (18 June 2003).

Still, conflictual incidents do occur from time to time between the IFP and ANC. For example, in October 2002, a counsellor from each party was found murdered amidst wider charges that tensions were on the rise in KZN. See: “Inkatha, ANC tensions rise in KZN,” Mail and Guardian (29 October 2002).

²²² Gutteridge, 23.

²²³ “Governance in KZN: Challenge of re-building cooperation with IFP,” ANC Today (10-16 January 2003).

The practice of participation and cooperative governance has continued to the present day, which is another kind of indicator of desecuritisation of domestic politics.

Overall, there is reason to suggest that a working process of reconciliation is developing. There are constitutional structures in place to allow space for South Africa's multiple societal identities, there has been peaceful acceptance of the electoral system, and despite even strong criticism at times from opposition parties, there is in the end, participation. Together, they allow fairly solid indications the desecuritisation in the political sector, which is an important step to be able to say that a message of reconciliation is being received.

Election Results

Election results are a third measure to demonstrate desecuritisation and development of a working process of reconciliation. Election results are available to compare from 1994, 1999, and 2004 with relatively high voter participation rates. A few points have already been mentioned concerning the parties and where they stand, so this section looks at the results more for what they indicate about the popular attitudes. Overall they do not suggest trends that obviously undermine the process of reconciliation, and suggest reason for optimism in several respects.

The election results of 2004 confirm the basic trends that have been unfolding since the first elections back in 1994. In 2004, the ANC attracted 69.7 percent overall of the national vote, and formed a majority government for a third consecutive term. The DA

received 12.4 percent of the national vote and became the official opposition in South Africa. The IFP accounted for 7 percent, while the NNP took only 1.7 percent overall.²²⁴

In general, the white right-wing has declined dramatically in influence from 1994. Extremist political parties exist, but with very little in the way of popular standing. Notably, the NNP diminished considerably, having witnessed the splintering of hard-line right wing factions into smaller parties, but then ultimately collapsing in 2005. The IFP continues to be seen as a regional opposition party, with an ethnic Zulu identity, and has not become a party with a broad-based framework capable of generating a national identity. Overall, there has been a declining influence of support for any party advocating extreme or militaristic platforms, and their actual political influence is quite marginal. Despite the historical divisions of the country along identity lines, ethnicity does not appear to be an accurate predictor of voting patterns.²²⁵

The fact that the majority of South Africans support mainstream parties probably says the most about the general commitment to the current system. The major parties all appear committed to the democratic process, which shows that there is some will to work within a common political process. In total, based on the 2004 elections, these parties for 89 percent of the overall national vote.²²⁶

²²⁴ National Election 2004. Independent Electoral Commission.
http://www.elections.org.za/elections2004_static.asp.

²²⁵ Based on evidence from KwaZulu-Natal (KZN). Ethnicity appears to be a poor indicator of voting patterns in this region. This is significant because KZN is a region that has seen fierce rivalry between the IFP and the ANC. See: Jung, 104.

For example, the 2004 elections saw the IFP take 34.7 percent of the vote even though the majority of the province is Zulu. The South African Government estimates 71.4 percent of the population of KZN are Zulu speakers. For election results see: National Election 2004. Independent Electoral Commission.
http://www.elections.org.za/Elections2004_Static.asp. For population statistics see: South African Government Information. The land and its People. <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/landpeople.htm#kzn>.

²²⁶ This percentage reflects only the combined votes for the ANC (69.7%), the DA (12.4%), and the IFP (7.0%). See: National Election 2004. Independent Electoral Commission.
http://www.elections.org.za/elections2004_static.asp.

Active Reconciliation

Active reconciliation is another indicator of the reception of a message of reconciliation. The aspects of desecuritisation discussed above suggest that political process are “returning to normal,” which at best provide some minimal conclusions that a basis for process of reconciliation to emerge.²²⁷ Active reconciliation suggests that individuals, groups, and organisations are taking the message of reconciliation to heart. It represents evidence of a deeper level of reconciliation than desecuritisation.

A range of statements, gestures or activities can qualify as active reconciliation, and again are situationally contingent. The key point is whether these activities that support or undermine the ideals of reconciliation. These activities support the principles of human rights, support a discourse of forgiveness, and support principles of *ubuntu*. It can be gauged in part by looking at the acts and actions of South Africans in terms of participation in the TRC process, and also the sorts of activities that continue to take place in the spirit of reconciliation. Specific actors in the South African case include: the architects and commissioners of the TRC, mass media reporting, the political parties, academic literature, political organisations, religious organisations, cultural organisations, and local organisation of all types.

