

**AN ACTION LEARNING BASED REFLECTION
ON PARTICIPATIVE DRAMA
AS A TOOL FOR TRANSFORMATION OF IDENTITY
IN THE SPIRALS PROGRAMME**

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ABSTRACT

This thesis is a reflection on both the conceptual frameworks and the personal narratives that have shaped the development of the Spirals Programme. The Programme is a participatory drama and creative arts based initiative established in 2000 in Grahamstown, South Africa, to explore issues of identity in the emerging democratic context of South African society – and support both personal and contextual processes of transformation.

Working within a poststructuralist and social constructionist paradigm, Spirals works with groups and communities to facilitate and enable experiential links between the drama based and performative nature of identity construction – and the possibilities for transformation and healing provided by participative drama methodologies.

The structure of the thesis follows the principles of the Freirian based Action Learning praxis within which Spirals works. It begins with an account of the contextual dynamics and events that gave rise to the development of the Programme, followed by a reflection on the conceptual frameworks regarding both identity construction and participative drama methodologies that informed Spirals' development. These paradigms are then analysed in relation to the articulated experiences of three workshop participants using critical discourse analysis. The thesis concludes with an assessment of the issues emerging from this analysis – the aspects of the Programme that need to be strengthened and sustained, those that need to be changed and possible new strategies that could be developed.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis reflects on the development of the Spirals Programme, a creative arts based series of workshops set up in South Africa in 2000 with the aim of exploring issues of identity in the emerging democratic context of that time. It was a context in which the language that was used to define people, and ways in which the world was understood, had gone through a radical process of change. This was as a result of the democratic elections of 1994 and the implementation of very different social, political and economic structures to what had existed before during the apartheid era.

The Spirals Programme grew out of a desire to use embodied, drama-based workshop methods as the primary vehicle to understand the conflicting identity-related discourses of the time.¹ These discourses were understood to be the ways in which language embodied beliefs and values about people's own identities – and those of others in South African society.

The thesis documents and critically reflects on the praxis that has developed through the work of Spirals, in terms of how action based learning and understandings of experience can be an arena for developmental, transformative practice for both facilitators and participants. It further examines the ways in which the South African context gives particular slants to academic thinking in some of the arenas and writings from other contexts that the work of Spirals connects with.

The key focus of the research is the embodied, dramatic way in which identities are constructed in the context of this work – and the embodied, drama-based methodologies that have been used to create aesthetic spaces which facilitate creative transformation for those who engage in Spirals workshops. Transformation is used here with the understanding

¹ The development of the Spirals Programme will be explained in more detail in Chapter One

that it involves a process of integrated, constructive and positive change or growth – sometimes as the result of conflict or dissonance of some kind. It is about processes of change that are part of cycles of growth and emergence, and predominantly leads to positive change and growth for those involved and their contexts.

A thesis of this nature is inevitably one that touches on a range of disciplines – not least a combination of drama and psychology. The key to the thesis is the linking of participative drama to issues of identity, i.e. the way in which the body is both a physical and aesthetic narrator in the construction of identity related discourses, and how the creation of an embodied aesthetic space enables processes of change and transformation (or possibly inhibits transformation). The thread that is woven throughout the discussion is not one of academic discipline or subject area, but rather the embodied dialogical nature of both identity construction and creative personal and social transformation. If anything, it is a transdisciplinary piece of work in which the intention is one of reciprocally engaging with different disciplines using a dialogical approach so that each is developed and enriched by the other. (Fairclough 2004a)

In terms of research methodology, the thesis uses discourse analysis – including tracing the narratives (and crises of narrative) that have informed both the choice of drama methods used in the programme and the experiences of participants in the programme.² The Spirals programme developed during a time of significant discursive shift in South Africa – from those discourses that informed the apartheid regime to the adoption of those that informed the establishment of a constitutional democracy in 1994. Caught up in these significant cultural, social and political discursive shifts were the conflicts, identities and narratives of the people living through this history. Inevitably, this included complex processes of deconstructing aspects of both individual and group identities, and constructing new and emerging understandings

² The reason for choosing discourse analysis will be discussed further in Chapter Four.

and narratives as a constitutional, rights based democratic society began to emerge.

Analysing the discourses that were shaped by these constructions and narratives, and reflecting on the effectiveness of the Spirals Programme in enabling the narratives and discourses of this context to be more consciously explored, forms the basis of the research.

As one of the participants in the dialogues and an ongoing facilitator of the work of Spirals, my role is not dissimilar to that of any Spirals workshop participant as I write up this research. My narratives, and the discourses of which they form a part, mean that I am simultaneously story-maker, story-teller/writer and story-listener – in terms of my own story, that of Spirals and the experiences articulated by the three participants whose interviews will be analysed in Chapter Four. However, unlike a Spirals workshop participant, I play the role of a talking and writing body in this context.³

This is a complex task, but at the same time it is perhaps the very place from which such a dense arena of human experience needs to be viewed and understood: from the contextual narratives in the very midst of the unfolding drama. In this complex, folded (Hetherington 1998) realm of human experience, it is impossible to say that what is written in this discussion can be empirically proven. However, that does not make it less “real” in the sense of being justifiable and understandable – it is an important epistemological basis for qualitative research. (Burt & Lotz 2001; Gergen 1999) It is also one of the characteristics of participative work – the emphasis is on co-operative processes that enable an exploration of the world that leads to change (Reason 1988: p.18) and a recognition that participation is an important part of human consciousness. (Reason 1994: p.2) As important, though, is rigorous reflection on the contextual discourses that both produce and are

³ This issue will be explored further in Chapter One

produced by these narratives and experiences (Korobov 2001), and reflecting on how these shape and are shaped by a programme such as Spirals.

In line with the ideas of post structuralism and social constructionism which frame this research, exploring discourses inevitably requires acknowledging that nothing exists outside of a discourse. The language used and the discourses which are named in this thesis are not transparent or neutral – any attempt at exegesis or analysis is in turn also constructed by contextual discourses. For example, even the choice of Critical Discourse Analysis as the research tool for this thesis brings its own discourses and is the consequence of the context in which it is being written.⁴ The thesis is therefore both a reading of narratives through research and a rewriting from perspectives that are in turn being rewritten as the research changes the researcher. (Luke 2001)

The underlying assumption of both this discussion and the work of Spirals is that change is happening all the time – but that a greater level of consciousness about what the changes are, and the values and principles which inform the choices that shape transformative change, is something desirable in itself. This understanding emerges from an Action Learning⁵ based praxis of describing events, reflecting on the significance of these events, exploring the learnings that emerge in order to make new meaning – and then strategising about moving forward in new ways. This is the basic framework of a Spirals workshop; it is also the framework of this thesis.

These conceptual frames place the work within a postmodern paradigm. This is a vast and dense arena, and can therefore primarily be referenced in a thesis of this nature – rather than explored in depth.

⁴ The specifics of this context, which gave rise to this choice, will be discussed further in Chapters Two and Four.

⁵ This is based on the Freirian principle [see Freire (1971)] of action, reflection and learning which feeds into planning for the next cycle of action. Further analysis and description of this can be found in Hope and Timmel (1995), Marais, D, Taylor, J. and Kaplan, A. (1997) and Reeler, D. (2005)

Reeler (2005: pp.1-6) suggests the following structure to an Action Learning process:

1. *Action*: What significant things happened? Describe the events. Who was involved, what did they do? What picture emerges?
2. *Reflection*: Why did it happen, what caused it? What helped, what hindered? What did we expect? What assumptions did we make? What really struck us? Do we know of any other experiences or thinking that might help us look at this experience?
3. *Learning*: What did we learn, what new insights? What would we have done differently? What was confirmed? What new questions have emerged?
4. *Planning*: So what does this mean for practice? What do we want? What are we going to do differently? What do we have to let go of or stop doing? How will we not repeat the same mistakes? What steps will we use to build these new insights into practice?

With this in mind, the thesis has been structured in the following way:

Chapter One will describe the events and developments that gave rise to the Spirals Programme – as well as the personal narratives that informed and shaped these developments. This falls under the first section, titled *Action*, of Reeler’s framework mentioned above.

Chapters Two and Three will comprise the necessary reflection on the actions taken in the development of the programme. In terms of Reeler’s framework above, the main focus will be on the underpinning assumptions that shaped the development of the programme – and theories or thinking that could challenge or strengthen the work emerging from these assumptions.

Chapter Two will reflect on issues of identity in relation to what has been described so far in the discussion – what is understood in academic writing about identity, how identity plays out for those involved in Spirals

in the South African context, and what the particular emphases are in the way Spirals approaches identity through its focus on the embodied and dramatic nature of identity construction.

Chapter Three will explore the creative, participative, bodily experienced methods that have been used to set up an aesthetic space which enables creative distance, critical choice making and the decisions and actions that feed out of these.

Chapter Four comprises the learning or meaning making stage of the research. It draws on the experiences of three workshop participants in extrapolating learnings emerging from what has been explored so far. It will engage with the personal narratives of the three workshop participants who have agreed to be interviewed about their experiences of Spirals' workshops and methodologies. The Chapter will begin with a description of how Critical Discourse Analysis will be used as the research methodology. Following on from this, the interviews will be analysed and reflected on using Critical Discourse Analysis.

The Conclusion comprises the planning phase of the cycle. It will explore some of the connections and dissonances between the theoretical claims that Spirals makes, and the articulated experiences and narratives of the participants. It will play the role of bringing an Action Learning based cycle to completion by exploring the implications of these connections and dissonances emerging from the interviews for the future of such a programme – or indeed the development of similar programmes for other practitioners. For both Spirals and other practitioners, the intention of this is that learnings emerging from the research will inform the initiation of the next cycle of action, as these cycles of developing practice are not closed circles but rather unfolding and evolving layers work and practice.

The ultimate intention of the research is to interrogate the practice and methodologies that have developed as the Spirals Programme has evolved, and to enable a deepening of practice through this.

CHAPTER ONE:

A BACKGROUND TO THE WORK OF SPIRALS

This chapter comprises the 'action' component of the Action Learning cycle on which this thesis is based. (Reeler 2005) As outlined in the Introduction to the thesis, this requires a description of what happened – the events that took place, the people that were involved and what they did, and the impressions that emerge from this.

Inevitably, this section of the thesis is highly subjective and largely descriptive, which necessarily provides the basis from which the next (more reflective and analytical) phase of the Action Learning cycle can develop.

The Development of the Spirals Programme

As indicated in the Introduction to this thesis, the work of the Spirals Programme emerged from the context of South Africa at the turn of the 21st Century. It began with a series of dialogues about addressing the dissonances between understandings of identity under the apartheid regime and the growing democratisation of the 1990's.

These dialogues began in the context of a training institute for Anglican clergy in Southern Africa – The College of Transfiguration (CPSA)⁶ in Grahamstown. Up until the late 1980's the institution's academic staff and student body had been homogenously white and male. During the 1990's both the student body and staff became increasingly racially diverse, and in 1999, when the dialogues that led to the Spirals programme began, 40% of the academic staff and 25% of the student body consisted of women. The women students were present as a result of the CPSA's historic decision in 1992 to ordain women as priests. An

⁶ The Anglican Church in this context is known as The Church of the Province of Southern Africa (CPSA)

unanticipated result of this decision was that interpersonal and structural conflicts escalated during the ensuing time of transition, making life in the community of the College of Transfiguration one of struggle and heated debate around a number of issues, not least race and gender. Many staff and students found this both stressful and wounding. In conversation with priests who returned to the College of Transfiguration having worked in parishes for a while, I have been told that the impacts of these conflicts were felt throughout the CPSA.

The concept of Spirals was born during a conversation about the reasons for these conflicts. Brian Marajh, a staff member at the College of Transfiguration, hypothesised that people's aggressive and conflictual behaviour was caused by internalised 'displaced identities' that were 'imposed' by the apartheid system.⁷ The question he addressed to me was whether I thought a workshop programme that explored and named these issues in some way might assist in addressing the conflicts that the community of the institution was experiencing.⁸

My sense was that Marajh's ideas were exciting and important to engage with as a way of understanding what was happening both within the context of the College of Transfiguration and in other sectors of South African society at the time. We⁹ therefore agreed to meet regularly for six months, exploring our own understandings of identity and how they informed the conflicts we had experienced, as well as reading various texts on the issue – with a view to using this as the basis for developing a programme that could be piloted with the students.

⁷ This was the term Marajh used during this conversation and in the early stages of the programme. During the development of the programme, particularly as the dialogue explored the concepts of social constructionism, this concept shifted somewhat. This is discussed in more detail in Chapters Two and Three.

⁸ I had facilitated a workshop on gender and conflict at the College of Transfiguration in 1998, and had held a number of discussions with students and staff members about strategies that might help in addressing the levels of conflict they were experiencing.

⁹ A note on the use of the word "we" in this discussion: it refers specifically to discussions or decisions that were made by Brian Marajh and myself. I have avoided using the term in other contexts – preferring to speak for my own choices and perspectives in this regard.

These dialogues led to a growing understanding that identities are constantly involved in processes of construction, review and reconstruction, but that these constructions do not happen in a linear way (hence the name "spirals"). Rather, they are complex weavings of individual and relational narratives that defy tidy categorisation. The apartheid system had attempted to impose identities through legislation and social engineering, but from its inception this was resisted both publicly and privately – resulting in the climax of the unbanning of the ANC, and the negotiations that took place through CODESA,¹⁰ events which ultimately led to the 1994 democratic elections.

The establishment of a rights-based society and the drafting of a progressive Constitution did not bring relief from the outworkings of the colonial impositions of both British rule and apartheid for individuals, communities and social groups, however. These had been too deeply etched on individual lives and society as a whole, and still profoundly informed the daily experiences and interactions of South Africans – as well as continuing to shape the constructions and narratives of identity in both private and public relationships. The bases on which both colonialism and apartheid assigned identity still form an ontological basis for the determination of both rights and identity in early 21st century South Africa. The newly established Constitution attempts to integrate an ethos of universal human rights with the ethnic basis on which the violation of rights was carried out in the past. (Zegeye 2001: p.3)

The issue of rights realisation is deeply complex – not least because of the way in which the individualised understanding of rights can be worked out in a context still deeply influenced by ethnic, racial, class and gender based group identities. For example, the realisation of rights previously denied because of racial oppression does not mean that a woman's rights have been realised in terms of gender based oppression –

¹⁰ This is an acronym for The Congress for a Democratic South Africa – the structure within which the multiparty negotiations took place. It was responsible for formulating and agreeing on how the transition to a constitutional democracy would take place.

or that a woman who has achieved success in her career is necessarily able to realise her rights in the context of her home or marriage.

As tools to explore shifts, change and possible healing during our dialogues in the midst of this context, Marajh and I used a combination of story-telling and reflections on the choices that led to certain constructions of identity for each of us – both as individuals caught up in the historical events described above and as members of different groups that were affected in different ways by the political regime and events of our time.

There was a realisation that oppression involved some kind of mutual consent on the part of both 'oppressor' and 'oppressed' in the constructions of 'otherness.' In the light of this, a deconstruction of and creative distancing from those moments of unconscious choice-making might enable new, more conscious levels of choices becoming possible. We recognised that this was not a straightforward or easy issue to deal with; for a start, the choices available to the oppressor and the oppressed were different in nature and scope. (Wong 1994: p.134)

Out of this emerged a recognition of both the drama and role based nature of identity construction and the associated opportunities for creative resistance and change that are always present for people in some way – no matter how profound the trauma and psychological damage in a situation, and how seemingly small the options. This understanding of identity is further also described by Hetherington (1998) as performative, a concept that will be further explored in Chapters Two and Three.

Both Marajh and I had been impacted by the struggle for democracy in South Africa, with the many powerfully dramatic scenes that took place during those times. For both of us, a significant influence had been the way in which church leaders used their understanding of liberation theology, drama and ritualised theatricality to great effect during protest marches, commemorative services, political funerals and other interventions into situations of grave physical violence. An example that we spoke about in our discussions was Desmond Tutu walking into the midst a crowd of people attempting to kill a suspected police informer using the notorious necklace method, and remonstrating with them until they let the intended victim go free.¹² These and many other experiences were manifestations of the dramatic, creative resistance possible in the midst of violent oppression and trauma in its multiple manifestations – they were ritualised enactments in which processes of forming new identities were being explored.¹³ This became a constant reference point in our development of the programme – to what extent could we incorporate similar possibilities of creative and defining moments of resistance for participants in workshops?

Of course, the political upheavals of the context in which both Marajh and I had lived consisted of countless dramatic events and it was far more than religious leaders who enacted and embodied creative resistance during this time. The focus of our historical discussions was because the role of the church in the struggle for democracy had been formative for both of us – and the church was the context in which we were both working at the time, albeit in different roles.

Another important reference point was that at the time that we engaged in these dialogues the Truth and Reconciliation Commission had recently completed its public hearings in which stories of both victims and

¹² A necklace murder was carried out by placing a rubber tyre doused with petrol or paraffin around a person's neck and setting it alight. This usually happened in a mob context, and there would be singing and dancing as the person died a slow and painful death.

¹³ This phrasing is based on Hetherington's (1998) ideas, which will be discussed further in Chapter Two.

perpetrators of apartheid were told by thousands of South Africans. On several occasions we reflected on the way in which all players in these situations were victims of their contexts in some sense, whether they were regarded as victims or perpetrators. We expressed the hope that we were in some way continuing the work that the Commission had begun – allowing stories to be articulated in a way that enabled both a catharsis and the freedom to make new, more conscious choices in the light of what had been learned through the process.

In this sense identity, as the arena with which we wanted to explore these issues, was the meeting place of structure – contextual discourses and socio-political dynamics – and agency – the power people had to choose and to act in a context. (Bhavnani and Phoenix 1994) The interplay of these needed to be understood in simultaneously physical and symbolic spaces and interactions – ‘theatre’ and ‘life’ were not separable phenomena (Hetherington 1998: p.151; Goffman 1974 cited in Counsell and Wolff 2001: pp.24-29). Through the articulation – on a stage at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission hearings – of the ways in which people caught up in the apartheid system made choices at the time, and later made sense of what they had done or what had been done to them, new and often dramatic possibilities emerged as to what this “new” South Africa might be facilitating for its citizens. (Gobodo-Madikizela 2003; Krog 1998; Tutu 1999)

A fundamental aspect of apartheid’s underlying ideologies was the concept of group identities – determined primarily by skin colour but also by tribal identity. We were aware of needing to address the collective nature of oppression of the past, while at the same time giving people space to explore the power of their personal and individual ability to make choices but without negating the importance of the philosophy of ubuntu¹⁴ within African culture.

¹⁴ See later discussion about these terms in Chapter Two.

The decision to use interactive methodologies in a group workshop context was therefore the next step. This was motivated by the belief that creative choice-making could best be enabled by using methodologies that invited creative personal and relational outcomes without imposing simplistic answers or stereotyped identities based on historic constructs or outdated discourses. It also hoped to invite shared and emerging wisdom for both participants and facilitators as the dialogically based workshop process unfolded. Our articulation and understanding of this was tenuous at the time, based largely on my areas of training, facilitation and education and Marajh's theoretical understandings of the work. But we agreed, with the support of the College of Transfiguration staff, to pilot a programme of exercises we had developed, as well as some drawn from other programmes, and reflect on the outcomes and methodology in the light of students' responses.

Inevitably, one workshop could not possibly realise all the ambitions that had surfaced during our discussions. It was an attempt to begin a process that we hoped would grow and develop over time – but we were not sure whether our efforts would be successful at all.

The first Spirals workshop took place on 30 March 2000 at the College of Transfiguration with 22 final year students from the College participating. The agenda was a tentative one – trying out some creative methodologies, but relying to a large extent on verbal story-telling and dialogical workshop exercises that reflected on these stories.

One particular moment in this workshop shifted the whole momentum of the process. As one woman was tracing her ancestry on a large map of the world posted on the wall¹⁵, she spontaneously started dancing her new-found freedom at owning her ancestry as she placed her mark on different parts of the map (in her case South East Asia, Africa and Europe). As she was doing this, she reflected on how little she knew

¹⁵ This exercise called Pinning Down Our Roots / Routes is in the Spirals Manual– see Appendix Two.

about her female ancestors because they had been both African and Asian slave women in South Africa while her male ancestors were the white slave owners who had come from Europe.

Her actions were a stark reminder of the physical, embodied, inherently performative nature of the issues we were dealing with: she was dancing in front of a depiction of the physical journeys that her ancestors had travelled, provocatively celebrating the way in which this led to her having a light brown skin (with all the oppressive implications of this in the light of the Population Registration Act and other legislation of the apartheid regime) and acknowledging the complex web of oppressions that living in a woman's body – and a dark-skinned body – entailed. Her dance was a ritual of defiance and transformation enacted by a physical body in a physical space, but was also symbolic of the way in which the body is a place of convergence of memory, psyche and spirit which acts in a representational space.¹⁵ Unfolding in her brief presentation was a multitude of voices, representations and roles – and a defiance of the meanings these had held for her in the past. The way in which she was presenting them invited the articulation of that which had previously been shamed and silenced, and enabled the emergence of new voices as she made new meanings of her identity. In owning what had previously been unspeakable by dancing the truth of what had happened to her female ancestors in dark, oppressive and abusive situations, she created something that changed not only her, but those watching and participating in the exercise with her. What she did became a reference point through much of the rest of the workshop as others examined what a similar naming and owning process might involve for them.

The 'audience' of other participants thus played a dual role of witnessing and honouring an important rite of passage for this participant - adding dimension and weight to the participant's healing through the experience. (Weingarten 2000) The audience also became listeners and absorbers of

¹⁵ The concept of space in these processes will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

a narrative that in turn changed them in different personal ways – congruent with Morton’s idea of women being heard into speech as stories are surfaced and shared. (Morton 1985 cited in Johnson 2004: p.13)

The feedback from participants about this workshop was very positive. Comments made by participants in the brainstormed group evaluation at the end of the workshop included:

- “This was better than I expected”
- “I liked the sharing and digging deeply in a non-threatening way”
- “There was a high level of maturity”
- “This was levelling the playing field and meeting the person”
- “Happy that we have this course at the College”
- “There was sincerity and openness when raising issues”
- “Talking about experiences heals and makes one feel lighter”
- “I hope the rest of the process will be the same”

(Workshop course evaluation, College of Transfiguration students, 30 March 2000)

This gave us the reassurance we needed to embark on a five-day residential workshop in July 2000. This time, as a result of our heightened awareness of the body as the place of convergence of so many issues we were dealing with, we more consciously included participative drama exercises in an effort to explore the possibilities this would enable. The understanding of the embodiment needed to shift from engaging primarily with a talking and thinking body to using combinations of enactment, sound, image work, drawing, sculpting, writing and crafting. These methods needed to be used as tools for inviting a creative articulation of narratives of memory, emotion, spirituality and insight contained within the stories and images being created.

This has been the crux of the work since then – the creation of a drama-based, embodied space to enable an exploration of the interplay of embodied, performative narratives on the way identity issues play themselves out in the South African context.

It is also the crux of this discussion: to reflect critically on how the embodied drama methods that were developed through Spirals, in response to a dynamic unfolding process that happened very quickly over a relatively short period of time (four years), can be interrogated, analysed and articulated.

As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, the term “drama” is used here to describe a range of different creative, symbolic and relational approaches which require an interactive, dialogue-based bodily engagement with the issues and identities explored through workshops. This is based on the understanding that constructions of identity and meaning are reciprocal and complex unfoldings of both contextual discourses and dynamics and the personal meaning-making processes that flow out of these. But the creation and re-creation of physical, embodied experiences of the spiralling nature of construction and reconstruction in the process is key to enabling shifts and transformation.¹⁶ Different types of drama were used in varying combinations during workshops, including devised role-plays and adapted Drama-in-Education and Theatre of the Oppressed methods, incorporating aspects of Image Theatre and Forum Theatre in particular. But the methods went beyond the physically interactive aspects of the drama in that there would also be exercises involving symbolic drawing, clay-sculpting, mask-making, journaling, poetry writing, creation of symbolic constructions of imaginary spaces and the creation of crafted group collages on large sheets of paper or plastic as tools for personal reflection and integration of learnings emerging from exercises. Together,

¹⁶ See more detailed discussion of this in Chapter Three

they aimed to guide the participant through the cycles of Action Learning described in the Introduction.

The design and linking of these was intended to integrate the disparate threads being explored when looking at issues of identity. At the heart of our understanding of the dramatic is that it intrinsically deals with the individual in their context – constantly engaging in performative acts of re-membering (in the sense of putting together fragmented memories and understandings of self) and meaning-making.¹⁸

Because of both the deliberately group-orientated nature of a Spirals workshop and the way in which interactive and personal exercises were arranged, the unfolding and weaving of contextual, interpersonal and intrapersonal narratives was invited, encouraged and explored. A rhythm of alternating group and individual exercises was designed to enable reflections on issues at a range of levels; e.g. a group exercise relating to experiences of oppression or marginalisation would be followed by a personal reflection on ways these issues had been internalised by each participant – and what the possibilities or strategies for change might be. Conversely, a range of exercises reflecting on the masks that people adopted (or projected onto others) as coping mechanisms in situations of oppression would be linked into a group exercise and the physical masks participants had made on their own could possibly be used as props in a group role-play.

At the same time, it was agreed that a fundamental aspect of the process would be that every participant had the right to choose whether they wanted to engage in an exercise or not. Coming out of an oppressive regime whose primary modus operandi was coercion, we felt that this was one way to invite conscious choice-making and acts of resistance

¹⁸ I am indebted to Michael Lapsley SSM for his articulation of the idea of "re-membering" as a process of personal and social reconstituting and healing in his addresses during Healing of Memories workshops which I attended in 1996. Trisk ascribes this concept to Toni Morrison's novel *Beloved* (Morrison 1987 cited in Trisk 2002: p.50).

during times in the process when participants were feeling vulnerable, under pressure or uncomfortable in some way.

This Action Learning based process has continued as a central part of Spirals' ethos. It has meant that those involved in the work of Spirals need to be part of constantly adapting and developing the way workshops are run. This enables the development of methodologies that are consistent with the programme's stated aims of enabling transformation of identity through conscious choice-making.

In the pilot programme of 2000, the five-day workshop was followed by a closing ceremony in which each participant was asked to make a creative presentation that reflected their journey through the year's programme in some way. While participants presented some creative and thoughtful pieces, they were mostly reflective rather than fulfilling the intention of providing a bridge into the year ahead for them as newly ordained clergy. There were some indications that reconciling with deeply painful events had resulted in changed behaviour for people, but this was the case for the minority of participants. This was perhaps because of the limited time span of six months and density of the issues raised by the programme.

The following year, the programme was run again at the College of Transfiguration – with some refinements and a more clearly thought through implementation of the methodologies being used.

In addition, invitations came to present the work that we were doing in a range of contexts – a conference on faith based peace education organised by the Hague Appeal for Peace and the United Nations in New York, a conference on Healing Through the Creative Arts in Johannesburg organised by the Centre for the Study of Violence and Reconciliation, the Southern African Association for Conflict Intervention conference in Port Elizabeth and a group of young people from different nationalities in the Balkans who had attended the World Conference Against Racism in

Durban and wanted to engage with other South African projects dealing with race and identity. At the same time, requests were coming in from other groups in the Eastern Cape who wanted to participate in Spirals workshops as well.

This led to the decision in December 2001 to move the programme out of the College of Transfiguration and establish an independent NGO (Non-Governmental Organisation) that could take the ideas and methodologies that had been developed in the College programme into other contexts, while continuing to run the workshops at the College of Transfiguration as an independent service provider.

In the three years since its establishment, the Spirals Trust has run 75 workshops with almost 1300 participants in many different sectors, mostly within the Eastern Cape. In addition, funding was generated to publish a manual of the work – the launch of which took place in 2003.¹⁹

During this time the vision and mission of Spirals were developed in the following way – subject to amendment at the annual strategic review meeting:

Vision:

Communities of people
making conscious choices
that enable personal transformation and social change
which deepen democracy.

Mission:

Spirals facilitates open-ended, creative processes
with individuals, organisations and communities
that raise awareness about individual and group identities and values
enabling people to challenge and confront personally & contextually

¹⁹ A copy of the manual is attached in Appendix Two.

in a supportive learning environment.

The principles that form the basis of a Spirals workshop have been articulated in the following way:

- Workshops consist of both individual and corporate processes of discovery, healing and transformation.
- Spirals' work is based on an assumption that each person has the wisdom they need to carve their own path of discovery and growth through the issues being explored.
- There is no textbook – the journeys of our own lives are the primary texts.
- Exercises are highly participative, and allow space for each individual to apply their context and issues to the overall theme.
- Facilitation involves Action Learning, i.e. highly participative approaches based on an action-reflection praxis and methodologies such as group work, expressive arts-based exercises, Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, role-plays and journal writing.
- Each workshop is evaluated by both the participants and the facilitators – and developed or changed appropriately.
- Spirals recognises the need to address healing holistically: physically, emotionally, mentally, intellectually, spiritually, communally and socially.
- Spirals works from the assumption that every participant has probably experienced trauma, and work needs to be addressed in such a way as to include components of trauma healing, e.g. telling of stories, identifying and naming what has harmed and what has hurt, naming the identity imposed by the trauma, exploring and taking on new identities at the level of self-perception.
- Spirals sees its work as enabling healing in a group context rather than providing individual counselling or therapy. Additional counselling or psychotherapeutic support would need to be set up by participants themselves.

The following have been identified as the primary outcomes of the work:

For Individuals

The experience of having addressed and begun to deal with unresolved personal identity issues.

Indicators: Freedom to speak about ethnic, gender, family and other issues with various people in a constructive, affirming way.

Beginning to heal from experiences of trauma.

Indicators: Shifts for individuals from a victim identity to a survivor and "wounded healer" identity in which patterns of dependence shift into patterns of interdependence.

Experiencing the affirmation of knowing that others also struggle with issues of identity, and feeling less alone with their struggles as a result.

*Indicators: Greater levels of personal confidence.
The ability to reach out to and support others in their struggles relating to these issues.*

Greater inclusion and affirmation-based reactions to those who represent "differentness" and "otherness".

Indicators: Shifting away from exclusion, fear-based reactions to relationships and attitudes of mutual respect.

A decrease in dependency based relationships and modi operandi.

Indicators: Participants begin to take ownership of choices they have made in parts of their lives that have been stuck or paralysed in dysfunctional patterns

Development of behaviour and attitudes that recognise and celebrate interdependency

For Groups and Organisations

More relationship-building conflict handling strategies.

Indicators: Conflicts handled by means of dialogue and co-operation, rather than competitive, hostile strategies or avoidance.

Greater tolerance and affirmation of difference in terms of race, gender, sexual orientation, etc.

Indicators: Verbal exchanges shift from mocking, teasing, jibing to affirmation, appreciative inquiry and open dialogue. Shifts from power-based decision-making processes to inclusive, consultation-based processes.

New learnings and growth from the workshops are fed back into the life, work and development of relationships in the group / organisation.

Indicators: The growth of a "learning organisation"-based culture in which the constructiveness of identities operating in both relationships and work are constantly reviewed, addressed and celebrated. Policies and practices in the group / organisation are adapted to include and address learnings and growth that take place.

A shift in relationships as a result of clarifying identities, roles and values in the group / organisation.

Indicators: Higher levels of interdependence between both individuals and groups within an organisation / group.

A greater awareness of how the quality and identities of relationships sustain the work and purpose of the group / organisation.

A greater desire to celebrate and develop both individuals and the group / organisation as a whole.

*Indicators: Shifts from a culture / identity of blame and victimhood to assertiveness and co-operation
Creative, dynamic, intuitive approaches to work encouraged and developed by the people who make up the group / organisation.*

A recognition of the wisdom that is present in the group's / organisation's members, as a result of their varied identities and the consequent relationships they have with other individuals and groups.

*Indicators: Respectful, listening, inquiry based approaches to relationships, communication and tasks
Interactions and work draw on and learn from the cultural and personal wisdoms available to the group / organisation from its own members.*

The frameworks outlined here are the beginnings of a conceptual framework for the work – although colleagues from other NGO's who have participated in annual strategic review meetings have challenged them quite strongly. Their contention is that the indicators are difficult if not impossible to quantify, making a meaningful evaluation of the impact of Spirals difficult.

This is a key tension in the work – the breadth of the intention and claims for the work are both impossible to realise within one programme and immeasurable in terms of effectiveness. This is not to say that the work has been a waste of time, it is rather a programmatic and organisational challenge that faces Spirals in the future: how to home in on the aspects

of the work that have been meaningful and useful for participants as a form of research that deepens practice within the work. The next task is to then frame these approaches in a way that sharpens the focus and more clearly specifies the intended outcomes.

People's stories need to remain at the heart of the work, though, whatever the conceptual frameworks that are used to make meaning of them. With this in mind, the following section of this chapter continues to trace the narratives that shaped the development of Spirals: I have recounted as far as possible the personal narratives that brought me to the point of being both a role-player in the establishment of Spirals and the researcher who chose to focus on this work for the purposes of this thesis – and reflected on some of the tensions this has brought about in the course of this research.

Some Personal Narratives that Shaped the Spirals Programme

The first section of this chapter has recounted the events that led to the formation of the Spirals programme. An important component of these events was the personal narratives which shaped them. In an effort to work consistently with both the narratives of myself as facilitator as well as those of participants, the following is a description of my own narratives as they shaped the development of the programme. I have chosen to explore both narratives of identity as well as the drama related narratives (what I have called narratives of methodology) that were integrated into the design of the programme – and then explore how this places me (and impacts on me) as I have engaged in this research. This section of the chapter consist of three sub-sections:

1. Narratives of identity
2. Narratives of methodology
3. My role in this research

1. Narratives of Identity

Marajh and I were “other” to each other in many ways. He was registered Coloured under the apartheid regime, his home language is Afrikaans, he is male, an ordained priest in the Anglican church, a father and a husband. On the other hand, I was registered White, my home language is English, I am female, I have no formal religious affiliations, I have no biological children and I am not married.

As we started speaking, the yawning gulfs in experience and life possibilities that separated our stories – particularly those created by apartheid – were very painful at times. Marajh’s stories of his family’s forced removals, and the trauma that the family still lives with as a result, were juxtaposed by my growing awareness that, even at the age of five, I believed I had power of control over the lives of people much older than me because our different racial identities. My earliest memory

of this is shouting at and mocking the woman who worked in our home as a cleaner because she was in trouble with my mother.

I also remembered and raged about the indoctrination that I was subjected to at school – the raising of the apartheid South African flag in the playground at school while we sang “Die Stem”²⁰, the riot and bomb drills that we had to do “in case of an attack” (by blacks / communists / terrorists being the implication). I recalled the multiple racist conversations in my family and at social gatherings, especially amongst the farmers I grew up with.

Throughout it all, there was a constant simmering fear that pervaded every moment of every day.

I spent many weeks, during these conversations with Marajh, grappling with my sense of shame and guilt about the discourses of assumed power – and the assumptions about power – that I had growing up as a white person. I felt helpless and trapped within these edifices of power – alienated from Marajh and others who had been oppressed by me and my race group. I was afraid of the power of Marajh’s suffering, and felt that it gave him some kind of hold over me – as if the legitimacy of my being in South Africa at all was constantly in question and needing to be affirmed by what Marajh symbolised for it to have any meaning.

I also recalled the moment of truth that changed me forever, when a school friend and I were asked to leave a coffee shop because mixed races were not allowed in that establishment. I have agonised ever since about never asking my friend how she felt about it – my shame and guilt silenced any possibility of that at the time. Although I did ask questions about it of adults around me, there were no answers – just more silence and guilt. I thought about how powerfully that event determined my university career, in that my involvement in the struggle became almost

²⁰ This was the name of the national anthem under the apartheid regime.

as important as my academic studies. The fact that I had been involved in the apartheid struggle and often been in physical danger as a result felt as if it counted for nothing; the horror of my guilt seemed to obliterate other possibilities.

At these times, I envied Marajh his victim status, and the sense of connection it gave him to others who had also suffered in the same way. I felt embarrassed by white culture, by the racism inherent in a lot of the way I grew up and was educated – and found it hard to differentiate that from choices for something different that I had made as an adult when I was in this frame of mind.

I also struggled with the ambiguities of my ancestry and family. My maternal great-grandmother was a courageous activist against oppression during the Anglo-Boer War, leaving Scotland to work with Boer women and children in the concentration camp at Brandfort. My family prided itself on not supporting the Nationalist Party, and my father made courageous choices when called on to do military service in the turbulent townships of the 1980's. And yet there is no doubt that I come from a legacy of colonialism and oppression – I am a product of the exploitation of South Africa's human, emotional, spiritual and physical resources for the benefit of a select few. I grew up believing that my kind was somehow superior to and cleverer than those with darker skins than mine. The deconstruction of that from the time of my adolescence until now has been painful and hard work.

In spite of all that work, though, there were times in the dialogues with Marajh when the assumption that my white culture was the norm and the way to understand the world would kick in and I would find myself judging things Marajh said or did with a level of arrogance only possible for an oppressive class. In the next moment that would collapse and I found myself vulnerable and frightened all over again.

The one strategy that did help me through all of this was to find the wherewithal to stop talking when I sensed my white control mechanism kicking in – to focus on listening inwardly to the demons my voice was trying to silence, and also to listen to what Marajh was saying that prompted such a fearful reflex action on my part. That has stood me in good stead in countless other very difficult workshop situations – wait, listen inwardly and intuitively, and allow the real voices of the pain to name themselves.

At times in our early dialogues, though, I wanted to call the conversations to an end as an act of denial of my own pain, and as a way of trying to escape Marajh's gaze and the pain in his eyes in a lot of what he spoke about. But we continued – because we had committed ourselves to do this, and increasingly because of the sense of lightness that came from speaking out things that had never been articulated or reflected on in quite that way before. There was also a growing recognition that we had both suffered, albeit in different ways. The paradoxical and intimate relationship of oppressor and oppressed is based on pain and brokenness – and we saw that in each other on many occasions. I found the witnessing of my pain, and Marajh's affirmation of my suffering and alienation, a deeply healing process.

After the initial story-telling phase, we tried to read as much as we could about the theory behind issues of identity. This was very exciting, particularly as we explored the connections between the stories we had shared with each other and the ideas that other writers had reflected on in far more detail.

One of the most exciting concepts for me was that of social constructionism – the idea that constructs of reality (and identity) were chosen in some way.²¹ This took so much of the power of the imposed identities of apartheid away for me; they were chosen and/or imposed

²¹ There is further discussion about social constructionism in Chapter Two.

identities for a time, but it is possible to choose something other; and the very act of choosing to be different makes it so – even if it is only at the level of perception, and is able to manifest outwardly over a period of time.

During this time we also started developing the programme that would be piloted in 2000, and realised that this idea was fundamental to what we wanted to explore through the workshops that we ran. In essence what our thinking was can best be summed up in a progression of ownership, objectification and choice-making (the imagining of new possibilities described by Boal 1979, 1992, 1995). For me the process was one of firstly owning my identity as a white person as being one that had emerged out of a series of choices made by both my ancestors and myself. Secondly I realised I could look back over my life and acknowledge what had brought me to this point and this process. Thirdly, the very act of doing that created new possibilities because the process of reflection by its very nature was also a process of asking questions and creating space for new choices and answers to emerge. I realised that this spiral could develop into something more and more conscious in my life if that was what I wanted.

Of course this made possible a questioning of the way in which the construct of race had developed as the dominant determining factor in my identity. Just as the apartheid system had been hierarchical and patriarchal, so there were hierarchies of identity in everything about the context in which I grew up: race came first, then gender, then religion. Given the highly homophobic nature of the hierarchical, patriarchal ethos of the context, any discussion about sexual orientation was taboo.

For the purposes of this thesis, I have chosen to focus on the dominant discourse of race, and not to include the narratives and discourses around gender, religion and sexual orientation that were part of this process for me too. As will be seen in Chapter Four, this is because race

was the dominant discourse from which most discussions about identity started in the context in which the work emerged. Of course, these racial discourses were informed by the essentialist constructions of race of the apartheid era, an issue which is made even more problematic because race itself is a constructed phenomenon. This poses significant challenges for me and the work of Spirals – how does one think outside the box in relation to racial constructs and discourses that have so powerfully and traumatically shaped one’s identity? What does it mean to find other, more helpful, constructs of identity that are not so oppressively shaped by racial discourses? Is it possible to even begin to think of race as a redundant concept? (Hoeane 2005) The understandings of identity articulated by Hetherington (1998: pp.21-25) in which construction of identity is seen as negotiating between constraints and multiplicities of possibilities is particularly apt when reflecting on these issues.

These dialogues were profoundly liberating for me in and of themselves – but they also became a wonderful base from which to start the Spirals workshops the following year. Our opening was “we have been telling our stories, and wanted you to have the same opportunity.” The need for judgement was not part of what we were inviting; our starting point was a desire to affirm the humanity of each person in the room (especially in the light of how dehumanising the apartheid system had been for all caught up in its web).

This thesis has been a process of interrogating this process, and exploring the effects of those decisions on others’ lives. As will be recounted in the following section, it has also heightened my awareness of the way in which the context and historical period I have lived through has impacted on me in my work – particularly my involvement in drama as a tool for social change. This is what will be explored in the next section.

2. Narratives of Methodology

I was born during dramatic times in the history of South Africa – the 1960's. So there was a powerful impetus leading towards my life journey using drama to make sense of it all.

For the first ten years of my life, my family moved to a new place on average every 18 months during which time my parents and their four children endured numerous traumatic life events. "Drama", in the sense that emotions, conflicts and events seemed to function at a heightened level all the time, was the norm. Also, even as a child I was aware that each new place already had people living there that we would need to find ways to engage with – in the midst of them trying to make sense of their own lives and contexts. This created an increasing feeling of being different and outside of other people's stories, and experience which influenced my later work.

My schooling took place during the 1970's and 1980's, with a constant background of political violence and turbulence – and an insidious sense that there were dangerous mysteries in the world that we should not try to understand or ask questions about in any way.

As I have mentioned in my previous narrative, my later years of schooling were when I first personally understood what apartheid meant for me and those I cared for. My university career was spent studying drama, but also trying to make sense of the growing political turbulence of the 1980's. There were many everyday events that had a distinctly theatrical edge to them: meeting with people in a plush mansion in the KwaZulu Natal Midlands prior to them leaving the country to join the ANC in exile, political marches and protest meetings, raids by the police in people's homes, friends being detained and tortured, heated debates and discussions in secret meetings, discovering police spies at gatherings and

trying to confront them about their activities, not to mention the political funerals of the time.

While studying, I also tried for the first time to integrate drama with the need to address social issues in some way: two of us spent a few months running Drama-in-Education workshops with young children in the newly established Eastwood community in Pietermaritzburg. All of them had moved there because of forced evictions from their own communities, and were highly traumatised. Later, I worked with young people in Mitchell's Plain in similar ways. This led to other efforts to use drama as a way to voice the issues and challenges of our context: theatrical productions of various kinds, Healing of Memories workshops, exploring ways of using drama as a tool for conflict resolution, as well as conferences on these issues.

This was also taking place in the midst of major historical shifts and changes: being in Cape Town on the day of Mandela's release, working for the Independent Electoral Commission in the violence-torn KwaZulu Natal midlands during the 1994 elections, being at a church service in London to welcome South Africa back to the Commonwealth later that year, witnessing the Commissioning service of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in Cape Town in 1997, and many other events too numerous to mention – each dramatic and hugely impactful both historically and personally.

