

Is Multiculturalism a Workable Policy in South Africa?

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After pervasive political violence during the late apartheid years, has the South African Government developed a policy akin to multiculturalism and how effectively is this policy being implemented? Why does violence along ethnic and racial lines appear to have diminished in South Africa since its democratic transition in the early 1990s and is this related in any way to such a policy? These two questions are discussed in three steps – first, a short constitutional history of transition in South Africa over the past decade is given; second, as these constitutional provisions may be viewed as state attempts to construct new identities “from above”, the identities of South African citizens that appear to be emerging “from below” are discussed. Identity construction “from above” is a state strategy aimed at legitimising new state institutions. Simultaneously, citizens’ identities – influenced as they are by such strategies – are constructed “from below” within the full range of institutions in which citizens act. As a third step, a preliminary scan is made of institutions operating at local level within different groupings of citizens.

Modern societies are increasingly confronted with minority groups demanding recognition of their identity, and accommodation of their cultural differences (Kymlicka 1997, 10)

Multiculturalism as a term is used in three distinct senses: as a description of the state of cultural diversity in a society, as an ideology aimed at legitimising the incorporation of ethnic diversity in the general structure of society, or as public policy designed to create national unity in ethnic diversity (Kallen 1982). In this paper the focus is squarely upon the third sense – that of public policy.

The term multiculturalism is not used in South African policy-making circles (McAllister 1996). Where it is generally used and debated is in a set of predominantly anglophone countries: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and the United States and more recently, in the United Kingdom. Although South Africa shares, as its dominant cultural ethos, this international anglophone (and largely urban-based) culture, it is neither majoritarian anglophone nor strictly the product of successful European settlement. The five societies above, in fact, as a consequence of British imperialism and its democratic aftermath, continue to receive large streams of immigrants who tend, once they settle in these societies, to be classified as minorities. In the aftermath of failed policy initiatives – the “melting pot” in the United States and cultural dualism in Canada as examples – multicultural policy is one way in which the governments of these societies seek to address this challenge (Kallen 1982). Underlying this policy is the ideal that personal dignity or honour – a fundamental value in a democracy – is closely bound up with the collective dignity of a person’s ethnic or cultural community (Taylor 1994). National and ethnic identities ought to complement one another.

The term more often used to capture the diversity of South Africa is “divided”, an idea derived from that of the plural society (Horowitz 1991; Rex 1971; Van Den Berghe 1990). This classification implies more than cultural diversity. It suggests coinciding cleavages along lines of inequality – a situation of “ranked ethnicity” (Horowitz 1985, 22) – and high potential for violence and continuing conflict in the society. Accordingly, this paper discusses two separate questions. In the first place, after pervasive political violence during the late apartheid years which were deeply marked by racial and ethnic cleavages, has the South African Government developed a policy akin to multiculturalism and how well is this policy being implemented? In the second, why does violence along ethnic and racial lines appear to have diminished, virtually disappeared, in South Africa since its democratic transition in the early 1990s and is this related in any way to such a policy?

These questions are discussed in three steps. First, a short political history of transition in South Africa, over the past decade, is given. This history concentrates on constitutional provisions pertinent to cultural diversity and their institutionalisation in society. Second, as these provisions may be viewed as state attempts to construct new identities “from above”, the identities of South African citizens that appear to be emerging “from below” are discussed. Identity construction “from above” is a fundamental state strategy aimed at legitimising new state institutions, particularly in the new democracies of divided societies (Du Toit 2001). Simultaneously, citizens’ identities – influenced as they are by such strategies – are constructed from below, within the full range of institutions in which citizens act (Bornmann 1999; Martin 1994). Indeed, according to Castells (1997, 7), “although [...] identities can [...] be originated from dominant institutions, they become identities only when and if social actors internalize them, and construct their meaning around this internalization”. As a third step, therefore, a preliminary scan of institutions operating at local level within different groupings of citizens is made.