Participation in the TRC Process

The evaluation of participation in the TRC process begins in looking at formal participation in the process during the operational timeframe (roughly 1995 to 1999). Aspects include victim submissions, perpetrator submissions, and group submissions as one form, and engagement with the TRC or its key personalities through the media, as well as

²²⁷ *À la* Buzan, Waever, and de Wilde.

through academic forum. In terms of the extent and quality of societal participation in the TRC process overall, the results are somewhat mixed. Formal participation in the TRC did not occur to the as freely or extensively as might have been ideally desired, but nevertheless had an impact upon the societal narrative process.

An impressive number of individual victims and perpetrators made statements, gave testimony, or submitted applications for amnesty to the TRC hearings. Over twenty thousand individuals made submissions to the TRC as well as over seven thousand perpetrators. There was extensive engagement of all levels of society throughout this process in the media. Virtually all key public figures and leaders were involved or came under the spotlight at some point, as did groups, organisations and/or their spokespersons.²²⁸ These cases of the high profile individuals become highly symbolic and in theory represent events around which many individuals would have dealt with and digested many of the issues involved on a personal level.

The IFP was a virulent opponent to virtually everything related to the TRC, framing the TRC as an ANC witch hunt. In July, 1997 for instance, the IFP “officially withdrew” support for TRC.²²⁹ Elsewhere, the IFP was described as having “made no pretence of co-operating with the TRC.”²³⁰ The *TRC Report* found that “strong public opposition of the IFP was likely a factor in influencing people not to come forward with submissions to the TRC.”²³¹ The IFP opposed the publication of the final version of the *TRC Report*. They

²²⁸ A high profile example would be former Prime Minister F. W. De Klerk who applied to the Cape High Court to set aside a finding of the Commission against him personally related to the bombing of the South African Council of Churches (SACC) headquarters in Johannesburg in 1986. Mxolisi Mgxashe, “Reconciliation: a call to action,” Looking Back Reaching Forward: Reflections on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa (Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, 2000): 213.

²²⁹ “IFP supporters protest against ‘TRC bias,’” SAPA News, TRC Website (04 September, 1999), http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/trc_frameset.htm.

²³⁰ *TRC Report*, Vol.5, Ch.6, Par.22.

²³¹ *TRC Report*, Vol.5, Ch.6, Par.23.

came to an out of court settlement in 2003 to allow for a compromise version of the findings to be published.

Overall, there was reluctance to fully embrace the process and opposition to the TRC in many forms such as objections to TRC findings, procedures, and personnel. There were some charges of bias, and there was contempt for the findings of the TRC. The NP voiced its objections and showed reluctance to participate as did the Freedom Front (FF), a right-wing Afrikaner party by former security force Commander Viljoen. Even the ANC objected to various aspects as all of these parties were scrutinised for their responsibility for gross HRVs.²³² The objections of the ANC are notable given that as the governing party the TRC was their creation, but even they responded defensively to findings of responsibility against them.²³³

However, the conclusion that can be reached is that widely speaking, South Africans became *engaged* with the TRC. Through a daily and intensive the mass media dialogue, virtually all major public figures, political parties, leaders were forced to engage with the TRC or with the notion of the TRC, whether directly through procedures or submissions, or through dialogue in the media and public spotlight.²³⁴ This is, however, a difficult notion to quantify precisely.

Moreover, the fact that there was widespread debate on the TRC is not a negative thing from the perspective of narrative experience. In fact, since narrative can be viewed as a site of struggle in which meanings are negotiated, the fact that there is free and open

²³² Paris, 302.

²³³ The objection was to the belief that they had fought with just cause against an unjust system, and that it could never be equated with actions done in support of an unjust cause. This point is touched upon in Chapter Two of this thesis as an aspect of the critiques of *ubuntu*.

²³⁴ Another example of the public spotlight would be the Faith Communities and religious institutions as a public forum in which the principles of reconciliation were acknowledged.

debate around the TRC and the future of South Africa, and that all viewpoints are able to be voiced reinforces the genuine nature of the narrative process in South Africa.²³⁵ The TRC has now become a part of history, so the more important matter in the present is whether South Africans are buying in to the commitment of a reconciled society as they move forward into new, shared histories. This is where it becomes useful to identify ongoing evidence of activity that supports an ideal vision of reconciliation.

Ongoing Activities that Support Reconciliation

Following up in the spirit of reconciliation contained the TRC and its symbolism is evidence that the message of reconciliation is being genuinely received. This means that people are actively doing things to promote or that support the reconciliation in South Africa. Once again, many types of activities could qualify as “active reconciliation.” Active reconciliation establishes a link to the TRC, specifically where the activity follows up on recommendations made in the *TRC Report*. Again, the point is that they continue in the spirit of reconciliation or support other aspects of the larger process (*i.e.* with respect to political or socio-economic problems).

Reparations are an illustration of active reconciliation. Reparations can occur at different levels like the government reparations for victims, reparations between one community and another, or one individual to another. The TRC recommended that the South African government pay reparations officially noted victims of gross HRVs.²³⁶ Symbolic reparations recommended by the TRC include measures such as death certificates, reburials, the renaming of streets or facilities, the creation of national holidays to remember. For

²³⁵ The opposite of which would be propaganda in South Africa, there was open debate, was open debate not propaganda.