But through all this there was an ongoing tension for me about the way drama was being used to name and address social and political issues; I felt that the trauma and pain of the people involved in these processes was not being given enough space. The conflicts that people wanted to address were political and power-based and ideological; but where were the inner psychological issues given space to enter into the script? Each person was the site of huge dramatic unfoldings and processes and events, and yet I felt that the structural; rather than personal discourses

were being emphasised. Where were the opportunities for this to emerge? Quite apart from wanting to enable these types of processes for others, *I* needed that kind of process and opportunity!

I needed something that integrated the verbal and physical in ways that enabled the nonverbal narratives and their dramatic possibilities to emerge and to dialogue with contextual and relational issues as well.

It was at about this time that I first came across Augusto Boal's methodologies (1979, 1992), which seemed to provide some possible answers and strategies to achieve what I had been looking for. I was particularly excited by the way in which Boal used physical space and the physical bodies of participants to create symbolic links between personal issues and broader contextual and systematic issues – provoking and inviting new kinds of understanding and possibilities for change.

Soon afterwards the dialogues with Brian Marajh described in the Introduction to this discussion began. Spirals developed initially as a pilot that attempted to address some of these tensions, firstly for Marajh and me as dialogue partners, and later at a more methodological level in the workshops we facilitated for others.

I was amazed to discover that people embraced the spaces Spirals created with a mixture of relief, passion and courage. The rapid development of the work, and the decision to establish Spirals as an independent NGO were both exciting and daunting. However, at the time of writing this thesis, the organisation is well established, the methodologies growing and developing all the time and the areas of engagement for these methodologies growing in their effectiveness and diversity. This thesis has been a vehicle to reflect on the story of what happened, to interrogate the work more deeply in the light of theory related to the work, and to enable a deepening of my own – and hopefully others' – practice as a result.

Fundamental to the work of Spirals and this thesis is a belief in the power of stories and the way in which our bodies carry our identities and stories in such powerfully physical ways. This brings me to the final section of my personal accounts: how this journey has brought me to the point of wanting to understand the work of Spirals more deeply by taking on the role of researcher.

3. My Role in this Research

As mentioned in the Introduction, my role in this research is a complex one. In accounting for the development of Spirals, I am simultaneously story-maker, story-teller/writer and story-listener – and as a researcher I am also using certain discourses to explore and analyse the stories and discourses of others.

The discourses that have informed the development of Spirals have been shaped by the belief that the shifts which took place in South Africa during the 1990's were just the beginning of an incremental process of transformation – and that those who had been involved in the struggle against apartheid would need to continue working at developing a society in which human rights and democracy were increasingly evident.

As has been indicated already in this chapter, discourses are complex and interwoven, meaning that racialised discourses continue to inform South African society and my own life in a profound way. The work of Spirals and of this research have been to try and understand how these discourses are at work, and what can strengthen shifts into discourses that are more consistent with my intended values, rather than historically internalised ones.

In the course of this thesis my role in the story progressively shifts from this subjective account to different levels of reflection and analysis, using

the Action Learning cycle, in an effort to comprehensively analyse and interrogate this work.

This chapter has been primarily about my role as story-maker. The story is about my work of trying to use strategies such as Spirals to change and shape the way in which identity is understood and managed for myself and those who participate in Spirals processes.

As story story-teller/writer, I am a participant and co-researcher with other participants in a process of narrating and reconstructing historical events and discourses. My intention is that this will enable me to engage more effectively with my current context, and more consciously work to realise the intended and hoped for discourses of the context in which I live.

As a story-listener and researcher, my role becomes more complex. I am inevitably listening to stories through the filters of both the historical discourses of my upbringing and (simultaneously) through the emerging discourses that desire transformation and the human rights based society for which I try to work. I am therefore constantly interrogating my analysis of the discourses and narratives that I hear or read from literature, workshop participants and co-researchers – in order to understand more effectively what their discourses are, but also to try and deconstruct my own discourses on an ongoing basis in order to invite greater complexity of engagement with what I am hearing or reading.

Inevitably, this means that it is not only participants or co-researchers who are changed by this. I am also constantly challenged and changed and revising my understandings and insights into narratives and discourses. (These issues will be reflected on in the Conclusion to the thesis.)

Within a Critical Discourse Analysis²² framework, it is the weavings of these discourses and the investigation of power issues and the surfacing of choice-making and voice that needs to remain the focus.

The Action Learning based structure of the thesis as described in the Introduction enables this weaving of personal discourses to run through the thesis, while at the same time inviting the discourses and stories of others to strengthen the meaning-making and reflection on issues for the future for Spirals as a whole.

The starting point might be my personal narratives discourses, but this needs to shift into more of a chorus of discourses that are shaped by – and are able increasingly to shape – those who facilitate the work, the work itself and the context in which the work takes place. This is what the following two chapters will explore.

²² This will be defined and discussed in more detail in Chapter Four.

CHAPTER TWO: IDENTITY

This chapter comprises the second phase of the Action Learning cycle on which this thesis is based. It is the first of two levels of reflection on the actions described in Chapter One. In reflecting on issues of identity in this chapter, and the embodied, drama-based methodologies used in Spirals in Chapter Three, some of the themes and issues informing the actions described in the previous chapter will be reflected on in more detail.

As Reeler (2005: p.3) suggests, the process of reflection broadly needs to include understanding why these events happened – the causes, sources of support, challenges and obstacles that were present. The reflection includes the expectations and assumptions that informed actions that were taken, and theories or conceptual frameworks that could enable a meaningful reflection and analysis of the events. The discussion in this chapter is a weaving of – and critical reflection on – different themes and conceptual frameworks about identity that have influenced and emerged out of the work of Spirals, rather than a linear structured argument that reaches a specific conclusion that is in danger of being formulaic.

The themes explored in this chapter will be:

- Self and context in relation to identity
- The South African context
- Making sense of identity as a construction
- The understanding of identity for Spirals
- Identity and the body
- Identity and trauma
- Poverty, wealth and identity

Self and Context in Relation to Identity

In beginning to reflect on issues of identity, it is important to clarify once again the conceptual framework within which this thesis has been written.

In using a poststructuralist and social constructionist framework, there has been an inevitable choice against other frameworks. These include what Crossley (2000: pp.4-8) defines as traditional psychological studies of the self. Amongst these would be experimental social psychology in which the self is only defined as 'I' as 'knower' based mainly on positivist, behaviourist and 'scientific' understandings of identity. It would also include humanist and psychodynamic approaches in which the primarily subjective nature of the self is emphasised, with an emphasis on self-actualisation, which is seen as an individualistic phenomenon. These are both problematic within the conceptual frameworks of this thesis; a constructionist understanding of identity fundamentally challenges positivist models of identity in which the individual is understood to exist primarily outside of their context. Constructionism sees the individual as primarily relational and both emerging out of, as well as challenging, contextual discourses.

In line with narrative psychology, which is based on constructionist principles, the self in this thesis is therefore understood to be a complex weaving of emerging narratives and discourses that are shaped over time. These narratives and discourses emerge from connectedness with the contexts a person is part of and are interactive in nature. Within this paradigm, the emphasis shifts from the primarily subjective and individualistic nature of the individual to one in which the individual is a constructed phenomenon that can only exist because of its relational nature. Each individual is therefore constantly shaping and being shaped by the contexts of which they are part.

These understandings of identity and the self form the basis for the reflections that constitute the focus of this chapter.

The South African Context

As has been described above, exploring issues of identity is a complex undertaking in any context. As reflected in the thesis already, the history of South Africa makes the task in this context challenging, inevitably open to contradiction and an arena of constant shift and change.

Under apartheid legislation, South Africans were divided into ethnic categories which were upheld as the ideological basis for "separate development." For over 30 years of Nationalist Party rule, social identities were imposed and enforced by the government of the day – building on the ideological and legislative foundations laid by their British colonial predecessors. In 1994, the country held its first non-racial, multi-party elections in which the African National Congress (ANC) came into power, on the strength of its promise to eradicate the divisions of apartheid and reconstruct South African society socially and economically. However, the legacies of systematic and physically violent segmentation on the grounds of culture, race, historical background, language and religion have left South Africa a deeply divided society – not least because of the racially determined class and economic divides that are the legacies of apartheid. (Zegeye 2001)

Many South Africans suffered enormously as a result of physical displacement from land, home, families, communities and other places of significance during this time. (Ackermann 1998; Krog 1998) In addition, there are multiple layers of complexity and challenge about living in a society of transition and emergence into a democratic, rights-based way of life where conflicting and conflictual racial, ethnic, gender, class, sexual, religious and national identities have shifted into a fluid, 'rainbow nation' philosophy in which multiplicity and dynamism are embraced.

(Nchabeleng 2000; Zegeye 2001) Social and legislative frameworks have shifted from asserting "group rights, ethnic sovereignty and primordial cultural connection" to building a nation based on "an ethos of universal human rights, of free, autonomous citizenship and individual entitlement." (Zegeye 2001: pp.3-4)

This shift in the ideological and operational frameworks of South African society feed directly into an important conceptual tension regarding theories of identity – and indeed the work of Spirals. It is both a challenge and an opportunity in terms of what Spirals aims to achieve, depending on how both participants and facilitators choose to engage with it. It is exactly because of the new shifts, openings and changes in understanding identity that Spirals has emerged. One of these shifts involves understanding that identities are evolving rather than determined – as will be explored in the next section of this chapter.

Making Sense of Identity as a Construction

An essentialist approach would argue that there are certain clear characteristics which all members of a particular identity group share, and which do not alter across time – that it is possible to say there are true, fixed identities which individuals and groups can lay claim to. (Woodward 1997: p.11) Under the apartheid regime, ethnic and racial identities were assumed to be essentialist and therefore provide justification for the elaborate systems of social engineering that took place through, for example, pass laws, forced removals and the establishment of Bantustans.

Non-essentialist understandings of identity would focus on the complexities of differences, as well as the common or shared characteristics that make up a group's identities. They would also consider how the meanings of characteristics and group identities have

shifted and changed over time, and the ways in which individuals have made choices regarding their identities. (Woodward 1997: p.11).

This research understands identity to consist of constructed realities – for both individuals and groups. Essentialism could therefore be considered just one possible construct in the process of understanding identity. Gergen (1991) argues that individual identities are constructed within social, group and therefore dialogical, rather than fixed, contexts. This concept is congruent with Desmond Tutu’s account of how African identity is constructed through ubuntu: “a person is a person through other persons” (Krog 1998: p.263) in the sense that it is through relationship-based meaning-making that identities emerge, rather than through predetermined understandings of group and identity. Dramatic possibilities are both present and constantly emerging in the interwoven unfoldings of these threads of dialogue, perception and Other.²³

A constructionist understanding of identity is described by Wetherell (1996) as emerging from the practices and narratives which shape the lives of those living in a context and particular place – that the minds of individuals emerge from the collective socio-linguistic and linguistic realm in which they live. (Wetherell 1996: pp.5-6) Conversely, the external social worlds of people, groups and relationships are also in a constant process of being constructed by means of an outward expression of the ‘inner’ meaning made of contexts:

The external social world of people, groups and relationships is seen as already inside each individual comprising each person’s selfhood. And simultaneously – in reality and in phantasy – this internal collectivity gets projected back onto the external social world to create material for new constructions of what is out there and to communicate and actually influence others. The spiral continues, reflecting and re-reflecting self and others, back and forth – with images that are variably distorted. It

²³ These dramatic possibilities, and the way in which they have influenced the development of Spirals’ methodologies, will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

is a process that makes us into who we are; it also enables us to maintain ourselves, modify and move between versions of ourselves and influence others. (Wetherell 1996: p.111)

The precise degree to which each person's internal and external processes shape their identity is impossible to determine. Equally difficult to assess is the degree to which their identity is shaped by a person's identification with symbols and understanding of sameness and belonging, as opposed to difference or the apparent lack of attainability of an identity. This is partly because the very act of identification is more than a simple replication or copying of an identity – it is a complex psychological process of association, interpellation and internalisation, which is taking place every moment of every person's life. (Woodward 2000: pp.16-18) The psychological nature of this process is both shaped and changed by different factors within a person's context, including archetypes that have been constructed over long periods of history. These constructions of identity are generally only brought to consciousness, or become an issue, when there is a tension or crisis of identity in some way. (Mercer 1990 cited in Woodward 2000: p.19) Each individual also has unique ways of understanding and positioning themselves in relation to their contexts, the groups to which they choose to belong, and those which they choose to reject or marginalise themselves from. (Wetherell 1996: p.33)

As a result of postmodern thinking, crises and tensions of identity have prompted new understandings of the ways in which identity is constantly in processes of both being and becoming – rather than something which is already somehow in place, transcending context, events, history and culture. Identities emerge from somewhere and have histories, although those histories themselves undergo constant processes of review and reconstruction. Identities belong primarily and simultaneously to the present and the future. (Wetherell 1996: p.34 & p.225) This raises constant tensions and possibilities for any individual, because their understanding of themselves is both unique and relational. Identity and

process are both different and the same – giving rise to pluralities rather than dualities of meaning in which the self is both a consequence of historical archetypes and transcends these archetypes, is part of a greater whole *and* the whole in itself. (Taute 2000: p.16) Each person is therefore constantly living in “potential space” – a space in which apparently opposing concepts dynamically create, inform and negate each other in ever-changing relationships that are constantly moving towards integration, in the understanding that complete integration never happens. (Winnicott cited in Taute 2000: p.61)

This is a significant shift from understandings of identity of the recent past in which issues such as schooling, work, sexuality, religious and political affiliation were regarded as largely

...already scripted; individuals had the job not of writing the script from scratch but of understanding their life experiences through a larger script. But now ... the structures of the life-script are seen to be less fixed and certain, the possibilities for producing conventional narratives about work, family and locality are thought to be no longer possible. (Hetherington 1998: p.23)

The aspects of identity that were regarded as fixed and stable – and determining the centres of power from which personal and social scripts emerged – have therefore lost some of their historically deterministic power. This decentring, fragmentation and pluralisation of power and oppression has given rise to a politics of difference in which historically marginalised identities have become a source of empowerment and resistance. (Hetherington 1998: p.22) An example of this in the South African context is the way in which the various social and political movements which made up the anti-apartheid struggle resisted the narratives of identity intrinsic to apartheid by undermining associations of whiteness with political superiority and non-whiteness with political inferiority. The 1994 democratic elections were a direct result of these individual and group acts of resistance and empowerment. (Zegeye

2001: pp.3-4) Spirals has emerged out of an expectation and assumption that the values and principles informing these resistances need to be integrated into the emerging post-1994 context.

Acts of resistance are never simple, however – they do not involve a straightforward shift from one narrative or discourse of identity to another in the nature of binary opposites. Instead, resistance itself takes the form of pluralities and cleavages that reform individuals and social groupings from being sites of resistance to becoming discourses that themselves are resisted. Again, to contextualise this, the 1994 election was a significant event, but did not erase the historical discourses and dynamics of power, oppression and constructions of identity overnight. Foucault describes resistance to power as always and inevitably coming from “inside” power, meaning there is neither any simple escape route nor definitive end point to a process. (Foucault 1981 cited in Woodward 1997: p.286) Inevitably, identity and change are processes of ongoing meaning-making both individually and collectively as necessary resistances and power relations unfold. (Judith 1996: p.29) The challenge for Spirals is to be constantly inviting the articulation of new levels and forms of meaning making through the dynamic and emergent nature of drama based processes; becoming complacent is not an option. This is important to acknowledge but almost impossible to achieve as there are inevitably going to be times when both facilitators and participants are blind to their own power, or perceive resisting power as being unwise or risky in some way. Not that power in itself is something to be avoided or undesirable – the challenge is to name and analyse the nature of the power that is present, and to interrogate whether it is consistent with the stated values and objectives of a situation.

The implications of this are that structures of power, discrimination and oppression are themselves not simple. For example, rather than speak of racism or gender as singular terms, it would be more appropriate to speak of racisms and genders. Bhavnani and Phoenix (1994; pp.5-6)

describe racisms as shifting and changing in response to the resistances that have emerged, as is the case in the unfolding of resistances to patriarchy through feminisms. They describe identity as comprising an unravelling of relationships between structure and agency, in that each individual (and the groups of which they are part) is inevitably inscribed with and embodies unequal power relations, while at the same time opting for different, resistant, and at times conflicting identities depending on the political, economic and ideological dynamics of their situation. In their understanding, essentialism and constructionism are “a couplet each of whose parts contains the seeds of the other”, rather than binary opposites constantly at loggerheads with one another. (ibid: p.9) In terms of reflecting on theories that inform the development of Spirals, this idea has interesting implications for the challenges facing such a programme in the South African context – instead of rejecting historical essentialist constructs, it suggests that the relationship between these and emerging constructs and discourses needs to be worked with in poetic and creative ways.

Wong (1994) expands on Bhavnani and Phoenix’s (1994) arguments by describing the paradoxical ways in which privileged and dominant groups of people have determined the realities of marginalised groups of people even as they are in the process of resisting and seeking new articulations of identity. An example of this is the way in which studies of ‘difference’ have focused primarily on difference from the perceived norm of whiteness and maleness, while seldom focusing on the complexity of a white person’s response to a Black ‘other.’ “These reductionist measures fail to examine the systems of domination and subjugation that structure the racialisation and socialisation of *all* peoples.” (Wong 1994: p.134)

Even within feminist reconstructions of identity, lesbians and “third world” women have found themselves at odds with the ways in which white heterosexual feminists have articulated experiences, identities, choices and communities relating to identity. The task of feminism

actually articulating the challenges of identity for all women is complex, because of the layers of racism, heterosexism and classism embedded within their own theorising. White feminists are at some levels a paradox of identity politics because of the ways in which their power and privilege define their positions and undermine their intentions, because of the contradictory processes of power and privilege they are caught up in. (Cohen 1991 cited in Wong 1994: p.135) The same could be said of white activists in the South African struggle for democracy, or black men in the struggle for gender equality. This inevitably highlights the paradoxical nature of my role in this work as a white South African woman – and the importance of interrogating the way I use the power inherent in how my identity has been constructed.

Gergen (1999) describes the danger of identity politics, in its engagements with politics and power in shaping identity and social processes, as being one of trapping members of marginalised groupings in states of grim bravado and stylised marginality in which historical and traditional binary opposites of oppressor and victim become entrenched in the very act of trying to construct new ways of relating and reconceptualising self and other. He argues instead for a shift from identity politics to 'relational politics,' in which traditional constructionist rhetorics of antagonism and separation, with their consequent escalations and alienations, shift into rhetorics of relationship. (ibid: p.8) The shift involves perceiving a relationship as 'we', rather than 'me' and 'him/her/them', in which there is mutual relational responsibility rather than rhetorics of individual or group blame. He acknowledges the risk of rhetorics of incorporation and enforced unity, in which people are coerced into unities that are not consensual and deny power relations that undermine the very unity being sought. Instead, he argues for a "poetics of relationship" (Gergen 1999: p.9) in which the complex networks of which each person's identity is comprised are regarded as a resource and can potentially lead to an "appreciation for politics as the art of living together." (Phelan 1989 cited in Gergen 1999: p.11) This concept has

interesting links with the earlier discussion about the possibilities of poetically exploring the links between essentialism and constructionism, rather than becoming stuck in antagonistic, dualistic ways of thinking.

Spirals of dialogical identity constructs could therefore be described as having moved beyond issues of crisis and tension to debates about the creative possibilities and empowering choices these tensions and 'potential spaces' create:

Where once sociologists talked about uncertainty and identity in terms of identity crises, alienation or role conflict, now most commentators talk about the possibilities and forms of resistance opened up by fractured, hyphenated and multiple identities associated first with psychoanalytic, then structuralist and more recently with poststructuralist and feminist critiques of an essentialist subjectivity on which earlier sociological ideas about identity were founded ... One of the main issues behind this interest in identity and in identity politics more generally has been the relationship between marginalisation and a politics of resistance, and affirmative, empowering choices of identity and a politics of difference. (Hetherington 1998: p.21)

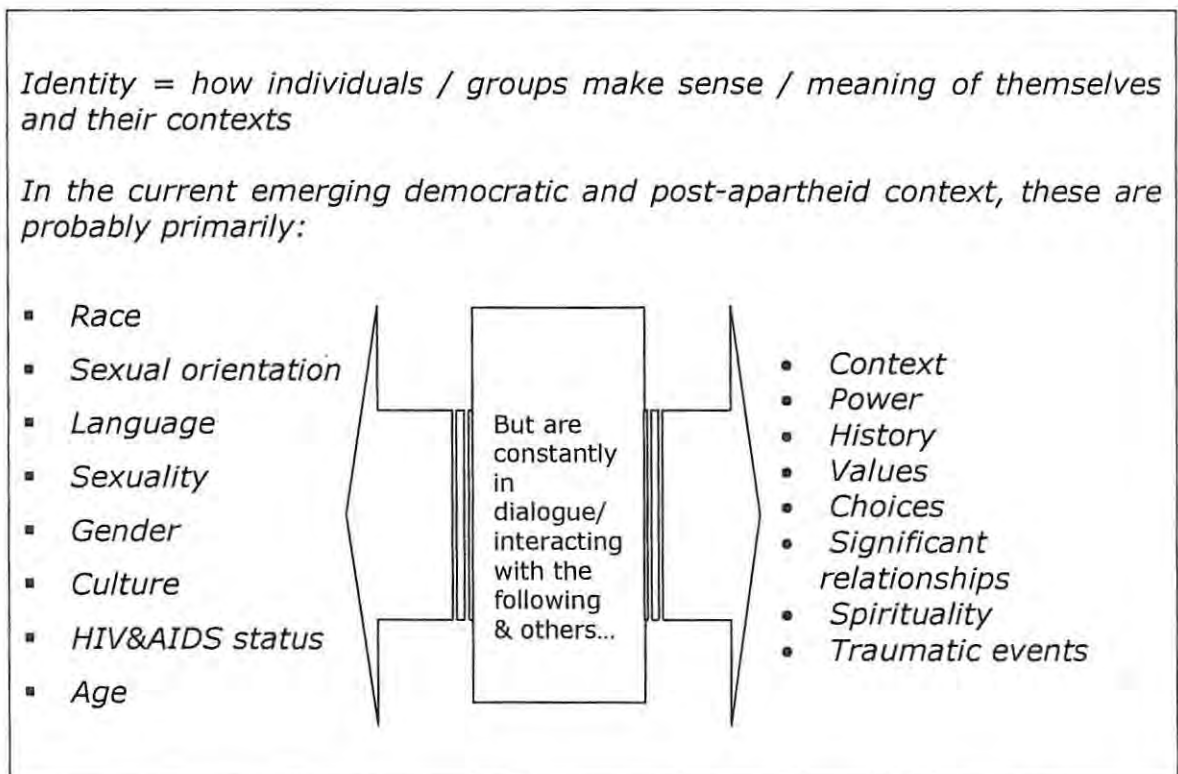
While a dramatic or theatrical metaphor of identity construction emphasises the individual's ability to step out from a purely subjective experience of themselves to that of observer and dialogue partner, the subjective nature of identity construction also needs to be understood. Each person is no longer looking at a complete picture of their lives from an objective distance, but rather being both the subject and shaper of the picture in which they always only have small glimpses rather than a full view. "The space of identity is a heterogeneous, folded, paradoxical and crumpled space in which a distinct singular position is not possible." (ibid: p.23)

The Understanding of Identity for Spirals

The Spirals Manual describes identity as consisting of shifting layers, which are moving and unfolding in relation to each other for both individuals and groups. These include:

- ◆ Physical identity
- ◆ Emotional identity
- ◆ Ego identity
- ◆ Social and political identity
- ◆ Creative identity
- ◆ Archetypal / Transpersonal identity
- ◆ Spiritual identity

These levels also weave themselves in the following framework:



As the interviews which follow in Chapter Four will reveal, there have been particular layers or folds of identity that have emerged as prevalent in several workshops in recent years. However, Spirals still uses this

broad framework to define its work and adapts the way in which it is used to the stated needs and expectations of each group.

In reflecting on this framework in the light of the research undertaken for this thesis, it is interesting to see how from early on in the programme there was an understanding of the complexity of identity. Also, that it is primarily about the interactions between aspects of a person's identity – and that there are always new possibilities emerging. The work of this research has strengthened the value of using this framework as a starting point, as well as the importance of not imposing it on a group or process but rather allowing the dialogues and processes within the group to guide and direct the constructions of identity that need to be explored.

Identity and the Body

The highly racialised and patriarchal history of South Africa (Ackermann 1998) means that any citizen's identity has been profoundly shaped by ostensibly essentialist aspects of their identity – most particularly their skin colour. Under the apartheid regime, an individual's race as determined primarily by skin colour (and sometimes also by features such as hair texture) decided not just that individual's life, but those of whole communities: where they lived, where they went to school, whether they could own land, who they could marry, where they could travel, when and with whom they could associate in public. (Zegeye 2001)

The differences constructed and enforced by this legislation were further fragmented through the differentiation of tribal groupings into separately administered structures according to each resident's identification by the government of the time. The underlying message was that an individual had very little value in and of themselves: everything about them placed them in a group, a larger and more important reality than themselves, with the result that identity and life choices were already severely

circumscribed. While this was primarily true for disenfranchised sectors of South African society, it impacted on the dominant white groupings as well. (Gobodo-Madikizela 2003: pp.104-116)

In post-1994 South Africa, however, what were regarded as rigid borders have become instead frontiers of new possibility and exploration. Identities have become more "hybrid" in which aspects of identity are able to encounter each other and be transformed into completely new dynamics. (Bhabha 1994 cited in Rosler and Wendell 1999: p.11) These new possibilities emerge as something more desirable than what has been before – combining previously irreconcilable opposites that were regarded as "pure" in the past in new and subversive ways. (Hamilton 1999: p.57) Hamilton argues that previously agreed bases of identity construction come into question in times such as post-1994 South Africa, resulting in both stress and dynamic change – something the emergence and growth of a programme such as Spirals attests to.

One of the arguments of this thesis is that the powerfully group-orientated nature of determining identity in apartheid-ruled South Africa meant that processes of conscious choice-making in relation to issues of identity were severely limited. Defiance or resistance to these prescribed identities was potentially dangerous, as detention and physical harm due to violence and imprisonment were likely consequences. A person's body was powerfully and constantly determining and shaping their identity – because of the group they were told they belonged to. A person's body was also in constant danger of being violated as a result of resistance because of the punitive legislation of the time, and the powers the security forces were endowed with. The psychological internalisation of these elements have profound implications for constructions of identity for those living in this context.

The new dispensation, an emerging democracy in the process of understanding and developing itself, has resulted in some old structures



gradually disintegrating. A person's body is no longer understood as a constant in quite the same way during this time of flux, but rather as the site and catalyst of changes in meaning. (Csordas 1994: p.2) This creates new possibilities for individuation, duality and hybridisation. (ibid.) However, as described above, the nature of power and resistance means that these shifts are not simple. Resistance and change takes place within power; the 'old' racism and patriarchy have changed and shifted into new racisms and sexism – and the class and economic structures that informed the old racisms have become increasingly apparent.

Issues relating to change and transformation of identity in relation to the body will be discussed further in Chapter Three.

Identity and Trauma

Accumulating stress and ongoing traumatic stress are common experiences for many South Africans at some stage in their lives. (Eagle 2000; Bartsch & Bartsch 1996)

Whether people wear out through accumulating stress, or through sudden traumatic events, the effects are the same. Normal patterns of living are disrupted. People feel disconnected from others, feel helpless to manage the events and often lose faith and hope. (Bartsch & Bartsch 1996: p.5)

This has profound implications for the identities of both the victims / survivors of trauma, and those they are in relationship with.

Trauma ... deconstructs any map, belief system, mythic structure, or organisation used to hold reality together. Organisations of self, God and humanity are injured and, in many cases, forced to die. A victim's version of reality is under assault or rapidly coming apart at the seams. (Grant 2001: p.50)

Such are the levels of socio-politically motivated and crime related trauma in the South African context, that Eagle (2000) and her colleagues have started referring to *Ongoing* Traumatic Stress, rather than Post Traumatic Stress (PTS). The symptoms are similar to PTS, but it is assumed that people have had multiple, accumulating and ongoing experiences of trauma, rather than the unexpected, probably once-off perceptions of trauma most commonly experienced in developed countries. (Bartsch and Bartsch 1996) Piercing moments of annihilation qualitatively reinforce previous experiences, and strengthen identity constructs that centre around PTS symptoms of either intrusion (such as hyper-vigilance, flashbacks, nightmares, reliving experiences, panic attacks) or denial (such as depression, emotional numbing, avoidance, addiction, dissociation/fragmentation and magical thinking). (Grant, 2001 p.50) These factors powerfully inform how any individual or group makes sense of themselves and their relationship to their context.

When the rupture of one's senses is a daily occurrence, as in South Africa's violent political past, old memories fuse with new ones. The narratives of trauma told by victims and survivors are not simply about facts. They are primarily about the impact of those facts on victims' lives and about the painful continuities created by the violence in their lives. There is no closure. The lived experience of traumatic memory becomes a touchstone for reality, and it tells us more than facts can about how people try to lead a normal life after such a trauma. (Gobodo-Madikizela 2003: p.86)

The consequent intense experience of victim identity imposed by traumatic events, repeated systematic abuse and the ever present nature of the memories they carry are therefore multiplied and iterated for people in the South African context – making journeys of healing and transformation long and complex, because each experience of trauma is unique, the pain different and the fusions of memories increasingly complex. (ibid: p.82)

Grant (2001: p.51) argues that the emotional and relational states people living with traumatic stress are thrust into are beyond the ego, and are the same states of no-thingness or void that mystics and shamans describe during processes of spiritual initiation. This provides significant ways forward from the states of helplessness, disconnectedness from others and meaninglessness or futility that are the main symptoms of trauma. (Bartsch & Bartsch 1996: p.9)

The challenge is to learn the lesson of one's wounds, and to let go of partial approaches to life while not hardening one's heart, as a gauntlet of ignorance, cruelty and isolation are negotiated. (Grant 2001: p.55)

Poverty, Wealth and Identity

The issue of poverty as a powerful determinant of identity is a reality for a significant proportion of the South African population: 37% of South Africans live on less than R1000 a month. (Statistics South Africa, 2001 cited in Terre Blanche 2003).

Terre Blanche (2003) explores the implications of this in the following way:

... consider the unique psychological and other challenges that poverty presents people with and the opportunities that it takes away from them. These are, for example, some of the challenges that children who grow up in environments of poverty face:

- ◆ Poor children are more at risk of physical disease and injury and this may affect their intellectual performance. For example, poor children are more likely to have uncorrected hearing and visual problems and may be less able to concentrate due to an inadequate diet - all of which will affect their ability to learn in a formal school environment.
- ◆ Poor children are more likely to have to take on parental responsibilities at an early age, and may even have to act as the

head of a household. While they develop caring and other skills in this process, they miss out on many other opportunities - especially socialising with their peers and schooling.

- ◆ Poor children typically grow up in relatively crowded environments. While, again, this provides them with some unique opportunities for emotional and interpersonal growth, it can also entail considerable stress and may place them at greater risk of physical and sexual abuse.
- ◆ Poor children are more likely to witness or to be victims of crime and violence.

Health services (including mental health services) are far less accessible to poor children - both because they cannot afford it, or because they live in areas that have no or poorly-resourced clinics and other health facilities. (Terre Blanche 2003: pp.2-3)

Each of the issues that Terre Blanche (2003) describes above potentially impact significantly on the constructions of identity for people living and growing up in contexts of poverty.

Terre Blanche (2003) goes on to describe some of the impacts of poverty as being a sense of hopelessness about being caught in the poverty trap and not having the resources to enter the formal economy or to build a hopeful future - especially if a person is in a situation of generational poverty that has existed for some time. (ibid: p.3) However, it is important to balance this with an acknowledgement of the creative survival skills and close network of relationships that develop in most situations of poverty.

Another psychological impact of poverty is a sense of vulnerability or uncertainty about the future - especially as a result of not having resources to cope with shocks and stresses. Increasingly, the HIV&AIDS pandemic is one of the likely shocks and stresses experienced by many poor families. The trauma of this, as well as the struggle to access

adequate resources and support for those suffering from the disease, is a growing challenge in the South African context.

And, finally, there is a sense of alienation or otherness from society – a sense of being less than acceptable to society at large. (Terre Blanche 2003: p.4)

The paradox of these poverty related issues of identity is that those who are living in situations of poverty recognise and can analyse the patterns and impacts of capitalism and wealth with sharp clarity – what Paulo Freire called critical consciousness. (Freire 1970: pp.80-105) Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (1979) developed out of this desire to invite critical consciousness as a tool for change for people who had been silenced and marginalised by oppressive systems – which has provided important conceptual frameworks for Spirals workshops when facilitating processes in situations of poverty.

Conversely, the accumulation of material wealth might shift a person's identity at some levels, but they are then impacted by consumer culture, isolation from the very sources of social capital that might sustain them in their new contexts, and the inevitable influence of cultural imperialism of Western capitalism. (Terre Blanche 2003: p.5-6) The identity challenges posed by these issues are no less complex than those of poverty itself.

This has been an important issue for the work of Spirals, as many of the participants at the College of Transfiguration come from situations of poverty. As the work of the Spirals Trust has grown, it increasingly works with people and in communities grappling with the effects of poverty on issues of identity. It has become increasingly clear that poverty is not a separate phenomenon, but profoundly links and interfaces with issues of trauma and the impact of HIV&AIDS in the current South African context.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has reflected on the themes and issues around identity that have informed the work of Spirals – the underlying concepts, challenges, expectations and assumptions, and theories that have supported the work. Because the focus of the research is the way in which the embodied, drama based methodologies have enabled transformative exploration of issues of identity, this is what needs to be reflected on in the next chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: WORKSHOP METHODOLOGY

This chapter completes the second phase of the Action Learning cycle on which this thesis is based. While Chapter Two focused on identity related discourses that informed the content of the programme, this chapter focuses on the interactive, drama based methodological framework within which the work of Spirals explores issues of identity.

In the Introduction to this thesis, the process of a Spirals workshop was described as the creation of an aesthetic, embodied space which aims to enable an exploration of the interplay of embodied, performative narratives of identity. This chapter will reflect on the development and implementation of these embodied drama methods, with specific reference to the way they form part of the overall methodology developed by Spirals in exploring issues of identity. It will explore the methodological frameworks and references that work of this nature has drawn on, and reflect on the ways in which these have been contextualised in the work of Spirals.

As Reeler (2005: p.3) suggests, the reflection phase of the Action Learning cycle needs to include understanding why the actions described in Chapter One happened – the causes, sources of support, challenges and obstacles that were present. Also, the expectations and assumptions that informed actions that were taken, and theories or conceptual frameworks that could enable a meaningful reflection and analysis of the events.

The themes explored in this chapter will be:

- Defining Spirals' methods
- Exploring models of practice in participatory drama
- Identity, conflict and creative methodologies
- Method and personal/symbolic dialogues
- The issue of space

- Decolonising the workshop space

Defining Spirals' Methods

The work of Spirals has grown out of dialogues and reflections drawing on a range of disciplines, making the methods of the work eclectic in nature. The key focus, though, is the way in which drama methods enable embodied, drama-based explorations of identities.

The drama methods used in Spirals workshops are described as creative and participative in the sense that a space is created within a workshop where the different stories, voices, narratives and folded identities of the people present – and of their contexts – are invited to emerge. The tradition of story-telling is the meeting place of ancient history and current disciplines – and the major focus area of this discussion. (Landy 1996: pp.1-4)

Within a Spirals workshop, these methods are understood to be any activity that involves a physical expression of personal and social narratives within the defined physical time and space of the workshop. The details of the dramatic methods are adapted to suit the group, context and time available for a process.

In the emergence of the methodologies used by Spirals, it has not been possible to trace a structured progression or unfolding of a concept. Instead, it has been in the weaving of ideas, different approaches and feedback from participants that the work has grown. In keeping with this, the discussion in this chapter is a critical reflection of different threads or narratives that have emerged in the development of the work – rather than a structured argument that reaches a specific conclusion. It is a tracing of the contextual dynamics that have shaped the identity and ethos of the work of Spirals, and will be analysed in more detail in the Conclusion.

Exploring Models of Practice in Participatory Drama

Drama-in-Education

Some of the most significant examples of praxis in terms of participative drama have emerged from the field of Drama-in-Education.

Bolton describes Drama-in-Education as being about "making significant meaning" through role-plays in which the educator's primary responsibility is to empower learners by becoming a facilitator and working from within the dramatic process, rather than outside it. (Bolton and Heathcote 1995: p.4)

Earlier on in his writing, Bolton (1979: pp.2-11) drew from his own practice to define different types of drama based activities and experiences within the Drama-in-Education field. The first three were exercise (including direct experience, skill practice, imaginative drama exercise, games and other art forms), dramatic playing (imaginative playing, most often associated with children's play, but always about taking on imaginative roles as a tool for learning) and theatre (the creation of a particular dramatic product for sharing with an audience). Bolton argues that all three of these combine in various forms under the umbrella in Drama-in-Education to form what he calls "drama for understanding". (ibid.)

In the first collection of Heathcote's writings, Heathcote – a pioneer of Drama-in-Education in Britain – defines drama for understanding as necessarily being about manifesting change in some way. (Johnson and O'Neill 1984: p.115) Drama, as with other art forms, is about enabling a freezing, particularising and isolating of a particular issue or moment in time. Drama, however, is about the unfolding interaction of "people and forces" (ibid: p.115). A Drama-in-Education process needs to provide a

framework within which the negotiation of these dynamics, and the changes they lead to, can be explored.

This links very directly with my own experience of the creative, drama-based space of a workshop, providing what I often describe as a rehearsal for life – and for revolution in Boal's terminology. (Boal 1979) The opportunity to engage with issues and try out different ways of dealing with them through the interactive and dialogical nature of a group process happens within the contained boundaries of the time and space the group is together. Things that are said and done do not have the same consequences they would in a person's day-to-day world. Just as a child explores roles, modes of communication and relational dynamics through play, so the drama based space invites all who are involved to revisit those strategies and to engage with possibilities of change within the safety the space provides. The challenge for a facilitator is to be intuiting the spoken and unspoken life of the process, and to be guiding, holding and leading the unfolding drama towards moments of change and shift. If possible, these moments of change and shift need to be supported and sustained through ongoing work – something the short-term nature of each Spirals workshop is sometimes not able to achieve. Assuming that reaching a point of change is enough, and that participants can sustain their own integration, has been an area of weakness (which will be explored more in the following two chapters).

An important concept in this field of practice which has influenced the work of Spirals is the Mantle of the Expert – where learners in the classroom are enrolled by the educator (who has also taken on a role in the drama) as experts who can take the action of the role-play forward and determine its outcome. It is one of a range of techniques within Drama-in-Education through which learning outcomes emerge from the tasks in which learners must be conscious of, as well as being responsible for, what they are learning – because they are making the learning

happen through the power they have been given. (Bolton and Heathcote 1995: p.18)

Heathcote (1995) further explains that using the Mantle of the Expert enables deep "social (and sometimes personal) play" because learners²⁴ know they are contracting into a fiction, they understand the power they have within that fiction (to direct, decide and function), they observe themselves even as they function within a world of action and responsibility, and they grow in expertise through harnessing a range of conventions. (ibid: p.18)

The work of Spirals has drawn on several aspects of the models developed through Drama-in-Education – especially through its intentions to make meaning and to empower through facilitation. This becomes possible because of the way the facilitator is required to hand over choice, direction and the harnessing of knowledge and insight to participants. An important difference between Heathcote's use of the Mantle of the Expert and the work of Spirals is that the Mantle in Spirals is understood to have existed before the workshop and to continue to exist after the relatively short process of the workshop is complete. A Drama-in-Education process is longer than a Spirals one, and the Mantle is assumed and worked with specifically in the course of a drama process.

The direct relevance to identity is that it heightens awareness of the subjectivity and agency of identity; the Mantle of the Expert is not something the facilitator determines and hands over to a participant. Each participant is already the primary agent and "expert" on what constitutes the narratives of their identity – and they therefore carry and explore the significance of that mantle in the course of a workshop.

²⁴ The term learners is used here in preference to students or pupils. It is the terminology being used within the Outcomes Based Education system currently being used in South Africa. I also use it because I prefer the dynamic, active, engaged connotations of the word, which are consistent with the educational principles of both Drama-in-Education and Spirals.

I would argue that a key difference between a Spirals process and a Drama-in-Education processes is that Drama-in-Education requires learners to become experts in a range of ways – drawing on their own experience, researching information in order to take on the mantle or working with hypothetical and fantasy based scenarios.

A Spirals workshop works in a very specific and focused way because of its intention to raise awareness of the way in which each person wears the unique mantle of being the one person who deeply knows and understands their own identity. An important aspect of the process is affirming the fact that a participant is already the wearer of the mantle – it is not bestowed on them by someone else. The mantle is rather something that a Spirals workshop seeks to encourage participants to recognise and own in new ways, particularly because of the ways in which contextual issues and traumatic experiences often seem to have removed a sense of knowing that they have that mantle – and that they are indeed an expert.²⁵ This is part of the significance of the workshop or Drama-in-Education space; it provides a safe environment to analyse historical personal narratives and explore possible new ones without the constraints of a diffused focus in everyday life. Its liminality also diffuses some of the dominance of contextual discourses that might exist outside of the workshop space.

Dramatherapy

In addition to Drama-in-Education, another field of practice that uses participatory drama and has influenced the work and development of Spirals has been Dramatherapy.

Dramatherapy uses drama based, creative techniques to enable people to work through problems they are experiencing or to honour and sustain a sense of wellbeing. Insight and self-awareness could become vehicles of

²⁵ See discussion on the role of trauma in identity in Chapter Two.

change. (Meyer 2001: p.1) Connections are created between a client's inner world, situations or experiences they are dealing with, and the activities undertaken in the drama therapeutic session. A new relationship to the problem or situation is sought with the intention of this leading to some kind of resolution, relief and possibly a new understanding or way of functioning. (Jones 1996: pp.1-8)

Dramatherapy grew out of a range of influences including Jacob Moreno's development of psychodrama, the improvisational theatre pioneered in the 1960's by Viola Spolin and the early Drama-in-Education work of Peter Slade in the 1950's. It has since grown and diversified in many countries. Fundamentally, it works in the domain of how the concept of role in the realms of play and 'real' life can interact through a facilitated process in a therapeutic way. (Emunah 1997: p.108)

Within these broad frameworks, Dramatherapy draws on a range of techniques to achieve its aims, including:

- Dramatic projection
- Therapeutic performance process
- Empathy and distancing
- Personification and impersonation
- Interactive audience and witnessing
- Embodiment
- Playing
- Life-drama connection
- Transformation

(Jones 1996 cited in Meyer 2001, p. 1)

Concepts such as role, expression of feelings, empathy, catharsis and revelation of that which is not visible are fundamental to both Dramatherapy (Landy 1996: p.3) and the work of Spirals. Within these concepts lie the common belief that dialogical embodiment and articulation of issues is important and helpful in surfacing issues, and

enabling a learning process in which new possibilities are explored within a contained space. A participant leaves the workshopped drama process with more options than they arrived – and greater consciousness about how to continue working with these options in their day-to-day life.

The work of Spirals is not Dramatherapy in a clinical sense; it is about asking questions and enabling articulations of identity. However, because issues of identity have been the cause of so much systematic, emotional and physical violence in the history of the South African context, painful and traumatic memories and emotions inevitably emerge during most Spirals workshops²⁶, and there is a responsibility to hold the process of revisiting these memories in order to enable reflection and new insight. The focus in a Spirals workshop is the use of group processes to provide a lens through which to look at the questions that lie behind these stories, the narratives that inform them – and the way these can feed into creative choice-making.