1. Constitutional Provisions during Transition

South Africa's historic moment, bringing apartheid to an end, was shaped through an extended process of domestic negotiations involving national political actors – the African National Congress (ANC) and the National Party (NP), in particular – during the early 1990s. This moment was crystallised in an Interim Constitution, in subsequent general elections in 1994, and in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa 1996. At this historic moment, the new South African Government inherited a number of interrelated and forbidding challenges, some primarily home-made, others of international fabrication. On the domestic front, these challenges comprised violence as the means to reach political goals, deep inequality and poverty rooted in the national economy, pervasive racism in the consciousness of South Africans, and minority ideologies claiming rights of self-determination which threatened to translate into separatist and irredentist movements. From abroad, the major challenges were less visible in the early 1990s. The first relates to re-entry into the global economy and its implications for international competition. The second major challenge – globalisation and the gradual loss of state sovereignty as well as the rise of the politics of identity, particularly regarding an increased recognition of minority rights in the arena of international law – was barely visible to South Africans during their period of negotiations and democratic celebration. Recognition of the nature of both these challenges has taken some time to surface.

During the process of domestic negotiations, however, these challenges were not only raised but in most cases were also addressed, albeit solely in constitutional terms. The 1996 Constitution was fashioned on the field of political battle, in cross-fires produced by forces of transformation and forces of preservation (Martin 1994, 15), by notions of constructing new identities and of safeguarding enduring identities. Accordingly, state-civil society issues relevant to cultural diversity were very much alive in the minds of the negotiators (Bekker 1997).

How is the new South African state tackling the challenge of reconciling democratic governance with cultural pluralism? In the first place, this state is required to operate within the limits laid down by the 1996 Constitution. A number of its key features are identified below.

Its first striking feature is that of constitutional sovereignty. Under the previous constitution, governance was guided by parliamentary sovereignty that accorded the national executive and legislature supremacy over the judiciary, a constitutional authority which was employed on numerous occasions (Abel 1995). Today, the Constitutional Court bears this authority. When the South African state, reflecting – as it inevitably will – certain cultural interests, is called upon to be even-handed in constitutional terms, as it surely will often be, it will be the judges of this Court rather than the government who will adjudicate.

The second feature is the particular territorial dispersion of political power which is constituted. Intergovernmental relations between central government, nine provincial governments and numerous local governments are required to be “distinctive, interdependent and interrelated”, thereby constituting “co-operative government” (SAC 1996, Section 40(1)). Provinces have substantial devolved powers, including authority to establish a provincial constitution, to raise certain taxes, and to legislate on local government affairs. Central government has a wide range of overriding powers which it can exercise when conflicts between national and provincial legislatures emerge. An advisory Fiscal and Finance Commission, comprising nominees of central, provincial and local government, is established to ensure equitable sharing of revenue between these governmental tiers. In short, this division of powers establishes multiple territorial domains of representation and participation without constituting a federal arrangement. The nature of this division of power moreover reflects the territorial cultural diversity in the country by, for example, allowing a provincial constitution to include the institution of a traditional monarch (SAC 1996, Section 143(1)b), and by enabling each provincial government to select at least two of the eleven official languages as their medium of communication (SAC 1996, Section 6(3)a). The demarcation of these new provinces (with the possible exception of KwaZulu-Natal) has moreover resulted in little coincidence of territory and ethnicity.

General and provincial elections to establish a national assembly and nine provincial parliaments take place under a simple list of proportional representation. Political parties, including a large number of new interest-based parties, competed openly with one another. Expressed by South African metaphor, the political playing field has been levelled. What has been proclaimed to be the South African miracle is due in no small part to the nature and outcome of this multi-party electoral system which clearly identified the winning party while facilitating the emergence of minority party rule in a number of provinces, and minority party representation in a number of “governments-of-unity”.

If a constitution is interpreted as establishing a mandate between a state and its civil society, then the 1996 Constitution defines South African civil society as constituted primarily by individuals. Non-racialism and non-sexism are two of its founding provisions. Citizenship and the franchise, equality and freedom, are rights of persons, not – as in the past – of groups, or of minorities, or of races. Accordingly, cultural, linguistic, gender and religious rights of individuals are protected from unfair discrimination by the state in the Bill of Rights. The 1996 Constitution is, in this sense, classically liberal democratic in form (Welsh 1994).