²³⁶ “Apartheid victims to get R30 000 grant,” *Mail and Guardian* (15 April, 2003).

example, the former commemorative “Day of the Vow” is now known as the “Day of Reconciliation.”²³⁷ It is an ongoing reminder of the importance of reconciliation and national unity.

Another example of active reconciliation is education and teaching about human rights, national reconciliation, and finding constructive ways to solve South Africa’s other social problems. Research institutes and NGOs, academics and community groups continue in support of reconciliation through education and efforts to raise human rights awareness. These types of activities are important because they work to support the ideals of reconciliation as well as a long-term strategy to supporting the process.

There have been statements and declarations made by political and public spokespersons. For example the Congress of South African Trades Unions (COSATU) issued a declaration of forgiveness for an act of violence during the conflict of which they were a victim. COSATU “forgave” former law and order minister Adriaan Vlok and his 22 accomplices, for their role in the bombing of COSATU House in 1987.²³⁸

Another indication of active reconciliation comes from one way the Afrikaner identity is working through the transition of reconstructing societal identities in post-apartheid South Africa. The well-known Voortrekker Monument in Pretoria was once a great symbol of Afrikaner Nationalism. Recently, the CEO of the monument “has worked furiously to demythologise the site turn it into a more mundane museum of Afrikaner culture

²³⁷ The Day of the Vow celebrated a 19th century battle victory of nearly 500 Afrikaner *Voortrekkers* over a Zulu army of over ten thousand. Before the battle, the *Voortrekkers* prayed to God that if they were victorious, the day would be observed as a day of thanksgiving and passed down through their descendants. In post-apartheid South Africa, the same day is now a public holiday celebrated as the Day Reconciliation, with the purpose of promoting reconciliation and national unity. See: South African Government Information. About South Africa. Public Holidays. <http://www.info.gov.za/aboutsa/holidays.htm#16december>.

²³⁸ “COSATU forgives Vlok for 1987 bombing, asks for help on other atrocities,” SAPA News, (14 December, 1999), TRC Website, http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/trc_frameset.htm.

and history.”²³⁹ The monument is not being portrayed as an “apartheid museum,” but as a living testament to the place of the Afrikaner identity in the new South Africa. The transformation of the site is symbolic of the transformation of the identity at large.²⁴⁰

However, there appear to be some limits as to how far this process will go. For example, in 2002, the DRC church voted not to apologise for historical events that led to unfair land distribution in South Africa. As they stated, “We have apologised enough for things that happened in the past. It's time to lift up our chins.”²⁴¹ As one spokesperson added, “I have through the years developed a pet aversion to having to make confessions over things I had no part in.”²⁴² This sort of language suggests there are limits to how far this sort of collective apology can be extended, yet in the same declaration opposing the apology the DRC calls for the land reform process to be speeded up. Even under these limitations, there is still support for the other aspects of the process of reconciliation, *i.e.*, measures to redress socio-economic issues.

The evidence of active reconciliation adds another layer to the conclusions that a message of reconciliation is being genuinely received. In short, it shows that there are some motivated South Africans who continue to take the message of reconciliation to heart and strive for an ideal of reconciliation. Different types of activities qualify as active reconciliation, but the key point is that they are conducted in a spirit of reconciliation. Even if only a minority are participating in this way, they are still making a contribution to the process of reconciliation such that it goes beyond the minimum of simply a working process.

²³⁹ “Voortrekker Monument changes in the new SA,” Mail and Guardian (07 May, 2003).

²⁴⁰ This is not to suggest that all Afrikaners favour this transformation, but rather to suggest that these sorts of activities are occurring, and that the influence of active reconciliation is positive for the process of reconciliation.

²⁴¹ “Afrikaans church won’t apologise for land policy,” Mail and Guardian (17 October, 2002).

²⁴² *Ibid.*

Popular Attitudes

Popular attitudes are the third indicator of the genuine reception of a message of reconciliation. Public opinion research is the main type of data presented. It is useful as another way to measure the reception of a message of reconciliation (as societal identity reconstruction). Opinion polling is not sufficient to conclude that the message of reconciliation has been genuinely received, but it does provide an additional perspective to consider in light of the evidence above. This discussion will focus primarily of the merits of certain types of attitudes that point to whether or not an inclusive pan-South African is emerging.

The attempt is to add a third layer to assessing the process of identity reconstruction. The first two aspects of desecuritisation and active reconciliation are focused more on an elite level, so a more complete picture would entail a counterbalance popular level. It is therefore important to get a glimpse of popular attitudes and feelings. To recall the earlier definition of reconciliation, a working process aspiring towards an ideal and requires negative feelings and attitudes to be set aside in a process of identity reconstruction.