As indicated in the description of the principles informing a Spirals workshop in Chapter One, when a participant is not able to hold their personal issues within the context of the group, Spirals is willing to work with the participant in finding therapeutic support and counselling. But Spirals is about the weaving of personal and other narratives in transformative ways – not about deep psychological therapeutic work.

The very nature of the work involves working in some depth with people's lives and issues, however. This raises a number of ethical considerations. Even though clear 'community commitments' are made by both facilitators and participants at the beginning of every workshop - one of which is always the confidentiality of what gets shared – respecting that confidentiality remains a challenge. While there has not yet been a reported case of a participant in a process abusing the knowledge they have about another in a public arena, it remains a risk within the work.

²⁶ This issue will be discussed further in the analysis of interviews with participants in Chapter Four.

This is something that is less of an issue in a one-on-one therapeutic counselling situation.

It is one of the reasons a group exercise in a Spirals workshop is often followed by a personal reflection exercise such as drawing, painting or journal writing. It has been my experience that there are people for whom a group sharing process is quite threatening, and a private creative space within which to both process and contain issues is very important. As will be seen in Chapter Four, this is borne out by Themba's account of his experiences of Spirals.

The dilemma this creates is that significantly meaningful processes for participants remain unspoken and unknown by others in the group. This makes monitoring the wellbeing of participants difficult for the facilitator, and my sense is that potentially rich shared processes of learning are curtailed for some participants by the difficulty of articulating issues in a group context. For the moment, this is an insurmountable issue that just needs to be factored into an overall understanding of how such group orientated methodologies work. A facilitator therefore needs to be constantly mindful of the boundaries between this work and therapy.

Theatre of the Oppressed

A third field of practice that has influenced the work of Spirals has been Theatre of the Oppressed, developed originally in Latin America by Augusto Boal (Boal 1979, 1992 and 1995) as part of the same movement that Paulo Freire's work enabled (Freire 1970; Hope & Timmel 1995).

Although his original work was very participatory in nature, I see Boal's work in the last decade or so as having fallen within a far more theatrical paradigm than the participatory drama one that Spirals has chosen (an issue that will be clarified later in this chapter). However, common to both Theatre of the Oppressed and Spirals methods is the belief that there are dramatic possibilities and dynamics in the inner and expressed

lives of every person and group, and that significant learning and growth are possible when safe spaces are created for those dynamics to be reflected on, revised and consciously changed in some way. What I would choose to describe as dramatic possibilities, Boal would call theatre. For the purpose of understanding his philosophy and how it relates to Spirals, I will use the word theatre in this section as well – even though I would define theatre as being more product-orientated than the unfolding, dialogical nature of a drama process.

Boal describes theatre as the first human invention – one which precipitated all other inventions and discoveries. (Boal 1995: p.13) For Boal, the moment a human being perceives what it is, realises what it is not and begins to imagine what it could become or where it could go, a realm of imagination has developed that takes humanity into the possibilities which have uniquely characterised its history on the planet. The human being is described as being “tri-dimensional (the I who observes, the *I-in-situ* and the not-I) because it alone is capable of dichotomy (seeing itself seeing)” (ibid: p.14). The relevance of this for Spirals is that it highlights the way in which embodied drama methods enable shifts between the subjective nature of experience (*I-in-situ*), the ability to observe and reflect on the implications of identity issues (*I who observes*), and the opportunity to choose for and against certain constructs, narratives or patterns of behaviour (*not-I*).

This convention of dramatic space and possibilities means that language and perception have moved beyond the purely informational to the symbolic and descriptive not only of what is, but also what can possibly be – and can be communicated through words, action, painting and music.

Theatre studies the multiple interrelations of men and women living in society, rather than limiting itself to the contemplation of each solitary individual taken in isolation. Theatre denotes conflict, contradiction,

confrontation, defiance. And the dramatic action lies in the variation and movement of this equation, of these opposing forces. Monologues will not be 'theatre' unless the antagonist, though absent, is implied; unless her absence is present.

The passion is necessary: theatre, as an art, does not have as its object the commonplace and the trivial, the valueless. It attaches itself to actions in which the characters have an investment, situations in which they venture their lives and their feelings, their moral and political choices: their passions! What is passion? It is a feeling from someone or something, or an idea, that we prize more highly than our own life. (Boal 1995: p.16)

The Theatre of the Oppressed techniques that have been used most frequently in Spirals have been Forum Theatre and Image Theatre.

Forum Theatre was the first method used by Boal. The key concept is one of enabling theatre to become a forum for dialogue and debate. A story that explores dynamics of oppression in a situation is developed. Once it becomes Forum Theatre, a person that would otherwise be a passive spectator in a theatrical event becomes a 'spect-actor' and can step in to the role of a protagonist at any time. A spect-actor can therefore change the course of the story, try out solutions and plan possible changes for later implementation in their own contexts. It becomes what Boal calls "a rehearsal for revolution." (Boal 1979: p.122) The audience therefore intervenes directly in the action, bringing their own experience and suggestions to an exploration of possible courses of action. (Jackson in the Translator's Introduction to Boal 1995; p.xviii)

Image Theatre was later developed once Boal started working in Europe. This is a technique that enables a deeper investigation of an issue in which spect-actors create a series of statue-like images with their bodies. These are intended to give a collective perspective on a given theme and participants are then asked to try out ways of changing an oppressive

reality within that theme. (Boal 1992: pp.1-2) As I will explore in more detail later in this chapter, there are tensions between these claims about Boal's methods and what really happens for participants.

Forum Theatre and Image Theatre are an integral part of the more therapeutic emphasis in Boal's later work called Rainbow of Desire. (Jackson in the Translator's Introduction to Boal 1995: p.xx)

These techniques are useful within Spirals because they provide effective tools with which to enable deliberation and surfacing of narratives and meaning within a situation. Often they will be used as a way of exploring the issues that have emerged from another exercise – such as the Masks and Power exercise that is described in more detail later in this Chapter. The images or pieces of Forum Theatre revisit themes that have emerged during the Masks and Power exercise,²⁷ enabling a deeper analysis of, for example, the structural power relations between an ordinand and their Bishop – and the transformative choices and possibilities available to the ordinand.

Spirals' Interpretation of Participatory Drama

As it has drawn on the conventions of Drama-in-Education, Dramatherapy and the Theatre of the Oppressed, my work within Spirals has understood drama to consist of simultaneously fictional and real, embodied realm of action which is created specifically with the aim of exploring and knowing without having a particular outcome in mind. This is in contrast with the concept of theatre as being a realm of action in which the primary intention is that the action, which is a particular and largely pre-determined product, is witnessed or seen by an audience. (Wilshire 1982: p.30) Drama in this sense serves to highlight the dramatic form, content and courses of action that are present in day-to-day life and its events (Turner 1982: p.91). It enables learnings within

²⁷ An outline of the process followed in this exercise can be found in The Spirals Manual, Appendix Two.

the way the workshop process is facilitated that might not otherwise have been possible - particularly if the ultimate aim was to prepare a particular 'product' to be viewed by an audience.

These kinds of learnings are made possible by the fact that a participant in a Spirals workshop leaves day-to-day life, even if it's only for a few hours, and enters a space of a different nature and removed quality for the duration of the workshop. This means that the issues explored through the drama methods used will set up an interdependent feedback process between the narratives of the dramas and the previously familiar narratives of the day-to-day. These processes are therefore paradoxically both separate from but also integrally part of day-to-day narratives and discourses. In this sense, a Spirals workshop takes on the dimensions of a ritual or a rite of passage. Rituals are a long-established form of social drama in which people engage in reflexive processes, either individually or in groups, in order to define or understand an issue or a state of being in such a way that change occurs. (Turner 1982: pp. 92-101)

While a Spirals workshop does not necessarily have the religious or theatrical overtones that other rituals might, a person who chooses to come to a Spirals workshop has nevertheless made a number of commitments. They have made time available for this process, they have agreed to engage with sensitive issues in a way that will change them somehow and they are willing to explore transformation of identity in some way. It is the physical activities of both withdrawing from day-to-day life in order to participate in a process and taking part in the activities and exercises of the workshop that enable the learnings and shifts that constitute the intended work of Spirals. The withdrawal to be in a workshop does not mean that a participant has separated themselves from experiences and issues, but rather that they are engaging in a particular kind and quality of activity that enables reflection and change.

This links with Holzman's (2000) claim that activity – in the sense of being revolutionary, self-reflexive, dialectical, transformative and continuously emergent²⁸ – is a legitimate ontological unit. In this sense it is not a way of making meaning of something, it has meaning in and of itself. In her account of Vygotsky's writings, method is described as "simultaneously tool and result" when it is part of a process of changing the old and mundane into new forms of life through the dialectical practice of performing both who we are and who we are not in order to qualitatively transform and reshape ourselves and our environment. (Vygotsky 1978 cited in Holzman 2000: pp.81-83) This links with and strengthens Boal's theories of the interactive nature of 'I-in-situ', the 'I who observes' and the 'not-I' discussed earlier in this chapter.

These arguments are significant in relation to the work of Spirals both because of the nature of the activity that a Spirals workshop involves, but also because of the link it makes with the active and dramatic nature of identity construction itself. The construction of a person's identity could also be described as revolutionary, self-reflexive, dialectical, transformative and continuously emergent. In this sense, the liminal space in which drama methods are used in Spirals is not removed from participants' day-to-day lives at all – to set up dualistic notions of the nature of the workshop space as opposed to their own lives would defeat the ontological basis of the work. A Spirals workshop is a focussed opportunity to explore the dramatic meaning of identity construction within the experience and possible learnings provided by that very day-to-day life.

Hetherington (1998: pp.150 ff.) reflects on some important aspects of the drama based nature of identity construction that help to explain this issue further. Although he is primarily reflecting on his context of late

²⁸ Holzman describes this as a "Marxian" sense of the word – based on Marx's writings in K. Marx & F. Engels (1974) *The German Ideology* New York: International Publishers.

20th Century Britain, his discussions about the underlying principles of identity construction as 'performative,' spatially situated processes have important bearing on the work and context of an organisation such as Spirals.

His contention is that Western modernist understandings of identity, in which the script and boundaries of a person's life were perceived to be determined by their situation in life, have shifted considerably. The current emphases on subjectivity and agency have resulted in a "proliferation of scripts" in which there is a range of choices. These proliferations are multiplying as hegemonic boundaries of class and identity politics are challenged by Postcolonial and feminist questionings and assertions about the multiplicity of centres and margins that can be articulated. For each person there is therefore the constant paradox of living in the midst of shifts between constraints and multiplicities of possibilities (ibid: pp.21-25). This is an inevitable reality of the post-modern condition. I believe these ideas are true of the South African context too. In the South African context, however, there is not only the shift from modernist understandings of identity, but there is also the shift from colonial and apartheid-determined understandings of identity, which could be conceived as modernist, to the multiple, hybrid and constantly unfolding identities of the emerging democratic and Postcolonial era. For South Africans too there are constant paradoxes and shifts between constraints and multiple possibilities, but in a different way to the experiences of people living in Britain.

Hetherington (1998: pp.151-152) draws on the writings of Antonin Artaud in order to articulate the way in which a theatrical concept in relation to identity can be understood as being more than metaphoric. He describes Artaud's intention as being to achieve the fusion of theatre and everyday life through the creation of a space in which the body can fully express itself in its hungering after life and desire. The result could be

described as a carnivalesque framework in which new identities and identifications become possible. (Artaud 1977: p. 77)

The carnivalesque is understood to comprise renditions of situations and events that are not consistent with official renderings; they are narratives that rupture social fabric in ways that disrupt and redirect the way in which power shapes a situation. Rules are broken, alternative truths are realised and difference is embraced. (McRae 2002)²⁹ The workshop space is therefore reminiscent of the carnivals of traditional story-telling conventions of past cultures, in which communities gathered to reflect on – and laugh at – the narratives of power and other issues of their context.

Hetherington links the outcomes of these carnivalesque disruptions with Schechner's sociological concept of "restored behaviour." (Schechner 1985: pp.35-115; Hetherington 1998)

By (restored behaviour, Schechner) means action that is remembered and can be rehearsed so that it may be incorporated into future performances ... Particular 'strips' of restored behaviour, performative repertoires that can be learned, may be arranged and rearranged to make up a performance. In this respect, there is never an original action, no performance is ever for the first time. Like role playing, which involves restored behaviour, a performance can never be completely spontaneous and will always involve ... recognisable elements. The creative aspect involves not the bits of performances themselves but the ways that they are arranged, and the expressive, embodied ways in which this is often done. Learning strips of behaviour means that the totality of the performance is unbounded and can be unscripted while at the same time having a visibly performative character to it.

²⁹ The idea of the carnivalesque as a means of disrupting accepted norms in a performative space is also explored by Bakhtin (1965) in Counsell and Wolff (2001: pp.216-221).

The question of identity along with the practices associated with identity politics³⁰ can be seen in terms of restored behaviour. What persona one adopts, the embodiment expressed through this persona, what identity one wishes to have and how one identifies with others; these will all depend on the type of restored behaviour, the strips of action which are chosen and the way they come to be arranged. In a more sociological sense, restored behaviour will comprise part of the stock of knowledge that individuals have but its use will not necessarily follow the conventions of everyday life. Rather, it will follow the convention of the occasion. Just as routine social activity involves performance by skilled agents, so too do liminal, playful and transgressive activities involved in the maintenance of new identities and identifications through recognisable repertoires and their strips of behaviour. (Hetherington 1998: pp.153-154)

When these ideas are applied to Spirals workshops, some interesting connections and ideas emerge. Given the highly prescriptive, essentialist context of apartheid era South Africa, Spirals workshops provide opportunities for exploring restored behaviour as people engage with the new possibilities for emergent identities made possible through the process of democratisation. This will be explored further during the discussion about the Masks and Power exercise later in this chapter.

The way in which drama methods support democratisation needs to be clarified here. The concept of Deliberative Democracy – based on what Amartya Sen calls a “public reason perspective”, rather than “public ballot perspective” – is what Spirals aims to support (Sen 2004: p.2). This means that democracy is about far more than each person having a vote – it is about debate, deliberation, discussion and the ongoing exploration of how democracy can best work to realise the values and principles it stands for in a specific context and culture. It is about far more than majority rule; it is rather about interrogating and analysing the nature of oppression, understanding difference and power discrepancies within a context, and exploring through dialogue how to

³⁰ See Chapter Two for discussion about the link between identity politics and the work of Spirals.

implement democratic practice in a way that effectively challenges historical oppressions rather than replicating them in another guise. This is where principles of the participatory drama methods described in this section of the chapter are so valuable – they enable and provide an embodied understanding of exactly this model of democracy in the way they work.

Identity, Conflict and Creative Methodologies

An important thread in the story of Spirals and in the development of its methodologies is the fact that it grew out of a desire to address conflict. As described in the Introduction, the very racial and gender diversity many people had worked towards realising in the CPSA was causing ongoing cycles of conflict at all levels of the College of Transfiguration. Understanding the nature and role of conflict – and the possibilities of creative, participative workshop methodologies in addressing the challenges raised by conflict – are an important component of the methods developed by Spirals.

Conflict is a universal human phenomenon, and often the catalyst for artistic creativity. One of the reasons we need stories and embodied ways of understanding ourselves is the fact that we are constantly dealing with and understanding at new levels both the implicit and explicit conflicts that are caught up in what it means to be human. In every society, the arts are used in some way to describe and express views about how to deal with conflicts within a particular context. (Liebmann 1996: p.1) The reality of conflict as an inescapable component of life means that conflict is not always bad, although the experience of conflict may be challenging and perhaps painful. Instead, at the heart of a conflict is a range of creative possibilities, each with their own potential dramatic scripts.

Equally, however, not all conflicts can be “resolved” in the sense that they disappear – on the contrary they may be deliberately set in motion

or continued in the interest of some kind of change. What creative and dramatic methodologies can offer is an opportunity to understand the experience of historical and current conflicts, the underlying causes – as well as a safe environment in which to explore options that could result in positive and transformational change in a situation. This is done in a context where individual and group work are able to feed into each other. (ibid: p.3)

Liebmann (1996: pp.2,3) describes the enabling role of the arts in addressing conflicts in the following way:

Arts approaches can provide special opportunities to develop and practise many ... skills in the following ways:

- They involve participants actively, so that they can actually experience – in role play for example – someone else's point of view.
- The engagement in an external activity can provide a 'distancing' which can help people gain a new perspective, which in turn may then help to resolve a particular situation.
- People can try out different options and ways of being, whether using drama, movement, music or painting in a frame of reference which is parallel to everyday life.
- Involvement in the arts engages the whole person, 'speaking from the heart' and using their creativity and emotions. This can lead to learning and insights which can pave the way for the personal change needed to resolve many conflicts.
- Cooperative projects can teach participants skills of working together to resolve conflict, and arts activities provide a tangible forum in which to achieve this.
- In many situations, people in conflict with themselves or others do not have the communication skills to resolve situations verbally, and arts approaches are extremely helpful here.

Liebmann's approach to conflict is at an applied, and primarily skills-based level – while Spirals, as articulated already in this discussion, tries to work at a range of levels besides those of skills, such as trauma healing, and understanding the narratives and discourses that shape conflicts.

However, her final two points have not been specifically raised in this thesis and need to be highlighted. Spirals workshops work best when the group is as heterogeneous as possible, because the range of voices and ideas and perspectives feeds the dialogical process and enables the tracing of different – sometimes conflicting – narratives. A performative, embodied approach to expressing these narratives and conflicts gives participants a “tangible forum” in which to explore these at a range of levels.

In my experience, this does not always lead to co-operation. Sometimes naming the dissonances is all that can be done – imposing co-operation would involve silencing important voices and concerns in a situation. It would re-colonise the space that we are working to de-colonise.

This has overtones of the idea that people with different identities in the South African context should “reconcile”. While reconciliation is a noble and important process, the pressure to reconcile when in reality there are irreconcilable dynamics and dissonances in a situation runs the risk of being as oppressive as the past we are only in the process of emerging from. Dealing with conflicts is not only about developing skills to co-operate – it is also about learning to creatively live with paradox and unanswerable questions.

Liebmann's final point about communication is important to highlight. Often Spirals workshops are run in contexts where participants do not share the same first language and come from different cultures. Sometimes levels of proficiency in English and confidence with workshop

culture are sufficient for the process to move ahead fairly quickly; on other occasions it is necessary for translation of exercises and discussions to take place. In other situations, levels of literacy and English proficiency are such that verbal dialogue and writing up concepts on newsprint are extremely ineffective. This is where the power of storytelling in people's own languages (even if some participants don't understand the details of what is being said) that leads into image and symbol work becomes most useful, because the imaging methods enable levels of communication and dialogue that would be impossible at a purely verbal level. This is an idea highlighted by Boal as well when he talks about a human being as comprising a sensate body before anything else (Boal 1995: p.29), meaning silent images can sometimes communicate even more powerfully than speaking bodies.

Whatever the details of the process, the key issue in what happens during a Spirals workshop is that the space is provided for conflicts to be articulated and the narratives that have caused them to be explored so that glimpses of new narratives and dramatic possibilities have the opportunity to emerge. The "empty space" of the workshop circle becomes a safe space in which to allow the unsatisfied needs and the often intense emotions associated with different types of conflict to be explored, acted out, and new options generated.

In the South African context, the embodied nature of conflicts – many of which have been traumatic and violent – make embodied methods for transformation important.

Method as Personal / Symbolic Dialogues

In the course of this thesis, the events of the struggle for democracy in South Africa have been described as simultaneously physical and symbolic. Spirals works with identity from the same basis – the dramatic

and embodied nature of identity construction is also simultaneously physical and symbolic.

The highly politicised context of the apartheid era meant that every act, whether private or public, was starkly both personal and political – and as a result, also both physical and symbolic to a greater extent than has been the case since 1994. Because of apartheid legislation, personal choices such as where one wanted to live, who one wanted to engage with in intimate relationships, and where one wanted to go to school immediately took on political and symbolic overtones – legislation such as the Population Registration Act, Group Areas Act and the Immorality Act prescribed people's choices at every level. Complying with these laws made day-to-day activities symbols of acquiescence, while defying them became symbols of resistance – and placed people in danger of arrest and possible detention without trial. An example of this was the "invasion" of designated Whites only beaches in Cape Town by members of the United Democratic Front on 19 August 1989, when hundreds of people who were forbidden to set foot on "Whites only" beaches by apartheid legislation tried to walk onto the beaches and reach the ocean. An act that in other contexts could simply have constituted a group of people spending a Saturday morning on the beach assumed huge political and symbolic significance – to such an extent that police violently tried to prevent them from realising their intentions on both Strand and Bloubergstrand beaches.

This weaving of the personal and symbolic continues to be the case in the emerging democratic South African context, although often less overtly – given the cultural shifts that are taking place as the sharp edges of the impact of apartheid's legislation abate over time.

Drama methods provide a medium to explore the personal and symbolic within identity construction through the use of role-play and image work. However, it is important to emphasise that the physical and symbolic are

not different “frames” of meaning in the sense that Goffman describes them. The same action is not transformed from being purely physical into also being symbolic (Goffman 1974: pp.21 ff.) – they are simultaneously infused with different narratives. For example, in the case of the participant who danced in front of the map depicting her varied ancestry described in Chapter One, her actions were simultaneously both personal and symbolic – the expression of her identity was both a personally performative and politically symbolic act at one and the same time. She was narrating her personal history and ancestry, but the political and symbolic relevance lay in the fact that her foremothers were black or Malay because they were slave women from Africa and Asia, while her forefathers were white and came from the colonising countries of The Netherlands and Britain. Fused with the liberation and joy of owning previously split and denied aspects of her identity was a powerful symbolic representation of the oppressive practices of the past, and their impact on her life and context. The act of dancing and touching the parts of the map from which her different ancestors came was simultaneously a personal act of reconciliation and a symbolic enactment of the historical oppressions and liberations inherent in the story.

No story or action invited in the context of a Spirals workshop is either linear or simple, but rather a weaving of complex narratives that need to be understood as stories but also conveyers of meaning and tools of transformation for the story-tellers and story-listeners. Of course, this weaving of narratives continues after the workshop is over; what Marajh and I hoped to achieve is that they happen more consciously and enable personal and socio-political transformation – and the deepening of democracy – as a result. How this can be achieved and whether it can ever be measured is one of the harsh questions that the work is needing to grapple with as it grows and develops.

One of the weaknesses of the way in which the work of Spirals has been structured is that there has not been sufficient monitoring of the extent

to which this has really happened. Currently, clearer monitoring and evaluation strategies are being piloted that both track and support participants for several years after a programme – using questionnaires, contacts sessions and feedback from leaders in contexts where they are now working.

An example of how we endeavoured to work in this way, though, is the Masks and Power role-play,³¹ often used in a five-day Spirals workshop, in which a situation of oppressive power and control is set up and participants enrolled into two groups: one that holds power and control and one that doesn't. Through their responses to the creation of a scenario, workshop participants make individual and group choices about how to respond to the power dynamics of the situation. The exercise is a provocative invitation to adopt or resist 'strips' of behaviour (as described by Hetherington in the previous section of this chapter) from the oppressive structures and role models that participants have engaged with historically in their lives – and to reflect on the effect and consequences in the relatively contained environment of a role-play.

At different times, highly racist, sexist and discriminatory remarks have been made while in role, particularly by participants placed in the group given roles of power and control. There has been very little that predictably defines who will engage in these strips of behaviour and who will not – this has been a constantly surprising aspect of the exercise. Image Theatre is very useful here as a technique that enables a deeper analysis of what has transpired, and gives participants a chance to explore choices and modes of behaviour other than those they adopted during the role-play. A person in an oppressive role can explore through image the nature and source of the power they have used, while a person in an oppressed role can reflect on the structural power constraining them and what their choices for resistance might be.

³¹ See The Spirals Manual in Appendix Two for an outline of this exercise.

The most challenging engagement with the situation created has always been for those participants whose roles mean that power of choice seems to have been taken away; for many it is an experience of re-traumatisation in which the ability to either voice their trauma or articulate their desires feel as if they have been annihilated.³² If sensitively handled, the safety of the workshop space enables a realisation that the sense of annihilation is a memory and not necessarily a reality – which then enables a realisation of the possibilities of resisting the power and oppression of these memories and explorations of different ways of handling the situation.

In most workshops, at least one member of the disempowered group in the role-play is able to respond with an action or voice that articulates some form of resistance – and acts as a catalyst for the rest of the group to explore the possibilities and consequences of resistance in some way. (This has been an important strategy for disrupting the discourses of oppression and 'ideologies of superiority' discussed later in this chapter.) In other workshops, it is only in the debriefing of the role-play and sometimes a Forum Theatre-style re-exploration of the dynamics, that new, transgressive or defiant 'strips of restored behaviour' are able to be rehearsed and adopted as the beginning of a new narrative of transformed or chosen identity.

The shift that takes place when traumatised and disempowered people name the abuses that are taking place in a role-play such as this is an important moment of truth-telling and therefore significant in realising the aims of Spirals. This is not truth in an absolute sense, but an articulation of the relativistic nature of experiences of truth. A truth that, as Morss suggests, can maybe only be spoken against power. (Morss 2000: p.20)

³² There is further discussion about trauma and identity in Chapter Two.

This happens most effectively in a Spirals context when there is an integration of a physical embodiment of the issues around identity and power through the role-play, linked with dialogical processes of reflection and exploration of choices and alternative narratives. It is these alternative narratives that are the catalysts for both personal transformation and a deepening of democracy, because participants are able to recognise the contextual implications of their personal choices through their symbolic meaning.

Not all participants reach the point of recognising these issues, and not all participants leave a workshop saying they have changed in some way. There is sufficient evidence that change does occur for at least some participants – as will be seen in the next chapter.

The Issue of Space

As already mentioned, the nature of the workshop space in a Spirals process is significant. It is integral to the ontological nature of the activity that is undertaken.

It is not only the fact that participants agree to enter into a separate and different space for the purposes of a workshop that is important to consider, but the way in which that space is set up and worked with.

It is important that the space is quiet and safe – as free of disruptions as possible. This enables participants to focus on the issues at hand without the distractions of phone calls and other activities.

Wherever possible, participants are seated in a circle or semi-circle without tables or desks in front of them – unless the arrangement needs to shift for group work or some other kind of exercise. This is a deliberate attempt to create a ritualistic type environment, and one where each person – including the facilitators – is in an equal spatial relationship to

the rest of the group. It is also intended to send the message that every person is simultaneously a teacher and a learner – there is no “teacher’s territory” at the front of the room. This is at the heart of the participatory ethos of the work of Spirals.

The centre of the circle is empty – inviting the creativity and plasticity a drama based process makes possible, as described earlier in the chapter. It also invites what Peter Brook would describe as holy, rough and immediate theatre in which “if” is both the truth and an experiment. (Brook 1996)³³

For Brook (1996: pp.42-64), holy theatre is a space in which the invisible is made visible through experience; it is a space of surprises, of ritual and ceremony, a space of spontaneity where there is order, an expression of darkness that illuminates and an invocation and laying bare of the things that daily life covers up. Another dimension of what theatre can be is a rough space (Brook 1996: pp.65-97) where there is salt, sweat, noise and smell. A space which is anti-authoritarian, anti-traditional, anti-pomp and anti-pretence, and which can provoke both delight and rage. It alienates and distances through parody, imitation and criticism, and disturbs through contradiction and paradox. The third dimension of theatre that Brook (1996: pp.98-141) desires is one that encapsulates the best of both rough and holy theatre. It is immediate; it is constantly evolving and responding as it recognises impermanence while also finding a sense of balance between polarities that is appropriate for a certain moment. Finally, immediate theatre leaves one changed by an image or memory – even an invisible trace of a new insight – that can transform a person’s thinking for life.

³³ Again, Brook speaks about theatre, but I see his definitions as also applying to the drama based work used by Spirals.

It is a huge challenge to manage a creative and dramatic space that realises these ambitions, but my experience of the drama processes is that Brook is naming important aspects of what the work calls for in the way he describes a vision for theatre – albeit that they are sometimes also elusive. It is an important and inspiring vision. And one I have seen realised in small, almost iconic moments in drama processes – such as the woman participant dancing in front of the map of her history described earlier in this thesis, and the moments of insight and change articulated by Themba in the next chapter.

As mentioned earlier in this chapter, Spirals' eclectic methods have also drawn significantly on another very different approach to this issue of space in the development of its own work – emerging from the highly politicised postcolonial context of the developing world context of Brazil rather than the Western European context of Britain in which Brook primarily worked – namely, the work of Theatre of the Oppressed.

What would be called a dramatic space in Spirals is closely linked to what Augusto Boal (1995: pp.16 ff.) describes as the aesthetic space – the dynamic space in which knowledge and discovery are stimulated by learning through experience.

Within this framework of understanding, each person's presentation of themselves every moment of every day has an element of drama: it is an embodied series of rituals in a range of spaces and situations (Hetherington 1998: p.150) in which what Boal refers to as "opposing forces", play themselves out. (Boal 1995: p.16)

The danger of describing "forces" as "opposing" is that they are perceived in a dualistic way – which does not necessarily enable a weaving of narratives and exploration of choice-making in this regard in the way Spirals intends. I prefer to see this dynamic as relational and dialogical,

rather than oppositional, it invites more of the transformative principles that Spirals intends. Because what these rituals are, the space they take place in, and the meaning made of them have direct bearing on the identities both present and emerging for those who are taking part – and those which are excluded for whatever reason.

For Boal (1995: pp.20-27), there are three dimensions to the aesthetic space in which theatre takes place, which are helpful in clarifying what occurs during these creative processes:

1. *Plasticity*, meaning that both fiction and reality are present at the same time – there is a dreamlike quality but it is also physical and substantial. This enables:
 - a. Liberation of memory and imagination
 - b. The affective and oneiric dimensions - what exists in people's minds, emotions and senses is projected into the aesthetic space - it may be physically the same space or event, but for each person it takes on different dimensions.
2. The "aesthetic space" is *Dichotomic and Creates Dichotomy* – meaning that role-players and observers are both themselves and who they have been created to be within the space.
3. The "aesthetic space" is *Telemicroscopic* – meaning that it focuses in with a fine lens on issues that have either seemed distant or invisible as a result of being below the surface of events.

(Boal 1995: pp.20-29)

In Boal's Rainbow of Desire, the person telling or enacting a story is simultaneously the teller, the observer and the person in the past who experienced the situation being described. There is therefore both a backward and forward (i.e. dichotomic) movement. Boal argues that, in order to make these shifts within the aesthetic space, the person whose story is being shared in this process has both recalled the story and also begun to develop alternatives to a situation which causes unwanted

suffering or unhappiness in some way. This is a transformational process of someone exploring their own subjectivities in relation to the unconscious and conscious social and psychological dynamics of their context. And, of course, this is done with the assistance of the witnessing of the other participants in the process.

An important point of connection between Boal's thinking and the work of Spirals is that we as human beings live in human bodies – our bodies are the receptacles of all experience, be it sensory, emotional or mental. The body, then, is the key to unlocking the memories and beliefs that provide the gateways to transformation. A creative, drama space (what Boal would call the aesthetic space) creates opportunities for these memories to surface and undergo a sifting and a processing in collective physical spaces.

As already mentioned, in Spirals the workshop space does not always take on overtly "theatrical" forms or methods, but it nevertheless incorporates many aspects of Boal's aesthetic space as described above – with important differences.

Firstly, a range of creative methodologies are used to enable this drama space in which transformative processes can unfold.

In addition, Forum Theatre processes are usually tightly held by both the facilitator and the actors. In Spirals workshops, there is a deliberate shifting of the locus of control through the rhythms of group and personal exercises that proactively invite the questions, challenges, voices and actions of participants beyond the controlled environment of a piece of image theatre or role-play. By the end of the three- or five-day process, the intention is that the direction of dialogues and questioning is increasingly driven by the participants rather than the facilitator. A Spirals workshop is therefore not a rehearsal for revolution in the sense that a piece of theatre is always held and controlled in some way – it is

rather invites a transformative revolution in the way the very process itself unfolds as participants take increasing control of the process.

There are also some conceptual points of dissonance when comparing the work (and contexts) described in Boal's literature with the work of Spirals. As Green (2001: p.52) points out, neither Theatre of the Oppressed nor Rainbow of Desire clearly articulate strategies for the deconstruction of oppression – or the experience of the oppressor. The focus is primarily the voicing of experiences of oppression by its victims. Boal's shift towards developing an understanding of the "fears and frustrations, hopes and desires" (Boal 1995: p.2) that inform people's experiences, particularly in the West, is a significant shift to inviting personal rather than only structural narratives – individuals' and communities' personal experience and internalisation of structurally determined labels such as "the poor" and "the oppressed" are able to surface, be explored and deconstructed.

However, the deconstruction of the identity of the oppressor and the unpacking of what the options are for those trapped within the delusions and masks of privilege and structural power have yet to be addressed in his work. Part of the challenge of this is that an individual may not seem to be an oppressor – they may have lived a kind and compassionate life. What makes them an oppressor nevertheless is the way their economic, class and political privileges mean that every aspect of their life – and lifestyle – is based on the exploitation and oppression of others who are less privileged, and of the natural environment. As discussed in Chapter One, ignorance or avoidance of these layers of complicity in systematic and structural oppression do not render one innocent of oppression. Deconstruction of these aspects of identities of oppression are as important as deconstructing identities of the oppressed.

The need to challenge an oppressor about the value systems that inform the structures and choices that s/he makes – and the inevitable

alienations that they involve – are not clearly articulated in the work of Theatre of the Oppressed. (Davis & O’Sullivan 2000: pp. 293-294)

In Spirals workshops – as well as in the deconstruction of my own identity narratives as a white South African - I have come to realise just how much work is involved in this aspect of identity transformation. The nature of structural power is such that those who hold and control power are able to hide their vulnerabilities far more easily than those who are disempowered. Finding tools and practices that supportively enable participants to work dialogically with the identity and nature of the oppressor and the oppressed has been a significant challenge – particularly because the emotional and spiritual experiences of those who have been oppressors often involve significant silencing and oppression of integrity and conscience that it is cloaked behind intense denial.

A danger of both Theatre of the Oppressed and Spirals’ techniques is that those who come from privileged, structural oppressive contexts use the dramatic space to try and imagine what the experience of someone who is overtly oppressed might be, rather than owning their own experiences. This has the double effect of both silencing voices and narratives of the oppressed and leaving the oppressors as alienated and trapped in denial as when the process started. In many ways it becomes a re-enactment of colonisation that reinforces its discourses of power and voice. This will be discussed further when exploring decolonising the workshop space.

Within Theatre of the Oppressed programmes, this use of the dramatic space results in an assimilation and assumption of presumed voices of others’ oppression when groups of community drama practitioners or actors articulate or narrate stories of other people who have been oppressed in some way.³⁴ At times this is theatrically useful, but the danger remains that the original narrative and issues get lost. (Salverson

³⁴ This comment refers to later developments in Boal’s work. The original intention was that a group or community develop their own drama about a situation of oppression. (Boal 1979)

2001: p.122)

I have therefore chosen to facilitate processes in which layers and narratives of oppressor and oppressed that are present but often rendered invisible in the day-to-day can be explored, challenged and understood in new ways within the contained drama-based space of a workshop environment. This enables both a personal exploration of these issues for participants as well as the opportunity to listen to others' stories as a means of reflexive growth, insight and change.

As will be discussed in the next section, this is not an easy task for either facilitators or participants in a process. It is usually best handled with a sense of the carnivalesque disruption described earlier that involves gentle humour and inversion of power, rather than judgement and guilt or the grim bravado Gergen (1999) refers to.

Decolonising the Workshop Space

A significant challenge of the context in which Spirals began, and the nature of the workshop space that was possible, was the cultural and ideological ethos of the College of Transfiguration and its position in the CPSA. The CPSA is an historically patriarchal, European structure, and the College a primarily academic institution.

As described above, one of the dangers of the work of Spirals is that it inadvertently replicates or reinforces oppressive discourses within this history and context. The workshop space needed to be a site of decolonisation, not re-colonisation.³⁵

While part of the stated intention of the methods used in Spirals was to deconstruct the narratives and power constructs that had shaped

³⁵ The field of Postcolonial theory is vast and complex. A thesis of this nature can at best make reference to it rather than reflecting on it in detail.

participants' identities using participatory drama, the very basis from which this was done also needed deconstruction. The role of the body in a process of this nature needs to be understood at different levels: that each participant is acting for themselves within the dramatic space, but is also an agent in shaping the dynamics of the workshop group and the issues that are emerging from them, while at the same time engaging with the contextual, structural and socially determined discourses in which the process is taking place. (Balme 1999: p.167)

The importance of a dramatic space which enables a recognition of the many truths inherent in human experience – rather than an objective truth which imposes a reductionist understanding of either “normality” or transformation – is an issue that is not easily addressed in an overt manner. (Wong 1994: p 134) Marajh and I debated at length just how to create a space for participants that would be both holding and challenging in a context where using the body as a medium of learning was not familiar and therefore potentially threatening. The convention of church services being led by priests who wear layers of robes and are seated behind large altar tables and railings is a stark contrast to the kind of space and ethos Spirals aims to create in workshops.

We needed to both invite and disrupt the narratives of the College context in the workshop space in a way that made it possible for participants to engage with and deconstruct them using strategies and exercises that were empowering rather than threatening.

The very fact that the first groups of Spirals participants were preparing to be Christian clergy in an Anglican structure meant that they arrived with certain discourses already tacitly agreed upon. For example, words that often came up in discussion were the need for “us” to address or care for “the marginalised” and “the poor”. Marginalised from what? What did the use of “the poor” as a noun rather than in an adjectival sense mean? Who were the speakers in relation to these groups – part of them

or "other" from them in some way? How had these discourses emerged in that particular context? Were these participants (in spite of their racial and gender diversity) ontologically placing themselves in an assumed dominant position within the structure they were training to be part of? Was the subtle language of exclusion of others placing a "veil of transparency" over the dominant institutional discourses of white heterosexual patriarchy? Were participants self-censoring their own dissenting discourses as a result of their desire to belong to the dominant discourses in some way – or to be liked by their Bishop and therefore given a good posting on the completion of their studies?

In reflecting on this, we developed strategies that invited and sometimes provoked an exploration of these issues. Firstly, group brainstorm and Image Theatre processes that began with people's own experiences and histories, exploring narratives of oppression and power, were used. The intention was that this was a way of placing and naming the dominant articulated discourses and those perceived to be marginalised or "othered" in the realm of participants' own lived experience, starting with their own stories. Through revisiting and re-mem'bering (in the sense of putting together the memory of a lived experience) events in which participants had experienced marginalisation and othering for themselves in a personal way, it was hoped the distance created by the objectification of others would shift. This was followed by personal writing and drawing exercises which encouraged participants to name the aspects of themselves and their stories that they marginalised or "othered" within their own identity narratives.

Of course, these processes were being facilitated from the basis of certain discourses as well – which influenced the direction which the workshops would take. For Marajh and myself, these discourses included the intention to encourage greater ownership of issues – for change, for learning and for transformation. We were also both strongly influenced by

the liberation theology³⁶ taught at the College of Transfiguration, with its emphasis on deconstruction of traditional Western theological discourse. And then there was the desire to continue the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, which had recently completed its work, and the desire to support and the implementation of deliberative democracy.

Any facilitator comes with ontological, epistemological and identity discourses of their own, and cannot help but weave or imprint those into the fabric of a process. The challenge is to stay with the questions that a process such as Spirals raises, and deconstruct the discourses informing the questions, rather than imposing one's own discourses or manipulating the process and the participants towards a certain predetermined or desired goal. This is the reason why a Spirals workshop is described as a process of facilitation rather than training: it is important for the facilitator not to have an end goal in mind, but to invite historical, current and emerging discourses in a dialogical and creative way so that participative, sustainable transformation takes place.

An awareness of these issues, and a willingness to grow into more flexible, skilled and enabling approaches that invite and provoke multiple discourses in the workshop space, is perhaps as much as can be asked of a facilitator.

Another component of facilitation that I have experienced as inviting different kinds of ownership of the workshop space is for the facilitator to stay silent at certain stages in a process. Sometimes it is when there has been an intense exploration and participants need space to process what has been emerging through the process. On other occasions it is when participants are grappling with – even conflicting about – an issue. For the facilitator to step back and relinquish control of the process at these

³⁶ Liberation theology emerged from South America and initiated a significant movement within the Christian Church. It shifted theology away from being a primarily intellectual Western discourse to focusing on the experiences of poor and oppressed communities as the raw material for doing theology. The key principles are a preferential option for the poor and turning theology into a critical reflection on contextual praxis. (Villa Vicencio in de Gruchy & Villa Vicencio 1994: p.187)

times – calling on participants to recognise their mantles of the expert – can be as important in enabling transformation and a claiming of voice and space as any proactive leading of exercises or discussion.

The idea that different ideologies of superiority (which come out of the power to discriminate against others, and result of oppression of others on the basis of ideologies of inferiority) have developed is a central theme in Spirals workshops. It is as important for the facilitator to deconstruct and step away from the practices of the ideology of superiority of the facilitator as anything else that happens in a Spirals workshop.³⁷

As Spirals has moved beyond working only at the College of Transfiguration, it has become clear that this challenge of naming dominant but often denied discourses of power is ongoing for both participants and facilitators in a workshop process of this nature.

The complexity of actually realising stated intentions in this regard are well illustrated by Davis and O’Sullivan (2000), who strongly challenge Boal’s claims to be facilitating a “rehearsal of revolution” in his Theatre of the Oppressed work. They suggest that his stated claims (Boal 1995: pp. 288-297) and the discourses inherent in his work are at odds with each other. The danger is that the processes undertaken in the name of change and transformation do no more than reiterate existing discourses, without the critical deconstruction that results in actual impact and change beyond the reflective experience of the exercises carried out during a workshop. This is not the ontological understanding of activity outlined earlier in this Chapter; it lacks the learning and planning for change components of the Action Learning cycle. (Marais et al 1997; Reeler 2005)

³⁷ See Cycles of Power Exercise in The Spirals Manual, Appendix Two, for further information on this.

In the same way, Spirals needs to be constantly evaluating its claims against the experienced outcomes for participants – and the changes that can be seen in contexts where Spirals has worked – so that the desired change and transformations of identity can become an increasing reality through emerging and developing practice. Reflecting on these issues through this research has been one way to do this.

There needs to be both an inclusion of the hybridity of postcolonial narratives that have previously been excluded from colonial discourses of identity³⁸, even though these narratives probably conflict in many ways. Drama based exercises need to explore how the inclusion of these narratives changes the way in which people live out the new insights that have emerged. This in turn needs to keep changing Spirals and the way in which it works. It is not enough to use postcolonial language – the impetus behind postcolonialism is that previously obliterated narratives and discourses need to be reclaimed in a way that changes the way in which power is negotiated in societies and the global context. (Gugelberger 1997)

The contention – and the hope – of Spirals is that naming the challenges associated with both the colonised nature of identity and workshop discourses, and then deepening the learnings emerging through ongoing cycles of developmental practice, enables the desired shifts and transformation.

Concluding Remarks

This chapter has brought to completion the reflection phase of the Action Learning cycle on which this thesis is based. It has reflected on the different ways in which embodied, participatory methods have been built into Spirals' work and practice. The next phase of the thesis needs to

³⁸ Both Western colonialism over the centuries and apartheid are understood to be colonialism in this context.

explore the learnings that can be made from this – the ways in which three participants' experiences of workshops provide insights, confirm the claims made about Spirals so far in the thesis, provide ideas for doing things differently and enable a deeper understanding of the impact of the work. This is what Chapter Four will deal with.