When it goes beyond protection and obliges or enables positive state action to recognise, establish or promote such rights, new cultural constituents of civil society appear within its definition. The state is obliged to take practical and positive measures to elevate the status of indigenous languages (SAC 1996, Section 6(2)); to constitute a state commission for the promotion and protection of the rights of cultural, religious and linguistic communities which will recommend

on the establishment or recognition of relevant cultural councils for South African communities (SAC 1996, Section 185); to recognise the institution of traditional leadership; and to ensure that the courts apply customary law when that law is applicable (SAC 1996, Sections 211(1), 211(3)). Active state intervention is enabled in two areas – affirmative action and the political role of traditional leaders. Thus, within the Bill of Rights, “legislative” and other measures designed to protect or advance persons, or categories of persons, disadvantaged by unfair discrimination may be taken to promote the achievement of equality (SAC 1996, Section 9(2)) – strictly, an example of “categorical rights” (Kallen 1995) rather than group rights. In the second place, national legislation is authorised to provide a local government role for traditional leaders, and to establish provincial houses and a national council of traditional leaders (SAC 1996, Section 212). Finally, in a section reflecting most sharply the contested nature of its establishment, the 1996 Constitution – after confirming the right of self-determination of the South African people as a whole – recognises “the notion of the right of self-determination of any community sharing a common cultural and language heritage” within the nation (SAC 1996, Section 235). In a cultural sense, therefore, beyond the classically liberal rights of the individual (and of institutions such as political parties and trade unions in classical pluralist democratic theory), new constituents of civil society are identified – *cultural, religious and linguistic communities*, the institution of *traditional leadership*, and *customary law*. In addition, as an apparent anomaly, the notion of the right of *self-determination* specifically for communities sharing a common cultural and language heritage is recognised. Cultural constituents of civil society identified in earlier South African constitutions, such as racial groups and ethnic groups, or in international law, such as minorities and “groups” as such, are conspicuously absent. It is noteworthy that in terms of constitutional theory at least, the South African case appears to recognise cultural pluralism more comprehensively than in countries where multiculturalism is official policy, such as Australia and Canada (Kallen 1982; McAllister 1996).

What of the process of institutionalising these new constitutional provisions? We are able to offer no more than glimpses of the changing natures of both civil society and the state as the nation begins to address the domestic challenges set out above – political violence, inequality and poverty, racism and primordial minority movements.

A number of institutions – cooperative government, the National Council of Provinces, the Commission for the Promotion and Protection of the Rights of Cultural, Religious and Linguistic Communities, the Pan South African Language Board and those defining local government roles for traditional leaders – have been established. Their track records may best be described as mixed (Henrard 2001). The large number of urban and rural local governments supposed to engage in cooperative government has recently been replaced by less than half this number. The commissions and boards designed to address minority concerns are struggling to establish procedures and ways of carrying out decisions. A Division of Traditional Affairs has been established within the central state Department of

Constitutional Affairs. Simultaneously, although fragile and sometimes perceived to be “toothless”, these institutions are generally viewed as legitimate, at least within elite groupings. The Constitutional Court, in particular, has taken a number of decisions within the cultural domain relating to religious freedom and language.

Although still present, political violence has decreased sharply. Afrikaner separatists have fallen silent, almost forgotten (particularly after their poor results in the 1999 general elections); Zulu traditionalists in KwaZulu-Natal appear to be more involved with consolidation in this province than with extra-constitutional threats. Violent crime, which takes on extraordinary proportions (Nedcor 1996; Nedbank ISS 1997–2001), captures the nation’s attention instead. Simultaneously, civil society appears much less coherent than it did during the exuberant days of resistance and negotiations when civics and the forum movement dominated the public consciousness, when, as elsewhere in Africa in earlier times, “with swelling voice, civil society demanded liberation, the dismantling of the oppressive colonial state” (Young 1994, 237).

The state is attacking poverty and inequality in two primary ways. The first is through affirmative action policies and the second through direct policy measures and a new macro-economic strategy. As the first is largely targeted on the job market, its track record so far is fair, particularly in the public sector. The main reason is that the state is in a position to directly influence job allocation in this sector and indirectly influence many positions in the private sector. The same cannot be said for its poverty-alleviation strategy in the unemployment and informal sectors. The Reconstruction and Development Policy of the mid-1990s did not fare well. Its failure was symbolised by the closure of its offices located in the Ministry of the Office of the President and the transfer of its Minister without Portfolio to another ministry. Subsequent growth strategies have been characterised by “jobless” growth and the number of jobs in the national economy has been diminishing, in absolute terms, over the past few years (Statistics South Africa 2000, 2001; Natrass and Seekings 2001).