This chapter now turns to provide a snapshot of popular attitudes in a few specific areas. The first looks at general attitudes towards the government and the political system to get a sense of attitudes toward the development of the direction of society and the democratic political system. The second looks at a sample of attitudes towards race. The third looks at attitudes from a case study on identity narratives of a sample of white South Africans. The results presented give totals for the overall population, but where possible break down results by racial or ethnic group.

General Attitudes to Government, Political System, etc.

Overall, the results of the data under review suggest that clearly South Africa has a number of social problems to deal with related to the economy, unemployment, and corruption, but the data also suggests reasons for optimism than outright pessimism. Among the positive signs are some promising trends relating to mainstream attitudes to the overall political system.

According to some 2002 *Afrobarometer* results, attitudes towards the overall democratic political system South Africans show positive gain in a few key respects. In terms of combined numbers, there was an 18 percent gain overall of South Africans who felt positive towards "the current system of government," which increased to 54 percent from 36 percent who felt that way in 1995. Notably, 46 percent of whites surveyed gave favourable assessment to the same question in 2002, compared to only 12 percent in 1995, which, although still a minority, is nevertheless a 34 percent increase up to a total that is now nearly half. As for the future, 74 percent of South Africans overall held an optimistic vision of the political system in ten years time. The white population again showed a 20 percent increase over this period at 44 percent up from 24 percent in 1995. Broadly speaking in terms of the survey results as a whole, white respondents have become more positive about the constitution over the past five years.²⁴³

The *SA Reconciliation Barometer* is one of the more comprehensive pools of survey data at present dealing specifically with reconciliation. The results of this data suggest modest grounds for optimism in several areas. Over a period from 2003 to 2004, the results

²⁴³ Mattes, Keulder, *et al.*, "Democratic Governance in South Africa: The People's View." *Afrobarometer*, Working Paper No. 24 (December 2002), <http://www.afrobarometer.org/abseries.html>.

show slight increases overall in terms of perceptions of economic, physical, and cultural security. For example, there was an increase in terms people who felt that general levels of safety would improve over the next twelve months, increasing from 38 percent in April of 2003 to 52 percent in April of 2004. The largest increase came from the black population, but the other groups showed slight increases as well.²⁴⁴

There are some apparently more negative signs reported as well, for instance, popular attitudes about cultural threat. Unfortunately, the Third Round Report of the *SA Reconciliation Barometer* reports, while identifying a number of useful areas of inquiry, they do leave out some numbers that would be useful to see as well. For example, it reports that 54 percent of South Africans overall think that “people’s respect for their language or cultural group will increase.”²⁴⁵ It would be useful to compare to numbers of how many feel that it will stay the same as well as whether it is getting worse, or to how fearful they were with respect to their cultural security. In addition, in terms of the longitudinal aspect of the comparative data they are able to provide is limited in the sense that it is not able to compare the data of 2004 back to 1995 because the data did not exist back then. Therefore, one must be cautious in drawing long-term conclusions out of trends provided. Still, they do present some positive indicators, and do not present a picture of anything too frightening occurring to derail process of reconciliation.

These types of attitudes are important because they represent attitudes towards the identity of the society. They are more important than attitudes towards a specific political party, government leader, or programme. If people are growing more favourable to the

²⁴⁴ *SA Reconciliation Barometer*, “The State of Reconciliation: Report of the Third Round of the SA Reconciliation Barometer Survey,” Institute for Justice and Reconciliation (2004), http://www.ijr.org.za/ijr/politicalanalysis/reconbar/index_html/view?searchterm=reconciliation%20barometer, p.11.

²⁴⁵ *SA Reconciliation Barometer*, 21.

system, which politically has been defined in the constitution as a multiracial democracy.²⁴⁶ This can also be used to support the premise that they are accepting the notion of an inclusive pan-South Africa, which at a bare minimum, has not been ruled out.

Attitudes towards Race

There are a number of relatively positive indicators to report concerning attitudes towards race. In general, according to Grossberg's report, 42.1 percent of people polled in a 2002 survey felt that race relations have improved since 1994, while 32.8 percent felt that they had stayed the same. Only a minority of 14.9 percent felt that race relations had deteriorated.²⁴⁷ In addition, 72.5 percent indicated that they had not personally experienced racial discrimination within the past six months. While of the 27.5 percent that had experienced some racial discrimination in the past six months, "most" respondents had experienced it only once.²⁴⁸

The *SA Reconciliation Barometer* looks at several attitudes towards race in terms of attitudes towards mixed inter-racial neighbourhoods, schools, and marriages. The most positive results are with respect to schools, then neighbourhoods, then marriages. For example, the percentage of South Africans overall approving of mixed inter-racial neighbourhoods in 2004 was 52 percent, with no change from 2003. The racial breakdown indicate support from blacks at 54 percent approval compared to 53 percent in 2003; whites were at 49 percent approval compared to 39 percent over the same time, while Coloureds

²⁴⁶ This was a working premise for the *SA Reconciliation Barometer* as well. See: p.23-24.