CHAPTER FOUR: EXPLORING PERSONAL DISCOURSES

The aim of this chapter is to explore contextual and personal linkages between the discussions of the previous chapters and the experiential dimension of people who have participated in Spirals workshops. It comprises the third phase of the Action Learning cycle on which this thesis is based – that of drawing learnings from the experiences of Spirals workshop participants.

According to Reeler (2005: p.3), the questions that need to be dealt with in this phase are: what did we learn, what new insights have emerged? What would we have done differently? What was confirmed? What new questions are emerging?

The aim of this stage of the cycle is to draw out themes and issues which will inform the meaning making which shapes the planning. Planning is the final phase of the Action Learning cycle, and will be dealt with in the Conclusion to the thesis.

The first section of this chapter will clarify the research methodology used in analysing the narrative and discourses of past workshop participants. Semi-structured interviews with three College of Transfiguration students who participated in the Spirals Programme will then be analysed, using Critical Discourse Analysis.

The chapter has the following structure:

- Clarifying the research methodology
- How the interviews were conducted
- How I have approached the interviews
- Analysing the interviews
 - Siphho
 - Leah

- o Themba

Clarifying the Research Methodology

Analysing meanings of spoken words transcribed into written texts by someone other than the speaker is inevitably a complex and problematic task. In line with the poststructuralist, social constructionist framework of this thesis, the method chosen to explore the issues emerging from the three interviews being used in this discussion is Critical Discourse Analysis.

The terminology used needs some clarification, as the term "discourse" in particular seems to have slightly different meanings, depending on the context of its use.

The use of the term needs firstly to be placed within a poststructuralist framework, in the sense that it challenges reductionist views of history and social contexts, and assumes more deconstructive and constructionist approaches – in line with what has been described in discussions about social constructionism elsewhere in this thesis.

For the purposes of this thesis, discourse within a poststructuralist framework is understood to be "speech or writing seen from the point of view of the beliefs, values and categories which it embodies" (R. Fowler 1990 cited in Hawthorn 2000: p.90) and which constitute a framework of beliefs and values - a way of looking at or organising the world. To put it another way, discourses in this realm are seen as the practices that shape the objects of which they speak (Parker 1999: p.3) through the stories or narratives that people articulate in order to build symbolic resources of identity, meaning and culture. These discourses can also be described as organising principles that are constantly in ongoing and processes of emerging constructions of meaning. (Potter 1996: p.127)

As has been described previously in this thesis, the development of the Spirals programme came out of the conflicts caused by the massive shifts in discourse that took place in South Africa in the 1990's. Many of these shifts have not been unique to South Africa; Berry (2000), for example, explores the shifts underlying discourse that have informed changes in language from masculine terminology being used to refer to all people to more inclusive terminology as a result of the feminist movement. Similarly, activism and challenging of discourses of "normality" has led to the term "physically challenged" increasingly being used instead of the historical terms of "retarded" or "disabled". (ibid: p.64) What was specific to the South African context at the time that Spirals emerged was the way in which discourses of race and class had shifted, and had impacted on the life and culture of the College of Transfiguration in the CPSA at the time.

In Postcolonial Theory, which has earlier been described as influencing the development of Spirals, social change needs to be understood in terms of the way in which the discourses which shape cultures are unfolding. The aim of this is "to make intelligible the real movement of culture as it is registered in social life, in group and class relations, in politics and institutions, in values and ideas." (Hall 1971 cited in Macey 2000: p.77) This is done through investigating and dismantling the discourses informing the meanings made of "gender, race, colour, creed, sexuality, political affiliations, and other possible constructions" (Berry 2000: p.77) within a particular context. This is what the Spirals programme has tried to do – it is also what the discourse analysis of the interviews later in this chapter endeavours to achieve.

Defining discourses in relation to other ways of constructing meaning is a complex task. In the South African situation, for example, it is sometimes difficult to differentiate between discourses and ideologies. For Foucault and other Critical Theorists, an ideology emerges from a particular political perspective and is secondary to other determinants. (Foucault

1979 cited in Mills 2005: p.3) However, when it comes to exploring the role of power in relation to discourses, as Foucault did, the multiplicity of discursive practices that shaped and positioned subjects under the apartheid regime meant that oppression, ideology and discourse operated in very complex and intricate ways. (Levett, Kottler, Burman & Parker 1997: pp.2-4) As has been highlighted earlier, these discursive practices continue to shape the current South African situation. The best one can manage is to try and differentiate between the ways in which ideologies are a means of establishing and maintaining unequal power relations, and the ways in which discourse analysis can be used to interrogate the language and discourses of the powerful – particularly as a way of understanding their effect on those who suffer. (Weiss & Wodak 2003: pp.14-15) As a researcher, the challenge is not only to differentiate between ideologies and the discourses which inform this research, but also to place myself and my ideological and discursive position within the research process. This includes the texts I am working with as I explore narratives and discourses articulated by the interview participants. (Korobov 2001: pp.2-11) I will describe how I went about this later in the chapter.

This only serves to highlight the complexity of defining discourse both ontologically and epistemologically – and the challenges of clarifying epistemological frameworks for discourse analysis. (Weiss & Wodak 2003: pp.6-19)

In the broadest sense, discourse analysis focuses on speech and text as social practices, and explores the resources that are drawn on to enable these practices. (ibid: p.129) There is therefore a dialectical relationship between discursive events and the contexts which frame them – each shapes the other, and is therefore being shaped by the other both ontologically and epistemologically. (Weiss & Wodak 2003: p.22)

In terms of methods of discourse analysis, Willig (2003: pp.160-181) distinguishes between

1. Discursive psychological discourse analysis – which is primarily based in ethnomethodology and conversation analysis, and
2. Foucauldian discourse analysis – which has been inspired by Foucault and emerges from poststructuralism.

The analysis of these interviews has primarily used Foucauldian discourse analysis, as it is the vehicle most closely aligned with the post structuralist and social constructionist ethos of the Spirals programme, and within which I have chosen to work for this research. This approach to discourse analysis has broadly been termed Critical Discourse Analysis by subsequent writers, in the sense that it endeavours to mediate between language and its social context, rather than focusing mostly on the linguistic discourses of the text.

The primary aim of using this vehicle is to enable the exploration of networks of power and relationships between current and emerging narratives, and the related discourses. The issues arising from these relationships and their contexts need to then be reflected on in the light of the work and methodologies of the Spirals Programme as described and reflected on in the previous chapters of this thesis.

Levett et al (1997: p.3) argue that Foucauldian discourse analysis enables an unravelling of issues of identity and provides the tools to explore texts in terms of:

- how images of self are constructed
 - how these images function to produce coherent articulations of constructions of identity
 - highlighting variations within texts
- i.e. exploring the construction of identity related discourses, their function and variation within them. (Potter and Wetherell 1987 cited in

Levett et al 1997: p.4) I have chosen to use these three stages as the framework of analysis for the interviews conducted.

How the Interviews Were Conducted

The three workshop participants whose interviews have been used in this thesis all took part in two Spirals programmes at the College of Transfiguration – all in 2001 and 2002. In their second year of participation, they worked closely with Marajh and myself in the planning and facilitation of the course, as a way of deepening their experience in terms of both the content and methodology of the programme.

Because they were the only students at the College of Transfiguration at that time who had been through such an intense and relatively long term involvement with the Spirals programme, I asked them if they would be willing to assist me with this research. In October 2002, they agreed to each take part in a semi-structured interview in which they reflected on their experiences and the ways in which they continued to journey with the issues raised in the workshops. I had deliberately chosen two South Africans and one person from outside of the country, as I felt this would play a useful role in highlighting or possibly challenging some of the contentions about the nature of identity construction in South Africa as opposed to other contexts outlined earlier in this thesis.

My approach to these interviews was to regard the interview participants as co-researchers. Their knowledge and insight had already been significant in the planning and implementation of the programme, and in addition to that, they had the experience of having been through the whole programme twice, the second time as co-facilitators. As we had already worked alongside each other, I felt the more we shared the work of this research, the richer the interviews would be. In the end, however, their primary role was to provide interview data – as will be described later. Further dialogue and engagement did not occur in the manner I

had hoped. Given the emphasis on participation within the ethos of Spirals' work, I feel this is a weakness in the research.

I suggested that one of the three – Themba – co-facilitate the interviews with me. He and I designed a framework of questions for the semi-structured interviews we would be running. The outline was discussed with the interview participants, and agreed on.³⁹ I then interviewed Themba so that he had the experience of answering the questions for himself, after which he interviewed his classmates and co-facilitators Siphon and Leah.

Themba and Leah's interviews were conducted at the College of Transfiguration while Siphon's was conducted at his mother's home about 90 minute's drive from Grahamstown. Each of the interviews was between 45 and 60 minutes and was recorded on audiotape. The participants each gave their consent on tape to the interviews being used for this research.

Because the interviews were conducted in the weeks before the students left to take up posts in their parishes, there was no opportunity to discuss the interviews with them face-to-face after they had been written up. However, a transcript of their interview was sent to each of the participants, with a request that they make contact with me if they wanted to discuss anything further. Themba and Siphon made contact to say that each had enjoyed reading through their interviews, and felt comfortable about the way they had articulated issues. Leah was already home in the Seychelles when the email was sent, and did not respond.

Even though they indicated that they were comfortable with their "real" names being used, I have chosen to change the names of all three participants in this thesis, in order to protect their anonymity. There are several reasons for this. The primary one is that the interviews are both

³⁹ A copy of the framework of questions can be found in Appendix Three.

intensely personal and also representative – what participants shared were their own narratives and stories, with several personal details emerging in their responses. The purpose of the research is to look at the link between these participants' experiences, and the contextual discourses which emerged in relation to the work of Spirals – focusing too much on who the person is leaves them unnecessarily vulnerable and detracts from the focus of the research. It is also a decision I made in the light of the diminishing co-researcher role that developed over time, as discussed earlier.

This approach possibly runs the risk of distancing their voice from the reader of these analyses. But it is my belief that it is the most appropriate way to balance the need to respect the highly personal nature of the material and the need for confidentiality in this regard with the representational nature of the issues discussed.

Another reason for my decision is that the ethos of Spirals involves respecting people's right to speak for themselves. The fact that I am analysing transcripts of interviews (even though it is with participants' agreement and co-operation) means that ownership of the stories has already shifted significantly. I do not want my interpretations of the participants' stories to be misconstrued by others, with possibly hurtful consequences for people who trusted me and this work enough to give of themselves in this way. I would rather protect them, and take full responsibility for what I do in this process of analysis and research.

How I Have Approached the Interviews

As has been hinted at in the previous section, I have been very aware of the complex filters or lenses through which I have engaged with the interview texts – both in the way I listened and how I have read and interpreted the texts.

Each interviewee and I had long-standing relationships as a result of Spirals; as mentioned previously, we had been through two Spirals programmes together. Also, they had been far more vulnerable to me as facilitator than had ever been appropriate for me to be with them, given the nature of facilitator-participant relationships in a context of this nature. This therefore resulted in subtle but important power differentials in how the interviews played themselves out. There was an unspoken assumption that this was not an ordinary conversational dialogue, but rather them committing themselves to speaking about very intense and personal processes with me or Themba as the facilitator-interviewer. Admittedly, this was not very different to the role of facilitator in a workshop, because our primary role was to be a catalyst for the unfolding of stories. Inevitably, though, the one-on-one nature of the interview (compared to the group ethos of a workshop), and the more formal tone than a workshop style interaction, influenced the process. One possibility I have considered is whether it silenced participants' criticism or narratives of resistance to what Spirals was trying to achieve.

Another concern for me was the discourses which Spirals already brought with it – particularly in terms of deconstructing and shifting discourses of stereotyping and discrimination. Would participants respond to questions in a way they thought I would be happy with? Might there be a subtle desire to “please” me and Themba through their responses? Would they feel intimidated by these discourses into not necessarily speaking openly about their feelings and attitudes in terms of identity? Although there was no clear evidence of this during the interviews, it remains a concern for me.

These power dynamics were openly discussed as we prepared for the interviews; all three participants indicated that they felt there had been enough trust and confidence built up for them to feel free in talking about issues. They also said that they had already dealt with these issues in the

workshops, and they felt this had prepared them to respond to the questions being raised.

Another issue that influenced this approach was that the interview participants knew they were being interviewed about a process I had both designed and facilitated, and I was concerned that my presence would therefore doubly constrain them from raising challenging issues. I also wondered if there might be contrasting discourses in Themba's interview compared with Siphos and Leah's – and thought it might make for interesting analysis in the process of this research.

In the end, however, the texts of the interview I conducted and those Themba conducted are not all that different in terms of the issues raised. Whether this was because we had all shared a common process and there was therefore a predominantly mutual understanding, or because Themba was as much of a constraining presence, or whether interview participants found the questions equally easy to discuss with either interviewer, is difficult to gauge. Themba suggested that it was because of the levels of trust that stories would be honoured that existed within Spirals – and that we had already shifted some of the power dynamics by working as more of a team while co-facilitating in the second year of their participation.

Whatever the case, the data was gathered with as much sensitivity as possible, and the analysis needs to proceed.

Analysing the Interviews

As indicated earlier in this chapter, the analysis of the interviews explored the personal narratives reflected in the interviews, and the contextual discourses that they informed and were informed by, in three stages.

Firstly, narratives and discourses of identity were highlighted. This was directly invited by the first question in the interview, viz. 'how do you

understand your identity to be constructed?’ Secondly, the function or role of these narratives and discourses in creating a sense of coherence in terms of identity constructions was explored. Finally, changes and variations within these narratives and discourses were identified – particularly in terms of how participating in the Spirals programme had played a role in this.

The connections and confluences, as well as the tensions and areas of dissonance, within these constructs were included in the analysis and the contexts from which they were emerging explored. The relationships between interview participants’ practices and their spoken discourses were examined, as well as their subjectivity around these issues – i.e. how they felt, thought and experienced various narratives within these discourses and practices.

In using these methods to analyse interviews, my aim has not been to assume the right or power to understand personal levels of meaning or experience (Banister et al 1994: p.95). Instead, I have focused on narratives that give hints about constructions of meaning (i.e. discourses) around issues of identity in the context of the experience of Spirals workshops at the College of Transfiguration. In my analysis, I firstly highlighted within the texts issues that related to the three stages of analysis. I looked for narratives that linked these issues – and the discourses which they shaped (or were shaped by). I then looked for the changes and variations within these narratives and discourses, particularly in terms of how Spirals might have been the catalyst for these changes or variations. My attitude to the analysis throughout was one of regarding analysis as a form of dialogue. Rather than making objects of these people I know well, my desire and approach has rather been to dialogue with the transcripts of their interviews.

My approach in doing this was to read the transcripts several times, to familiarise myself with the text. I then highlighted evidence of narratives and discourses around constructions of the self. I analysed the language that indicated articulations of these identities, and how the language was symbolic of identity related discourses. I then explored variations within the texts, and between these texts. Relevant excerpts from the interviews have been included in the sections below, with my analyses and reflections below.

Given the diminishing role of the interview participants as co-researchers, these are my analyses and interpretations and need to be named as such in the interests of research that does not uncritically assume the right to speak for others.

Sipho

When asked about the way he understood his identity to be constructed, Sipho's first narrative was related to his Africanness:

The fact that I am African informs my identity and also the place where I was brought up.

The second narrative related to the context of poverty – and communality – in which he grew up:

The experiences that I have in life, the joys and pains, good times that I experience throughout my life Being born out of a poor family, that are the things, the community I am living in. Ja, they are the things that constructed my identity.

Culture and the social context in which he grew up emerged as the third narrative concerning identity construction:

... my culture forms part of me and I, also besides that, I am not alone in that culture. I am living with people, that means I need to live in harmony with other people – and those things that forms me. Because I think life is about forming relationships, and the relationships are the things that forms us, and each and every day our identity changes. Today you are this and tomorrow you grow, you change as time goes on.

These narratives create clear indications of the cohesion and function of the primary discourses around Sipho's process of identity construction. For him, Africanness, poverty and communality were interwoven into an ubuntu-related discourse in which the layers of connectedness of the suffering of poverty as an African, and the close familial and communal relationships that enable survival and meaning making in this context are

regarded as integral to identity construction (an important factor in identity formation previously discussed in Chapter Two).

It is interesting that he did not see these constructs as being fixed and essentialist – there was a sense that these constructs are in the process of shifting and changing as a person grows and develops.

This is reflected in the first articulation of variation of narratives – in the next section of the interview, he spoke about the conflict emerging for him in relation to his situation at the time of the interview:

I think one of my problems that I am struggling with presently, in my style that I am living, is totally different from what my family is living in. For instance, I was at the College I was eating three meals a day, eating breakfast, eggs, cheese, bacon, all those things – and eat good lunch, good supper. But here in my place things were not like that, so I've got this conflict now of saying from where I'm from things are not like what are they here to the place that I am staying.

The juxtaposition of these narratives is interesting in the constructs they set up. They suggest ways in which the constructs of Africanness and poverty were both linked and problematic for him – they provided him with a sense of connection and belonging, but at the same time were something he needed to leave in order to achieve his goals and ambitions in life. The nature of his physical presence at the College meant that he was in a space that highlighted this and created conflicts for him at a number of levels. Being at the College gave him access to resources, security, opportunities and an education that he wanted, and that enabled him to realise his ambition to become an ordained priest. It had introduced him to people from many countries in Africa, provided him with an introduction to liberation theology – with the positive discourses

of previous marginalised and de-valued identities such as those of poverty, Africanness and lack of formal education that this provided.

However, the day-to-day reality of this was problematised for him by the knowledge that his family and other members of the community from which he came were still dealing with the grinding challenges of survival and having enough to eat. The context of the College was enabling an exploration of new and positive discourses of African identity. At the same time, however, this was constantly challenged and unsettled by the reality of poverty for so many Africans, not least himself.

Discourses of shameful dehumanisation and suffering were what Siphos primarily associated with poverty – a paradoxical place to be in when he was simultaneously engaging with very different discourses relating to the same issues in his education at the College through liberation theology. Another area of tension was his apparent desire to identify and be identified with his family and the context in which he grew up, and an implied sense of guilt that this was no longer the case in the same way it had been before he went to the College.

It is as if there were discourses of shame on both sides of this conflict for him. On the one hand there was shame of poverty and suffering, and on the other the guilt-related shame of feeling he had abandoned the power of his sense of connection with the belonging and sense of communality linked with that poverty related Africanness.

This led to an articulation of the personal pain and suffering of being caught up in these dilemmas, and of feeling constrained by the impact of discourses of poverty:

On the other hand sometimes even if you want to do other things your background does not allow you to do certain things in life and

you begin to ask yourself "Why me? Why always ... I always suffer?" Do you get the point? Because of my background.

There are interesting discourses of a victim consciousness here, which resulted in paradoxical painful questions for him about moving out of the poverty of his family and community, and into a professional career, with the resulting material and personal benefits of that. It is interesting that he found it hard to define the emerging discourses that resulted from these shifts. Choosing this new career and identity meant that the constructions of his identity were shifting – he would no longer “fit” in the context in which he had grown up in the same way. As will be seen later, this was not only about shifting identities, but as much about changing from an upbringing in poverty to middle class employment as a priest – with the inevitable discursive shifts this would involve in terms of his identity. The tensions arising from this shift possibly raised questions for him about whether he was also leaving his African roots in some way as a result, and how this would affect identity related discourses for him.

This led to an articulation of the struggle between the structurally related discourses of his class and ethnic / racial identity as opposed to the growing discourses of agency for him – something which his participation in Spirals had heightened for him:

There was what we call internal oppressions. And I said this ... I am poor there is nothing that I can do, I am what I am, nothing that I can do. Spirals programme allows you to stand up. It says to you brother stand up! Grow. Life continues. Try to look to other avenues. Try to stand up and face the realities of life I think for me that what Spirals is about.

Here there are hints of narratives of a growing sense of agency in his life – rather than a passive, negative, victim-orientated discourse emerging out of the poverty of his upbringing. The discourses of journey and

ongoing liberation are an interesting variation to the victim consciousness articulated earlier. The physical imagery used to describe this emerging discourse was one of having been paralysed by oppression, and now being able to stand up and walk and face "the realities".

In speaking about his experience of Spirals, his first response was that it had enabled acceptance of his journey, the pain of the past, and therefore also a greater acceptance of others. That it provided a vehicle for reconciling some of the paradoxes of narrative both personally and contextually:

You know, Spirals programme; one, it helps to me to be able to look back and to be able to understand myself. One of the weaknesses that we have in life, even myself, is acceptance ... I am not willing to look back. But Spirals makes you to journey, and think back ... backward, about where are you from – and you go deeper to your feelings and you begin to open the painful things that were hidden inside yourself. And after that it gives you an opportunity to face the reality and to see yourself – to see ... you know ... to check ... to become face to face with the thing that happens in your past and to be able to deal with them. And at the end you become a healed person, a new person able to interact with others, able to understand yourself - why you do things a certain way. And you're able now to be open and to understand others because, for instance in my experience in College, I was able now to work with other people, to interact with other people, to understand other people through the Spirals programme. Because if it was not for Spirals, the conflicts that we were having there – lots of them – would have happened, but through that deeper process of understanding – your inner being, your conflicts, your pain, your frustration – it helps me to grow, psychologically, spiritually and even socially with other people. Ja.

Again, the image of making a journey is used, providing an interesting reflective narrative of where he has been as being different to where he is going. This resonates with the social constructionist idea of an ontological state of becoming, as discussed earlier in the thesis.

The process of facing some of the painful experiences of his life through the story-telling and reflective image exercises in Spirals led to an emerging narrative in which he experienced a deeper understanding of why he was in his current situation that seemed to ease some of the tensions described earlier in the interview. An important emerging narrative here was one of greater tolerance of others who were different to him at the College. Again, there is a reflective awareness of constructions of "I" and "not-I" shifting from constructions of alienation to reconciliation. Having faced a denied and painful "other" within himself and begun to reconcile with the pain that led to the denial in the first place, he was then enabled to face the "other" he encountered in the people he was living with at the College, and engage with them in new, less alienated and conflictual ways.

In terms of the methodologies used during the Spirals workshops, the exercises that worked with masks were what he described the most.⁴⁰

... the issue of masks. For me, in life, wherever you go, since we are working with people, you ... the context ... of course you are going to wear a certain mask for certain things. There are good masks, there are bad masks. But at the same time for me the issue of masks makes me to say "I want to be Siphon nothing else." And even if I am here living, because in life you don't need just to think that you are an island, you are on your own, there are others. Meaning that through that process of beginning to make a

⁴⁰ The work with masks during the course of a Spirals workshop will come up in each of the interviews, but with very different discourses emerging from them.

mask you begin to make yourself, but at the same time you need to wear a mask that will make you now to be able to work with others. But knowing yourself first. So I think for me it is very, very important – and even for the ministry that God calls me – I think for me to begin to say "I want to be Siphon, nothing else." But at the same time "I want to live in harmony with other people." Which means I need to be sensitive in some of the things, the way I get things I need, to cater for other people.

For Siphon, discourses around masks was linked to the issue of roles – that assuming masks of different kinds enabled him to relate to people in different ways depending on the context, while all the time knowing who he actually was behind the mask. The "frames of meaning" discussed in relation to Goffman in Chapter Three are interestingly illustrated here – the meaning associated with the different kinds of masks Siphon describes are simultaneously both personal and symbolic of the discourses informing the personal narratives. This directly linked to Siphon's intended identity as a priest in a parish – and that the priest mask would be a way of "catering for other people", while his personal needs and issues would be held or contained within or behind the priest mask without being visible to the people he was working with.

Again, there were slightly dissonant ideas in this emerging discourse for him – that he needed to know and understand himself, but that this knowledge and insight needed to be hidden when he was engaged in a priestly role, i.e. when he was wearing a priest mask – a mask that was as much about his work as it was about a discursive symbol or role. Personal and priestly identities were seen to be separate or bounded in some way for him – a challenging idea when previous journey-related discourses had been about liberation from oppression. Was this a new narrative in which he – probably unconsciously – expected to once again engage in narratives of internal oppression of another kind through his role as priest? If this was the case, would the oppression still be about

discourses of dividedness in which he was silencing his emotional needs and the issues around his woundedness in order to fulfil the demands and needs of his contextual circumstances?

The discourse which followed concerned woundedness and the desire to be a "wounded healer", which was linked to the idea of the healing he had experienced through Spirals as being ongoing and journey-like in nature. There are interesting variations here in hints of a desire for strategies to hold paradoxical narratives (and maybe the dividedness referred to in the previous paragraph), and find an integration which enables new discourses to emerge in the way past experiences and woundedness can be understood:

Be a wounded healer, be able to say to other people, brothers I went through that, I don't want you to go through the same thing - through those play that we were doing.

And later:

Ja, I think for me (Spirals workshops) helped me a lot because, one, they make me to see things practically. And also, that's how sometimes you begin to say "I went through that experience", something clicks to your mind through those methodologies. And for me without those methodologies Spirals won't be successful. One of the reason that makes it to be successful, it is because of those methodologies - that we are able to find ourselves and to see where our wounds are.

There was an interesting dynamic here between earlier having described reconciling a sense of conflict and paradox, but at the same time being aware that this reconciliation was not a discreet event but rather an ongoing process. These new discourses were emerging through a journey, they would always involve tensions, resistances and shifts. They

would also carry some of the paradox of the Christian discourse of the Christ as simultaneously both god and victim – the creator who has been wounded and killed but triumphed over that suffering to become supremely powerful, and also eternally bears his scars. There is a discourse indicated here in which an inflicted woundedness is seen as inevitable – which is consistent with the impact of trauma described earlier in the thesis, but also consistent with Christian discourses of the crucified nature of humanity, constantly in need of salvation from this state of brokenness.

Once again, however, there are tensions in these narratives. In a similar way to how he described the narratives of masks and priesthood, Sipho's greater personal awareness emerging from Spirals, particularly in reconciling with painful events from the past, very quickly shifts into relationship based narratives. Is this a cultural issue – that just as discourses of relatedness and communality were important for him in terms of understanding where he came from, so this same dimension was important to him in how to work with emerging awarenesses? Or were these narratives unconscious forms of denial of his own issues in his desire to enable similar "healing" and "liberation" for others. Is there a danger that the very opportunity he appreciated of being able to articulate and make meaning of issues in the contained, safe spaces of Spirals exercises was something he would unconsciously deny others in his desire to make things better for them (and himself)? Is this an area in which Spirals does not support a process of ongoing and sustainable transformation enough? This question will be explored more in the Conclusion to the thesis.

The sense of agency as a person and in terms of exploring discourses around identity through the embodied methodologies of Spirals was highlighted again in the interview when he described his experience of Spirals workshops.

That means you start by tracing your identity and because of that now you are able to understand things that happens to you, the changes, because through that – say my family were there but now my family is living here – now that means through that process you are beginning to say at least I understand who am I. And also even the games, the programme itself, the questions, the way things are approached. And even through the discussions you are able to say at least now I understand who I am and I begin to accept things that forms me.

For instance, when we were asked to make dramas and sometimes even told – what you call this – plays that we were doing, throwing balls in different ways, and those were educational. Meaning that you need also to ... because the ball coming to you and you need to pass the ball to other person – that means you need to mind not only for your self but also for the person that you are throwing the ball to. You get the point? Whilst you are watching for yourself not to be hurt, but at the same you need to be careful not to hurt others – meaning that by our experiences, by our sorrows, our experiences and our things that we pass through, we need not just to say to people “okay I went through this” and you want all the people now to went through that experience. But we need to be careful when you are passing the ball – make others, liberate others. You get the point? ... And also the dramas that we were performing there, the arts that we were writing. All those things, those things were very good things.

It is interesting how the physical experience of exercises has stayed with him – the power of doing rather than only speaking or being spoken to. What is missing in terms of the intended outcomes for Spirals is an understanding of how these exercises were not just a tool of learning but a discourse in themselves in the sense that they represent an ideological approach to understanding being and the nature of learning and change.

As indicated in Chapter Three, the physicality of the exercises, and the nature of activity, were not only methodological but also ontological and epistemological statements about the nature of identity and ongoing processes of construction.

What did emerge during the course of the interview, though, was an understanding of the way in which discourses of agency and claiming the right and power to choose worked in the workshops:

The only thing that I like about the Spirals workshop – the methodologies, we are being part of them. We are given a chance to say “these are what we want ourselves”; in other workshops you are given something. That means you are not part of the process. In the Spirals workshop we are given a chance to say “this is what I want and it will be good.” So you are being part of the thing, we grow together. Do you get the point? And I think for me Spirals is different to other workshops, and in the process it’s us sharing what will be, it’s us initiating things, saying “this is good, we can change this.” So at least we are given a chance to be part of it, at the same time you are being something part of it, at the same time you are a facilitator yourself in the same process

The fact that decisions were made by the group rather than the facilitator, and that particularly role-plays and drama based exercises gave him the sense of being able to choose the role, style and direction he would take, were the main reference points he gave when explaining this.

These remarks are interesting when juxtaposed with the identities of poverty and Africanness mentioned earlier in his interviews. The overwhelming sense of oppression, and lack of a sense of agency in terms of these issues was very evident. These remarks were also made while he was in the process of deciding to become a priest – a line of

work in which where he worked and lived would be decided by the Bishop of his Diocese, and the pressure to fulfil certain anticipated social and spiritual roles and functions from his parishioners would be substantial. (This could be what he was referring to in the earlier narratives around role and masks).

His awareness of a sense of agency was therefore likely to provoke some challenges and conflicts in his life and exploration of new discourses of identity – especially given the discourses of oppression and victimhood from which he was in the process of emerging. Again, the question needs to be asked whether Spirals has adequately prepared him – and other participants – to handle these discursive variations in positively constructive ways. The interview does not provide clear evidence one way or the other. As mentioned earlier, this might be a result of the weakness in the research – if it had been as participatory as intended, more dialogue around these issues might have been possible.

These emerging discourses did result in him, towards the end of the interview, expressing a desire to use these new understandings as a tool to learn how to place himself in other people's situations, rather than focusing on his own or telling others how to deal with theirs'. An example he gave was to work at understanding what it was like to be infected with HIV, or to have full-blown AIDS.

Yes, first of all as you know that I was involved in St Philips AIDS Centre. The way I look at people, the way I interact with the children that I was working with, one of the things that makes me to be able open about things – not to be judgemental sometimes – is because of that workshop. And I think for me the experience that I gained through Spirals programme will help me when I am dealing with people in my ministry. Will help me to see things from another perspective, to view things from another perspective. And

I think Spirals workshop help me at least to be open, open-minded and to see things in different way.

The idea of open-mindedness as opposed to the more physical narrative of masks is an interesting variation in discourse here. Siphó's work with children at the AIDS Centre in a township in Grahamstown was remarkable. I have heard several anecdotal accounts of how his level of engagement with the people there had a major impact on the people involved with the organisation. There is evidence of the openness he refers to in the excerpt from the interview from feedback from St Philips volunteers and members, and other students and staff at the College. The context in which he did this work was that of a township – a context not too different to the one in which he grew up, which he had earlier indicated played a significant role in constructing his identity. The variation with earlier discourses of dividedness nevertheless keeps alive the paradoxes of weaving these conflicting narratives cohesively for Siphó.

This led to him also expressing a desire for similar processes to be run with others who are marginalised and suffering – e.g. those who are poor, unemployed, have AIDS, are sick, or suffering in other ways.

Something different for Spiral programme wherever we go, because everybody you know is hurt in our society. People are suffering, people are poor, unemployed, people are sick, dying of HIV/AIDS. And in our society there is no room for people to voice out their anger, to voice out their suffering, and there were even those who are working who are frustrated, because the tax is taking their money, so everybody I think for instance there will be a need for a similar workshop. Violence is here ... Everybody in our society ... it's ... you know ... there is big problem and something like Spirals will make our people to look at things from a different angle, to be able to cope with some of the things ... I think for me

this programme is a very good one for us and secondly, what I want to say, I want them to keep the standard and you know to make the work goes and help our people, for example the black people, and also I want to say it could be good also if Spirals workshop could be run with people who are living with HIV/AIDS. So that they can be able to be helped to their journey of living with the virus. Ja, ja, ja.

There are links between the discourses of injury, woundedness and healing in this extract and those discussed earlier. This time, he articulated a desire for people to voice out their anger because this would help them cope. He later also spoke about more black Africans needing a programme like Spirals to help them cope with the identity related challenges of their time and context. This was not elaborated on, but I suspect that it linked to some of his own discourses around his Africanness mentioned earlier in this analysis.

As with the other interview participants, there was a shift for Sipho from articulating his own journey through the process, to exploring possibilities for himself and other groupings beyond the workshops that he participated in. Within this shift, there were interesting discursive variations, as the role of his context, his own sense of agency and his intended work as a priest were woven through his narratives during the interview.

While Sipho's interview seems to have confirmed the validity of many claims that Spirals has made about the constructed, ongoing nature of dealing with issues of identity and transformation, there are also important gaps between Sipho's understanding of the value of the work and the claims that have been made for the work. Being involved in the programme seems to have enabled important insights and shifts in terms of historical discourses and the emergence of new possibilities. But there were hints of important challenges that lay ahead for Sipho. His

articulation of his hopes for the future for Spirals, and his own intended work in a parish hinted at interesting paradoxes for the future. While programmes like Spirals need to enable others to claim a voice in some way, his own journey into priesthood would involve him placing his own needs behind a mask, and possibly adopting the dominant discourses within the church outlined in Chapter Three, in order to address the needs of others. This raises questions about how Spirals can continue to support participants once they have left the College, and the need to expand the programme in order to enable sustainability of its work with participants.

Finally, it is quite striking how limited Siphos discourses were around gender, language and other prevalent issues that arose during the workshops he took part in. The identity related discourses he alluded to throughout the interview were very specifically linked to the suffering of poverty and related narratives that he began the interview with. It is difficult to know what to make of this – except that he articulated what was most present for him on the day of the interview and that a participant in a process such as Spirals will make connections and meaning of the discourses which are most prevalent for them at the time and the context of the interviews. It is also possible that his own gender being that of an oppressive grouping resulted in gender issues being invisible to him.

Leah

Leah's experience of Spirals was unique: her Diocese in Seychelles sent her to the College for three years.⁴¹ Her interview therefore introduces a useful contrasting reference point to the other two interviews with South Africans. Besides the fact that she participated in two consecutive Spirals programmes, her interview has been included in the research because of the interesting challenges and issues it raises about the very South African nature of the way Spirals approaches its work.

When asked how she understood her identity to be constructed, she made the following response:

Really pretty much mixed up in the sense that being someone from Seychelles where there's, you know, three different continents that's formed in Seychelles and to be a Seychellois; European, African and Asian. It's kind of difficult to identify if I'm more African than Asian or European ... things like that. Of which it has not been easy to have been in South Africa for example where they would say African and I'd always be excluded because I'm not part of the African continent. Yet I know that there are certain things that is very much African, things that I do and the way I do it ... and ... ja ...all that ...it's kind of a bit complicated.

The contrasting constructions of identity for Leah are striking when compared to the other two interviews. While the South African context

⁴¹ The Seychelles consists of a cluster of small tropical islands in the Indian Ocean, far removed from the immediate impacts of apartheid, and yet also a context of colonial oppression and diverse racial identities. The first inhabitants of the islands were the French and the slaves they brought from other colonies of the Indian Ocean in the 1770's in order to cultivate cinnamon, cloves, nutmeg and pepper. The British then took control in 1810 and administered the islands from Mauritius until the Seychelles gained independence in 1976. It has primarily been a one-party socialist state since then, with one attempted coup by mercenaries in 1977. Socialist rule was brought to a close with a new constitution and free elections in 1993. The most recent presidential elections were held in 2001. The economy is strong, employment rate high, education and health services are free and the tourist trade is highly successful. The population is mostly of Creole and European background, but over all comprises a combination of French, African, Indian, Chinese, and Arab. (The World Fact Book)

has constructed diverse, largely group- and context-determined discourses of identity, Leah as a Seychellois seems to have constructed her identity around a hegemonic understanding of what it means to come from that place – even though there are diverse ethnic and racial groupings amongst the population. In terms of Levett's (1997) framework, the function of this seems to be that it enables a sense of belonging and common purpose in relation to geography, land and climate that has been far less evident in the other two interviews.

The variation in these constructions has come as she has been challenged about the African nature of her identity as a result of her time at the College – even though Seychelles is identified as being part of Africa geographically and politically. This, together with the very different constructs of identity that she has encountered in South Africa, and especially at the College, has raised challenging (and sometimes painful) questions for her.

After describing the variations of discourse above, she articulated her primary chosen identity related discourse as a religious one:

...it's the aspect of uniqueness. If we are all created in a particular image - that is created particular in the image of God - and every individual is unique and God created me in my uniqueness and I accept that. With all these other cultures being mixed up..

This narrative indicates a construction of a religiously determined common identity that she perceives to transcend different cultures. There is a narrative of specialness and uniqueness that is determined by a God whom she regards as providing a reference point beyond the social constructs of her context. These would appear to be shaped by a discourse of God as a hegemonic entity that lies outside the realms of culture.

God in this excerpt seems to constitute a fixed, deterministic entity which shapes and decides a person's uniqueness. The fact that this notion of God is in itself a construction, which is the result of certain cultural discourses, does not seem to be a conscious aspect of what she is saying or what she believes. In some sense there is an unspoken narrative in which agency of identity construction is perceived to rest outside of herself.

The function of this has been to provide the means to cope with the variations in identity construction that she has encountered at the College:

... it's part of being ... of having better understanding that I couldn't have been here even if some people find it hard to accept that I am an African. ... but I have been able live with it and see the reasons why I cannot be African the way they identify African and how I can be African. I think there is always that part of being unique as a person.

Leah showed an understanding of the constructed nature of identity, but did not translate that into the identity which her construction of God played in that. She did highlight the tension and conflict emerging for her from the very different identity related discourses at the College compared with her home, but did not link that with her earlier account of how God shapes identity, providing interesting variations:

I know that at times our identity is constructed in a way ... Like, its easy for me to say that when I am here in South Africa I have this kind of identity which might create a confusion when I go home ... because I am opening up I think to explore ideas and see how I can fit into community just like being ... myself the way I am. There might be things that I'll be doing that might not

reconcile with what, say, a Seychellois should be doing. You know, ways of doing things.

An inevitable consequence of being at the College is that she has changed and been changed – resulting in her speaking from an in-between space of understanding and in different ways belonging to very contrasting places with contrasting discourses of identity and belonging. Perhaps it was the fact that she was about to move back to the Seychelles permanently within a few days of this interview, but this in-between space did not produce narratives of stuckness. There was a clear sense of motion and development, and of the reciprocal or dialectic nature of identity construction, for which she used the metaphor of a journey in very similar ways to Sipho:

Yes, it is like you know, life is a journey and our identity is constructed in such a way that you keep moving on, there are lots of changes that are constantly coming up. It's not stuck there, one's identity is not stuck - it keep improving, transforming day by day. By being with different groups of people, for example. Like I can guarantee that being here at the College in itself, with this mixed cultural group, a kind of identity is being built, you know, compared to when you first came here. Because you have to find ways of identifying with a particular group of people so that you can continue like that. So it's just a journey that you are constructing, you keep moving. You create more about uniqueness ... you know, our similarities also.

Leah shows an awareness here of the discourses around the folded, crumpled, multi-dimensional nature of identity construction (Hetherington 1998) referred to in Chapter One. While in Seychelles or South Africa, there are contrasting discourses of identity that need to be negotiated – but in the same way being at the College necessitates the development of discourses that are appropriate to that context as well. All of these are

being negotiated every day in slightly different ways, providing moments of conflict, variation and sometimes new meaning. When asked about her use of words referring to both uniqueness and similarities, Leah responded in the following way:

Well, it's not easy to say, you know like for example, let me use my own background. One part of my family are Indian and the other part more African. And there already there is a conflict of trying to say which group I will be fitting into?

And like, eh, when I first came here to South Africa my first year here the most challenging question was, was I white, coloured or black? Which group could you identify yourself with, you know? And it was a real struggle. It created some kind of confusion "why ... what on earth am I here for?" You know? And personally it was a challenge because I need to try and find out which group I should associate myself with. Which I think it was good that I could not because I eventually said all of the above, because there were things like you know most of so called coloured groups would do that we do, there are certain things that the so-called black people do that we do, you know, as a Seychellois. And so this in itself creates some kind of conflict and confusion. You are trying to see where are you located, and it's not easy. So that its one thing.

And the other thing is you know by way of identifying and talking to people, you know, like I cannot say that you are black, I am white or I am coloured or I am black but I can say we are all the same, you know? When I grow up we were taught from home, as we go to school also, that we are all the same. We are all the same colour. All people's colour is fair but some have a lighter complexion than the other. ... this is how we identify how people differ. Therefore we cannot ... we are not used to say that someone is coloured or someone is black. I cannot identify people by the

colour of their skin because they did not choose that. It just came naturally, you know... so this has been some kind of conflict and confusion.

It is interesting how Leah has once again (as with the discourses about God creating the uniqueness of a person) constructed a discourse of identity that appears to transcend a perceived conflict – she has chosen “all of the above” as a definition of what racial or ethnic group she belongs to when faced with discourses of group identity that conflict with her own. The use of the word “above” takes on some significance here – even though its structural role is to link her comment with the previous list of options she had outlined. The implied narrative, though, is that rather than embracing the diversity of group related identities that shape South African discourses, there is an sense of shifting to something higher and better through not belonging to one group or another. The function of this construct, then, would seem to be that not taking sides in a perceived conflict is somehow better and provides a sense of transcendence; yet the terms “conflict” and “confusing” recur.

In line with Levett’s (1997) framework of analysis, a variation that emerges within this discourse, though, is how the inexorable issue of racial and ethnic identities in the South African context can become manageable for her. She speaks of finding the South African absorption with racial group identities very hard to cope with – especially in her first year here – because she had grown up with discourses that emphasised all people’s complexion as fair, with the fascinating qualification that some are fairer than others. I found the implications of fairness rather than darkness being the basis for this discourse quite interesting – given the colonial discourses this implied. Why does “all of the above” become aligned with whiteness? It is interesting that the conflicts Leah experienced during her time at the College, and the encounters with liberation theology and a programme such as Spirals, did not enable a

deconstruction of this discourse of whiteness as being the definitive (and transcendent) reference point in her constructions of identity.

This is one of the most challenging aspects of a programme such as Spirals. It is somehow easier to identify the narratives and constructions of identity for those that are marginalised or oppressed in some way. A dominant grouping or class is so used to being the definitive construct around which discourses develop that there is a blindness which is very difficult to shift in a workshop. Of course, it is not comfortable for a dominant discourse to shift under most circumstances – within hierarchical and power-based structures and systems this implies a threat of losing power in some way. As was discussed in Chapter One, there is an inevitable vulnerability involved in acknowledging the levels of alienation that discourses of domination and oppression inevitably lead to. When a person such as Leah is feeling far from home and alienated already, this kind of shift becomes even more difficult.

It is also interesting that this discourse of whiteness is used in contrast to the definition by other College students of Africanness meaning blackness. While she does not refer to this directly, this would probably have significantly heightened the conflicts around a sense of belonging and how to deal with the personal conflicts arising from this for her. The fact is that Seychelles is politically and diplomatically an African country, and yet the tensions and conflicts she experienced profoundly challenged and possibly even undermined that.

The challenge is for Spirals to continue exploring strategies to surface discourses of internalised oppression, or ideologies of superiority and inferiority, such as the one used here by Leah – so that even as she uses the reference point of fairness as the determinant of identity and belonging there is some critical analysis and awareness of her own narratives in this regard. In line with the discussions in Chapter Two in this regard, there are indications of critical analysis having taken place

around many other aspects of identity for Leah – but this section of her interview shows the ongoing need for layers and narratives to surface and be reflected on in this journey which she refers to several times during the rest of the interview.