Affirmative action by the state appears to be having three consequences. White-collar employment in state and private sectors of black South Africans, although limited in magnitude, is rising. In the second place, such remedial action has led to a sense of deprivation and discrimination among communities that fall outside the boundaries of beneficiary groups. Third, many of the beneficiaries of affirmative action will continue to keep an ideological distance between themselves and the white middle class for they fully realise that a large part of the justification for the policies which promote their interests lies in the enduring condition of the poor who get left behind. The case for remedial action in contemporary South Africa is strong, the fact that its consequences are and will remain contentious is apparent.

A decade after South Africa’s historic moment, it would appear accordingly that cultural and economic accommodation of ethnic elites in the country is taking place through continuing institutionalisation of new constitutional and public policy

initiatives. In the society, recognition of cultural rights (in the educational context for example) has taken place; corporatism – business–union–state relations – characterises critical economic institutions; affirmative action gives access to positions of influence and wealth; and proportional representation offers various political parties access to political power (Adam et al. 1997). Simultaneously, this accommodation is brittle (Du Toit 2001): current conflict over guaranteed private mineral rights in the economy, over affirmative action quotas in large businesses, and over accommodating traditional leaders in local authority bodies all point to the fragility of these new institutions and to the delicate balance they have established in the emergent democracy.

How have rank-and-file South Africans taken to these new institutional arrangements? We turn to this question in the next section.

2. New Identities of Rank-and-File South Africans

Historically, the identities of South Africans have generally been described in terms of race and ethnicity. Once the process of transition from apartheid towards a democratic state began, however, interest in identity studies grew significantly (Bekker 1999). The questions underlying this interest derive from the ghosts of South Africa's past and the dreams of its future. Does race continue to carry deep meaning? Have the meanings attached to the ethnic and racial labels of the "old" South Africa persisted? Have South Africans developed a new national identity? The implication appears to be that South Africans are able to make one choice only – to belong together to a new nation, or to remain divided by offensive cleavages inherited from an unjust past. This perspective obstructs the examination of new subnational and supranational identities that may be emerging. Recent qualitative research on this question is relevant here, and reveal two major trends in identity construction "from below": while one section of the population clearly takes pride in cultural, religious and linguistic affiliations and acknowledges recognition of such rights by the new South African state, the second section seems indifferent to such issues and appears to be drawing meaning from alternative institutions and sources of bonding.

This qualitative research was conducted over the past three years in the Western Cape, a predominantly urbanised province comprising three main cultural groupings. Focus group discussions conducted in the languages chosen by participants were organised with a wide range of rural and urban residents who were requested to discuss how they felt about living in their neighbourhoods, in their province and in South Africa. Thereafter, discussions took place without further researcher intervention (Bekker et al. 2000; Bekker and Leildé 2003).

Rank-and-file discussions on national, provincial and local matters reveal no meaningful provincial identity and weak national identity. Respondents are confused by distinctions between national, provincial and local bodies and their

knowledge of their separate activities is patchy at best. This impedes the development of a political identity at both provincial and national levels. What does appear as particularly meaningful at national level is citizenship and thereby the right to stigmatise alien Africans as unwanted and illegal. In effect, questions pertaining to the balance between provincial and national loyalties, and related party political differences, were considered to be of little relevance.

Race formed an integral part of rank-and-file respondents' discussions of themselves and those around them. None the less, race is rarely the primary source of meaning and indeed only becomes primary in specific circumstances: in the presence of ignorance and extended radicalised socialisation, in the presence of marginalisation and lack of alternative sources of pride and self-esteem, and in the presence of enduring economic deprivation and of increased competition over jobs in the unskilled sector. Otherwise, it persists as one identity among many.

Cultural affiliation, on the other hand, emerged as particularly meaningful. A primary identity, "that is, an identity that frames the others" (Castells 1997), emerged through stated affiliation to a minority group, in the sample, to a religion and to a "first nation" (the Griqua). It is noticeable how readily participants in Muslim and Griqua groupings expressed pride in their fellowship, reflecting freedom to assert subnational (and supranational) loyalties in a way simply not possible in South Africa before the 1990s. Two quotes from these focus groups are appropriate:

We are Griquas ... a Southern African people ... but we are staying at home ... The Western Cape is our Cape ... [In] priority, we are Griqua. "Volks" boundedness is part of our family. Under the previous government we suffered severely ... Never did they even get so close as to give us acknowledgement. Here in this new set-up for the first time we were told we are being acknowledged as a "volk" in the country of our birth (Griqua middle-income neighbourhood, provincial town, Western Cape, 1999).