²⁴⁷ The white respondents showed the highest number saying that race relations had deteriorated, but this opinion could also be explained by the reversal of political power from apartheid to the present. During apartheid, they controlled the political system, but now they have minority status with much less political power. It would be logical for this group to respond. See: Grossberg, 64-65.

²⁴⁸ Grossberg's table does not indicate the number who had experienced this on only one occasion. See: Grossberg, 66.

showed the highest approval at 80 percent compared to 72 percent in 2003. For all racial groups, the attitudes are consistent with the year before, or even slightly improved in the case of whites and Coloureds.²⁴⁹ Once again, though, these are not overly strong for positive numbers, a more nuanced breakdown of the tables would likely reinforce the positive conclusions.

The percentage of South Africans overall approving of inter-racial schools in 2004 was 68 percent, also consistent from the year before. The racial breakdown was as follows: blacks were at 69 percent approval in 2004 compared to the same in 2003; whites were at 64 percent up from 49 percent over the same time; Coloureds were at 90 percent up from 85 percent. Once again, by racial group the attitudes are consistent or improved with respect to the whites.²⁵⁰

A survey done in 1999 asked respondents to declare specifically how they identified themselves. Overall, 61 percent of respondents identified themselves as “South African.” Broken down by race, the results showed 81 percent of whites, 68 percent of Coloureds, and 82 percent of Indians identified themselves as “South African,” while 55 percent of blacks self-identified simply as “South African.” This is a considerable number and suggests that perhaps there is some salience to an overarching identity of being South African. Still looking at overall results, 15 percent identified first and foremost with their language group (e.g. Afrikaans, Xhosa, Zulu), 11 percent with their racial group, and 10 percent simply as “African.”²⁵¹ The fact that out of these themes of identification, the majority self-identified

²⁴⁹ *SA Reconciliation Barometer*, “The State of Reconciliation,” 48.

²⁵⁰ *SA Reconciliation Barometer*, “The State of Reconciliation,” 52-53.

²⁵¹ Maano Ramutsindela, “Identity and voting trends in South Africa,” *Public Attitudes in Contemporary South Africa: Insights from an HSRC Survey*. (Cape Town: HSRC Publishers, 2002): 47-48.

as South African, which is the most inclusive, and suggest that people are accepting identities appropriate to the new South Africa.

A slightly more anecdotal piece of evidence of racial reconciliation and identity reconstruction comes from the world of sports. According to Moodley and Adam, sports are one area in which ideals of nation-building and the construction of new, inclusive identities is having some success. For instance, when it comes to the national sporting teams, South African spectators (from all racial groups) “wildly cheer their national team regardless of colour.”²⁵²

The picture does not allow really firm conclusions that attitudes are evolving. But, they do suggest crucially that they are not getting worse. They also suggest that racial attitudes are evolving only slowly, yet this is not at all inconsistent with the theories of racial identity. Furthermore, attitudes of racial difference and racial discrimination are worldwide experiences, and just because a South African individual has experienced racism in the past six months, *e.g.*, cannot automatically be pinned on a failure of the reconciliation process at the societal level.

White Identities in Post-Apartheid South Africa

White identities in post-apartheid illustrate a couple of different themes around which narratives are coalescing. To provide some context, Thiessen’s (1996) report situated the state of awareness and concern on the part of the white population, as the title suggests, “Between Acknowledgement and Ignorance.”²⁵³ While there is a new generation of white South Africans who appear to break with apartheid-era identities, there is another that was

²⁵² Moodley and Adam, 55.

²⁵³ Thiessen, (1996).

showing little evidence of low human rights awareness and/or showing negative attitudes towards the new South Africa. These latter accounted for roughly one quarter of the white population in 1996. This corresponds to approximately 25 percent of whites who feel that apartheid was in fact just, compared to 56 percent at that time who felt it was unjust.²⁵⁴ Thiessen also predicted to expect a “cultural lag” in terms of the construction and consolidation of a new political culture in South Africa, acknowledging that societal identities evolve slower than .²⁵⁵

Steyn’s more detailed study using questionnaire analysis questioning the meaning of “whiteness.”²⁵⁶ Her analysis identified a range of alternative and contending narratives framing the construction of whiteness. According to the analysis, the divergent narratives reflect a collective experience of dispossession.²⁵⁷ The narratives display divergent themes ranging from those who still believe in white superiority to those who feelings of being victims of the new order and potentially fear persecution, to those who accept the new system but are still tentative or ambivalent about the notion of changing white identity too much in part because the traits of this identity are viewed as beneficial for the future of the country, to those who assert a non-racialised South African identity and do not acknowledge a racial identity, and finally to those who have transformed their identities to embrace an overtly African identity.²⁵⁸ If these narratives are representative of contemporary white narratives, then it shows that white identities in a state of evolving, but not for all individuals. Another encouraging sign, though, is the fact that the new generations are the

²⁵⁴ Thiessen, 1996.