The interview also dealt with the issue of gender and identity:

And like the other thing also is the aspect of gender. Like, for me as I grew up I knew I am a female. I grew up as a female. I did not choose if I should be a male or female, and there are times that, in my youth, I even said to myself I would have preferred to be a male than a female. That was because of the way my brother was being treated by my mother that I was jealous and wanted to be treated the same way, so this create some kind of conflict also with one's identity ... and coming here in South Africa where I come from there seems to be an equality with male and female but being here there were things that men can do and women can't, or vice versa which were difficult to adapt to and to accept. You know as I would say life is journey that you keep transforming, either you take or reject.

While Leah has not clearly articulated her own constructions of identity in terms of gender, and their functions, there are some interesting variations and conflicts here. At one level, there is the family context narrative of a rivalry between her and her brother, and the implication that her brother was treated better than her because he was a boy. This was part of a sense of powerlessness about her gender – she had no choice over the fact that she was born a woman, which links to the earlier issue of having no choice over skin colour as well. Her perception of gender relations in South Africa, though, is that men and women are less equal here than in Seychelles. Again, identity related discourses carry an element of conflict for her – but this time she manages this by indicating that a person makes choices about how much of certain narratives and

discourses to take on. What is most interesting about this is that Leah was elected as Chairperson of the students' representative body in her final year at the College – the first woman ever to be elected into that position. Yet she chose not to speak about that in this interview, or to use it as a reference point in her discussion about gender.

This narrative of conflict and identity continued later in the interview:

Well the aspect of belonging is what I said earlier you like ... for example in South Africa it's so easy to select depending on the tribe, they belong to a tribe ... and after the tribe then comes the colour, the pigment of the skin as I was saying. This comes to the other issue, you know. So it's this kind of aspect like for me to be asked the question of "You identify yourself to be coloured or black?" It already create a confusion because this aspect of which group you associate yourself or whatever you ... whatever my response was gonna be it was like "OK, you are with us" or "no you not with us", its creates some kind of conflict for me. It could be also because where I come from in Seychelles we are all Seychellois. We all speak one language which is Creole. We understand each other by our language - we all speak English and Creole which we learn at school, and for me to be here is much to do with culture it seems like ... but really don't know if it is my culture because its such a mixture so I think its on that line.

This time the conflict was about group identity – and how much this is determined by tribe and race in the South African context, or at least during Leah's time at the College. The experiences she describes of groups of students applying pressure in their efforts to determine which group people were (or were not) part of seems to indicate an internalisation on their part of the colonial discourses of apartheid and its group determined, essentialist understandings of identity.

Its impact on Leah, though, is that she indicates a discursive variation about Seychellois culture for the first time in the interview – as to whether the fact that English and Creole are taught at school makes the apparently homogenous culture that results from this something that she can own and feel a sense of belonging to. There is a sense here of her differentness to the majority of South Africans at the College having led to her challenging them about their lack of unifying identity related constructs, but the reverse has also happened – the issue of belonging has raised questions for her about the construction of her cultural identity as a result of the divisive function of language in South Africa that creates powerful narratives of inclusion and exclusion in this context.

In terms of her experience of the Spirals workshops she participated in, as with Sipho and Themba, Leah spoke about the masks related exercises first:

... the aspects of masks that was dealt with so in depth in the Spirals workshop .. because I see myself as a person without being a mask, like I don't change my personality from time to time and things like that .. I just be myself ... people either accept or reject...

The narrative of being unchanging and without masks links back to earlier discourses of transcendence. And again, there was an identification with a sense of being different from the context of the College and South Africa:

... but I found that you know the aspect of masks in trying to identify and trying also listen to the way that people have seen things, the way that people have grown up, you know, especially with the aspect of South Africa because its apartheid which I heard of it, you know. I heard about it in the news, I read a little bit about it.. but being here, listening to stories of people you know,

and linking it with a mask has really helped to have a better understanding of one's identity, in the sense that I know well, as I said earlier I don't have a mask, I am just the person that you see and that's the way it is with me, but I could understand when ... you meet the group of people.... It is part of one's identity I don't think the person choose to be like that in some instances, its just that it's you but there are times that one's identity is influenced by the rules and I feel it has gained me more understanding, I have a better understanding of ... African or so to speak South Africans, something like that, identify themselves or see themselves as persons.

The extent to which Leah uses narratives of "them" in this excerpt in terms of group identities in South Africa indicates a shift for her from being a participant in Spirals to more of an observer of others. This suggests an internalisation for her of discourses of otherness and alienation in her efforts to construct meaning in this situation. This raises questions about the stated intention of Spirals – is the influence of South African discourses of otherness so dominant within the work of Spirals itself that it is not an enabling process for those who come from other contexts? Or was the sense of alienation there already for her, and Spirals helped her to make sense of it in some way? Either way, judging by this excerpt, the intended outcome of enabling a deeper understanding for a participant of the embodied nature of their own identity was not really achieved here. Or was it? Is there a possibility that Leah's response is a form of resistance or denial of a growing awareness of some of these issues? (A hint of this is that later in the interview, Leah spoke about the masks having helped and given her insight into her own identity – as will be indicated later in the chapter.) Leah's narratives in this section of the interview raise important questions that need to be addressed further in the Conclusion of the thesis.

Another Spirals exercise that she spoke about was Pinning Down Our Roots, in which participants traced their ancestries on a map of the world:

You know like ... in the first workshop ... when we do the Spirals we do these map things, you know, tracing back all the way back .. I started to realise and to think again and again, you know, where on earth do I come from? How are my shifts, ja, it has been being a Christian also, the aspect of my spirituality which is part of my identity also. I started to have a better understanding of who I am. What I suppose I believe.

While there are hints of reflection and some critical thinking here, the shift from a possible issue of conflict to a narrative which is more comfortable – and a discourse of transcendence – comes in very quickly. Again, it is difficult to assess whether there was more reflection and a shift for Leah around this issue – which she chose not to speak about in the context of the interview.

At another level, Leah's understanding of the role and purpose of Spirals methodologies was more detailed than Siphó's had been:

Well, ... I think it is helpful in that you can explore ... the creative side of a person ... I think dramas speak more than words, usually it speak more than what you say and it create more impact also so I think I found that it is very helpful to identify to be able .. you know while expressing and discovering one's identity ... exploring it ... has helped to see more to it, because you can read but reading you can gather only a small amount of things, you know, but having all the study on visual aids you know, participating involving oneself into it keeps you more grounded and more understanding. ... Like for example the drama of stories that were

told⁴² ... It helps, it gets you to explore and its other drama or wearing masks it helps in the sense that it makes you kind of thinking the person you are which world you ... in your life... and think back, think again what you want to change or more rather how is it you identify yourself.

And later:

... with Spirals there is more involvement and creativity ...try to use the creative talents by ... making masks I mean its not easy but one can do it by ... taking time with using the skills... of the person. Like for example there are these dramas, these masks, and to show your spirituality ... by trying the sketch whatever, for me it has helped me ... because in more instances I do not speak to it before I do it I just do things and I pre-empt, because I think back what have I done ...which is a way of saying that there are areas, certain things, that is hidden in a process.

The drama methodologies had helped her to feel grounded, and to understand the issues being dealt with – both for herself and in her understanding of the people with whom she was living in community at the College.

In conclusion, the interview with Leah was interesting in that it revealed the stark contrasts in identity related discourses between South Africans and someone else from a different contexts in Africa – particularly in terms of group identity and issues of belonging.

It is impossible to assess the extent to which she was avoiding or unable to process potentially conflictual discourses of identity from her own context. What it does raise questions about is the strategies that Spirals

⁴² Leah is referring here to an exercise called Stories and Masks in which participants shared stories from their childhoods and then created dramas about them using masks.

needs to use to encourage discourses other than those dominant with in the South Africa context to emerge in workshop spaces.

It is interesting to note, though, the much stronger religious discourses she used as compared with the other two interview participants included in this thesis. Considering all three participants were training to be Christian priests, this contrast in discourses is striking. How much this had to do with the way in which each participant articulated and framed their understanding of religious discourses, and how much it indicated the degree to which Leah's culturally determined discourses of transcendent religion separated her from the contexts of the other two participants, is hard to assess.

The interview reveals the importance of providing opportunities to process the powerful race and group identity discourses that exist for South Africans and those from other countries who live here, so that other discourses can emerge as part of a process of healing and transformation rather than increasing alienation.

Themba

The first point of reference Themba used when asked about his identity was how conflict had been central to the way he understood himself.

Ja, I think it's, uh, before I did Spirals there were a lot of conflicts. Really what constructed my identity. But as I go on in the workshop I realise the things that I never thought they make me who I am.

He went on to define his growing understanding of his own narratives in the following way:

Ja, so for me it is the place you grow up in has to do with your identity. Your parents. The group that you belong to, I mean your cultural group, being a Zulu and all that. Ja.

Narratives of place, family and tribe shifted to the universality of humanity, and then to gender:

And also for the fact that being human it's part of my identity and the fact of being a male is part of my identity which sometimes I find it fighting with some other things in myself – being a male as part of my identity. And looking sometimes at the abusive structures of our context and male figures being the abusers in some of the contexts, which causes a lot of harm in my identity as being identified as a male.

Themba has articulated an interesting sense of the multi-faceted nature of identity – the function being the creation of a complex, unfolding sense of himself. He also indicates an awareness of narratives around abuse of power, oppression and the abusive role of men within social structures – revealing a narrative of conflict and variation in terms of the function of

his gender. The issue of abuse comes up again in the interview, but this time with a narrative of woundedness for Themba:

But there, as I also said, um, the things also that happens to one when you grow up contribute a lot to construct my identity because if I was hurt once in my life, that becomes a part of me. And there are times when I have to identify myself as a victim. There are times when I have to identify myself as someone who has been hurt. So what... everything that happens around me at the end of the day gives me ...who I am... gives me my identity.

Themba's awareness of holding within himself narratives of having the power to hurt, and being hurt himself, were further explored later in the interview:

Sometimes I identify myself as just a good person most of the time ... but sometimes I identify myself through the influences of the hurts that I have had in my life and also through the experiences of the people that I have hurt also in my life directly or indirectly. So that also for me forms part of my identity. Which kind of, sometimes, it's a kind of a painful process sometimes it's a good process.

The discourses shaping Themba's construction of identity are far more complex than those of the other two interview participants. The reasons for this are not clear in the interview itself, but there is far more integration of the kinds of discourses encouraged by the Spirals programme – as well as other courses at the College which incorporate liberation theology related discourses. There is also an indication that he has suffered, and has had traumatic experiences. This seems to have influenced both the complexity of his constructions of identity, but also his level of consciousness about it. This supports Grant's (2001) claims,

as described in Chapter Two, that trauma can be a catalyst for wisdom and transformation.

The influences of his tribe and family context emerged later in the interview, with variations and conflicts becoming evident⁴³:

And also for the fact that I've got two surnames that I've been using. Z and N, you see. That plays a role in my identity which causes a conflict. Culturally I have to be N because my father is N and I have to take his surname, but I grew up with my grandmother so I grew up as a Z. So what ... so now I'm caught between this. N's people have never done anything to me ... for me ... but I identify myself more with the Z because I grew up with my grandmother who was taking care of me. But after my grandmother died I received a lot of hurts from the Z. So at the end of the day, how do I... which one I identify? I sometimes am having that conflict.

The narrative of being hurt emerges again in this part of the interview – and this time it creates a conflict and sense of struggle in terms of family and tribal structures and narratives of belonging. Themba articulates a sense of the potential spaces that could be possible for him in trying to deal with the tensions between the different branches of his family in the following section of the interview:

Is really identity helpful to me in that context or it just causes problems in my own life? And I am not wanting to identify myself with anything in that and I just say "heh, tch, I'll just have my own surname", which if I have a family that family will have my own surname. I always say sometimes I'll be ... I'll start a new surname

⁴³ I have used the first letters of the surnames Themba refers to in this section of the interview to ensure anonymity.

which is Z-N (laughter) you know, but sometimes I'll just start my own surname which is Themba. Then also I have a problem in that when I look back I say "okay, there now these cultural things, and these maybe I don't like them and maybe my children, if I ever have children which I wouldn't like them ... so which culture are they going to practise? N culture? Or the Z culture? Or kinds of the things?" So I'm just trying grab those tensions, those conflicts, with my identity which I'm struggling here.

Variations in narratives of choice-making and the desire to belong to a culture and somehow perpetuate that culture through children clearly create arenas of significant struggle and pain for Themba. While these are difficult issues, they are the very issues that Spirals is working to surface and challenge people to make more conscious choices about. While Themba has not articulated a clear decision or strategy here, there are strong indications that he is exploring and playing with creative options with increasing levels of consciousness about this. Which, in turn, enables a greater sense of agency:

Mmmm. I think at the end of the day it depends to me. Do I ... do I hold onto a culture that doesn't help me? Or do I move out of that and be myself and look at what do I want for me and how do I begin my life without these conflicts. Or how do I live with those conflicts because they will never go away, it always is there. Then talking culturally, from the cultural where sometimes people you slaughter for the.... The family that I grew up in slaughter for the ancestors and do things for the ancestors, you see. There was a problem when there was a time when my grandmother wanted to do something for me because I was still young so they had to practise these cultural things ... So, my father wasn't there so it wasn't possible to do all those things. So, how do I transform that thing? It all depends to me.

In the following excerpt, the emerging narrative of agency is articulated not only in terms of his own life, but also in the context of changing and evolving understandings of culture:

And also for the fact that where does the culture come from? It is from people, so who can change the culture? It's people. Which also begins with me. I don't have to say it's people out there. If I see for myself that no, that this doesn't work for me, and I can take it the way that I want to take it regarding all the cultural demands.

Within these narratives of agency there are once again hints of the sense of potential space that emerging narratives of identity create – and the ways in which a growing sense of agency can change culture (Berry 2000). There might be tensions and variations about the degree of agency he can exercise in his life, but the momentum to make them a reality and explore them surfaces several times during the interview. Another instance is in relation to issues of relationships and sexuality:

Society ... expects me to get a ... to show that I am normal to have a girlfriend To show that I'm normally to get married. ... Now whom I am dealing with? Am I meeting the needs of the community, the expectations of the community from me, or am I doing what I want to do? Where is my identity being controlled now? Is it the community controlling my identity? Or it's me who's controlling it? ... Which also causes a lot of damages in one's life.

Themba's questions around issues of agency shift in the previous excerpt to questions about power and control. These emerging narratives also show an awareness of the role of conscious choice-making in terms of sexual relationships – and how difficult it is to resist dominant social discourses in this regard. He hints at these discourses by using the word "normal" – suggesting that having female sexual partners and entering

into heterosexual marriage were the dominant discourses of his context. Themba clearly understands this – and shows significant awareness of the tensions involved in identifying loci of control in the way identities are constructed.

Of course, with the high prevalence of HIV&AIDS in South Africa, one of the risks involved in allowing these discourses to determine one's life choices is the possibility of HIV infection through sexual intercourse. Themba indicates an awareness of this risk, the related dilemmas - and the tensions they create - in the following excerpt:

... from the community that I grew up in ... for me it brings conflict also in identity and also in these issues of HIV&AIDS and contemporal issues. You find that at that time ... when one grew up ... you don't learn anything more especially from home but you learn it on the street, you learn it from people. You see sometimes when you don't have a girlfriend the old people will ask "Oh what's wrong with you?" Even your parents, your parents or some people that you are staying with will ask "Hey, what's wrong with you? We don't see you with a girl." Your peers now are starting too "What's wrong with you?" Which is the community now putting you under pressure. Sometimes some of them if you have got one girlfriend they say "Ag, you are not a man. We must see you", you see. Which, at the end of the day, if one is not careful with who you are and what you want to be you end up being influenced by the ... who?... by society. And you ended up being damaged by the society. Then when you realise it's too late you just have ... you just look back, you say "Who made me to do all these things?" It is the society which did. So sometimes it's the other, you want to take the identity from the society, or you make your own identity.

In terms of Levett's (1997) framework of analysis, the narrative emerging here connects personal and intimate relationships, already

complex because of patriarchal norms and social expectations outlined above, which are now further complicated by how to handle the possibility of contracting an incurable sexually transmitted virus as a result of sexual intercourse in these relationships. The allusions Themba is making include the ways in which the negotiation of sex in a relationship has been even further complicated by the issue of whether to use a condom or not – using one would be unlikely to result in pregnancy (as society demands), but might protect one from possible HIV infection; not using one meant pregnancy was a possibility, but so was infection with HIV. This is one of the forms of “damage” possibly being referred to here.

Another possibility includes the levels of stigmatisation of people who are HIV positive in his society – disclosure of an HIV positive status has regularly resulted in ostracisation, persecution and often banishment from one’s family. For women, disclosure can result in being abandoned by her partner and his family – resulting in loss of security, shelter and any financial or emotional support. With disclosure being perceived as more risky than unprotected sex, issues of trust and transparency are complex and difficult within intimate relationships. The conflicts and tensions for members of Themba’s generation in his context are therefore how to protect oneself from infection and emotional difficulties while at the same time fulfilling both the desire for intimacy as well as social norms and expectations.

Themba also links this to identity and sexual orientation – the only interview participant to do so:

The same issues like issues of homosexuals and all those things. What does society ... Who says it's wrong? Who says it's wrong, but it's the society. Because it's the society that does already have that ... the mentality that the heterosexuals is the right one. You see. So it is ... sometimes my identity is shaped by the society ...

Those are the things which you need which really always causes you a lot of trouble to your identity.

The earlier narratives of control and imposed normality in terms of heterosexuality shift even further in the following excerpt, where Themba articulates discourses of active resistance by embracing the identity of not being a "real" Zulu. Paradoxically, the active resistance he chooses to engage in is one of not participating in cultural practices. He chooses a defiant absence as a way of communicating his resistance, and implementing his chosen discourses of identity:

You have these tribal problems, you see. So you have to decide. You came to the tribal group to be identified as a Zulu. Or you just live on your own. Because I ended up having the name that "he's not a real Zulu." Because he doesn't comply with what the Zulus want when they have meetings and were having all of those things. I'm not there. Because I don't go with that. So, it also gives me the other identity from them that said "no, he's not a real Zulu," you see, so those, those also that conflicts that you live with them day by day. And how do you bring transformation also when it begins with one? You see. Because by me one not being one to abide with those rules... it transforms me, and to some people it can bring that transformation in the end by always doing things ...

Themba shifts from explaining the nature of his resistance, to articulating the emerging narratives and discourses of his chosen identity – ones that are an interesting combination of resisting the race and tribe dominated discourses of his context, indications of emerging conscious choice-making and values that he has chosen to adopt from his spiritual / religious context:

Yes, the new relationship which is practise the law of love one... love one's neighbour. And being involved in ... I mean for me I

would be ... our starting point ... before I become a Zulu, what do I become? A human. For me that would be my starting point. What do we need here it's a human being who can ... who can easily communicate with any other human being who is alive on earth. The belonging comes after being a human, you see. We are human first before we become Zulus or whatever. But we are human first. So if we begin by looking at things in the way of humanity. I am dealing with a person ... I am dealing with the other human. What I see, I don't see a white, I don't see a black, but I see a human. So if we begin to plant that in our mentality, you know, to people that are growing up which would bring a lot of transformation from this stage of treating people versus the other races. But what is important is the human being. So how do you deal with a human being which is different from your colour, which is different from your culture, which is different from the language that you speak. But the bottom line: how do I deal with a human being. Which brings a lot of transformation to yourself because if you begin to look at a person as a human being not as a person that belongs to the ... any group as a race or whatever but identify the person as a human being - I'm dealing with a human being, you see. So for me that's where we need to look at issues of transformation in people's life.

There are emerging narratives here of moving beyond the dominant group identity discourses within his context, and searching for narratives and discourses of relationship that enable connection rather than alienation. In terms of Levett's (1997) framework of analysis, the function of this is to provide him with structures of meaning that shift his own sense of alienation from his family and tribal context. It is interesting to note his sense of agency in this, when contrasted with Leah's sense of her Seychellois culture already being hegemonically determined, and her spirituality being shaped around transcendent discourses. During the

course of the interview, Themba articulated an awareness of tensions and variations:

Ja, it's really difficult. But for me it has to do with I have to begin it myself. And the question would be how do I break that silence, break those things in those people who are living in that situation? You see. But for me it would be the issue of looking back, and stay with people and ... the natural law of love and living in relationship. You see. Does our grouping together bring us to live in relationship with the other people in society or does our grouping us together identify us as a certain group break that relationship. So, how do we go about it if it breaks the relationship? So we need to come ... we need to start to involve ourself in other people because what you are doing is breaking the relationship. You see.

These were the values that he claimed enabled him to make positive choices for himself, that enabled him to hold the tensions emerging from being a member of his tribe and community, exercising his democratic rights and working within the Anglican Church. Each one of these has complex relationships with the other, although a rights based democratic approach probably conflicts the most with the other folds of his identity.

These values were summarised in the concept of this choice-making resulting in one becoming "fully human" – a discourse which integrated both theological and psychological intentions. For him, differences need to be superseded by a recognition of one's own humanity and the corresponding humanity of the person in front of one – redolent of the principles of ubuntu outlined earlier in this thesis.⁴⁴

He attributed this largely to the fact that the Spirals workshops had enabled him to sufficiently reconcile the painful and jarring parts of his own life and identity to be able to stand his ground when perceived as

⁴⁴ See Chapter Two for further discussion about the concept of ubuntu.

being other and different in the English context. He described himself as focusing rather on the fact that he and the people with whom he was studying were "human", and that he could therefore relate to them primarily from that perspective – rather than using difference as the starting point. Themba's descriptions were an implementation of what is described as Appreciative Inquiry within social constructionism (Srivasta and Cooperrider 1990 cited in Gergen 2001). Rather than trying to solve a problem or difficult situation by dealing with the perceived problem, start with what people share in common or are already doing to survive. The positive components of the situation then become the primary constructs in realising desired outcomes, rather than the perceived "problem" being the dominant construct. (Gergen 2001: p. 181)

Uh, there is a lot of change for me in Spirals as far as cultural issues are concerned. One of the things. I mean, Spirals has equipped me to be able to fit in a context that I never even knew before. But to fit because I am aware of my cultural biasness and I read the culture of that society. For example when I went to England I think it was going to be much more difficult if I didn't do Spirals before I go there ... It has made me to realise my really ... what I perceive as my really identity. So I had my own identity. So I didn't have an inferiority complex in joining the other community because I know how do I identify myself. And what was my main goal, it was to enter the different culture and see myself in a different culture. But not losing what I believe in, but also being able to enter into a different culture and willing to learn to that different culture ... also being proud of who you are where you come from.

As with both other interview participants, Themba responded to questions about his experience of Spirals by referring to the exercises dealing with masks. Themba spoke about the influence of Spirals methodologies in

enabling these variations and shifts in his identity construction in the following way:

Ja, I think one of the issues which we ... which touches me ... was the issue of masks. How ... the issues of masks where we wear in our identities. The mask identity that we are given by the community, we are being masked by the community to be the people that we are not. So, doing Spirals and talking on these issues of the masks made me to look at myself and to look at, as I was talking about the community pressurising you. What are the masks that I've been given by the community? How do I remove those masks? What are the masks that I wear in different groups? Sometimes I want to please the community, sometimes I want to please my friend, you see, which plays a role ... which sometimes, you know, bring a lot of conflict in my identity because this time I am identified as a person who goes with his friends and I want to please my friends. This time I have to change the mask to the society. I have to change the mask to my family, you see. Sometimes the society is in conflict ... the culture of the society is in conflict with my religion and with my family. So how do I deal with this, and wear a different mask?

In line with the rest of his interview, Themba approaches the issue of masks using narratives of complexity. For him, masks are a symbol of the tensions involved in negotiating imposed group identities on one hand and personal choice on the other – highlighting the tensions between personal discourses of structure and agency. He speaks about the potential spaces for him that these exercises give rise to:

So, how do one remove the mask of identity? How do I remove this mask? How do I deal with this issue of a mask that I am wearing trying to fit into a system? How do I fit in a system but remain myself? How do I deal with all these conflicts?

And the ways in which Spirals enabled the emergence of new understandings and possibilities:

... we open up in Spirals and we look at what really is identity, you see. So, I began to ... it's where I really began to grab the things that I have been talking about. That there are some things that I never thought of and it's there in my identity. But, after some of the workshops, we talked about but what really is identity? You also mentioned the issues of hurt, which plays a role in our identity. So one of the things we deal about it's how do we deal with this? How do we acknowledge our hurts? That I've been hurt, but move forward to another stage.

He referred to how Spirals methodologies enabled him to move forward from hurts in the following way:

And also, when we were writing things and drawing feelings that we don't know, we can't explain to people. You see. So when we were drawing all those things, they come out with a lot about who I really I am when I reflect on all those things. I remember one day you were giving us those images; just make a noise of something that is happening to you right now, you see. So you, you .. it was .. I was struggling but I began to identify something which it was happening to me, but I couldn't say it in words.

Themba gives the clearest indication of the three interview participants of the way in which the body can articulate pain that is difficult to give names and words to – as described in Chapter Three. There is a sense in this excerpt of the body knowing and carrying pain, which a wordless articulation of sound was able to bring to consciousness. Themba refers to this as self awareness in the following excerpt from the interview:

And first and foremost ... self awareness what Spirals has brought to me. Self awareness. And before you move to transformation you need to be aware of yourself. So, it was more of self awareness and that I know I am Themba who is made up of this and this and this. So, right, how do I deal with those things in a way that ... it's making me to move forward with the community. It's making me to be productive.

Themba has emphasised drawing as being particularly meaningful for him. As was explained in Chapter Three, these were usually a way of processing a drama or embodied exercise in some way. What his comments seem to indicate is that the reflective phase of drawing or writing, following the action of an embodied exercise, is where most of the learning and insight came from for him:

I experienced them as very helpful. For an example, as I was saying, there are things when you have to write them down, when you have to brainstorm about them, which is ... which are very difficult. But when you just have to draw a thing which represents what is happening to you it makes you much more easier to carry the feeling that is going on to you. And also for the fact that Spirals ... it's not about "I'm doing this", it's not about the facilitator leading this, but we all are participating in a process as the workshop goes on.

The progressive nature of these ongoing cycles of action, reflection and the learning that is enabled through participating in an ongoing programme emerges in the following excerpt:

One of the other thing is also the issues of hurt, which we dealt a lot in Spirals. One of the drawings I used to draw was a drawing last year, which I saw that change also in a drawing that I used this year. The drawing which I used last year was from ... it was a

kind of a cloud and rain coming from the cloud and I used dark colour to symbolise the dark rain which is coming from the cloud. And rocks which I draw, which are something on my way. So I began to deal with those hurts, and as time goes on that rain goes bit by bit, you see. And this year I drew the hands which were like this (demonstrated hands reaching out and holding) ... it was the hands which were like this ... and the cross. Ja, so those are the things that have contributed to make me to move from the one stage to the other. So how I was going to be aware of all those things if I didn't be in a workshop?

It is interesting that it was in going through the programme for a second year that Themba was able to engage at this level with some of his issues. This raises questions about the level of shifts possible for those (the majority) who had only been part of the programme for one year.

Later in the interview, Themba also spoke about the drama or embodied exercises:

Issues of drama. There are things that I really can't carry out but when I am acting them they are easily carried out to, I mean, to people. And it becomes practical. It's not a paper work, it's not those files, it's not about those files... You participate in person. So you kind of, you feel that you are involved. You feel that you are a part of the workshop. You are doing something.

When asked about the way in which these exercises had surfaced painful issues for him, he responded:

The thing is, before I even role-played we have already did some of the things in the workshop that dealt with handling conflicts that happens to one, the thing that happen within one. So, as the workshop goes on I've already started to fight with those conflicts

and to see how do I move from those hurts and from those conflicts which happened. So it's not like ... we don't begin with the dramas in the workshop, you see. We begin with ... we go to dramas as a process from one stage to another , you know... for ... when we talk about all these identity things and all those things, those contribute to you and you go with them and it's a flow , it's a flow from the start of the workshop. Then you come to a stage where you have to do these things, some of these things in drama you have already dealt with them in previous ... sessions in the workshop. So you kind of struggle with yourself. So those dramas helped you, you feel .. you sometimes really feel really you feel because you've been going in that struggle while in the workshop you have been changing these things and as the workshop equips you for challenges to face them you being to when you're role-playing them you in a drama where you really look at yourself. This is who I am with this. This is where I'm willing to go ... that, that ... it was one of the things that I kind of said if this Spirals thing can be just a continuing thing.

The challenge of each participant needing to continue working on insights and learnings from Spirals workshops far beyond the space of the actual workshop surfaced in two ways in the interview. The first is the way in which a participant faces and needs to keep working with questions:

And for the fact that I start acting it, it also challenges me to ... have I really dealt with this thing or not. Do I still really need this thing? What are the feelings which I felt after ... after ... after role-playing it. How do I really feel? Is that thing which comes - relief - is that for that time, does it go away, or even after, it's still there ... it also challenges me to say "hey have you really dealt with this thing. What's happening? How do you go from here with these things?"

One other thing was to sit down and really say "I have a problem", you see. "I really have a problem. So how do I ..."... in that workshop it helped me to identify my problem because when we dealt with cultural conflicts those were the things that were happening to me but which I was "Ag, tch it's not for me." But in the workshop you begin to deal with those things and okay you have the way that you identify myself. This where I identify myself. So then from there ... owning the hurts. And asking yourself now how do I move.

The second is the support that is needed for these shifts to be sustained:

Even if you have finished with it at the College, but you can do some follow up and also follow up if some people need counselling after Spirals or something because there are things that sometimes ... I think that we all go through, through the workshop. There are issues that you begin to deal that you have never dealt with. That's why we cry in the workshop, because something is come out, something's come out. And to have that space which allows you cry and to ... to ... there are some things which come out as we journey. And they don't come out just one day, it's ongoing.

While Themba does not raise the question of Spirals' responsibility to participants directly in this interview, it is nevertheless a question that needs to be asked. When working in the context of a society where trauma is the norm, as has been discussed in Chapter Two, how far does Spirals responsibility go in enabling participants to work with the issues that surface for them in workshops? Or does the desire to "help" participants who are facing painful issues run the risk of creating dependency on Spirals – rather than enabling them to claim their own wisdom and resources to work with these issues? This will be discussed further in the Conclusion.

Themba hints at the broader implications of this kind of work by referring to its links with the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission:

Spirals sometimes it links like Truth and Reconciliation – but with yourself first and with the community and moving on into the community. You see. Because ... people are living, we are living . I am living ... I've been living with hurts which I've begin to deal with them. The thing I took in was the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was there for certain people, people who just to testify, but there are people on a grassroots level who were not there and their voice were not heard who still carry these ... these hurts. I mean you can see the way that people were crying when they went for Truth and Reconciliation, so for me it also, the thing that it's how do we transform those people on ground level who have never been there on grassroots level? What about their hurts? Some things we were looking to the TV but hurt us – hurt people and hurt me. But we never dealt with it because we were not part of those people who were involved in those things. So how do we move with the whole society.

Themba is the first of the participants to make the link with the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission that Marajh and I had made when developing the programme. His comments pose a significant challenge to the work of Spirals, in that they validate the intentions of the work but also raise questions about the current capacity of the programme to meet the needs Themba has identified. In moving to “the whole society”, Themba also raises the following questions about the work of Spirals, which will be discussed further in the Conclusion:

And our society its also suffering from abuses – alcohol abuses, child abuse, women abuse, this issue of HIV&AIDS ... how do we work with those things and move with them in the wider society.

How do we run the Spirals workshop to people who are living with HIV&AIDS? How do we help them to deal with their past. People are living in this place, it is because of this, it's because of this and the society has masked them. How do we help them to move off all those masks you see. Because in all the society at large there are masks that they are there. So how do we do with those masks? So doing things like Spirals are things which makes one to begin to deal with those masks which are put by the community, they are put by myself or ourself to us. So I see it as fitting in a really wider community.

How we deal about the management conflict? The conflict between the management and the workers? Those relationship. Cultural differences in all those contexts. How do you deal with all those things?

The interview concluded with Themba focusing on his work in a parish, which was due to begin within weeks of this interview being conducted:

Because I'm going to a different community, but I've got tools that I've just to be myself and just go around in the community as myself and then willing to learn from those people and learn from their culture. For me it's really not more about culture, cultures, it's about people.

It has not been possible to assess how these tools have proven useful or not – which once again highlights the struggle for Spirals of establishing that the outcomes and indicators of change it claims for its work can actually be validated.

Themba's interview provided fascinating insights into the folded, multiple understandings of identity possible for someone living and working in a diverse and challenging context. His interview provides exciting evidence of the way in which using embodied approaches to issues of identity

enable a surfacing of many layers of issues at different times in a process. One of the key questions emerging from his interview remains the level to which Spirals is responsible for ongoing support of those who have been through its processes.

CONCLUSION

This final chapter explores the future implications of the research undertaken in this thesis for a programme such as Spirals.

In terms of the Action Learning cycle as defined by Reeler (2005: p.3), this final stage is described as planning. It needs to identify what the implications of the research are for practice, particularly in terms of what the programme wants to happen (and to stop happening) in the future. It also needs to look at ways to build new insights and deeper conceptual frameworks to grow and develop the work.

I have adopted various roles and voices during the course of the thesis. Chapter One was about being uncritically subjective in tracing the very personal role I have played in the development of the Spirals programme. In Chapters Two and Three, I drew on the voices of others in crafting and viewing conceptual frameworks of understanding for the work. In Chapter Four, the voices of the interview participants led the process as they gave feedback and input on their own experiences of the programme. For this final stage, I will endeavour to take one more step back from the highly subjective place that the thesis began and critically look at overall themes and issues emerging from the process of the research for the work of Spirals in its own right.

In terms of insights, there is a sense that the complex weaving of ideas undertaken in developing the Spirals programme has worked to some extent. While there are gaps and areas of tension, which will be explored later, there are strong points of connection from the original narratives and ideas that shaped the development of Spirals, through the researching of theory and practice and into the analysis of the interviews. Each of the interviews was very different, but none of the participants questioned either the value of Spirals for them, or the overall approach which Spirals has chosen to use.

However, at the same time, the ideas about body and the drama-based nature of identity are not as strongly indicated in the interviews as the programme and research has claimed. It is difficult to assess through the limited texts of the interviews what the reasons for this are – whether the limited time in dealing with such vast and complex themes is the primary reason, or whether Spirals has not structured and worked with the methodologies comprehensively enough for these connections to happen more for participants. As has been indicated earlier, I think this is a flaw in the research process of this thesis. There is a sense in each of the interviews at different times of people talking about these ideas at an intellectual level, rather than engaging with them as viscerally as Chapter Three implied they should. Either way, this is an issue that Spirals needs to explore more and develop strategies to address.

Another challenge is the very open-ended nature of the programme. In an attempt to be open to spirals and constructions of meaning, it might be that finding a helpful balance gets lost between opening up issues, supporting participants as this is happening, but still holding on to a clarity of purpose for the programme as a whole. As referred to in Chapter Four, part of this challenge is to find a balance between supporting participants as painful issues surface, and enabling them to find their own path through these issues. A question in terms of practice is whether Spirals draws enough on other possible sources of support for participants. It is one thing to make a blanket offering of helping to make counselling available, but another to engage more deeply in exactly what support participants need. Is counselling necessarily the best option? This might be an area in which Spirals needs to stop offering this as an option outside of the work, and start including more critical reflection for participants themselves of the kind of support they desire, and the possible avenues they could follow in finding it. It seems there has not been enough consideration of the discourses informing Spirals' own

assumption that counselling will be beneficial for participants who are struggling with issues.

A related issue that has emerged is the level of support for participants as they move into their work in parishes as clergy. The transitory nature of the student body at the College means that their engagement with the discourses shaping both the theological paradigm of the College and a programme such as Spirals, is brief, inevitably fairly superficial, and in danger of not being sufficiently integrated for participants. This raises questions about how realistic the intended ongoing spirals of transformation are when they move into the new and challenging environment of church parishes, with their own very entrenched discourses.

The influence of these entrenched discourses leads to possible confusion of role related discourses, such as the concern for me in Chapter Four about Sipho unconsciously using the potentially liberating exercises around masks to achieve what are ultimately impositional and patriarchal ends. The risk is that a sense of missionary zeal about being a healer of others results in an unconscious replication of oppressive structures in the church, and a denial of that person's own vulnerability and neediness. I need to be constantly mindful of my own agendas in this regard – am I imposing discourses of healing on processes and people in potentially oppressive ways? I need to constantly interrogate this in the work of Spirals, and continue to explore strategies that keep questions and consciousness alive for participants as they work to integrate their new learnings with the contexts in which they then move on to work.

One of the issues that makes this particularly important is the high levels of trauma for participants. As described in Chapter Two, the profound impact of trauma makes short-term healing processes extremely limited in their impact and potentially not helpful at all. As Gobodo Madikizela (2003: p.86) describes, these traumas do not go away, but rather

become a touchstone for reality, making the journey of healing ongoing and arduous. How is Spirals working with participants in remaining open to and conscious of their own woundedness, while at the same time working as ostensible healers in the communities and parishes with which they work? Stronger strategies for this need to be explored.

Leah's interview raises many questions about the way in which the Spirals programme has been run at the College. The one that stands out most for me is whether the very specific contextual focus of the work actually results in someone from another context being more alienated than anything else, resulting in the possible shifts that person needs not being realised. The possibilities of shifting from hegemonic discourses to a greater sense of her own complexity and potential seems to have been lost due to her sense of alienation and otherness from the rest of the group of participants. Spirals needs to reflect deeply on how the learnings of the transition into democracy in this country can be a gift rather than a burden for participants from other countries. There needs to be a greater realisation of Gergen's (1999: pp.8-9) concept of a poetics of relationship, and less of the grim bravado of alienation he so graphically describes.

In line with this, Spirals also needs to avoid imposing historical discourses on participants, when the participants themselves are possibly needing to use a different starting point. The very powerful racial discourses that shaped the early stages of the work might lead to other discourses being rendered invisible, resulting in exactly the opposite marginalising outcome to what was intended. While there is no clear evidence of this in the research, it is a constant issue, especially in the light of Hoene's arguments that race is a redundant concept (Hoene 2005) and Themba's suggestions for moving into new arenas such as the field of HIV&AIDS. In addition, the second decade of democracy in the South African context seems to be dealing far more with issues of class, economics and globalisation than apartheid-determined discourses. The

work needs to remain constantly critical of itself in being true to genuinely starting from where participants are at.

Of course, it is equally important to remain true to the values and principles on which the work has been built. Adapting to new discourses cannot become an end in itself.

In line with this, Spirals needs to be constantly reflecting on the shadows of its own discourses. The programme itself runs the risk of being so focused on proving its contentions and intended outcomes right, that it loses sight of the negative or harmful consequences of the work. As with the tensions for Leah in terms of the framing of identity within the College, the work of Spirals must involve the programme constantly adapting and evolving in the light of participants' and others' feedback. This needs to happen both at the level of practice and understanding the discourses that are shaping and being shaped by these practices. Of course, the danger is that the momentum of change and adaptation results in the work losing clear conceptual frameworks and sufficient depth – and the value base referred to earlier. This is a tension that needs to be carefully managed.

Concluding Remarks

This brings the Action Learning cycle of this research to completion. The aim of the research is not that this is a conclusion or closure of a process. My intention in embarking on this thesis has been to interrogate the work that I have been part of shaping, to deepen insights and highlight learnings that will guide the ever evolving cycles and spirals of this and other similar frameworks of practice.

The journey of engaging in this research has certainly changed me; both in validating the largely intuitive basis to the work initially and in highlighting gaps and areas of weakness in my own understanding and

practice. My hope is that the issues highlighted in this research will help to change and deepen both my own practice and that of others who are part of ongoing spirals of transformation in different ways.

**APPENDIX ONE:
SUMMARY OF AGENDA FOR WORKSHOPS AT
COLLEGE OF TRANSFIGURATION IN 2000**

Introductory Workshop

Date: 30 March 2000
 Venue: Common Room of the College of Transfiguration.
 Participants: 22 students from the College
 Facilitators: Brian Marajh and Theresa Edlmann

Introduction of People: Adjective Names	TE
Introduction of Spirals Programme – aims, structure, process	BM & TE
Obtaining participants’ agreement to the process	BM
Community Commitments	TE
Hopes and Fears for the Programme (Expectations)	TE
Concentric Circles	BM
Pinning Down Our Roots	TE
Journey of My Life	BM
LUNCH	
Stand Up If	TE
Identity Pie Chart	TE
Where Do We Go From Here?	BM
Evaluation	TE
Closure	BM

Five-Day Workshop

MONDAY: *Stories and Masks*

Introductory Stuff ♦ Group Norms ♦ Warm up ♦ 3 liturgy and day groups” ♦ Final day liturgy group	Brian
--	-------

Timetable and Logistics <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◆ Schedule for the week ◆ Room allocations ◆ Accommodation and food issues 	
Mass	Livingstone to celebrate
Storytelling and Group Dramas	Theresa
Evaluation and Closure	Brian

TUESDAY: *Power and Masks*

Masks and Power Exercise	Theresa
Mass	Vanessa to celebrate
Processing and reflection (possible video?)	Theresa and Brian
Private Space – explanation and setting up	Brian
Bible Sharing	Brian

WEDNESDAY: *Inside and Outside the Mask*

Exercises for the Day	Theresa
Mass	Isaias to celebrate
Bible Sharing	Brian

THURSDAY: *Masks And Spirituality*

Exercises for the Day	Brian
Mass	Janet to celebrate
Bible Sharing	Theresa

FRIDAY: *How we Journey on with our Masks*

Pilgrimage and Wrapping Up	Brian and Theresa
Mass	Brian to celebrate
Written Evaluation	Theresa / Brian???

Closure

Students shared a creative piece of work that reflected their journey and learning through the programme.

The session closed with Brian celebrating a Eucharist.