So we are in the Western Cape, coming from a Muslim identity, I see myself as a Muslim African, and a Muslim South African and I'm proud of my Muslim religion ... During the apartheid era, it was very difficult to be promoted as a Muslim. Now all the religions are equal ... In 1994, we were for the new government even if it doesn't give us everything we want; it is much more than what we had in the past ... Muslims represent about two per cent of the population and their level of influence is disproportionate, even for the legislation, we are advantaged (Muslim middle-income neighbourhood, Cape Town, 1999).

In the second place, shared meaning drawn from language emerged as an important identity marker. In the Southern Cape, strong affiliation to the Afrikaans language was expressed, implying the existence of a potential community of interest transcending "racial" cleavages. Third, shared locality appears to provide meaning to Western Cape residents. Neighbourhoods in particular provide a strong sense of community, "a close-knit 'feel'", in the words of one of the respondents (Cape Town, 2001).

Another good thing about our area is the schools that are here because the Christian element is very much alive and that is very important for us. There's a lot of Christian element. There is more than in lots of other places and for us it is very important. So that is very good (former white middle-income neighbourhood, Cape Town, 2001).

Another reason [not to move] is that ... the people in Rondebosch will have attitudes towards me and I will also have attitudes towards them because our cultures are not the same and I won't be able to do what I do here in Khayelitsha. For an example, Christmas time or New Year's time, I slaughter a sheep, now coming to Rondebosch, people would start looking at me (former black middle-income neighbourhood, Cape Town, 1999).

We have people who really even though they can afford to go and stay between people who are not [Muslim] ... they prefer to stay where they stay ... this preference is not because they are anti-white or anti-black, it is simply because they feel that the environment in which they are living is conducive to religious culture. They prefer to stay where there is a mosque nearby and they will look for that. That is how I would see it (Muslim middle-income neighbourhood, Cape Town, 2001).

Accordingly, the main conclusion to be drawn from this research is the importance of the local to South Africans. Politicians and opinion-makers appear mesmerised by grand images – the nation, the province, the continent. South Africans draw meaning from humbler sources – village, suburb, language, minority group. Government action in these spheres is of far greater importance than is generally realised. Simultaneously, as the development of pride in such humble sources is difficult to sustain, South Africans sometimes fall back on older sources of meaning found in their racial and ethnic past.

At this point in our analysis, an optimistic judgement of the South African state's policy and practice regarding ethnic and race relations would appear credible – fragile though they surely are in both word and implementation, new state-civil society institutions established by the 1996 Constitution enable expression of diverse cultural identities among the citizenry while starting to build a national identity, weak though it is at present. Such a judgement however would be premature. The institutions and identities identified thus far are situated within that part of South African society we can describe as commercial agricultural and urban-industrial. This section of society comprises the state and a vibrant civil society, economic relations characterised by corporatism, and a dominant cultural ethos we have labelled as international anglophone. The country as a whole, however, is semi-industrialised and those addressed here comprise barely more than half of its inhabitants. The other half – the “underclass” – live out their lives largely outside this institutional framework. These are South Africans who speak little or no English and who live in dense informal settlements on the peripheries of South African cities as well as in rural areas (particularly within former homelands where dense settlements far from urban places are common). Most importantly, these are people who hold down no fixed employment in the economy (Statistics South Africa 2000, 2001; Nattrass and Seekings 2001). Unemployment rates in South Africa are extremely high (in the region of 40 per cent) and recent trends

point to continuing absolute job losses in the formal as well as the informal sectors of the economy (Statistics South Africa 2000, 2001). Although this distinction between those living and acting within the new emergent South African civil society and those without is simplistic if understood in a rigorous sense – as kin ties, redistribution of income among relatives, and remittances within extended families all tend to blur such strict boundaries – evidence of the separation of populations and of the diminishing of such ties is available (Cross 2001; Cross and Bekker 1999). We need therefore to turn our attention to those “without”, to the South African underclass.