²⁵⁵ Thiessen, 1996, Ch1.1.

²⁵⁶ Melissa Steyn, ‘Whiteness Just Isn’t What it Used to Be’: White Identity in a Changing South Africa (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

²⁵⁷ Steyn, 155.

²⁵⁸ Steyn, 59-113.

ones more open to “white” identities that are able to comfortably come to terms with the new place in South Africa.

Analysis of Popular Attitudes

The aspects of popular attitudes discussed in the three sections above provide examples of types of attitudes that can be used to measure aspects of reconciliation in terms of the reconstruction of societal identities. The actual data presented in support of these indicators does not permit rock solid conclusions, but there are still some positive signs, which in light of desecuritisation and active reconciliation as well can rule out overly negative conclusions as well.

According to the theory, societal identities tend to evolve slowly in terms of racial and ethnic beliefs, and if some sectors are still showing greater resistance to changes in attitudes or feelings towards the other group and towards. The data also suggests that segments of white South Africans have not yet arrived at a point where they have received a message of reconciliation. It takes time to change these attitudes and for societal identities to be reconstructed, and as Moodley and Adam remind us, social racism is difficult to combat in that attitudes cannot be legislated.²⁵⁹ This point was expected in Thiessen’s reference to a cultural lag, but attitudes are showing improvements between 1995 and 2002.

There is some data demonstrating acceptance of the system, even suggest some sectors are gaining confidence in the system. General attitudes towards the system suggest that overall South Africans are accept an important component of the overall process of reconciliation – the political system.²⁶⁰ Some optimistic points to suggest a basis may still

²⁵⁹ Moodley and Adam, 58.

²⁶⁰ *SA Reconciliation Barometer*.

be developing from which multiple identities can continue to accommodate one another in consolidation of an open democratic societal as a part of enabling the construction of an inclusive pan-South African identity. In sum, a glance at popular attitudes in South Africa suggests a number of positive indicators that support the development of a working process of reconciliation. In terms of reconciliation South African racial identities are making some slow progress to where negative feelings and attitudes are not being prioritised in framing collective interaction in destructive ways.

One way to improve the possible conclusions to be drawn from the data under review would be to compare with a developed democratic state or another multiracial country to perhaps better interpret some of the nuances of the survey results. However, popular attitudes do represent only one of the three indicators under consideration, this last section is limited to explaining how these tentative results fit into measuring a social process of the reconstruction of identity. Still, the process of reconciliation is moving ahead in South Africa; the message of reconciliation has been genuinely received.

General Conclusions

The main argument presented at the outset of this thesis was that *in order for the narrative processes of identity construction to contribute in a positive way to reconciliation, a message of reconciliation must be credibly conveyed and genuinely received by society at large*. Communicating a message of reconciliation can play a positive role in the process of social transition from violent political conflict to a peaceful, inclusive democratic society. This hypothesis was developed in reference to a theoretical literature on reconciliation, identity conflict and narrative identity construction.

The ways in which the societal narratives frame the context of collective interaction will likely be indicative to how far the process of identity construction will ultimately go. The extent to which the long-term process of identity reconstruction becomes tied to other social problems will be indicative of the prospects for the success of reconciliation as the narratives evolve in conjunction with these issues. For example, if the major socio-economic challenges in South Africa are not dealt with effectively, and the Two Nations theme becomes a destructive or exclusively racialised theme that is used to blame or demand retribution for apartheid-era grievances, and this becomes the basis for the construction of post-apartheid societal identities, then it would suggest that the reconstruction of new identities is not occurring.

The process of the construction of new and inclusive societal identities can be put to test by new instabilities, which can come from sectors outside the narrative processes of reconciliation. Ultimately, it is important to keep the *process* of reconciliation moving forward. The way to do this in South Africa post-TRC is to continue to work for the overall

political stability, economic inclusion, social development, and raising of prosperity for the country as a whole for the future.

The greater the extent that a message credibly conveys the value and the vision of reconciliation to the largest number of people will contribute to the reconstruction of societal identities and to dealing with the violent conflict of the past. The reception of the message at the societal level, even the genuine reception of the message can only contribute to the successful outcome of the process provided this process is not derailed elsewhere by new instabilities. Therefore, the way that South Africa deals with the many social problems it is faced with will continue influence what happens to the process of reconciliation and the prospects for an inclusive South Africa.

The definition of reconciliation from the literature reviewed in Chapter One is that reconciliation is a process involving the reconstruction of identities. This is in part about developing a working socio-political system, but an important part of this about breaking away from violent or destructive historical patterns of collective interaction. This is what takes reconciliation beyond coexistence. The definition of reconciliation provided contends that reconciliation is a *working* process in that over time it is a perpetual process. In reality, in observing a case study, one should see signs that there exists some collective aspiration to pursue reconciliation.