**APPENDIX TWO:
THE SPIRALS MANUAL**

See next page



the
spirals
manual

Written by: Theresa Edlmann

Original Concept for Spirals Programme: Brian Marajh and Theresa Edlmann

Illustrations: Artists of the Egazini Project in Grahamstown



cover illustration: "African Identity" by Uyanda Tom

In this image I try to show the things that are important in our culture:

- ▲ **Ifele** – a skin of goat which is used to carry a baby after a goat has been slaughtered to celebrate imbeleko (the birth of a child).
- ▲ **A black pot** which is used in cooking the goat and brewing umqombothi (African beer).
- ▲ **Ingqayi** for drinking umqombothi.
- ▲ **Horns** to guard the home.
- ▲ **Isingqusho** (a wooden pot) used to stamp mielies and amazimba to make umqombothi.
- ▲ **A mask**, usually in broad African culture can be used for fertility purposes.



the
spirals
manual

Written by:

Theresa Edmann

Original Concept for Spirals Programme:

Brian Marajh and Theresa Edmann

Typesetting, Design, Layout:

Jeanne Louise Moys

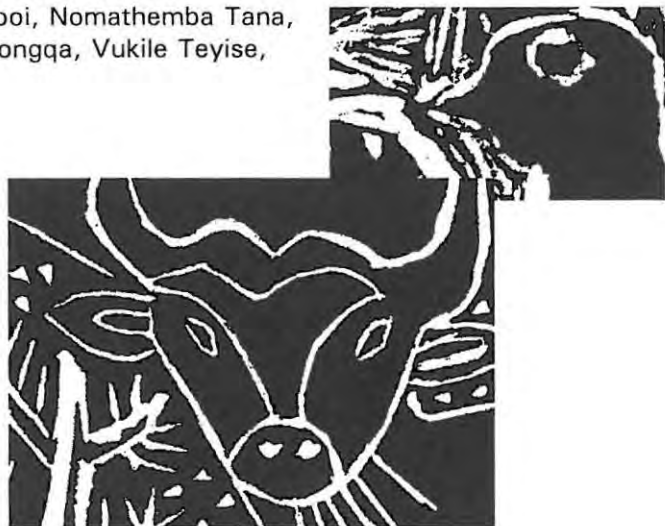
Illustrations:

Artists of the Egazini Project in Grahamstown

– Papama Lubelwana, Violet Booï, Nomathemba Tana,
Engelina September, Daniwe Gongqa, Vukile Teyise,
Linga Diko, Uyanda Tom

Administrative Assistance:

Pearl Liwani



*Details from illustrations
by Daniwe Gongqa (top)
and Violet Booï (bottom).*

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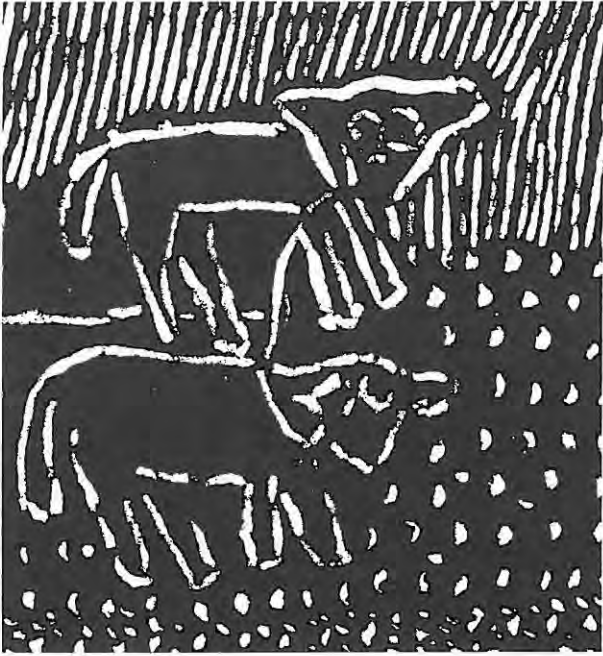
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Illustration by Vukile Teyise



introductory remarks

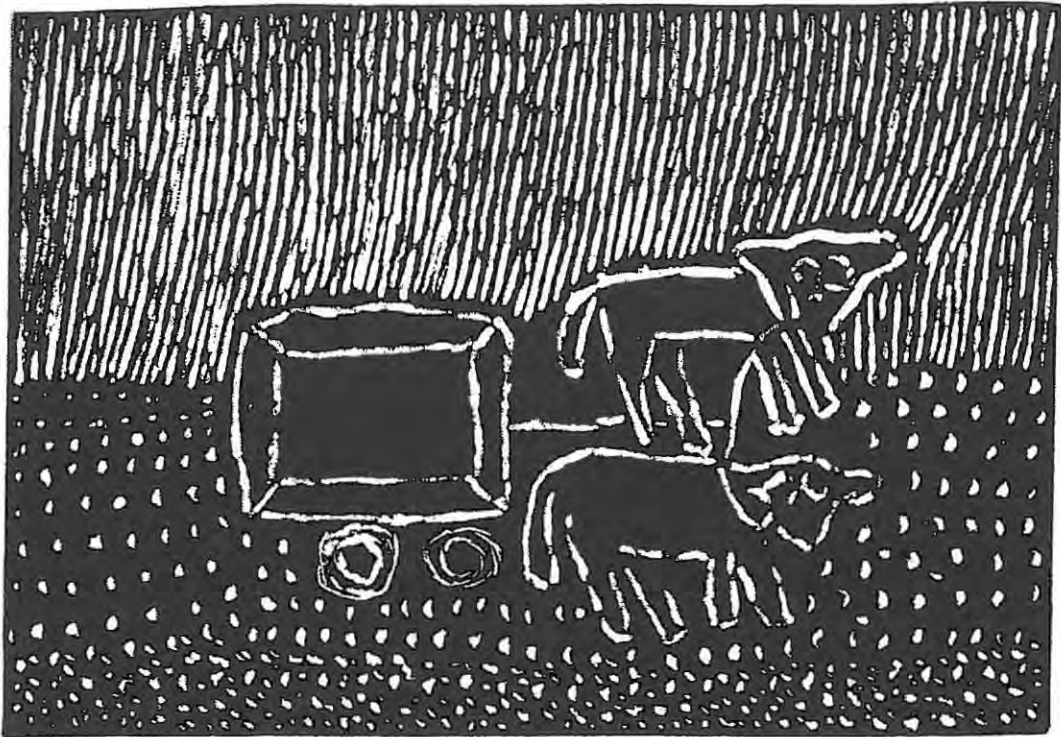
This manual is both a culmination of many people's work and wisdom over a period of time, and a work in progress.

Its aim is to give newly trained Spirals facilitators something to work from, and to act as a resource for those who are already involved in similar fields of work in various parts of the world. As many copies as possible have been put into files rather than bound so that the resource pack can expand and develop as the work of Spirals grows. Sections that will be added over time will include identity in relation to HIV&AIDS, trauma and human rights. And what it means to sustain identities of transformation.

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The shoulders of many people who have been at the wheel in different ways at different times also need to be acknowledged – although mere words can never convey the thanks due to them.

The concept for this work came from a conversation between Brian Marajh and myself – and the College of the Transfiguration (CPSA), where Brian was a staff member, was the extraordinarily rich seedbed for this work. Brian toiled and stretched himself again and again for Spirals, and special thanks need to be extended to him. Thanks also to Luke Pato, Lubabalo Ngewu, Janet Trisk, Vanessa Hawkins, Lance Dixon, Julie Hains, Melany Adonis, Linda Schwartz, Isaias



Chachine and the students of CoT for all they have contributed, especially during the time Spirals was based at CoT.

To the uMariya uMama weThemba community, and other OHC Brothers – thanks for their support, patience, encouragement, prayer and challenges.

To Bishop Richard Grein for his generosity in enabling Spirals to get to the 2001 Hague Appeal for Peace Conference at the United Nations in New York. And to Archbishop Desmond Tutu for his encouragement of Spirals.

To Dana Labe for clarity of thinking, cajoling and vital moments of humour in facilitating the planning and strategising of Spirals.

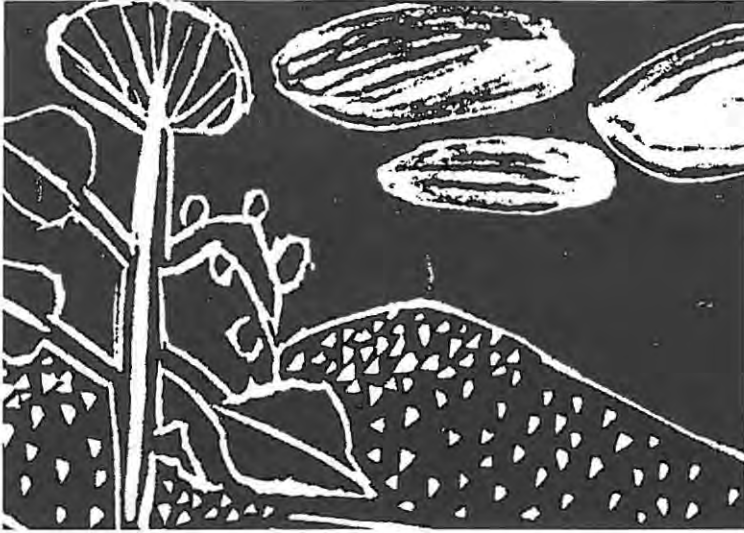
To the Spirals Trustees who have been so loyal and supportive through thick and thin: Timothy Jolley, Leela Pienaar, Luke Pato, Nomveliso Mhlanga, Julie Hains, Brian Marajh and Linda Nyarashe.

To friends, colleagues, family members, workshop participants and companions on journeys who have knowingly and unknowingly nurtured this work.

It is no accident that the work of Spirals developed in the South African context. Daily we live and work to nurture the best of humanity in the wake of systems and structures that evidenced the worst of humanity. Spirals is a small part of a much bigger process, and relies on fore-runners and sages of the past and present. Hopefully this manual can be a foothold for some in continuing this journey into the future.

Engelina September Ikari yoDonki

As some say that Grahamstown is a town of donkeys (there are a lot of donkeys here). I see donkeys as an alternative because when the black people were robbed of their country and wealth, donkeys were their source of income as they can take removals to somewhere else. Others find it easier to carry wood from the veld using donkeys and sell it for money to feed themselves.



putting spirals in context

Spirals began during a personal discussion about the struggle to deal with the massive changes of the post apartheid era – and the challenges of addressing old, displaced understandings and experiences of identity in an emerging democratic context.

This conversational approach has continued to be the core of Spirals work since then. Brian Marajh and I spoke about our own experiences of growing up in different racial classifications in the apartheid era, speaking different languages, going through different educational systems, being male and female ... the layers of difference and sharing continued to emerge as we spoke, and as the speaking changed us.

The African context in which we had been forged and were working wove itself more and more clearly into the fabric of our work. From an awareness of the presence and role of our ancestors in what we were dealing with, to the impact of hundreds of years of colonising and violent power struggles, to the challenge to find places of relational, emotional and spiritual meeting points in the midst of a highly polarised, stereotyped understanding of each other.

Increasingly, the work has recognised the complex interconnectedness of the roles individuals, groups and communities play in relation to each other. The African principle of ubuntu – “I am because you are” – places an equally balanced emphasis on each person’s responsibility to deal with both his or her personal and relational / contextual issues. Spirals strives to work at exploring the implications of these values and ways of being.

a background to the work of spirals



The development of these ideas resulted in working principles that have stood firm over the ensuing years.

The first is that the workshops and discussions themselves are a process of defining and understanding identity. We do not presume to have answers – what we offer is our availability, some background reading, research and discussions, some questions and the wisdom offered by participants in previous workshops.

Secondly, the work recognises the powerful essentialist assumptions that attach themselves to this word “identity” – a sense that aspects of our identity are fixed and unchangeable. However, workshops use primarily constructionist-based ways of thinking and working. Exercises have been developed in such a way that participants can explore how these constructions of identity have developed over time and reach their own conclusions about how to understand their identities.

We do not presume to judge participants for their socio-political views, ethical struggles or levels of responsibility for the political consequences of their identities. Inevitably, identity politics emerge at some stage or another in most workshops. How to deal with these issues is for participants to name, grapple with, and find their own ways of living with. Workshops and follow-up contact can at best facilitate, support and help to formulate and affirm the questions that are coalescing, and the creative options that the questions generate. Sustaining the shifts and changes that emerge out of these questions is a huge and ongoing task for all concerned – facilitators and participants.

Violet Boo!

My picture reflects a buffalo in the forest. There is a Xhosa saying that says “inyath’ibuzwa kwebephambili” meaning something / anything is asked of the people who saw or experienced it.

My picture shows the respect of animals by amaXhosa a long time ago.



Inevitably, addressing issues of identity unleashes intense emotions: shame, rage, relief, grief, joy ... each person's experience is different. The challenge within a workshop context is to respect the emotions, stay with the challenges they are drawing attention to, trust that the person will find the wisdom and courage to make more conscious choices about their sense of themselves and others in the future, and support them in this regard.

The assumptions we bring are the following:

- ▲ Identities are primarily about how we make *meaning* of ourselves, our relationships and others.
- ▲ These meanings will shift and change during the course of our lives.
- ▲ We carry powerful ideas and feelings about identity with us (our own and others'), without always being conscious of them and the reasons for them.
- ▲ The emergence of conflict is inevitable when dealing with issues of identity. Whether it is because of paralysis, denial, frustration, trauma or embrace of change; conflict is the norm when walking in this territory. Using the energy generated by these conflicts in the interests of transformation is central to this work.
- ▲ The relational context of a creative, participative workshop can help to unpack some of these issues, enabling shifts and changes.
- ▲ This work is therapeutic (i.e. enables healing), but it is not therapy in the sense of a detailed and ongoing intervention in a person's life.
- ▲ These workshops are provocative – the assumption is that they will lead to change. Not least because they might surface previously unnamed and taboo topics. This is not easily taken on and addressed, by facilitators or participants. Primarily this is because of the often unconscious fear and sense of danger associated with the discomfort, work and pain of changing.

As the name implies, this work assumes that there are shifting layers of identity, which are moving and unfolding in relation to each other for both individuals and groups.

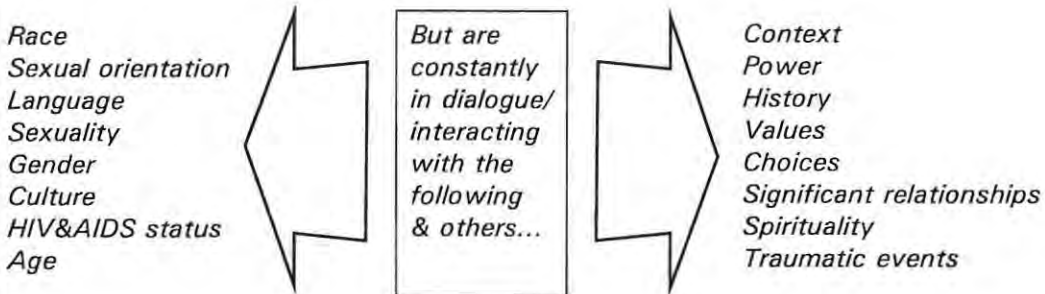
These include:

- ▲ Physical identity
- ▲ Emotional identity
- ▲ Ego identity
- ▲ Social and political identity
- ▲ Creative identity
- ▲ Archetypal / transpersonal identity
- ▲ Spiritual identity

These levels also weave themselves in the following framework, developed during Spirals workshops:

Identity = how individuals / groups make sense / meaning of themselves and their contexts

In the current emerging democratic and post-apartheid context, these are probably primarily:



The challenge for a facilitator is to become part of the dialogue of a group / workshop without losing a sense of the overall direction a group is moving in. Each group will choose a different combination of identity layers. Both acute listening skills and being intuitively aware of what is going on, below the level of interactions and words, are vital tools in this work.



During the course of most workshops, we are asked about the name of the Trust. There are several associations, all of which inform the work and our understanding of identity issues.

The first is that spirals are constantly in motion – coming back to similar but never identical places again and again, moving up, down, outwards and inwards.

The second is that many African baskets – containers of food, bearers of children, the tools of survival for many rural communities – are woven using a spiral as their basic structure. This seems an apt symbol of the issues Spirals workshops deal with.

Finally the spiral is an ancient and universal symbol that has increasingly gained popularity in recent times. It is a depiction of a fundamental life form – spirals being the way in which water and air move, and the structural form of many living organisms. Using it as a symbol visually captures the idea that issues of identity are ancient beyond our knowing, and will continue to unfold in ways we cannot comprehend.

name of the trust



some notes on facilitation

This manual assumes that the person using it is an experienced facilitator, or else has completed a Spirals facilitation training course. There are references to ideas and ways of working that it would not be appropriate to outline in this publication – it has been assumed during the writing of this manual that facilitators will take responsibility for learning about unfamiliar ideas or methodologies, or adapt exercises according to their context.

There are no agendas for workshops included in this manual – planning skills are part of the training of a facilitator conducted by the Spirals Trust. Other facilitators will need to put together the various exercises into a structure that suits the context in which they are working – and their own level and style of facilitation. Facilitators are also encouraged to weave their own work with the work of Spirals – although we would be grateful for an acknowledgement of sources.

Spirals workshops are very cross-disciplinary – there are aspects of conflict transformation, development, psychology, philosophy, sociology and spirituality. Any facilitator in this field needs to be developing and growing their personal engagement with the issues and ideas raised as well as their skills as a facilitator. Again, this manual can only be a guide and a framework in this regard.

These are the ideas that emerged during the initial development of the programme – the premise from which any workshop is developed:

- ▲ Workshops consist of both individual and corporate processes of discovery, healing and transformation.
- ▲ The work is based on an assumption that each person

facilitation



has the wisdom they need to carve their own path of discovery and growth through the issues being explored.

- ▲ There is no textbook – the journeys of our own lives are the primary texts.
- ▲ Exercises are highly participative, and allow space for each individual to apply their context and issues to the overall theme.
- ▲ Facilitation involves Action Learning, i.e. highly participative approaches based on an action-reflection praxis and methodologies such as group work, expressive arts-based exercises, Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, role-plays and journal writing.
- ▲ Each workshop is evaluated by both the participants and the facilitators – and developed or changed appropriately.
- ▲ Healing needs to be approached holistically: physically, emotionally, mentally, intellectually, spiritually, communally and socially.
- ▲ Work is done with the assumption that every participant has probably experienced trauma, and work needs to be addressed in such a way as to include components of trauma healing, e.g. telling of stories, identifying and naming what has harmed and what has hurt, naming the identity imposed by the trauma, exploring and taking on new identities at the level of self-perception.

Spirals work is strongly shaped by Paulo Freire's philosophies of education – that learning needs to be a process of liberation from oppression for individuals, which will feed into broader process of change and development for groups, organisations and communities.

A core characteristic of Spirals workshops is the creative

Daniwe Gongqa

My picture reflects a woman who is feeding her chickens.

This woman is living in a small house and she is taking care of her chickens.

Breeding of chickens used to be one of the things that amaXhosa used to do for getting meat.



methodologies used. This is because, in our experience, creative processes unpack that which is the strongest, most resilient, most wise and most transformative in humanity.

Increasingly, Spirals is also trying to weave the concept of Appreciative Inquiry into how we work. This involves unpacking what is already transformative and creative in a situation, and building from there – being aware that there is wisdom already present that needs to be acknowledged and used as the primary base from which to work. It is a powerfully liberating approach in shifting from the outset that which has been perceived as broken, traumatic, problematic and obstructive.

This kind of work can be described as that of a catalyst – the facilitator's work is to add something to a situation that will enable a series of reactions and processes. Some of these might happen in the workshop, but many will take place long afterwards. Most will be invisible to the outsider. Being a catalyst therefore involves having a strong faith in humanity's ability to find transformational ways through situations of difficulty and challenge. And continue to evolve, adapt and change when it is necessary.

A facilitator of these processes needs to be a multi-faceted, open, thinking and feeling person! There is no way one can do this work without being whole-hearted and passionate about it. There is also a basic reality that a facilitator of this work is as good as their own level of willingness to address what is emerging for them, and find their own healing through this work. To change and be changed by the spirals of inner dialogues and the meetings, dialogues and interactions with participants.



Spirals workshops therefore assume that a facilitator is familiar with participative methodologies. The most important skill in this regard is that the facilitator avoids the temptation to think they know more, or are further along a road, than the participants in a process. This is a very dangerous attitude to have. It shuts down listening skills that are absolutely vital to these methodologies. It cuts the facilitator off from being able to read with their intuition what the group is saying, and it keeps a process sterile – one ends up just going through the motions. It also means that the facilitator will not learn as much as she could from the people she is working with – and the work will lose out.

Facilitating from the critical edge of being part of a creative process, rather than controlling it, is also important if the facilitator is going to earn the right to name tough issues when they arise. Issues of identity inevitably involve addressing huge areas of pain – the legacies of systematic and internalised oppression around these issues guarantee that. While the facilitator needs to be objective enough to witness and honour what is unfolding for participants, the pain cannot be honoured if the facilitator is sitting back with her arms folded while the group is working through challenging issues. It is a delicate and challenging dance of engagement with both vulnerability and distance.

All of this sounds a bit heavy! The last item is as important. The ability to laugh – at oneself, at the complexity of this human race, and at the beauty of the universe. The edges of pain need to be softened every now and then with graciousness, a smile and a twinkle in the eye.

Where can I find healing for my trauma?
In the reconciliation and forgiveness
Where there is disconnection
Spirals sow relationship dimension
Where there is helplessness
We focus on empowerment dimension
Where there is hopelessness
We sow spiritual dimension.

In my trauma I lost my identity
In my trauma I lost my dignity
The only thing I was left with was
"victim identity"
Until the healing of my identity
When I got back my dignity
And I became a survivor
And through healing I was transformed
From a survivor to a wounded healer.

It's when I faced the wrongs
That I gained forgiveness
It's when I reconciled with my enemies
That I discovered hope, faith and love.

Then I rose from death to resurrection
From secrecy to revelation
From self-hate to self definition
From powerlessness and isolation
To power of my community.
Then I can say I'm free at last.

*Nomveliso Mhlanga
(used with permission)*





starting and ending workshops

This is a summary of the exercises and strategies generally used to start and end Spirals workshops.

Linga Diko

The First Democratic Elections in South Africa

The 27th April 1994 marked a turning point in the History of South Africa. After all these years, and most of all having released the most famous prisoner ex-president Nelson Mandela in 1990, the then apartheid government felt the pressure and gave in to Democracy. The majority of South Africans were so jubilant even before they went in to cast their votes.

The first image on the second part of my work shows exactly this, and the following one shows an elderly man eager to join the toyi-toying in the background (outside the voting station). While in the top part of this work I am showing proceedings inside the voting station. Represented by the man on the wheelchair is the 26th day of April 1994 which was thoughtfully so, put aside for those comrades with physical disabilities.



setting up a workshop theme

Aim: To create a conceptual and creative focus for a three- or five-day workshop.

Time: Most of the time given will need to be in planning for this. Participants will be involved in developing and adding to the visual displays, media and images being used.

15 minutes at the opening of each day should be sufficient.

Comments: Where possible, this creates a powerful metaphor for a workshop process.

The two themes that have worked well so far have been

- ▲ Identity and water
- ▲ Identity and masks

Each day starts with an exploration of how the theme links to the exercises for the day. Participants are given space in the agenda to run the opening section, developing and expanding on the theme by adding to the displays and media being used in the workshop space.

Participants should be encouraged to include music, drama, created objects or items of personal and cultural significance in their presentations and the development of a display.



introduction of participants and facilitators

Aim: This is an invitation to participants to take on a positive identity for the workshop in a spirit of creativity, involvement and fun.

Time: This depends on the size of the group. Allow about 1 minute per participant.

Comments: It is worth giving this exercise whatever time it needs – the fact that every person has equal space and opportunity to speak builds important foundations for the rest of the process.

Ask participants to introduce themselves to the rest of the group by choosing a positive describing word starting with the same sound / letter as their first name (e.g. Superb Siphoh, Wonderful Wendy, Terrific Thandeka, Courageous Karl). Facilitators need to be involved in this too.

If a participant is struggling to find a name, or if an English language name is difficult, be supportive and encourage other participants to help brainstorm a suitable name.

It is useful to give participants the option to change their name during the course of the workshop. This can be an important reflection of things they are dealing with and want to change. Support from the group for this helps to indirectly reinforce what they are addressing through making choices for change.



introduction of the workshop

Aim: To enable participants to have a clear understanding of the intention, structure and purpose of the programme – and what their role in it is.

Time: Up to 10 minutes

Have the aims and objectives and the agenda of the workshop (and/or programme as a whole) outlined in writing on newsprint or on a board (and as a photocopied handout if possible). Go through them step-by-step with the group. Ask for questions and respond to them openly and honestly – if you need to come back to people about questions that you do not know the answer to, make sure you follow issues up and come back to the people concerned.



obtaining participants' agreement to the process

Aim: To obtain the active co-operation and commitment of the participants to the process.

To send a message to participants that the facilitators are engaging in the process with an intention of mutual respect.

To ensure that the use of data for publication or research processes is done with the permission and agreement of all concerned.

Time: Usually 5 minutes

Explain the aim of this section of the agenda, and discuss the following questions in plenary – asking for questions or objections. Only once the active agreement of each member of the group has been given is it appropriate to proceed. (Agreement could be indicated by a simple nod of the head or, should it be necessary, a piece of paper that everybody signs).

- ▲ Are you willing to take part in this workshop / programme?
- ▲ If relevant: are you willing for information that comes up in the programme to be used for research? (with the understanding that anonymity will be respected at all times)
- ▲ May excerpts from workshops and written feedback be used in reports and other possible articles / publications? (with the understanding that anonymity will be respected at all times).



community commitments

Aim: To engage participants in a consensus-based decision-making process about how they will conduct themselves as a group for the workshop.

Time: 10-15 minutes

Comments: This is another important part of the foundation of a good process. Again, skills and principles that are important to the process are being modelled right from the beginning.

Option 1

Brainstorm with the group and write up on a sheet of newsprint what the agreements are that the participants want to make about the way in which the programme is run. (These need to be written up and kept on the wall during any future workshops in the programme too – and added to from time to time if necessary).

Option 2

Ask the group to take up a body position in the middle of the circle that indicates something they would like to agree to as a community commitment (e.g. leaning forward touching their ear and heart to indicate listening to each other with sensitivity). Each person holds their position, and others add to the group image. When the image is complete, the facilitator invites each participant to name what their part of the image represents. These may be written up on newsprint as above. It is fun to take a photograph of the final image if possible.



hopes and fears for the programme

Aim: To provide an opportunity for participants to articulate their expectations of the workshop. This enables the facilitators to take on board and incorporate participants' ideas into the planning of the programme.

To get the participants "up and moving" so that the power of the "facilitators' space" is diminished.

Time: 20 minutes

Comments: It can be confusing for a group to identify both hopes and fears – in some contexts it might be more helpful just to ask for the group's expectations.

Give each participant a few small pieces of paper and koki pens. Ask them to write one hope or fear for the programme on each sheet and stick them up on the wall. These are then arranged into groups according to the themes that have emerged from the group. (These also need to be recorded and referred to elsewhere in the programme to make sure that the fears are being / have been addressed and that the hopes are being / have been realised).



the way forward

Aim: To end a workshop by setting up clear processes and procedures for the future that all present agree upon.

Time: This depends on the group and the situation – give it the time it needs, though. It is an important part of ensuring the sustainability of the work.

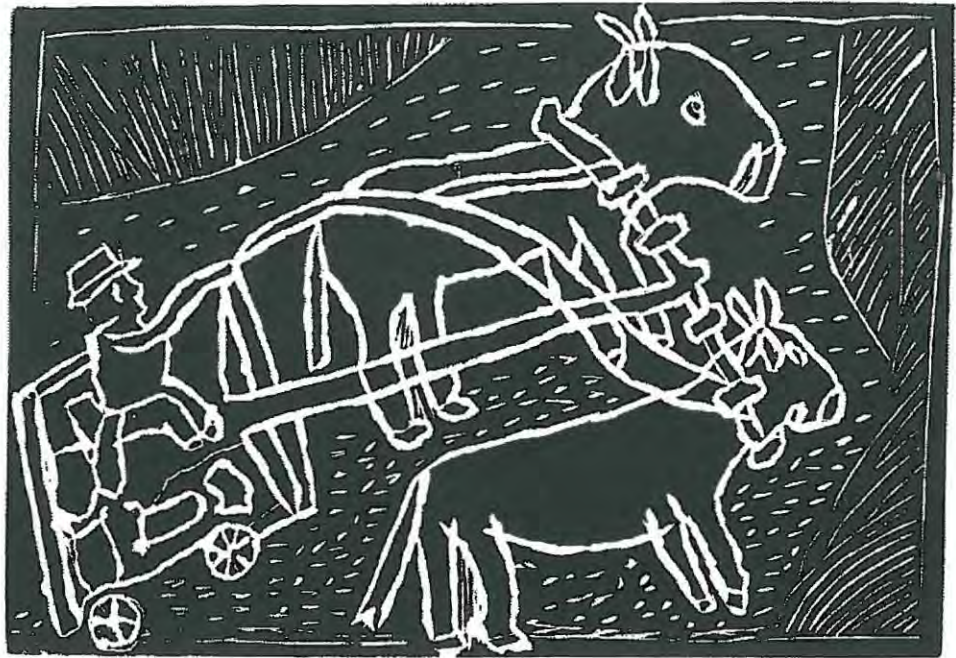
Comments: These are only guidelines as to what one can do at this stage of a workshop – it is important to do what the group needs. Asking the group to brainstorm the options for themselves can be the most useful way to approach this phase of a workshop. Using Open Space Technology techniques is another option.

If this is a one-off workshop:

- ▲ What does each participant plan to do in implementing / beginning the change they have realised needs to happen?
- ▲ What support is available to participants should they need it? How do they access the support?
- ▲ Is there an opportunity for a follow-up meeting? If so, when and where?
- ▲ Are there additional issues that need to be discussed and/or decided upon?

If this workshop is part of an ongoing programme:

- ▲ Clarify what is expected of participants between this workshop and the next event in the programme.
- ▲ Set / confirm times and dates for future meetings, focus groups and workshops.
- ▲ What support is available to participants should they need it? How do they access the support?
- ▲ Is there an opportunity for a follow-up meeting? If so, when and where?
- ▲ Are there additional issues that need to be discussed and/or decided upon? How will this happen?



Daniwe Gongqa

My picture depicts a oxwagon and a man who is in control. The message of my picture reflects amaXhosa in olden days using oxen for transportation purposes.

evaluation of the day / process

Aim: To obtain verbal or written feedback and recommendations for the future from participants.

Time: Depending on the group and energy levels, 5-20 minutes.

Comments: This is an important part of the Action Learning way of working. However, if emotions are too raw and participants would rather end with something more personally reflective, it is important to be open to that. Some later follow-up would be useful in that case.

Broadly, it is helpful to ask participants what went well, what needs to be changed or improved, what they learned and what the suggestions are for the future. These can be brainstormed and written up on a sheet of newsprint, or participants can give individual responses in writing on paper provided.



Engelina September

Indoda Yomxhosa

My picture shows a Xhosa man coming from milking his cow. As we know that in the olden days we had cows that symbolised wealth to the Xhosa people and even now there are some men who believe in that tradition of cows as the gold of the Xhosa people. In my picture I try to show a modern man coming from milking his cow, also a source of income.

closure

Aim: To bring closure to all that has taken place during the day for facilitators and participants.

Time: No more than 5 minutes.

Comments: This is what participants will leave the room with, so it is important that it is a reflection of or in some way relevant to what has happened so far in the workshop. It is useful to use something that generates a positive energy, but if this is inappropriate go with what is best for the process and the participants.

This could take various forms: a song, a prayer, or a brief participative exercise. It needs to be very brief (no longer than 5 minutes) and enable participants to bring a "full stop" to the day so that they can make an easy transition back into their "normal" contexts.

One of the things that I have realised is that culture, history, heritage, tradition, and spirituality always clash. The reason, I think, is because who I think I am is not me, but is what the people I come after were/are. Is what I call self really who I am? Well I think I have to search self in the past and the present which will lead to the future.

To find self I have the following questions which I have tried to answer:

Who am I

I am an African Swazi man

What makes me strong?

My heritage

What makes me weak?

My fears

What makes me whole?

My God

What keeps me standing?

My faith

What makes me compassionate?

My selflessness

What makes me honest?

My integrity

What sustains my mind?

My quest for knowledge

What teaches me all lessons?

My mistakes

What lifts my head high?

My pride

What if I can't go on?

Not an option

What makes me victorious?

My courage to climb

What makes me competent?

My confidence

What makes me sensual?

My insatiable essence

What makes me handsome?

My everything

What makes me human?

My heart

Who says I need love?

I do

What empowers me?

Me and God's creation

Who am I?

I am an African Swazi man

My biggest challenge is not someone else. It is the ache in my lungs and the burning in my legs and the voice inside me that yells "I can't" but I do not listen. I just push harder. And then I hear the voice whisper "I can". And I discover that the person I thought I was is no match to the person I really am.

*Bheki Magongo
(used with permission)*





exploring identity

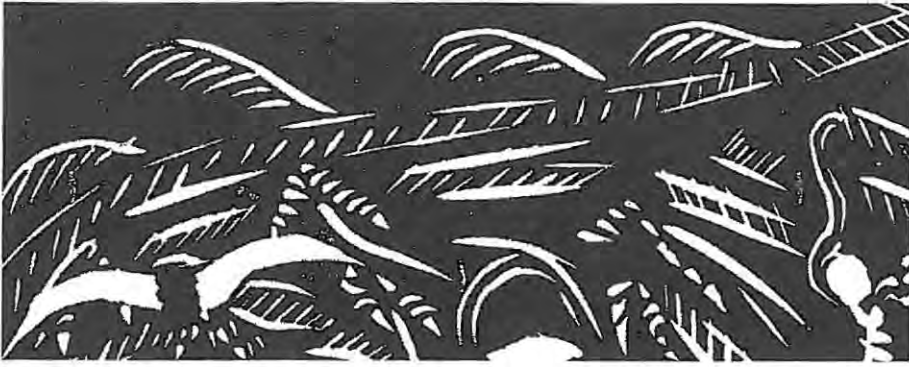
A series of exercises that provide an introduction to issues of identity. These can be used at the beginning of a programme, or constitute a short complete workshop.

Papama Lubelwana

These are the abakhweta – the boys going through the rituals of a man.

Inside their hut (ibhoma) they are making themselves warm with ifutha (white clay on their bodies) and fire. We find inside lamb meat hanging along with ibhekile (a bowl for food). On top of their door is a white bull horn (impondo zenkomo).

One of them is washing his face with ifutha (white clay) and alongside him or beside him there is izembe (an axe), horn and knobkerrie – a fighting stick (igqhudu). This is an ancient culture, but is being affected by HIV/AIDS.



talkers and listeners

Aim: To begin focussing on the theme of the workshop in a non-threatening, accessible way.

To encourage interaction between participants based primarily on active listening.

Time: Allow 8 minutes per question.

Comments: This is an extraordinary exercise – it gets a group working together very well. It's very useful in the opening stages of a workshop because it builds dialogue, relationships as well as the theme of the workshop.

The topics that follow are just a suggestion – they can be adapted to suit the theme and context of any workshop. Also, if time is short, up to 3 questions works very well.

It is useful to start with a fairly straightforward topic, move to a heavier or more challenging one, and then end on something positive.

There are several ways to arrange participants for this exercise – here are two suggestions, but you might want to try out other options. You need to make sure that each participant has a partner to speak to and then to listen to regarding each topic.

OPTION ONE

Divide the participants into two groups. Ask members of Group A to find a chair anywhere in the room that gives them enough space to sit facing a partner. Ask members of Group B to each place a chair in front of a member of Group A.

Explain that a topic will be given, they will be given a moment to think about it, and then the members in Group A will be asked to speak for 3 minutes on that topic, with no interruptions from their partner in Group B. Once they have finished, the person in Group B will also be given 3 minutes to speak on the same topic. If the person finishes speaking before the 3 minutes is up, they can either wait in silence, or their partner can ask a few questions about what has been said.

OPTION TWO

Divide the participants into two groups. Ask the members of Group A to move their chairs into a circle, but with their backs to each other so that they are facing "outwards". Once they have done this, the members of Group B are asked to each place their chair in front of someone in the first circle, so that there is now another "outer" circle, which faces the "inner" circle. The people who are sitting facing each other will be partners for the first phase of the exercise.

Explain that a topic will be given, they will be given a moment to think about it, and then the people in the inner circle will be asked to speak for 3 minutes on that topic, with no interruptions from their partner in the outer circle. Once they have finished, the person in the outer circle will also be given 3 minutes to speak on the same topic. If the person finishes speaking before the 3 minutes is up, they can either wait in silence, or their partner can ask a few questions about what has been said.

Topic One: A community celebration that I enjoyed when I was a child.

Once both partners have spoken, the people in the inner circle / Group A are asked to say goodbye to their partner and to move one seat to the right. The person sitting in the outer circle / Group B their new partner for the next phase of the exercise. This time the person in the outer circle / Group B starts by speaking for 3 minutes on a new topic, and the person in the inner circle / group A goes next.

Topic Two: A situation in which I was invisible, marginalised or displaced in some way – and how I felt.

The people in the outer circle / Group B are asked to say goodbye to their partner and to move one seat to the right. The person sitting in the inner circle / Group A in front of them is their new partner for the next phase of the exercise. This time the person in the inner circle / Group A starts by speaking for 3 minutes on a new topic, and the person in the outer circle / Group B goes next.

Topic Three: The aspect of my identity I am most uneasy about.

The people in the inner circle / Group A are asked to say goodbye to their partner and to move one seat to the right for the last time. The person sitting in the outer circle / Group B in front of them is their new partner for the next phase of the exercise. This time the person in the outer circle / Group B starts by speaking for 3 minutes on a new topic, and the person in the inner circle / group A goes next.

Topic Four: The aspect of my identity I am most comfortable with.

Thank the participants and ask them to move back into the big circle. Ask them how it was, what they felt, what new insights they gained from the exercise. Allow time for some processing.

Other possible topics (to replace any of the above) :

- ▲ The gifts I bring to myself and others in situations of stress and conflict.
- ▲ A challenge I have dealt with and that I am proud of is...



With acknowledgements to AVP



the journey of my ancestors and me

Aim: To enable participants to reflect on the construction of their own identities.

To encourage sharing with others in a safe environment.

Time: 20 minutes for working on drawings.

Up to 30 minutes for processing – although this depends on the group. Some participants prefer to tell their whole story to the plenary, and this can be extremely valuable. It is important to be open and flexible in response to what participants are asking for.

Comments: This exercise is useful in the early stages of a workshop. If it isn't possible to do "pinning down our roots", this is a useful substitute.

Ask participants to draw a line or road on their own sheet of newsprint that represents their lives in some way ...

- ▲ Where their ancestors came from, and what their migrations and journeys were
- ▲ The links between their ancestors and their own lives
- ▲ Where they have come from in their own lifetime
- ▲ People, places and situations that have shaped their identity
- ▲ Events that have been significant along the way
- ▲ Times and places where they paused to look at the view
- ▲ How they see the world around them
- ▲ The ups and downs that have influenced the directions their lives have taken

Ask participants to share with a partner / the group (depending on the number of participants and time constraints)

- ▲ What are the gifts and burdens of my ancestors that I carry?
- ▲ Do I choose to keep carrying them, or are there things I need to let go of?
- ▲ What are the gifts and burdens that my life has brought with it?
- ▲ How do I journey on with them or leave them behind?



pinning down our roots

Aim: To trace the historical and geographical origins of participants' identities in a fun, active, participative way.

To create a physical image of the ethnic identities of the group.

Time: 45-60 minutes

Comments: This exercise is very unpredictable. The longest it has taken is 3 hours, and the shortest 20 minutes! The time suggested above is just a guideline. For some groups, the placing of the stickers is enough, and they are ready to move on. For other groups, the exercise evokes many powerful, emotive memories and generates discussion about deep and complex issues relating to identity. The role of the facilitator is to listen – the more free-flowing the sharing of stories and reflections, the better the exercise works.

A large map of the world is placed on the wall (with specific regions or countries enlarged if this is appropriate), with different colour adhesive labels or pins in a container, as well as string, on a table or bench in front of it. Each person is asked to place markers that are the same shape and colour (and with their initials / name attached or written on in some way) over the places their ancestors and current family came from, and where they have lived in their lives. Participants are free to link up the journeys of their ancestors with string or by drawing them in with koki pens if they would like to.

Allow time for reflection and discussion afterwards.



exploring my identity

Aim: To give participants an opportunity to reflect on the layers of identity that they live with.

Time: 45-60 minutes

Comments: This is an exercise for individuals to do on their own. An important element of a Spirals workshop is the opportunity participants have to do inward reflection as well as reflection in group exercises.

Once this exercise is complete, it may be useful to ask for general comments on what they experienced, but it is important to respect people's need to process and reflect personal issues for themselves. If strong emotions have been generated, encourage participants to speak about them to someone they trust.

Make enough copies of the attached handout for everybody to have their own.

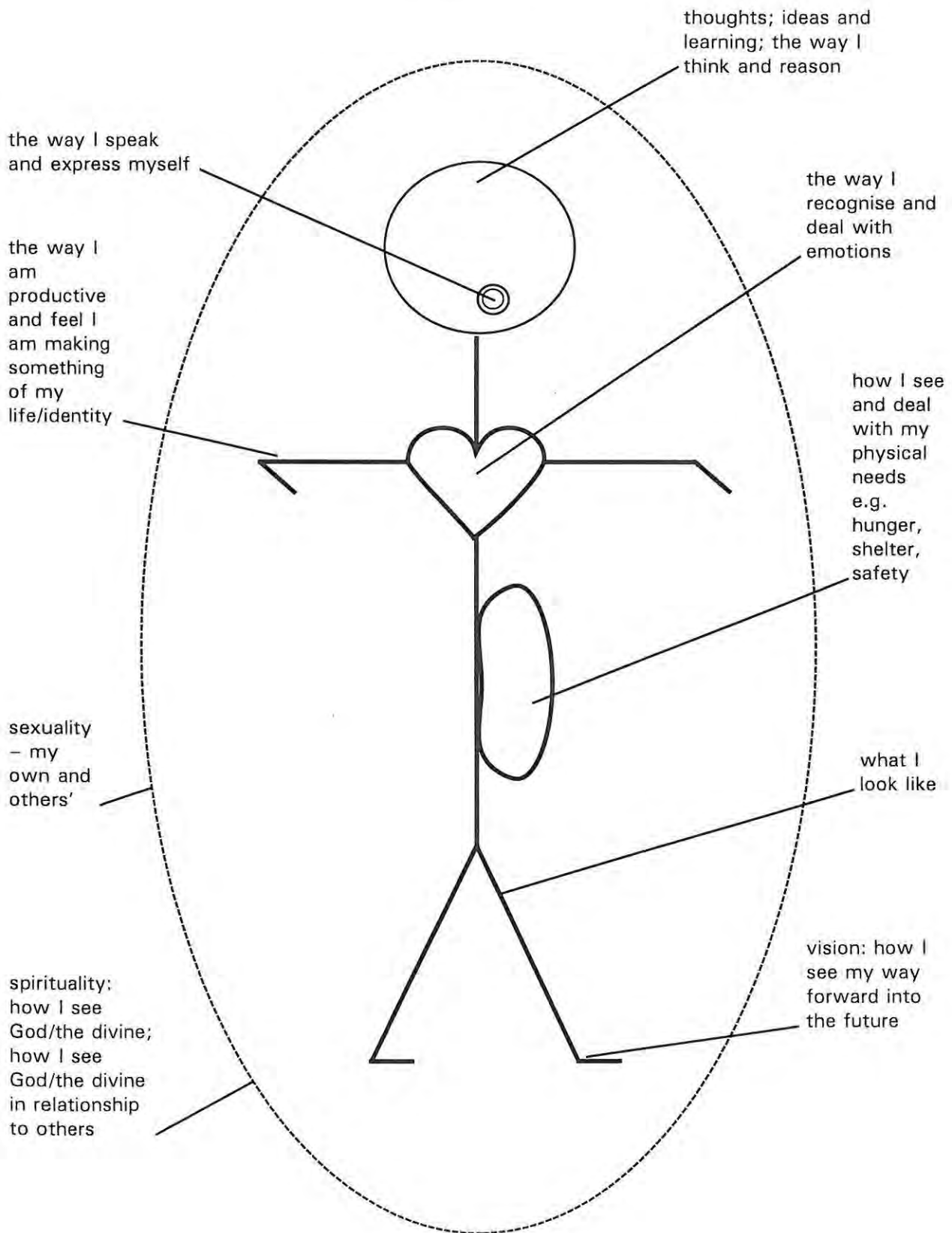
Go through the handout, making sure that everybody understands the terminology. Then encourage them to make notes on the handout about their response and thoughts on going through the aspects and areas of identity. Assure them that this is a private exercise – they will not be asked to share anything they don't feel comfortable about sharing. They will take the handout away with them at the end of the workshop.