3. Analysing the South African Underclass

3.1 Identities

The qualitative identity research referred to above revealed significant differences between underclass respondent groupings and other groupings (Bekker et al. 2000; Bekker and Leildé 2003). Among the former groupings, reference to cultural issues is rarely made and pride in cultural affiliation seems to be absent. Other than a few references to the Xhosa language, which is experienced as a disadvantage in the job market, no meaning appears to have been drawn from Xhosa ethnic identity. Similarly, though Coloured identity was mentioned a number of times, these references were made simply in order to distinguish between White, Black and Coloured and were stated without pride. No reference was made to the Afrikaans language.

Members of this underclass also express strong local identities but these are defined by exclusion rather than with pride. Identification with their residential area, which is typically an informal settlement, is narrow and does not include the town within which they live. This settlement is almost universally compared negatively with the surrounding town. These local identities are defined in both race (African and Coloured) and class terms, rather than in cultural terms. Exclusion is directly linked to local leadership as expectations regarding local municipal performance are enormous. Such disillusionment is not explicitly linked to political parties, but to perceived elites in general – all “leaders” are distrusted. Unemployment is experienced as more pressing than the quality of municipal service delivery. The municipality is perceived accordingly as a potential source of work as well as a potential job creation institution. It is severely criticised on both counts.

Members of the underclass appear to draw minimal meaning from public participation in the local sphere. Their social exclusion individualises and marginalises them. Their ability to complain is of little influence. Their ability to withhold payment for state services is ruled out for these services are essential to their survival strategies and they have no means of buying more expensive private services. The underclass accordingly find themselves in a double bind, because to

menace with voice (through petitions, marches or civil disobedience, for example) or to threaten exit (through accessing essential services from elsewhere, for example) carries little weight with local councillors and officials. These local people very rarely belong to an organised opposition movement and are not able to withhold substantial payments. Though the NGO sector is well-developed in South Africa's urban areas (Swilling and Russell 2002), it is very rarely referred to in the narratives of members of the underclass. Their strategy, typically expressed in individual terms, is one of opting out of civil society.

Faced with such comprehensive perceived social exclusion in their towns, members of the underclass do appear to develop strategies of coping and of survival. The first is an instrumental view of criminal activity. Two quotes from recent fieldwork (provincial towns, Western Cape, 2000) illustrate this view: "when we are hungry, we think about crime because there is nothing else to do." "If we are a group of men and we know that every Friday the people get paid, we are going to rob the people and this leads to gangsterism." A related strategy motivated by perceptions of police inefficiency and racial bias and aimed at defence against local criminal activity is vigilantism. "When I find the people who are doing this [stealing from the local informal shop], I'll take the law into my hands because I am tired of the police." In the third place, scapegoating and xenophobic attitudes emerged within these narratives. "The problem here in South Africa, there are a lot of foreigners. Foreigners take the jobs but they don't give any votes."

Exit strategies are not always anti-social in nature, however. In a small West Coast town, underclass respondents discussed organised community initiatives to address "problems that the council neglects". This project was described in the following terms: "We as a community have now decided to do our own things, we established organisations which are anti-political to reach our goals". Accordingly, exit of the underclass may lead to using voice-from-without, to working for change outside the confines of the local authority. "Anti-political" points to the intention of seeking mobilisation beyond the municipal sphere, beyond developmental local government.

3.2 Institutions

We are unable here to comprehensively cover the literature on what we call underclass institutions, a literature which is large (Bank 2001; Burnett 1999; Dixon 2001; Kinnes 2000; Scharf and Nina 2001; Sekhonyane and Louw 2002; Smets 1996; Steinberg 2001). People operating within these institutions appear able to develop and sustain strategies of coping and survival in an otherwise hostile and exclusionary environment. They are also often able to gain personal dignity in organisations established within these institutions and accordingly are able to construct identities that counter the loss of self-esteem in the wider society. As was the case with underclass identities, these underclass organisations are local – typically micro in scale and small in membership.

To simplify our argument, we identify a number of such underclass institutions by listing their associated organisations and indicating equivalent civil society organisations. As was the case earlier, the polarisation within this table is simplistic if understood in a rigorous sense, as many members of the underclass experience dissonance, being drawn towards ways of bonding under both the civil society and the underclass labels. In addition, religious organisations and traditional authorities do not fit neatly into this proposed dichotomy for they may well be located within or outside civil society, depending on their particular circumstances. None the less, underclass organisations do appear to offer substantial numbers of marginalised South Africans both a haven of survival and a badge of honour.