Ideal themes of reconciliation such as forgiveness and *ubuntu* provide a transformative vision to become part of the narrative processes, and provide a model through which negative feelings and attitudes can be collectively set aside between historical victims and offenders. In other words, the apartheid-era identity conflict would no longer frame the context of collective interaction. However, the larger process of reconciliation is

also about the reconstruction of societal identities so the long term process in this regard becomes about the construction and consolidation of an inclusive pan-South African identity. Inevitably, this is a difficult phenomenon to measure precisely.

The importance of identity in the process of societal-level reconciliation is magnified in the context of identity conflict because group identity is the central and defining feature, as for example, in apartheid South Africa. This literature suggests that certain features of identity conflict render a societal-level conflict inherently more problematic to resolve. The insights from this theory as to the ways in which narrative processes and political process tend to react when faced with real or imagined threats are important considerations for addressing issues of identity conflicts, if reconciliation is to be defined as a process of identity reconstruction. This is why societal security analysis becomes important to interpreting social trends and patterns of collective behaviour.

Narrative identity theory enriches the understanding of the process of reconciliation as identity reconstruction. Narrative is an event-centred, interpretative process that arguably plays the key role in identity construction. Societal narratives are composed of themes and symbolisms that frame the context of collective interaction. Broadly speaking, universalistic themes potentially support the ideals of reconciliation, whereas destructive particularistic themes potentially undermine those ideals. An effective message of reconciliation would convey universalistic principles that work within the thematic framework of the overarching societal narratives, reflecting the dominant themes and principles of the identities concerned. The communication of the themes at the societal level over time occurs through symbolic processes.

The theoretical contribution of this thesis brings together these three lines of thought and applies the combined insights to the examination of how reconciliation, when viewed as identity reconstruction, is developing at the societal identity level. The analysis broke down the working definition of reconciliation into components that are the development of a working process, evidence of aspiring towards an ideal, and the setting aside of negative feelings and attitudes. These aspects were presented as desecuritisation, active reconciliation, and popular attitudes.

Desecuritisation, as an overall trend, suggests that issues are being moved off of the security agenda and returning to a level of “normal politics,” reflected through political discourse, political compoment, and election results. In particular, the absence of securitisation around societal identities, which potential signals renewed escalation of conflict, is a positive sign for reconciliation (as the reconstruction of identities). Active reconciliation is about acts, gestures, and statements people are doing in support of the goal of reconciliation. As an indicator, it suggests commitment to the process of reconciliation, though by itself is not sufficient to declare that reconciliation is a success. It is, however, a positive indicator for the development of a long-term process. Popular attitudes are important to complete the picture of the analysis because they gave indications as to what is happening with respect to feelings and attitudes at the popular level, and if people are accepting and embracing an inclusive pan-South African identity.

Overall, this thesis centred on a case study of the South African TRC experience. The fact that it is based on one case study means that it is not possible to draw broad conclusions out of this research. Yet, the overall phenomenon of identity conflict is more

widespread than South Africa.²⁶¹ The conclusions drawn in this thesis do apply to the South African case only, but the theoretical framework is drawn from a wider set of experiences, so a logical extension of this work would be to begin to look at some other cases in a comparative perspective to be able to work towards a general theory. However, this was not the task of this thesis.

Against the theoretical framework developed in Chapter One, the historical background of apartheid South Africa and the context of identity conflict were presented. Under apartheid, South Africans were socially and politically divided along racial and ethnonational lines, key turning points in the conflict at Sharpeville and Soweto revolved around identity-related issues, and the level of conflict escalated in violence to a point of culmination in the 1980s and negotiations began in the early 1990s that eventually brought about political transformation and a democratic system of government in 1994.

The origins of the apartheid conflict are tied to the ethnonational liberation movement of the Afrikaners, who attained power in 1948. After some initial moves to “Afrikanerize” the state, race became the more prominent theme through the 1950s and 1960s in which apartheid policies were implemented according to visions of Separate Development. The anti-apartheid opposition generally reflects the reverse trends in terms of societal identity thematics. The narratives of the ANC movement were based in Freedom Charter principles of non-racial democracy and universal human rights, and were the overriding principles framing the opposition movements. Even the theme of Black Consciousness, which appears on the surface to be overtly racial, was more about psychological liberation and it came to be defined in an inclusive manner in terms of social

²⁶¹ For example, identity conflicts have occurred in many other places such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Armenia, Azerbaijan, and Rwanda to name a few.

oppression, and not as skin colour. The fact that universalistic principles are central to the political system of the new South Africa is an important part of developing a basis for a new society built upon new principles and inclusive identities.

Chapter Two revisited the South African TRC to show how that framework fit into a process of reconciliation when understood as the narrative reconstruction of societal identities. The link is that the TRC was in part a vehicle that communicated a message of reconciliation at the societal level in post-apartheid South Africa. At the same time, it constituted a shared experience upon which to build the principles for a common future. In this capacity, the TRC was described as a narrative experience.