Allow time for reflection and discussion afterwards – possibly with a partner, or else with the whole group together.

exploring my identity

As you reflect on this diagram, make notes for yourself on the handout about how you perceive your current identity in relation to the aspects listed.

Then make notes about which components of your current identity have been imposed in some way, and which you feel that you "own" and have adopted for yourself.





body drawing exercise

Aim: This exercise challenges the participants to physicalise their current identity issues by drawing, shading and symbolising a symbolic physical map of themselves. To “heal our relationships to ourselves” (Roth).

Time: Approximately 25 minutes.

Comments: This is a very useful way of grounding issues in people's own physical experiences of them. It is best done in a group that is open to introspective, reflective ways of working. Participants are often quiet and thoughtful at the end of the exercise, so it is important to give them time to work with what has emerged for them before continuing with the workshop – e.g. taking a break, doing a guided meditation, suggesting people go for a walk if there is a garden nearby.

Ask participants to stick together sheets of newsprint in such a way that they make up a sheet big enough for the person's whole body to be drawn on it. Each participant then finds a partner who will draw the outline of their body while they are lying on the paper, and then draw their partner's body on their separate sheet of paper.

Before beginning the exercise, explain that what you are about to read is not a set of instructions but rather a form of guided meditation. If they don't have a clear response to something, they can just remain still and wait for the next stage of the exercise before continuing. Remind them that everything about this exercise is private – they will not be asked to speak about what has happened to the rest of the group afterwards. The exercise is for their use only – unless they choose to speak about it to someone after the workshop.

Read out the following at a slow, measured pace once each participant is sitting quietly facing their outline:

Look at the shape of your body. What statement does it make? What is it saying about your identity? Write or draw your thoughts down somewhere outside the shape of your body.

Look inside the shape. What's going on? Sit for a moment and breathe and look and feel your body and your energy. Fill in the body with the energy you feel, and where you feel it. Sit back again.

What is your inner rhythm? Your basic pulse? What does it feel like to be you? Where and how do you want to show that in the shape of your body?



Sit back and look at the shape of your body again for a while. Where does your fear live in your body? Where is your anger? Your sadness? Put them in your drawing. Where is your joy? Your compassion?

Where is your mother in your body? Your father? How do they live in your body? What other feeling memories does your body carry? Put them in your drawing too.

What does your shape tell you about yourself? Give your shape a voice and write it down somewhere near your head on the outside of your shape.

If your heart could speak, what would it say? Write that down next to your chest. What do your hands want to do? Your muscles? Your skin? Let them speak to you and write or draw their voices.

Keep writing and drawing until there is nothing left but your breathing and you are able to be still as you look at this mirror of yourself.

Stay silent until participants have completed the exercise. Then encourage them to stand up, shake their bodies out and fold up their piece of paper to keep it safe and out of the way.

(loosely based on an exercise described in "Maps to Ecstasy: Teachings of an Urban Shaman" Gabrielle Roth, Nataraj Publishing, Novato California 1989)



water image exercise

Aim: To use the metaphor of water as a way of understanding identity.

To create images with clay that be used as a reference point during the rest of a workshop.

To encourage participants to work with their hands creatively as a way of unpacking issues and ideas.

Time: 45 minutes

Comments: This is a way of developing a focus display using a metaphor to link the workshops for the week together. The workshop for each day begins and ends with a brief moment of reflection on the theme. Water is one possibility – identity and masks has been another. (Please let us know if you use others effectively!)

Explain the purpose of the theme of water to participants, and ask them to brainstorm some of the links that can be made between the metaphor and identity. Examples might be:

Issues of identity start from the moment our lives begin, with a tiny little trickle emerging from the mountains somewhere,
we are all part of an larger ocean of the community of humanity,
at times our identity is associated with stillness and depth – like a dam or lake,
at other times there is turbulence and conflict, like a stream tumbling over rocks
. . . and so on

If possible, have large quantities of wet clay, play-dough, rocks and/or sand available, and large spaces for each group to work on (preferably with sheets of newsprint or plastic as a safe working surface.)

Ask the participants to divide into groups of three or four, and to explore the meaning of the symbol of water for them in understanding the concept of identity. They can use the clay to model shapes, images and landscapes, they can write poems and attach them to their sculpture . . . they can interpret both the exercise and the media they have been given to work with in any way they choose.

When they have finished, ask everybody to take a "Gallery Walk" and see what others have done. Allow time for reflection and discussion about what has emerged.



spirals image exercise

Aim: To explore ideas around essentialist (i.e. fixed) aspects of identity and constructed (i.e. emerging, chosen) aspects.

Time: 30-60 minutes

Part One

Give each participant a sheet of newsprint and some koki's. Ask them to draw one or many spiral shapes, and to write words or draw images that represent how their identity has developed, changed and will continue to so on in relation to . . .

- ▲ race
- ▲ gender
- ▲ language
- ▲ culture
- ▲ spirituality
- ▲ sexual orientation
- ▲ sexuality
- ▲ trauma
- ▲ HIV&AIDS

. . . or any other theme or issue that has been a strong influence in their identity

Part Two

Once each participant has finished Part One of the exercise, ask them to reflect on some of the debates around identity issues.

Are there aspects of their identity that are unchanged and unchanging? What are they? Why has this been the case?

Has their identity emerged and grown, and shown shifts and changes in some way? If so, what have these been – and how and why has this happened?



Part Three

This exercise will probably need quite a lot of debriefing and discussion – it could be useful to start off in small groups and then move into plenary.

Some questions to consider could be:

- ▲ What have I learned about myself that I hadn't realised before?
- ▲ What have I learned about the way I relate to others that I hadn't realised before?
- ▲ Are there aspects of my identity that I understand in different ways now?
- ▲ What are the challenges that I face as a result of this exercise?

Part Four

Ask participants to conclude the exercise by engaging in a Free Writing process. Each person needs to be in a private space with a piece of paper and a pen or pencil. They need to sit and write anything that comes into their minds for 5 minutes. They should not edit or correct anything they have written during that time, and they should not stop writing at all – even if it seems to be gibberish. They should just keep writing.

At the end of this time, ask them not to look over what they have written. Suggest that they use this form of journaling for a few more days, and only then look at what they have written. It will be interesting to see what has emerged as they process issues relating to their identity!



masks and identity

Aim: To explore how masks shape our identities.

To create physical images of the masks people use.

To address the concept of imposed identities and masks.

Time: If cardboard masks are made, this needs about 1 hour – with follow-up time allocated as needed.

For papier-mâché masks, time needs to be allocated over a few days.

Comments: This exercise needs to be adjusted according to the time available. It is not suitable for a one- or two-day workshop. Papier-mâché works best in a five-day process because of the time needed for the layers of paper and glue to dry. Cardboard masks work best in a three-day workshop, as the participants usually need time to engage with themes of identity before doing this exercise satisfactorily.

Making masks needs extensive planning and preparation – materials need to be ready and available when participants need them.

Masks can be a theme for a whole workshop, so that each day deal with an aspect of masks e.g. masks and (hi)story, masks and community, masks and conflict, masks and power, masks and spirituality, masks and transformation, etc.

Introduce the theme of masks as a representation of how we deal with our own and others' identities.

Some of the following points might be used as a basis or framework for discussion:

- ▲ Are masks useful in our lives or not?
- ▲ Sometimes we use masks as a way of protecting our "inner lives". But this can shut us off from relationships. How do we deal with this dilemma?
- ▲ We place masks on other people when we stereotype them in some way.
- ▲ Many of us have had masks imposed on us because of where we come from, our skin colour, language, gender, sexual orientation, etc. How can we lift or remove these in some way – if we want to?
- ▲ When we remove some masks, do other masks take their place?
- ▲ What are the masks of power ... and lack of power? Of wealth ... and poverty?
- ▲ Every mask has an inside and outside surface. What goes on inside the masks that you wear?
- ▲ Does transformation wear a mask?

As these and other issues are discussed during the process of a workshop, allow each participant time to create their own representations of the masks that they live with. This can be done by closing each day of a workshop with a time of silence in which participants work on their masks.

These masks may be presented at the end of the workshop – as part of a pilgrimage in which participants share and reflect on their journeys during the process.



stand up if

Aim: To focus more specifically on the issue of group identity – and different kinds of group identity.

To generate themes that might be useful for another exercise.

Time: 15 minutes

Comments: This is a wonderful way of shifting a group's dynamics – particularly when there are polarised sections in the group. It is a good one to use as a lead-in to other issues – and the movement makes it a bit of an energiser at the same time.

Feel free to add or remove statements depending on the group and context in which you are working.

The group sits with their chairs in a circle. Explain that people should respond to the exercise by standing up in silence for one second if the statements that are made by the facilitator are true of them. They will not be asked to speak about or explain their response to any of the statements – simply to stand up if it is true of them and stay sitting if it is not.

The facilitator then reads out some of the following (or any other appropriate) statements, and pauses while participants reflect on them and stand up. Once everyone is seated again, the process is repeated, until all the selected statements have been read out and responded to by participants.

So, begin by saying:

Please stand up in silence for a few moments and then sit again if . . .

1. *You are over 30*
2. *You are between 20 and 30*
3. *You grew up in a situation of poverty*
4. *You were raised by a single parent*
5. *A grandparent used to tell you stories when you were small*
6. *You grew up in a city*
7. *You grew up in a small town*
8. *You grew up in a rural area*
9. *You were born and raised in the Eastern Cape*
10. *You were born outside South Africa*
11. *You have ever wanted to be different to who or what you are*
12. *You have a hidden or visible disability*
13. *You were ever a victim of apartheid legislation*
14. *You come from a family where alcohol or drugs was / is a problem*



15. *You have a friend or family member who is gay, lesbian or bisexual*
16. *You have a friend or family member who is mentally ill*
17. *You were ever in trouble at school*
18. *You play a musical instrument*
19. *HIV/AIDS has touched your life in some way*
20. *You have ever earned money by working with your hands*
21. *You have ever witnessed or been involved in an act of domestic violence*
22. *You were ever told not to cry*
23. *You ever felt superior to someone*
24. *You ever felt inferior to someone*
25. *You have children*
26. *You are or have been married*
27. *You have ever had to suffer for what you believe in*
28. *You have ever laughed at someone who speaks a different language to you*
29. *You have ever been afraid of someone who has a different skin colour*
30. *You were ever accused of doing something you didn't do*
31. *You ever accused someone else of doing something they didn't do*
32. *You have ever looked up at the stars and wondered what is out there*
33. *You have ever been let down by some one else*
34. *You have ever given up on someone*
35. *You have ever had someone give up on you*
36. *Someone close to you has died or been killed*
37. *You have ever had a clear sense of God's presence*
38. *You have ever believed in yourself*
39. *You have ever been in love*
40. *You have ever felt pure joy*

With acknowledgements to John Shuford



storytelling and masked role-play session

Aim: To explore ways in which childhood experiences and memories influence the construction of our identities.

Time: 60 minutes

Comments: The use of the masks in this exercise is optional. It is particularly useful if masks are a theme in the rest of the workshop.

Divide participants into groups of about five.

Each group member is given a chance to share with their group a story that they remember from their childhood – a myth/legend, story about their family, fairy story they enjoyed, etc.

The group then needs to decide on one story that has been shared which they want to dramatise. The only condition is that they will need to incorporate at least one mask in their drama; this may affect the choice of story.

The group needs to prepare two dramatisations of the story they have chosen (the person who told the story may need to let go of details that the group wants to develop and interpret).

- ▲ One: as the story was told / heard
- ▲ Two: with one specific change made to the story. (which will be discussed afterwards)

The groups then each present their role-plays to the plenary, with the facilitator guiding them through this structure: group enacts, process of derolling, second enactment, derolling and debriefing.

Discussion and reflections on all the dramas may be useful at the end of the exercise.



symbols of identity

Aim: To enable participants to identify aspects of their current identities and how they choose to represent them.

Time: 20-40 minutes

Comments: This exercise is useful as a way of pulling together a series of exercises that have already taken place. It can be used to end a workshop.

Ask each participant to reflect on what has taken place so far in the workshop, and to draw a series of symbols that represent significant aspects of their identity at that time. These symbols should be different sizes – showing which aspects take up more of their identity at that moment than others. They could be personal symbols, or symbols that link them to a particular culture, organisation or group.

When they have finished, participants post their sheets of symbols up on the wall – with their names attached or not, whichever they would feel more comfortable with. This then becomes a “gallery” which participants and facilitators walk around and reflect on – noticing areas of similarity with their own identities and aspects that are different, thought provoking, challenging or interesting in some other way.

When everybody has finished and is seated again, ask participants how they found the exercise, how it felt – and that insights they gained from it.

Excerpts from follow-up interviews with workshop participants. Used with permission.

The business in this workshop is different in that it's all about you and where you want to go and where you are so you could look back and come out ... motivated and more strengthened in terms of how then you go forward as well. Because as leaders of the organisation as well we don't do that kind of work - we are always so busy, we have not got time for ourselves and this is something that I saw ... as something that can help.

You have to give people choices and particularly in our context of our history because in the past people had no choices – choices were made for them, so that in itself is an empowering process. To be able to say to people (in a Spirals workshop) you can choose whether or not you want to do this.



identity and community

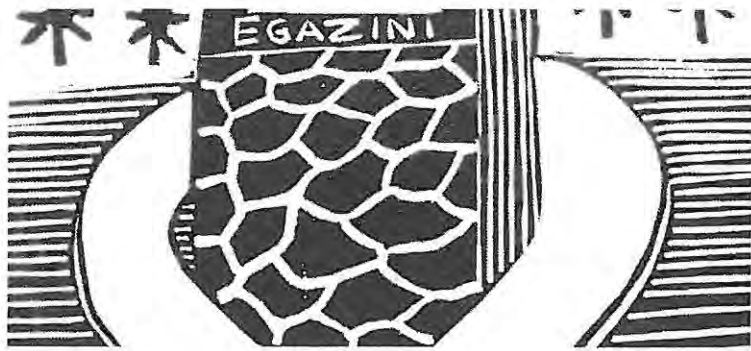


Illustration by Vukile Teyise



identity and community

A series of exercises which explore identity in relation to the communities we come from and to which we belong.



my communities exercise

Aim: To explore the different kinds of communities each person belongs to – and how they interface with their individual identities.

To encourage participants in making conscious choices about how they relate to groups and communities.

Time: 30 minutes

Explain to the group that we belong to different communities at various times in our lives – some we are born into, some we choose, and some we become part of without consciously thinking about it. For example,

- ▲ the people in the place we live and have our home is a community,
- ▲ our families are communities,
- ▲ the places where we learn and study are communities,
- ▲ our places of worship or prayer are communities,
- ▲ how much wealth we have places us in certain communities and cuts us off from others,
- ▲ our gender and/or sexual orientation groupings give rise to particular communities . . . and so on.

This exercise will enable us to explore the communities of which we are part – and which therefore shape our identities.

Give each participant a sheet of paper and some koki's. Ask them to draw a series of circles around or over an outline of themselves, and to label each circle according to the community it represents. Some circles might need to overlap in different ways. In this way they are documenting the various communities and groups of which they are part.

When they have finished, ask them to emphasise in a new colour the communities which have most powerfully determined their identity in some way.

Ask them to conclude the exercise by reflecting on the following two questions with a partner:

- ▲ In what ways have my membership of some of these communities shifted or shaped my identity in ways that have hurt or hindered me?
- ▲ Which communities am I most comfortable with belonging to?
- ▲ Are there changes or shifts that I need to make as I seek to find a sense of identity that is whole and true to myself? What are these?

Issues may emerge that need to be explored further through role-plays or Theatre of the Oppressed techniques. This will need to be decided at the time and in consultation with the group.



community and "other" exercise

Aim: To name and acknowledge the need to think of "others" as being "different".

To explore strategies to shift these ways of thinking and understanding.

Time: 20-90 minutes depending on the level the facilitator and group want to take this exercise to.

Comments: This exercise can address issues at a variety of levels, depending on the participants and what they want to deal with. It is important to keep the broader process of the workshop on track, but allow the time that is needed for people to deal with their responses. The emotional maturity of the group is important to consider when planning this exercise.

Give each participant a new sheet of paper and ask them to draw or write the names of the communities or groups which they:

- ▲ Are most afraid of
- ▲ Hate
- ▲ Laugh at
- ▲ Think are "lower", less intelligent or uglier than themselves
- ▲ Avoid in some way if they come into contact with them

(Note: it might be necessary to remind participants that these feelings and reactions are usually not rationalised or reasoned, and so they needn't be afraid or embarrassed by their own thoughts or actions. These attitudes, feelings and reactions come out of a context and history – they didn't just come out of nowhere. The aim of the exercise is to name issues and reach understandings in new ways, so that change and healing can take place. There should be no pressure to justify things straight away.

Ask them to share these with a partner, and to reflect on the following questions:

- ▲ What role does power play in these relationships (i.e. when do I feel powerful and when do I feel disempowered)?
- ▲ Are there aspects of what I have described that I need/want to change?
- ▲ How can I go about starting the process of healing or recovery in this area?
- ▲ What support do I need to do this – and how can I access that support?
- ▲ What are the strategies I can use to build community with people who are "different" to me?

Allow time for a group discussion and reflection in plenary before moving on to the next exercise.

Depending on where the discussion has gone, role-playing scenarios that explore attitudes to "other" and possible new options for handling one's reactions to "other" might be useful. Theatre of the Oppressed techniques might be useful too.



building community exercise

Aim: To explore the identity principles which participants believe enable communities to function best.

To encourage debate and discussion around the concepts of identity and community.

To challenge assumptions about identity and community.

Time: 45-60 minutes

Comments: This can be a particularly useful exercise for a group that is in the process of forming or is in the early stages of its life. It's a creative way to think through important group identity issues.

Another useful strategy is to ask a well established group to compare these ideal values and principles of group identity with what happens on a day-to-day basis in their group. If issues of systematic oppression that undermine the group emerge, Theatre of the Oppressed techniques can be usefully employed here.

Divide the participants into groups of between four and six.

Tell them that they are part of a pioneer group that is about to be moved to a remote island that has previously been uninhabited by human beings. However, it has enough vegetation and water for humans to be able to survive there. They will need to establish a community and build a new society together.

They need to decide on the following issues, amongst others, in their group:

- ▲ What a community is
- ▲ The way this community will be structured
- ▲ How decisions will be made
- ▲ How food and resources will be shared out
- ▲ How differences and conflicts will be handled
- ▲ What spiritual expression there will be

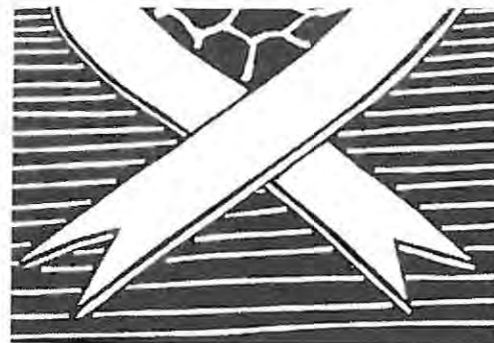
If they would like to do this in the form of a draft constitution, they can do this – but they need to make sure they address all of the points listed in the instructions (Note: it may be useful to list these on newsprint or in a handout)

When they are ready, each group needs to make a presentation about the decisions they have made about their "new life" together in a community.

Once they have made their presentation, the observers and facilitators can ask them questions about their choices. At the end, the facilitator may ask some of these questions – or others that are more relevant.

- ▲ What is the core principle of the identity of this community? (Note: if this has already emerged, then it is probably more appropriate to reiterate or emphasise what has been stated, rather than ask participants to meaninglessly repeat information)
- ▲ How do power and identity relate in this community?
- ▲ What is the relationship between individuals' identities and the community's identity?

Allow time for discussion and processing in the workshop, but also encourage participants to think and assess their own identities in the various communities they are part of – particularly in the light of what they have learned from this exercise. There might be value in reflecting on this exercise later on in the workshop, if it is more than one day.



my identity in community

Aim: To enable a reflection and analysis of the roles that each of us take within community contexts that we find ourselves.

Time: 20-45 minutes

Comments: This is another of those exercises some groups will do quickly, and others will need to spend a great deal of time with. Again, finding the balance between keeping the process on track and dealing with what is emerging for participants is very important.

Ask each individual to think about the role they most frequently play in a community context – especially when there are situations of “difference”. Possibilities include

- ▲ A helper – wanting to facilitate issues and help people
- ▲ A protagonist – the person who gets things going
- ▲ An antagonist – the person who challenges or objects to what is happening
- ▲ A passive role – the person who keeps quiet most of the time
- ▲ A passive-aggressive – the person who does not seem to be actively involved, but gets their way nevertheless ... often by undermining other people and/or group processes
- ▲ A listener – the person who always has an ear for others
- ▲ A pioneer – the initiator of new ideas and projects
- ▲ A follower – one who chooses to implement others’ decisions / choices
- ▲ A joker – the one who makes jokes and tries to keep people laughing, but often doesn’t want to get involved
- ▲ A visionary – the dreamer who sees where things could go or lead to
- ▲ A manipulator – the person who tries to control others, usually from behind the scenes

... and there are countless other possibilities

Ask the group to stand in a circle, and each individual to make a physical image with their body of the role they play in situations of tension and difference. This doesn’t have to be one of the suggested roles – participants can choose whatever fits best for them. Take a moment for everybody to observe what is happening. Give those who would like to make brief comments to do so.

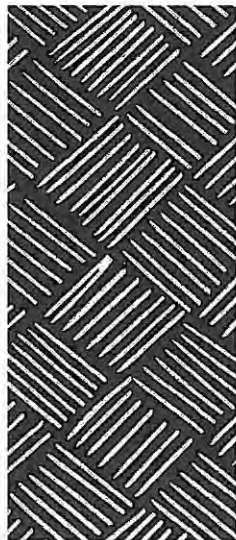
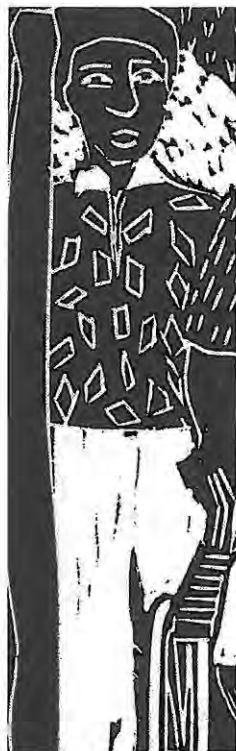
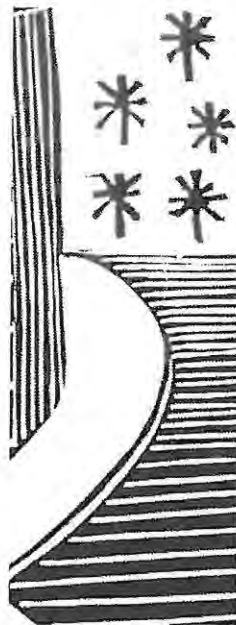
Then ask the group to make images that show

- ▲ Other roles they sometimes play ... (pause while they try these out)
- ▲ Roles they would like to try out but are afraid to ...
- ▲ Roles they feel might be more appropriate than ones they have played in the past

Ask the group to relax and sit down again. Ask them what they learned about their own and others’ identities from the exercise – allow time for discussion.

As African people I do believe that history is very much important, as history it repeats itself. And whatever might (have gone) wrong in the past we might be able to know it at the distance and to strategise the plans that we will be using to deal with specific issues. It was talking about our ancestors and demonstrating it (in the Spirals workshop) that was very much important as an individual and also in the sector of being an NGO because we know where we are coming from and so we go forward.

There was what we call internal oppressions ... this is poor, there is nothing that I can do. I am what I am, nothing that I can do. Spirals programme allows you to stand up ... try to look to other avenues. Try to stand up and face the realities of life. I think for me that what Spirals is about.



identity and conflict



1



2



identity and conflict

These exercises explore the ways in which conflict and identity issues are linked at various levels.

Nomathemba Tana

Picture one

My image is about ancestors. As you can see, there is a man and ixhanti (pole). He comes to speak from ixhanti because everything that concerns ancestors, you have to start exhanti - it is where our belief exists.

Le mfanekiso umalunga ngezinyanya nxa ujongile ubona utata nenxhanti. Uvela kuthatha exhantini elapho inkoloyethu khona.

Picture two

Long time ago people used to make fire outside the house. My picture reflects a woman who is sitting down outside near their fire cooking food for her family and she is smoking a big pipe, wearing her traditional dress.

Ngexesha lakudala kwakubaso phandle yiyo lento umama ehleli pantsi pandle ibonisa lonto lomfanekiso.



conflict brainstorm

Aim: To begin an exploration of conflict and participants' associations with conflict.

To analyse feelings and perceptions about conflict.

Time: 15 minutes

Comments: This needs to be quite quick and energetic – emerging issues can be channelled into later discussions and exercises.

Ask participants to call out words they associate with conflict, and write down these words on a sheet of newsprint. Once a comprehensive list has been generated, take time to reflect on and analyse what has emerged, e.g.:

- ▲ What would you like to comment on relating to these words?
- ▲ Do you see particular themes or links between words and concepts?
- ▲ What is the majority's feeling about conflict?
- ▲ Having looked at these words, is there anything you would like to add to them?



identity and conflict brainstorm

Aim: To explore links between conflict and identity.

Time: 10 minutes

Ask participants to think about the links between conflict and identity in their lives. Ask them to call out words that they think of – write them up on another piece of paper. Once the brainstorm is completed, use a similar process of analysis to the one suggested in the conflict brainstorm.



layers of living with conflict

Aim: To explore the links between our internal dialogues and how we behave in conflict situations.

To explore how formative events in our lives have shaped our identities over time.

To look at patterns of behaviour and identity that might be repeating themselves for participants in unhelpful ways.

To celebrate the wisdom of participants' past experiences in shaping their identities and behaviour.

Time: Explanations take about 5 minutes. Give participants 20-30 minutes to complete the handout on their own.

Comments: This exercise is a very useful way of exploring the links between our past experiences, our inner voices, and our reactions in situations of stress and conflict. It has proven to be a vital component of many Spirals workshops.

When planning a workshop, structure the exercise that follows this one to pick up on issues that have emerged in some way.

Introduce the idea that we deal with conflicts from the moment we are born – and are constantly shaped by our experiences of conflicts during our lives. Sometimes our own reactions work or don't work for us, and sometimes we seem to be impacted on more deeply by the behaviour of others. And we don't always recognise what is going on below the surface of events.

The reality is that our previous experiences and role models profoundly shape every action we take in a situation of tension or conflict. Even when our reactions seem to be out of proportion to an event, there is a reason for this – our behaviour doesn't happen in a vacuum. This exercise allows participants time to recognise and reflect on some of these issues.

Explain the attached handout to participants. Ask them to spend time on their own responding to the ideas and questions it contains – starting from the circle in the middle and working their way outwards.

Assure participants that they will not be asked to share what they have written at the end of their time alone – it is often far too sensitive or confidential to be appropriately shared with the rest of the workshop group. The way in which they weave the issues that emerge into the rest of the workshop is up to them.

Suggest to participants that they find a quiet place on their own to work on the handout.

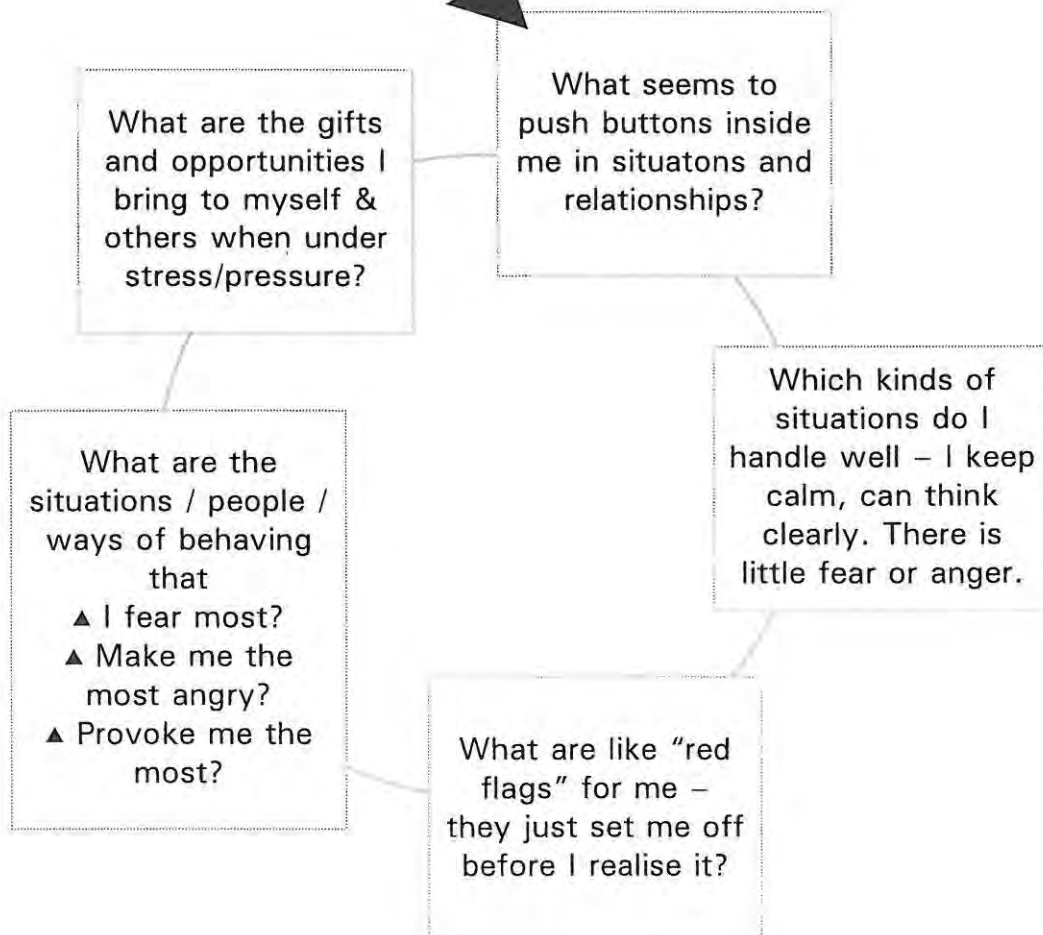
It might be useful to ask for a general reflection on doing the exercise when participants reconvene. Be sensitive to the atmosphere in the group as to whether this will be useful or not.

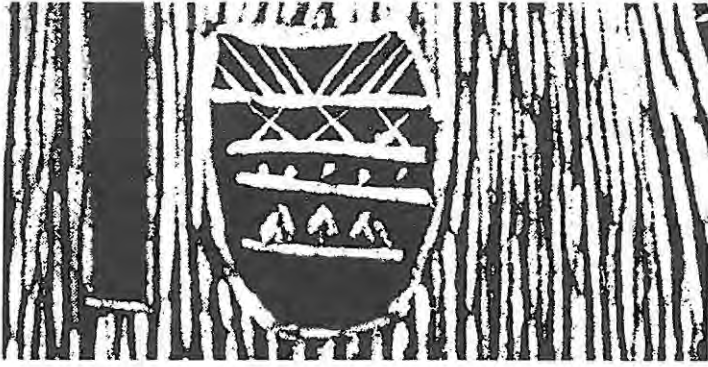
layers of living with conflict



What are the masks I wear in conflict situations?

How do I react / respond / present myself to others?





conflict handling styles

Aim: To reflect on how the way we handle conflicts shapes our identity – and vice versa.

Time:

Part 1: 20 minutes

Part 2: 25 minutes

Part 3: 10 minutes

Part 1

Draw the following table onto a sheet of newsprint and explain its meaning to participants (make sure you have researched and understood enough about conflict handling styles to be able to do this):

Competition	win - lose	"my way"
Avoidance	lose - lose	"no way"
Accommodation	lose - win	"your way"
Compromise	win some - lose some	"half way"
Co-operation	win - win	"our way"

Ask participants for comments, questions and feedback.

Part 2 (optional)

Divide participants into five groups. Allocate one conflict handling style to each group and ask them to devise a short dramatic scene which shows that style of conflict handling being used in relation to an issue of identity and conflict.

Give each group time to prepare, plan and rehearse their scene. Provide support and encouragement, but avoid giving advice.

When the groups are ready, ask them to each present their scene to the other groups. Once each presentation is complete, ask the group to explain why they chose that scene, whether they feel that the conflict has been satisfactorily dealt with (and, if necessary, what style of handling the situation might have been better given the details of that situation). Encourage members of the group who were watching the scene to ask questions and make comments of affirmation.

Part 3

Explain that the exercise is almost finished, and ask for general reflections on the links between conflict and identity – and what new skills and strategies they have developed as a result of this exercise.



handout:

strategies for handling conflict

We have all developed certain ways of handling conflict (as groups and individuals) because of

- ▲ Habit
- ▲ Learned patterns of behaviour
- ▲ Our different moods, environments and relationships
- ▲ The significance of the conflict
- ▲ What we believe – our belief systems

Here is a summary of some conflict handling styles:

Competition: an aggressive strategy in which one or more of the parties try to achieve their goal while preventing the other from doing so. The conflict is seen as a contest in which it is important to win.

Appropriate

- ▲ When unpopular action needs to be enforced
- ▲ In an emergency situation where urgent action is necessary
- ▲ When you are factually or morally right and the other person is not wanting to listen

Inappropriate

- ▲ When a more relationship-based approach is needed
- ▲ When it is important to share power and influence
- ▲ When non-threatening communication is needed
- ▲ When it is best to achieve the interests of all the parties

Accommodation: is when we want peace at any cost. The parties are willing to smooth things over, not deal with the conflict as much as possible. Doing what the other party wants or obeying rather than stating a different view or objecting.


Appropriate

- ▲ When maintaining the relationship is more important than dealing with the situation

Inappropriate

- ▲ When assertion and co-operation are important
- ▲ When your needs or concerns get ignored unhelpfully
- ▲ When it leaves you feeling resentful or dissatisfied
- ▲ When agreements made are superficial / a covering up of issues



 **handout:**
strategies for handling conflict

Avoidance: is when one or all of the parties in a conflict try to withdraw from the conflict by sidestepping or avoiding discussion/confrontation.

Appropriate

- ▲ When the issue is not important
- ▲ When the potential danger of confrontation is greater than the benefits of a discussion / confrontation / solution
- ▲ When time is needed to reduce tension, levels of violence and regain perspective, composure. And to gather information.

Inappropriate

- ▲ When discussion and co-operation are important
- ▲ When the issues will multiply and become more complex
- ▲ It causes stress and tension for the parties

Compromise: is when parties agree to give up something they want/value in order to reach at least some solution. The focus is on reaching common ground rather than finding a lasting solution. It becomes a 'win some, lose some' situation, 'splitting the difference' and making concessions in order to find middle ground solutions.

Appropriate

- ▲ When each party gains something
- ▲ The parties cannot agree on the same goal and this is the best possible option

Inappropriate

- ▲ If a more satisfying solution is possible, rather than going half-way
- ▲ The agreements reached are short-term and will not address the situation fully
- ▲ It closes off the possibility of a better solution
- ▲ One or more of the parties is left feeling that they have lost out

Co-operation: is also called a Win-Win approach, because the parties agree to work together fully to achieve mutually acceptable agreements. In this approach both the future of the relationship and the success of the outcome are important. Parties work towards understanding each others' interests and concerns in order to find creative ways forward.

Co-operation

- ▲ Is both assertive and co-operative
- ▲ There is a high degree of commitment to and understanding of what is being worked on
- ▲ Leads to agreements that have a greater chance of being lasting than other approaches to conflict
- ▲ Builds co-operation and positive relationships so that future challenges and issues can be addressed even more creatively

With acknowledgements to the Themba Project



cycles of power

Aim: To explore the internalised understandings of power and identity we live with.

To reflect on how these feed into conflicts we experience – and what can change.

Time: Input 10 minutes, reflection & discussion time will depend on the group. Anything between 10 and 30 minutes.

Comments: This framework is absolutely crucial to the unpacking of identity issues – it names the realities that perpetuated the past, and challenges some of the hindrances to democratisation in the current South African context.

It is important that the facilitator thinks through the concepts contained in the attached diagram carefully before presenting them.

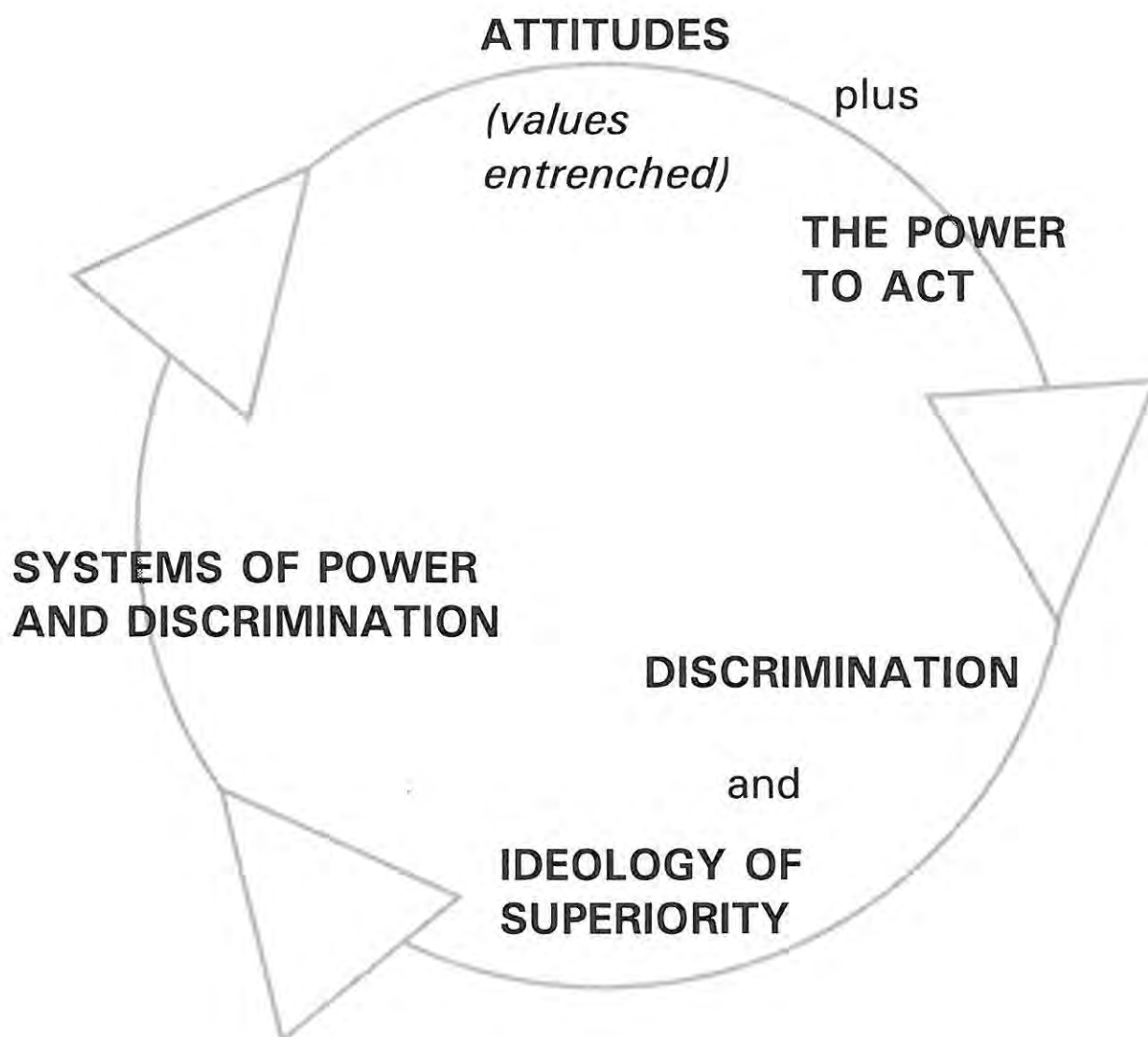
Give participants a copy of the handout with a diagram demonstrating the development of Ideologies of Superiority. Outline what the diagram means and ask for questions and responses. (It is helpful if you have a copy of the diagram drawn up on a sheet of newsprint)

Ask the group to call out the ideologies of superiority that have affected them in their lives (e.g. white people are superior to black people, men are cleverer than women, straight people are good gay people are bad, etc.). Write these up on a sheet of newsprint as they are called out. Allow time for reflection, comment and analysis when the group has finished.

Write up the following questions on newsprint, and ask participants to discuss them in groups of two or three. (It might not be helpful to ask for feedback from this exercise – it often gives rise to painful and difficult issues and topics. If the group wants to, however, it might be appropriate ... but it is important to be reading the energy and feeling of the majority of the group – not just go with what a few vocal individuals want.)

- ▲ What ideologies of superiority do I follow?
- ▲ How does this affect my sense of:
 - My “superiority”
 - My “inferiority”
- ▲ In what ways do I perpetuate powers to act?
- ▲ What and how do I want to change any of this?

cycles of power



The ideology of superiority needs to be challenged for the cycle to reversed.

(with acknowledgements to the Caras Trust)



masks and power exercise

Aim: To use a role-play/simulation that explores the power relationships and conflicts between groups.

To enable participants to enact and reflect on their own use or denial of power.

To enable participants to explore their own conflict handling styles in a conflict situation.

Time: 45-75 minutes

Comments: This is a powerful and emotive exercise, and should only be run by an experienced facilitator. It should not be done at the beginning of a workshop process, or right at the end when there is not enough time to process what happened.

The Masks group will need some sort of mask to cover their faces. Cardboard is fine. Airline eye-covers with holes cut out for the eyes are ideal.

Ask for the group's agreement to a simulation exercise / facilitated role-play.

Divide group into two smaller groups.

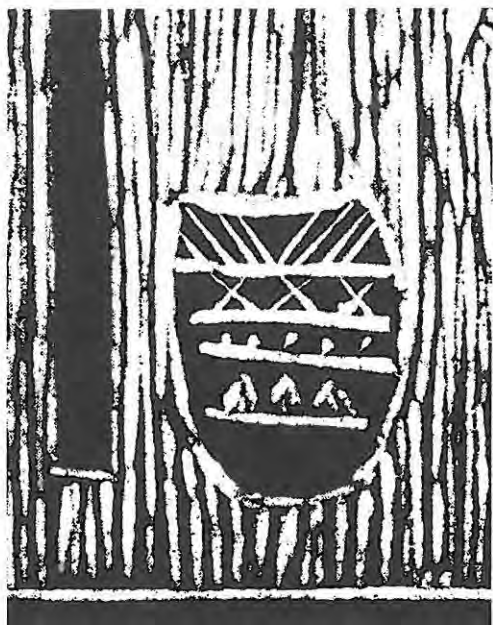
One group goes outside the room. Facilitator goes outside to explain to the group:

- ▲ Put masks on immediately
- ▲ Masks may only speak if they have the permission of the Unmasks
- ▲ Unmasks may speak whenever they want to
- ▲ Masks must always speak with respect to the Unmasks
- ▲ Unmasks may speak to anyone in any way they choose
- ▲ Violation of these rules will result in a participant sitting down outside of the role-play's action and being silenced.

The list of rules is posted on the wall in the main room. The facilitator explains the rules to the Unmasks.

Masks come back into the room and sit down in silence.

Explain the situation to the whole group as they are sitting:



You were all on the same flight in a Boeing, but got caught in a storm during the course of the journey. The pilot managed to land safely, so none of you have been hurt. You have climbed out of the plane to discover that you landed on a seemingly remote island, with no evidence of other inhabitants. You need to find a way to survive in this new environment. How are you going to do this without breaking the rules you have been given?