Table 1. Civil and Class Organisations in South Africa

Civil society organisations	Underclass organisations
School organisations Youth and sport associations	Gangs
Small, medium and micro-enterprises	<i>Spazas</i> (informal shops) and shebeens Syndicates, drug trafficking, poaching
Community police forums	Vigilante groups Anti-gang organisations
Local authorities NGOs, community-based organisations, civic organisations, housing forums	Burial societies and <i>stokvels</i> (informal savings clubs) Warlords and “strong men”

Two conclusions may be drawn from this rudimentary analysis. The first is that identities constructed within underclass organisations of this type remain local, and accordingly are neither racial nor ethnic – in South Africa at least, racial and ethnic identities represent identification with leaders and groups at a much wider scale of society, at the macro level. In the second place, it would be simple to categorise civil society organisations as reflecting “positive” social capital – trust among the citizenry in an emergent democracy – and underclass organisations as being “anti-social”, reflecting “negative” social capital – trust in small groups the activities of which are detrimental to the wider good of society. This however is too simple and possibly disingenuous a categorisation, for most members of the underclass appear to have little or no choice regarding their quest for a haven of survival and a badge of honour. Rather, this analysis implies that the identities members of the South African underclass are able to construct remain parochial and that the institutions within which they act remain particularistic. Such constraints diminish the

society's capacity to develop a democratic political culture and a vigorous civil society. Moreover, given minimal choices to obtain sustainable resources to survive in their society, many opt for activities defined as criminal and often find themselves involved in violent behaviour in pursuit of these resources.

Accordingly, although violence along ethnic and racial lines has virtually disappeared in South Africa, this does not mean that the society has become less violent. Criminal activity (including "white-collar" crime) is widespread and remains extremely violent, particularly when analysed in comparative terms (Nedcor 1996; Nedbank ISS 1997–2001). Much, though not all, of this violence originates in a range of underclass institutions.

4. Conclusion

It would appear that multiculturalism both as a policy and as an outcome has had a measure of success in the new South Africa. Minority groups demanding recognition of their identity and accommodation of their cultural differences continue to use civil society institutions to challenge the state in search of such identities and of accommodation. In urban-industrial South Africa and much of commercial agriculture, the new institutions of state and of corporatism have provided policies the implementation of which have accommodated both the new and the old elite, particularly in terms of cultural differences. Neither need to mobilise rank-and-file on ethnic or racial terms. Although race and ethnicity continue to act as significant markers for South Africans, they are rarely dominant identities.

For the South African underclass, multiculturalism appears to be an issue of no consequence. The large numbers of chronically poor and unemployed act within institutions and mobilise within organisations in which identity is local rather than racial or ethnic. The minute scale of such organisations rules out mobilisation on the basis of mass ethnic, linguistic or racial markers. Moreover, these local institutions and organisations offer psychological and material rewards which are experienced as independent of racial or ethnic origins. The new state and corporatist institutions that have succeeded in establishing elite accommodation fade away before they reach the arenas of these organisations.

Violence in South Africa today is widely defined as criminal – in conflict with the values and norms laid down by the state and by civil society. Violent incidents take place in a bewildering number of different local settings. These incidents very rarely appear to be related to one another. They flow from deep-seated sentiments of local exclusion: economic exclusion from the material rewards of the urban-industrial economy and socio-cultural exclusion from the dominant anglophone urban culture. Accordingly, violence – for perpetrator and victim alike – is rarely experienced as either racial or ethnic because the institutions competing with one another in order to offer personal dignity and material rewards are infra-racial and infra-ethnic (Castells 1997), typically localised in underclass neighbourhoods and

marginalised from state–civil society relations. The limited number of incidents involving the elite which are widely broadcast are the exception rather than the rule. South Africa accordingly remains deeply divided even though coincidence of class and culture has diminished significantly (Nattrass and Seekings 2001).

This analysis points to a more fundamental challenge facing the deeply divided society that persists in the country. The nature of elite accommodation in the society appears to exclude the underclass who, in reaction, are developing strategies of survival beyond civil society, strategies based upon sources of local sociality as well as upon anti-social behaviour. In this sense, criminal violence is a symptom of division rather than the challenge itself. The scope of multiculturalism as policy accordingly needs to embrace underclass institutions by offering them both material havens of survival and cultural badges of honour within, rather than without, emergent civil society.

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