The focus then turned to examine this experience from the perspective of narrative symbolism. The highlighted themes reflect aspects of the symbolic potential to inspire positive transformation and bring about reconciliation. The idea is that the content of the message of reconciliation conveyed by the TRC provided a basis for enabling the reconstruction of South African societal identities. Themes of human rights, forgiveness, and *ubuntu* all offer different aspects of a vision for reconciliation that contribute to the construction of new South African societal identities. This analysis considered the potential of these themes in light of the specific socio-cultural context of South Africa, and argued that there was potential within this overall message to positively contribute to the process of reconciliation.

Chapter Three presented data to evaluate the genuine reception of a message of reconciliation. First of all, the chapter continued the thematic analysis to identify the pertinent societal narrative themes of the conflict and the post-conflict period. The chapter

then provide a sample of data for each of the types of indicators identified in Chapter One – desecuritisation, active reconciliation, and popular attitudes.

Four major societal themes were selected for analysis: Ethnonationalism, Race and Racism, the Rainbow Nation, and the Two Nations. Ethnonationalism was a major theme of the early historical construction of the apartheid state, while Race and Racism were major themes of the construction of the apartheid society and of defining the lines of conflict. Both of these societal themes were imbricated in the identity conflict of the past, and a resurgence of either could signal the rejection of a process of identity reconstruction, which does not appear to be imminently occurring. The Rainbow Nation became prominent in the transition period, embodies an essentially inclusive, multi-racial vision for the new South Africa, therefore potentially supportive of the process of reconciliation. Finally, the Two Nations is a more recent theme emanating from the discourse of President Mbeki, and represents a theme of division that highlights the extreme socio-economic differences between the rich whites and poor blacks. There is some potential for destructive patterns to develop out of this theme, so it is important to examine discursive and behavioural patterns to see what continues to unfold in this regard. In terms of the development of themes, the results are not conclusive, but there are some signs that the process is moving in the right direction, even though there are pressing social problems still to confront.

In terms of desecuritisation, the overall tendencies in the political sector support conclusions that this is occurring, and one finds an absence of securitisation in general. The discourse of the major political parties on the landscape, the comportment of the main political actors, and the election results from 1994, 1999, and 2004 confirm the trend towards desecuritisation. All of the major parties support an open, non-racial vision for

South Africa based in principles of equality and respect for human rights, they are working within constitutional procedures, all the elections have proceeded peacefully, and practices of participatory democracy have developed and continued.

The fact that the overwhelming majority of South Africans support the political mainstream confirms a general commitment to the system. These factors all indicate that securitisation is not occurring around societal identity themes in destructive ways, and a potential from a working process of development working process of reconciliation has been developing. Reconciliation can come undone because it is based in relationships, and relationships always have the potential to deteriorate.

With respect to active reconciliation, there are a range of experiences and activities which suggest that at least some South Africans are taking the message of reconciliation to heart. Participation in the TRC is one possible form of active reconciliation. Although the results were mixed in terms of the quality and extent of formal participation in the process on the part of the political leaders and key public figures, virtually everyone engaged with the TRC in the public spotlight; they were therefore engaged with the issue. The whole experience also permitted opposition to be aired. There is also a range of ongoing activity that continues the work to promote reconciliation such as reparations, commitment to socio-economic development, statements or gestures of forgiveness, and various public efforts to engage in the re-imagining of societal identities. There is a tendency aspiring to an ideal form of reconciliation.

Lastly, in terms of popular attitudes, a growing amount of survey data is becoming available in South Africa that confirms the overall conclusions from a few different perspectives. Significant proportions of the population generally support the overall

political system, which hints at acceptance of the direction of a working process of reconciliation developing. There are positive signs with respect to attitudes towards race, in terms of indicators like personal experiences of racial discrimination (*i.e.* a lack thereof), attitudes towards mixed neighbourhoods or schooling, and general self-identification as simply South African. There are also signs that, collectively, white South Africans are undergoing a process of redefining their identity within the new South Africa, the data adding another layer to meeting the criteria of reconciliation, even though it would still be advantageous see more data on public attitudes moving forward. This data also suggests that negative feelings and attitudes, though they continue to exist in some quarters, are not being prioritised in framing collective interaction in destructive ways at this point in time.

In sum, reconciliation is a process and the ultimate success of a process of reconciliation will be judged on the ability of South Africa to confront the many social issues facing the country. Yet, in terms of the reconstruction of societal identities, it does appear to be the case that the narratives of the apartheid-era identity conflict do not appear to be framing the overall context of interaction in ways destructive to the ideals of reconciliation, or to the construction of an inclusive pan-South African identity. Thus the conclusion of this thesis is that there are a number of positive signs that a process of reconciliation as the reconstruction of societal identities is developing.

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