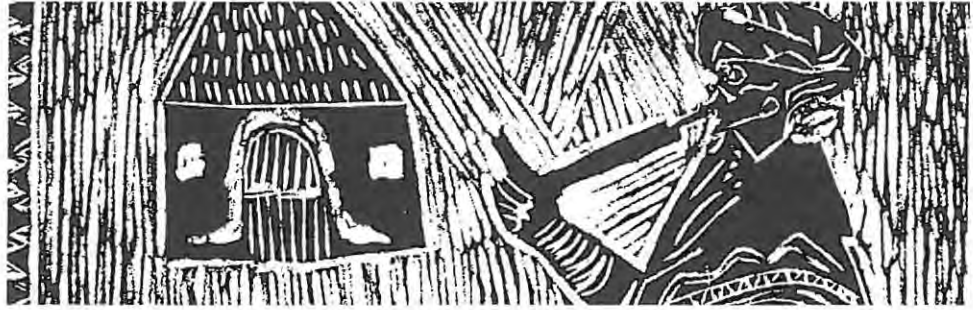
Allow the situation to unfold, monitoring the rules. Facilitators may intervene if people break rules and ask them to sit down in silence. Be careful of doing this in a disruptive way, though.

Call an end to the process when it is ready. Ask Masks group to remove their masks. Allow for shakedown and breathing time.

Process and debrief – use Power handout and Image Theatre where necessary.

Make sure the participants de-role after the end of the exercise.

With acknowledgements to the Alternatives to Violence Project



suggested themes for handout or follow-up discussion

Every one of us has personal power- to exist, to live, to move, to believe, to think, to make decisions.

We also accumulate different forms of power during our because we are female, male, black, white, educated, wealthy, successful, have money, belong to groups or political parties, hold certain moral beliefs, etc.. We are all part of transactions of power every day of our lives - consciously and unconsciously. Sometimes we hold obvious power, and sometimes we seem to be powerless. In reality, the "powerful" only hold power because it has been given to them by the "powerless" (e.g. the power that parents, teachers, political leaders hold). It could be said that there is a collusion between the powerful and powerless: the powerful might not be able to control, were it not for the subservient and compliant attitude - towards themselves as much as to anyone else - of the powerless.

In our day-to-day life, then, the challenge is to become more aware and conscious of the power dynamics in situations we are part of - and to recognise the choices we are making in how we exercise our power.

The following are some of the choices we make regarding how we use our power, particularly in relationships:

Exploitative - *power over*. This is based on force and society's expectations of us. The powerful make use of power for their own benefit. (e.g. employers not paying adequate wages to staff).

Manipulative - *power over*. This is power based on persuasion. People use power for their own benefit. (e.g. the media, a sales pitch).

Competitive - *power against*. This is power between relative equals, the aim of which is for one person to be "up" and the other "down". This tests our strength in different ways. (e.g. two competing businesses).

Nutrient - *power for*. This power grows from one's care or concern for others (e.g. parenting, teaching).

Shared - *power with*. This power comes into being when people combine their power in co-operation - making joint decisions and acting with the power of the sum rather than the parts.

Power can be exercised at four levels:

- ▲ assertion
- ▲ aggression
- ▲ violence
- ▲ denial



Whether we act in a situation or not, we are still exercising power. The choice not to recognise and consciously use power can lead to that power going underground, and manifesting itself in other ways.

(with acknowledgements to AVP and CDRA)

Types of Power

1. **Formal/informal power** – this arises from a mandate given to an individual or group to play a certain role or take a specific responsibility. Formal authority usually carries some legal backing e.g. parents, police, etc.
2. **Resource power** – arises from control of resources (e.g. money, property, labour, decision-making, skills).
3. **Moral power / conviction** – having the moral “high ground” because sufficient people believe in certain ideas or values (e.g. religious or political ideologies, or a charismatic individual).
4. **Political power** – representing large groups of people, and being able to speak on their behalf.
5. **Information power** – having access to sources of information that give one an advantage / greater power.
6. **Power of communication** – being able to communicate effectively and made good use of the media.
7. **Personal power** – charisma or characteristics that give people influence over others.
8. **Relational power** – having relationships with people or parties who hold a lot of power.

Conflict and Power

Parties involved in a conflict or dispute tend to attempt resolving the conflict through the following means:

1. **Power based procedures:** Determining who is more powerful, implying that the strongest party should get to determine the outcome.
2. **Rights-based methods:** These are based on the society / organisation / group’s laws, norms and values. The dispute is resolved by deciding what is most fair according to these.
3. **Interest based processes:** The needs and concerns of the parties involved form the basis of the resolution of the dispute.

Both in organisations and in personal level, when there is a transformation there is fear because its something which for people is new to them. And when something is new to them they might think that you want to overthrow, or you are undermining their level or their capacity of thinking. ... But it also teaches me to be patient trying to explain to other people that no, you should not have fear because at the end of the day there are lots of people who might be benefiting ... from where we are coming from, what we are trying to change or trying to make things ... to be accessible for everyone.

People are suffering; people are poor. Unemployed. People are sick, dying of HIV/AIDS. And in our society there is no room for people to voice out their anger, to voice out their suffering. And there are even those who are working who are frustrated ... so violence is here. In our society there are big problems and something like Spirals will make our people to look at things from a different angle, to be able to cope with some of the things.



identity, work and organisations



identity, work and organisations

These exercises are useful as part of an organisational development, leadership or team-building process.

Violet Booi

My image depicts a cruel man who is abusing his family. The man in the picture is carrying a stick that he uses to beat his wife. Their daughter is crying holding her mother. This man is unemployed.



layers of relationship and identity in organisations

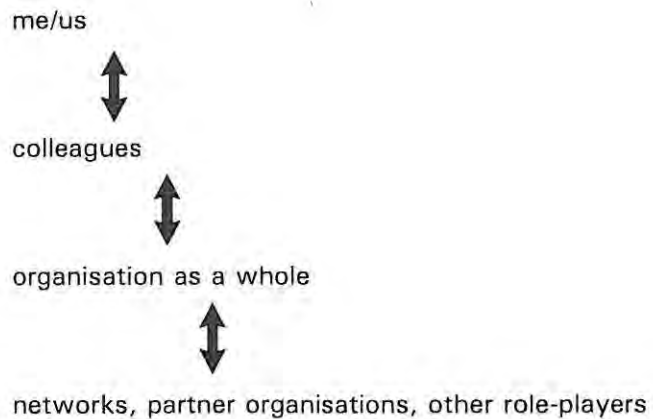
Aim: To enable individuals and groups within an organisation to look at levels of identity and relationship in their organisation and its context.

To identify areas of strength and challenge – and strategies to address these.

Time: 45-90 minutes, depending on the group and the complexity of the organisation.

Comments: This exercise is most helpful if it can feed into a broader process of organisational development. Conducted in isolation, it has limited value.

Ask participants to brainstorm, make notes about, and analyse the following levels of their organisation's identity:



Some themes that could be explored:

Which aspects of identity are

- ▲ Spoken about and celebrated
- ▲ Unspoken but powerful
- ▲ Cause tensions, conflict, power struggles
- ... in our organisation?

If it helps...

- ▲ Draw a map of how these dynamics shape the day-to-day operations of your organisation.
- ▲ Draw in areas of identity you could embrace and live with in new ways.
- ▲ Brainstorm some ideas and set up a programme of action that will support processes of change which you feel need to happen.



my identity in my work

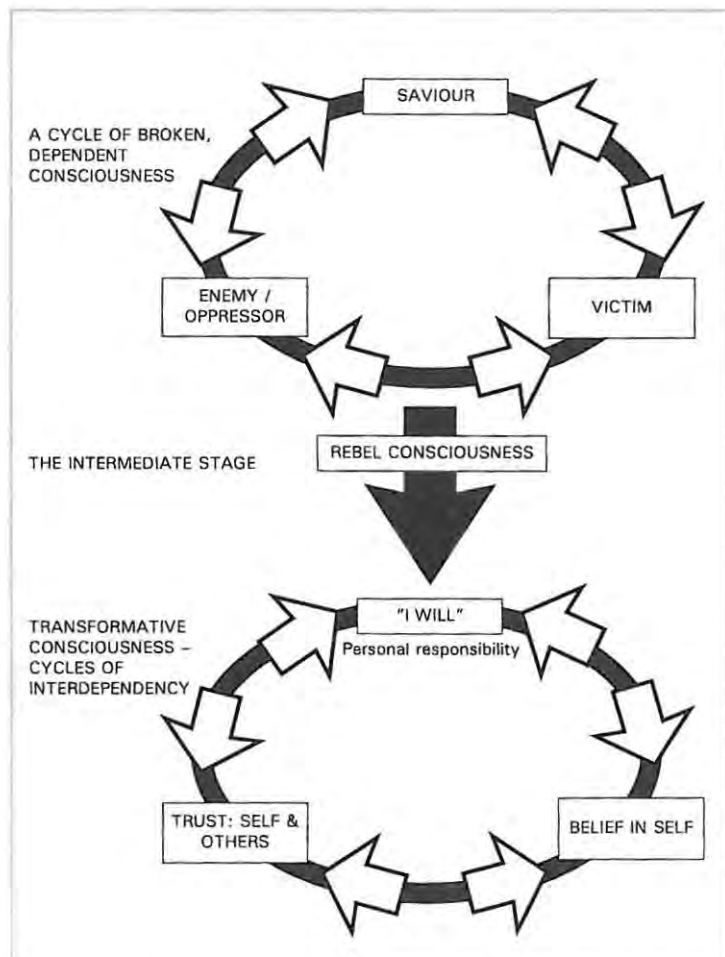
Aim: To explore how participants “walk the talk” of their work.

To look at how to establish appropriate boundaries when working with and for other people / communities.

Time: This depends on the size of the group, and the level at which they want to work on these issues. Anything between 20 minutes and 90 minutes!

Comments: This exercise needs careful planning – and detailed processing of the diagrams by the facilitator in preparing for the workshop. It is particularly powerful to use with development workers and caregivers. It has had a powerful impact for people working in the field of HIV&AIDS.

Talk through the concepts behind the following diagrams (ideally draw them on newsprint and give them to participants as a handout). Allow time for participants to discuss, challenge and contextualise the ideas for themselves – either in plenary or through small-group discussion.



What encourages this shift?

- ▲ An acknowledgement of the hurts that underlie the patterns of behaviour
- ▲ “Enough!”, “I will ...”
- ▲ Holding others accountable



Broken Consciousness

Passive

Makes no demands

Rebel Consciousness

*Questioning (sometimes aggressive)
Demanding rights without providing solutions*

No direction

No personal responsibility

Doubt, anger

Transformative Consciousness

*Questions and proposes solutions
Willing to walk in another's shoes
Engagement as a responsible member of a group*

*People don't resist change --
they resist pain. Change is
seen as painful.
Shifting the paralysis caused
by fear of pain is the
beginning of transformation.*

Questions to explore in small groups – these need to be structured according to the needs and context of the group being worked with:

- ▲ Draw these diagrams in sheets of newsprint and describe how these different patterns work themselves out in practical ways your organisation / work.
- ▲ What are the skills and strategies that enable people in development / caring professions to avoid being stuck in saviour roles?
- ▲ How does a perceived oppressor shift cycles of dependency?
- ▲ What strategies can you use to avoid victimising the people / communities you work with?
- ▲ How can a counsellor / friend / caregiver support PWA's (People Living With AIDS) in developing a transformative identity? What does it mean to support PWA's and their families/communities in realising their own rights and needs?
- ▲ What strategies enable interdependency rather than dependency for development workers – in their own organisations, and in work with communities and groups?
- ▲ How can organisations celebrate and affirm a rebel consciousness?
- ▲ What strategies will support a shift from rebel consciousness into transformative consciousness in your organisation?
- ▲ What are models of interdependency in your organisation / work?



identities of transformation

Aim: To use the “cycles of dependency and interdependency” model to reflect on identities and dynamics within organisations.

To encourage and support the development of transformative identities.

To explore what dynamics of interdependency might mean for a group / organisation.

Time: 30-60 minutes

Comments: This is a useful exercise to use in the middle or towards the end of a two-day or three-day workshop. It raises issues relating to identity that will have come up before during the workshop – as well as providing tools and frameworks to look at what change and transformation might mean.

These diagrams contain some complex ideas – make sure that your planning includes some detailed thought on how to present them to the group.

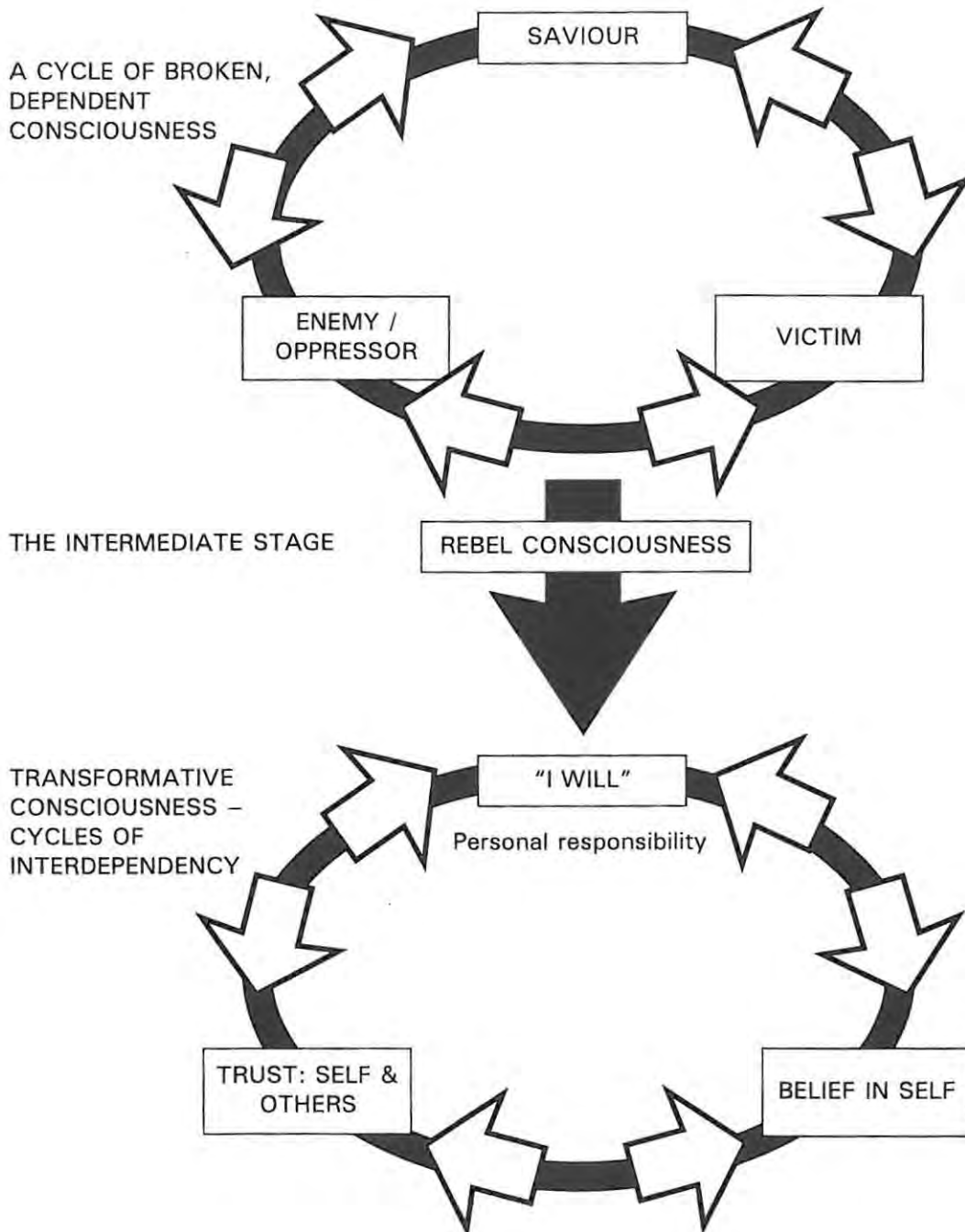
If these diagrams have already been used, bring them to the attention of the group again. Otherwise, explain the key concepts to the group, and then ask them to reflect on how they relate to the participants’ organisation by working on the following questions in small groups:

- ▲ Where are we as a group / organisation in relation to these diagrams?
- ▲ What do we want to be?
- ▲ Why is this important?
- ▲ How could our organisation be if we were to change?
- ▲ What will we see / how will we know when this has happened?

Ask each group to present their discussions in any creative way they feel is appropriate. Group images, a role-play, diagrams and maps ... anything goes! Make sure that key issues within the organisation are captured and summarised.

Theatre of the Oppressed techniques may be useful in taking these ideas further.

cycles of dependency and interdependency



*(with acknowledgement to the Scape Programme)
Reference: Nchabeleng, Leah 2000 Making Change ... a challenge to
leaders in the new millennium ODdebate, OLIVE Vol: June 2000*



clay image exercise

an end of year reflection tool

Aim: To give people an opportunity to review and reflect on the previous year's work.

To use a physical, tactile way of working that massages the pressure points on the hands.

To celebrate successes and diffuse or address areas of stress.

Time: 45 minutes

Comments: This exercise could be used in a range of situations and contexts, but has worked most effectively as an end-of-year reflection and wind-down for a team of colleagues in an organisation.

It is important to have a surface that participants can work on without causing damage with the wet clay – large sheets of plastic are useful or doing it outdoors somewhere.

Give each participant a paper plate and a lump of wet clay / modelling clay. Ask them to spend time on their own, modelling images and shapes with the clay. If the environment of the workshop is suitable, participants can also use flowers, leaves, stones, pieces of bark, etc., in the image.

Encourage them to choose up to three images in response to the following questions:

- ▲ What was the lowest point in the year for me?
- ▲ When do I feel most frustrated in this team?
- ▲ When did I feel affirmed and good about myself?
- ▲ When did I feel the most inadequate and overwhelmed?
- ▲ When did I feel that my skills and abilities were most effectively used in this team?
- ▲ What are the hopes and dreams I carry for the coming year?
- ▲ Which was the most difficult relationship in this team this year?
- ▲ When was I most on top of my stress?
- ▲ When did I feel like I was "going under" because of the demands and stress?
- ▲ When did I laugh the most?
- ▲ When was I at my most creative?

Within each image....

- What was going on for me?
- How did/do I feel?
- What was its impact on my work?
- How did it impact on my life at home / in my community?

Ask participants to present their images to the rest of the group – if possible, keep the images on permanent display in the office. This might be useful as a tool for addressing issues on an ongoing basis.



celebrating the identity of an organisation

Aim: To use principles of Appreciative Inquiry in an organisational review / planning process.

Time: This exercise needs two sessions – the length of each session needs to be appropriate to the needs of the group.

Comments: The simplicity of this structure has proven to be powerful and useful in assisting people to think strategically.

SESSION ONE

Divide participants into task groups of between five and eight people that need to prepare a creative presentation of their response to the following question:

When is our organisation at its best?

SESSION TWO

Once the report backs are complete, begin to sift and sort the information into emerging themes and issues.

Ask participants to volunteer themselves to address the following questions relating to each theme/issue:

1. What are the values that make these factors intrinsic to the organisation's identity?
2. What are the
 - ▲ current and historical
 - ▲ emergingchallenges and how can we address them?
3. Mapping the future → What are we in the process of becoming?
4. How do we walk the road between now and what we want to become?



cultures and identities in our organisation

Aim: To use role-plays and image theatre that enable participants to reflect on what takes place on a day-to-day basis in their group/organisation.

For these role-plays and images to act as a mirror for the group / organisation.

To explore where the stresses and challenges are in the group / organisation's culture / identity – and what needs to change.

Time: 30-60 minutes

Comments: This can be a very powerful exercise, and needs to be facilitated with sensitivity. Groups that have done this exercise either end up falling over themselves with laughter, or feel overwhelmed by what they have witnessed about themselves. Either way, there is an enormous amount of energy generated, which needs careful facilitation.

It may be useful to follow this exercise with "celebrating the identity of an organisation".

Ask groups of participants to role-play or use frozen images to depict the way in which any of the following elements of their organisational life function / take place most often.

- ▲ Conflict and/or confrontation
- ▲ Decision-making
- ▲ Leadership
- ▲ Meetings
- ▲ Tearoom and corridor chat
- ▲ Relationships

When the role-plays or images have been presented, ask members of the group to reflect on what they have seen – and what they feel needs to change.

People sharing their own different experiences. By judging those different experiences one can tell that one need not to think that we are all the same. We are different people at different levels. Whenever you are dealing with people you have to take in mind that, and then ... don't think this person is using your own mind she is using his/her mind. That difference amongst the people - having different kinds of people.

Before I become a Zulu, what do I become?
A human. For me that would be my starting point. The belonging comes after being a human.

I think at the end of the day it depends to me. Do I hold onto a culture that doesn't help me? Or do I move out of that and be myself and look at what do I want for me and how do I begin my life without these conflicts. Or how do I live with those conflicts because they will never go away, it always is there.



identity and spirituality



Illustration by Vukile Teyise



identity and spirituality

This section contains exercises that explore personal and cultural identity issues in relation to spirituality. Some prayers that were written for Spirals have also been included.



identity and spirituality exercise

(Original concept: Brian Marajh)

Aim: To examine the layers of identity participants experience in relation to spirituality.

To create a collective image of these layers of identity.

Time: 30-40 minutes

Comments: This exercise has been used in the context of a church seminary for priests. It can be adapted to suit any spiritual or religious framework (e.g. the first question could be left out).

The exercise should be done with no discussion – participants simply draw or write and post their cards on the spiral. Any discussion that happens at the end needs to be respectful and voluntary – participants usually need some time on their own once this exercise is completed.

This works best as part of a longer workshop in which spirituality is a significant focus.

Place a spiral of string on a large sheet of plastic (a painting drip sheet purchased from a hardware shop is ideal). Give participants small pieces of cardboard of different shapes and colours. For each step of the exercise use a particular colour card.

Step 1

Facilitator asks
Who is Jesus?

Participants write and draw on the cardboard in response to the question and paste their icon anywhere on the spirals of string.

Step 2

Facilitator asks:
What are the factors that have shaped my / our spirituality?

Participants write and draw on the cardboard in response to the question and paste their icon anywhere on the spirals of string.

Step 3

Facilitator asks:
What are the structures, rituals and frameworks I have chosen to express my spirituality?

Participants write and draw on the cardboard in response to the question and paste their icon anywhere on the spirals of string.



Step 4

Facilitator asks:

Where are the

▲ moments of truth and meaning

▲ places of dissonance and conflict

within these structures, rituals and frameworks?

Participants write and draw on the cardboard in response to the question and paste their icon anywhere on the spirals of string.

Step 5

Facilitator asks:

What masks / imposed identities do I wear in coping / living with these paradoxes?

Participants write and draw on the cardboard in response to the question and paste their icon anywhere on the spirals of string.

Step 6

Facilitator asks:

Where is the piercing, crucifixion and resurrection life of healed and real identities in all of this for us?

Participants write and draw on the cardboard in response to the question and paste their icon anywhere on the spirals of string.

Allow time for discussion and debriefing. It is not useful to ask participants direct questions here – allow time and space for people to speak about issues they are comfortable with.



sacred text and identity

(Designed by Brian Marajh)

Aim: To explore the identities we have encountered and developed in sacred texts.

To use sacred texts as a tool for exploring new possibilities in terms of identity issues.

Time: Each step needs about 60 minutes.

Comments: This was originally planned by Brian with a passage from the Bible in mind. The framework could be used for any text that is regarded as sacred or meaningful in some way.

The instructions have been left in the second person because it is quite useful to give participants a written framework for this exercise.

Steps 2 and 3 should be done in groups of not more than seven people.

Step 1. Personal Reflection

Suggested passage of scripture: Ephesians 4:17 - 32

Theme: Identities: Masks and Sacred Text

1. Find a place where you can make yourself comfortable and which is conducive for reflection.
2. Make use of an A4 size paper and draw in 6 columns about 20 cm in length. Assign a column to each of the topics below, writing the respective topic above each column.

Topic: Emerging Image/s or Symbol/s
Theme/s
Words or Phrases
Emotions/Feelings
Emerging Questions
Any other Observations

3. Read the given (or selected) passage several times and after each reading make a note of the specific aspect of the text (make use of the categories listed in number 2 above) that have caught your attention.
4. Pause for a moment and reflect on what you have jotted down. See whether there is any specific image or symbol that presents itself to you. Become aware of your emotions or feelings, is there a specific emotion or feeling (or a combination of several) that is emerging for you? What does this tell you about yourself or the self that you would like to grow into?
5. Make a mask (or make use of the one that you have already made) that will capture the aspect/s of your



identity/ies that you have become aware of during your time of personal reflection and/or discovered anew.

6. Spend a few moments in silent prayer or meditation, when you are done rejoin the larger group.

Step 2. Group Sharing

Interactive Sharing:

Any insight or awareness that may have emerged for you during the time of personal reflection that affirms you as person.

Step 3. Group Activity: Preparation and presentation of a short drama or play

Each group needs to prepare and present a short drama / presentation based on the insights (at least some aspects of them) that participants have acquired throughout the different stages of the exercise. You could make use of miming, body sculpting or role-play. You can also incorporate the masks that you have made during the workshop.

Facilitator:

After each group has done their presentation, thank the participants and ask them to move back into the big circle. Ask the group that presented how it was, what they felt, what new insights they gained from the exercise. Give those who watched the presentation an opportunity to ask questions and to give their impression. Allow time for some processing.



images: god, the bible and me

(Designed by Brian Marajh)

Aim: To explore the often unconscious levels of identity that we carry in relation to Christian spirituality.

To enable new possibilities and shifts to emerge in participants' experience of their spiritual identities.

Time: 60 minutes

Comments: This exercise has been done in the context of a church seminary for priests. Inevitably, the issues of power and hierarchy in relation to spirituality tend to emerge. It might therefore be useful to include exercises on power, conflict and identity in a workshop when using this exercise.

Divide the participants into groups of roughly eight members each.

Exercise One

Making use of body imaging that involves every member of the group, ask participants to portray or give expression to their understandings of God and how those have a bearing on their identity(ies).

Each group shows their image to the rest of the participants, and there is an opportunity for the group to make any comments they want to and for observers to ask questions and make comments.

Exercise Two

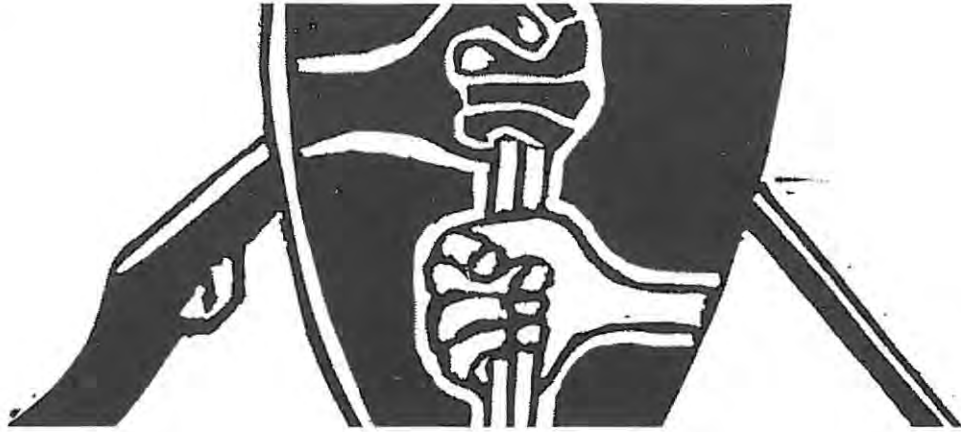
Making use of body imaging, ask participants to portray or give expression to how the Bible shapes their identity(ies).

Each group shows their image to the rest of the participants, and there is an opportunity for the group to make any comments they want to and for observers to ask questions and make comments.

Ask participants to reflect on and discuss the following questions in their small groups:

1. Is there anything that you have become aware of through these images about yourself, in relation to the God or in relation to the Bible, which you were not consciously aware of before or now have a greater awareness of? Make a note of your awareness.
2. What do these images tell you about your self-understanding, at this point in time, in relation to God or in relation to the Bible?
3. Is there anything with regard to your self-understanding in relation to God or in relation to the Bible, at this point in time, that you would like to let go of or integrate?

Encourage participants to spend a few minutes in silence or in prayer before taking a break.



benedictine spirituality

Aim: To explore elements of spirituality that need to be celebrated and affirmed – and aspects that need to change.

Time: 30 minutes

Comments: This is an exercise that can be slotted in with other exercises – either in relation to spirituality or in a more general workshop where one wants to build in a aspect of spirituality.

Give the participants a handout based on the following framework – to be completed on their own.



St Benedict says there need to be three components to both the life of a community and an individual within a community:

▲ **Stability:**

Knowing who one is, what the purpose of one's being is. Having a sense of focus and groundedness in what one thinks, says and does.

▲ **Conversion:**

Being engaged in a constant process of growing and becoming, growing more and more into what one wants to be, becoming more and more true to one's calling in life. Moving out from stability, but not compromising it.

▲ **Obedience:**

This is the obedience of listening "with the ears of one's heart" to what one's own heart is saying, what the people one is living with are saying, and what God is saying – and finding the right balance between them in the way one lives one's life.

There needs to be a harmony and balance of these three components in the lives of individuals and their spiritualities, and in the lives of communities and the way they operate on a day-to-day basis in their prayer, relationships and work.

Some Questions

Spend time thinking about your own life with God – your spirituality.

- ▲ How much is each of these components at work in your own spiritual journey?
- ▲ What do you need to celebrate and affirm?
- ▲ What do you need to challenge and maybe change?



spirals pilgrimage

Aim: To provide an opportunity for participants to reflect on the journey they have made during the workshop.

To encourage a spirit of support and prayer amongst the group.

To bridge the gap between the intensity of the workshop and what participants will be facing when they leave the workshop.

Time: This depends on the number of participants – allow 5-10 minutes per participant.

Comments: This is a gentle and flexible way to round off a three-day or five-day workshop.

Invite participants to prepare a presentation of drawings, sculptures and other work they have done during the workshop. Ask participants to be aware of the need to respect their own emotions – and not to talk about issues that are still feeling too raw.

As participants volunteer, they share their journey of the week, and conclude with the following prayer. The rest of the group immediately responds with the second part of the prayer. There is no discussion or comment – the group moves on to the next presentation in the pilgrimage.

Participant:

I ask you to pray for me, my sisters and brothers,
On my pilgrimage into wholeness and fruitfulness,
into creativity and loving.
For the times I kneel in the Garden of Gethsemane and
weep with fear
For the times I am crucified and cry out in pain
For the piercings of my heart at moments of death
And for the courage to embrace the resurrection life.

Group:

We honour your pilgrimage,

We pray to the spirit of comfort and truth
For wisdom, love and laughter
To be with you in your journey.



eucharistic prayers

These prayers were written by staff members at the College of Transfiguration (C.P.S.A.) for use at services during workshops. Their agreement to the inclusion of these prayers in the Spirals manual is gratefully acknowledged.

Human Identity

Written by Janet Trisk

We will praise you O God, for you are altogether lovely.
Your touch brings us to life.
Your embrace nourishes us
And when you ask for our love all our defences crumble.

O God if we let go into the whirlpool of your love will we survive your embrace?
If we fall into the strong currents of your desire, will we escape drowning?
Yet how shall we refuse you or withdraw from the desire of our hearts?
Even if the waters go over our heads, yet you will still hold us.

As we discover the unfolding of ourselves O God
You invite us to discover you.
You invite us to discover you within the complexities of our humanity,
in passionate and tender loving,
in struggle and pain,
in confusion and unknowing,
in flashes of insight and wisdom.
You also call us beyond ourselves to places of imagination,
beyond the silent stars,
in the deep rhythms of the ocean,
in the unending cycles of day and night, seasons of life and death.
With saints and ancestors,
with all that shapes us
with our friends and those unknown to us,
with all creation we join in the song of your unending glory:

Holy, holy, holy Lord,....

We praise you that in Jesus

human identity



you make known to us the wonder and richness of our humanity.
We give thanks for his life-giving love,
for his healing touch,
for his vulnerability and for his gentleness.
Before he gave up his life,
he shared his humanity, his flesh and blood with his friends.
He took bread, gave thanks for it, broke it and gave it to them saying:
"This is my own body given for you. Do this to remember me."
So too after they had eaten, he took wine, gave thanks for it and gave it to them saying:
"This is my blood, poured out in love for you. Do this to remember me."

So we proclaim the mystery of faith

Christ has died...

Come now Spirit of God, and as we eat and drink these bodily things,
make us one body, food for the world,
one blood to be poured out for the life of all.
Touch us with your gentle creativity in the intimate places of our lives
and fire us with longing for the new age of justice and peace.
We ask this through Jesus
who gave his body that we might be one
and his blood that we might find new life,
with him, and through him and in him
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
be to you O God, all honour and glory forever.



Identity and Masks

Written by Vanessa Hawkins

Blessed are you, O God of all creation; through whose goodness, we have this bread to offer, which earth has given and human hands have made, may it become for us the bread of life.
Blessed be God forever.

Blessed are you, O God of all creation, through whose goodness we have this wine to offer, fruit of the vine and work of human hands; may it become for us the cup of blessing.
Blessed be God forever.

GREAT THANKSGIVING

The Lord be with you
And also with you

Lift up your hearts
We lift them to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord our God
It is right to give our thanks and praise

Spirit of God, who brings light into our very existence and who reveals the truth of our inner being.
We worship you, we praise you,
we recognise the wholeness of your presence'
the abundance of your compassion,
and the fullness of your love for your revealed creation.

In our journeys, we seek your unveiling of the masks which hold us prisoners.

Masks which distort our own self-images,
which deny our goodness,
which support our own self-rejection, and
which disguise our feelings of powerlessness over the challenges of the world.

Lord, you came to your own, to fill them with self-knowledge;
to free them from the fear, illusions, and self-doubt
which held them bound to makeshift masks;
to lay bare that which they desired to hide and destroy;
to reveal the inauthentic,
to expose the uncreative;
to disclose the imposters; and
to heal and unify those who had disintegrated into fragmented people.



Therefore, with all those who have come before us,
who have learned self-acceptance,
all who have been illumined and made whole,
we praise you and forever sing to the glory of your name:

**Holy, holy, holy Lord, God of power and might,
Heaven and earth are full of your glory.
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the one who comes in the name of the Lord.
Hosanna in the highest.**

Blessed is Christ, who fills us with a sense of wholeness,
and who frees us from the power of self-deceit.

We give you thanks that on the night of his arrest,
Jesus took bread,
and after giving thanks to you, he broke it,
and gave it to his disciples, saying:
Take, eat.
This is my body, given for you.
Do this in remembrance of me.

In the same way he took the cup, saying:
This cup is the new covenant sealed in my blood,
shed for you for the forgiveness of sins.
Whenever you drink it,
Do this in remembrance of me.

Remembering your mighty acts in Jesus Christ,
We take from your creation this bread and this wine
and joyfully celebrate his dying and rising,
as we await the day of his coming.
With thanksgiving, we offer our very selves to you
to be a living and holy sacrifice
dedicated to your service.

Great is the mystery of faith:
Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Gracious God,
pour our your Holy Spirit upon us
and upon these your gifts of bread and wine,
that the bread we break
and the cup we bless
may be the communion of the body and blood of Christ.

Through Christ, with Christ, in Christ
In the unity of the Holy Spirit,
All glory and honour are yours, almighty God,
now and forever. **Amen.**

Community & Identity

Written by Janet Trisk

We praise you O God because from your eternal community
you endlessly invite us to become part of your circle of love;
you invite us to join the dance of love;
you feed us with your own body
and pour into us and all people your life-giving Spirit.

We remember Jesus, born into the community of Mary and Joseph.
We remember Jesus who chose disciples to be his followers and friends.
We remember Jesus who received the anointing of an outcast woman,
ate at the table of a despised tax collector,
touched the untouchables
and drew them into the new community,
of the friends of God.

And so with all whom you love,
the poor, the outcast and the unloved,
the unremembered, despised and forgotten,
with all who shape our lives and help us become who we have
it in us to be,
we praise you saying

Holy, holy, holy...

Blessed is Jesus our friend and brother
who creates community wherever people gather in his name,
who in showing us how to love, washed feet,
and then gave his own self, body and blood,
to create a new community.
At the table with his friends, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke
it and gave it to them saying:
"Take and eat. This is my body, given for you."
After supper he took a cup of wine, and gave it to them saying:
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood. Whenever you drink
it do this to remember me."

So we proclaim the mystery of faith.

Christ has died...

Come now Spirit of God and as you transform this bread and wine
transform us too;
knit us in the new community which makes us one body
for the life of the world.
We ask these things through Christ,
with whom and in whom in the unity of the Holy Spirit be all
honour and glory
now and forever.

Amen





Identity And Masks

Written by Livingstone Lubabalo Ngewu

The Lord be with you

And also with you

Lift up your hearts

We lift them up to the Lord

Let us give thanks to the Lord

It is meet and right to give thanks to the Lord

Lord God of the universe we give you thanks and praise for in love you created the world and out of nothing you called into being that which did not exist and thereby set the stage ready for your revelation and our redemption. Triune God who exists in community and in perfect harmony with the beings of the Trinity you created human being out of the dust of the earth and imparted to each one of them your life-giving breath so as to ensure their rootedness in the universe and their relationship with you. Just as in love you created human beings, in love you chose as your possession a people whose origins were servile and had been subjected to a hopeless drudgery and suffered humiliation with no end except by death and exhaustion. On the night before their escape from Egypt they had a meal that was to be an essential part of the Exodus event – a meal reminiscent of their delivery. You entered into a covenant relationship with the Israelites that You would be their God and they would be Your people. You took them to the Promised Land. But sin crept in and created a rift between you and your people and you continued to nurture them in love. We thank you God that your people never lost their identity whether on the banks of the Euphrates or in the flames of Auschwitz. Thus they retained their identity which no mask could hide and told their story which no red-herring could distract. We come before you, Loving God, with our own masks and we implore you to give us courage to remove such masks and thereby enable us to tell our own stories.

Lord God whose glory surpasses all that our minds are capable of comprehending, we magnify and glorify your name which is above all other names. We join your heavenly hosts, your innumerable saints, our forebears who have been called into eternal rest and in the song of the angels we say:

identity and masks



Holy, Holy, Holy.....

Holy God when the Israelites drifted further and further away from you, you sent them prophets whose messages they flouted and finally you decided to send Jesus your invincible Son who was and still is the perfect image of the invisible Godhead, Jesus took the flesh of Mary and became human and thereby restored to us our lost identity. God how gracious it is that in your Son Jesus you chose not to be God who is distinct from and immeasurably beyond your people but tabernacled among them. Thank you Jesus for having a last meal that transformed the Passover meal that has actualised God's mighty and all-inclusive redemption in history. On that fateful night, but o what a happy fault, as you reclined at table with your friends you took bread and gave thanks to God and said, "Take this and eat, this is my body which is broken for you and for many". After Supper he took the cup of wine and said, "This is my blood which is poured out for you. Whenever you do this, do it in remembrance of me".

Lord Jesus we celebrate this in your remembrance and we ask you to send your Holy Spirit upon this bread and upon this cup so that they may be to us a constant reminder of the pain you endured in the restoration of a broken relationship and an immutable assurance that we are aspiring towards a heavenly banquet. May this Eucharist be a significant rendezvous where both the creature and the Creator rediscover each other. We uphold to you, gracious and loving God all your children who are broken one way or the other, particularly those who have no hope of restoration, those whose lives are devastated by death.

Just as at the point of your death the veil that separated the holy of holies from the rest of the Temple was rent asunder, may the masks that hide who we truly are be removed. Enable us to be who you want us to be and give us the courage to tell our stories. We offer these prayers to God to whom all honour and glory belong, God the Creator, God the Redeemer, God the Sustainer, God Yesterday, God Today and God forever and ever. **Amen.**



Identity and Transformation

Written by Janet Trisk

Receive these gifts of bread and wine, dear God,
and accept in them the sacrifice of ourselves.
In life and in death
May we be an offering to you forever.
Amen.

The Lord be with you
And also with you
Lift up your hearts
We lift them to the Lord
Let us give thanks to the Lord our God
It is right to give God thanks and praise.

We offer you praise
and hearts lifted high, O God
by whose word the heavens were formed
and the earth was brought forth from the waters.
The reflection of your glory
shines in every created thing,
and, though earth's flowering fades,
you have planted within us imperishable seeds
for our salvation,
and call life out of death
into the light that endures forever.
And so with heaven and earth's host of light,
we join in the song of your unending greatness.

Holy, holy, holy Lord
God of power and might,
heaven and earth are full of your glory
Hosanna in the highest.
Blessed is the One who comes
In the name of the Lord,
Hosanna in the highest.

Blessed is our brother Jesus
who walks with us the road of our grief,
and is known again in the breaking of bread;
who, on the night he was handed over,
took bread, gave thanks, broke it and said:
"This is my body, which is for you.
Do this to remember me".
In the same way also the cup, after supper, saying:
"This cup is the new covenant in my blood."

identity and transformation



Do this whenever you drink it
to remember me.

**Christ has died.
Christ is risen.
Christ will come again.**

Come now, disturbing spirit of our God,
breathe on these bodily things
and make us one body in Christ.
Open our graves, unbind our eyes,
and name us here;
touch and heal all that has been buried in us,
that we need not cling to our pain,
but may go forth with power
to release resurrection in the world.
By whom, with whom, in whom,
in the unity of the Holy Spirit,
all glory and honour is yours, almighty God,
world without end.
Amen.

The bread of heaven is broken
for the life of the world.
Amen.

**Loving God, as we share in these gifts, we are aware of our
unworthiness.
We know that you are a God who transforms.
Today we ask that you transform us, so that we can see you in
each other.
Draw us together into community with our diverse gifts and
talents, that we may
work together for your common purpose.
Amen.**

Dismissal.
O God, who has called us as sisters and brothers of Christ
and placed your laws in our minds and written them on our
hearts,
as you have been our God, so may we be your faithful people,
living together in mutual love, and inwardly growing in the
assurance of things hoped for, and the conviction of things not
yet seen.
With all people may we work to build sure foundations for life,
so that when the heavens and earth pass away
we may remain in what cannot be shaken.
Amen.



Uyanda Tom

Siyavuma (We Agree)

My image shows a sangoma (a traditional healer) in healing spirit. In spirit the healer can see the problem the seeker has. The name Siyavuma means we agree always with the words the sangoma says. When the sangoma says them it gives them a good performance but after that the thieves always break in a little, which is why the sangoma asks you if you really agree.

iSangoma not only believes in ancestors, but also in uQamata (God) that is why I put a cross in my picture.

The itshoba (animal hair) the sangoma carries is to chase away the evil spirits. I put the inxili (tobacco bag) for the ancestors and also ingqayo, a clay pot for umqombothi and the ancestors.

Two amaxhanti, the poles with horns and eyes represents fact that the ancestors are watching the home of every black man and woman.

APPENDIX THREE: INTERVIEW FRAMEWORK

Thank participant for being willing to do the interview.

Ask if they would like a copy of the transcript.

Would they like their own name or a fictitious name to be used in the transcript and other research the interview might be used for?

Start the questions:

How do you understand your identity to be constructed?

What are some of the conflicts that you experience about your identity?

How has taking part in Spirals enabled you to understand some of these issues more deeply - or not?

Have the participative drama methodologies helped or hindered your experience of the workshop, if it has helped how? If not – why?

Has there been any change and transformation for you as a result of participating in Spirals?

Do you think your experience of this workshop has contributed to a broader process of change in society – or not?

Are there any other issues you would like to raise?

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