1 Introduction

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The second decade of democracy in South Africa has created a sufficient distance for media scholars to look back on what has been achieved and to begin to understand and critique the trends and developments that have transpired in the years since the abolishment of apartheid in 1994. It is true that the media, like South African society itself, have undergone massive changes in this period. The liberalisation of the broadcast sector, the arrival of the tabloids, the growth of the Internet and significant shifts in the ownership patterns of media organisations are sufficient evidence of the predominance of change. But, again as in society itself, there are some areas of the media where change has been lacking or minimal. Some of these areas are the participation of women in the media, where the status quo has remained stubbornly resistant, as well as the terms on which the voices of black youth are heard in mainstream media. A study of the South African media post-1994 must therefore tread carefully so as to explore the interesting and often unpredictable ways in which change has been taking place while at the same time not be so celebratory of change that persisting challenges and problems get overlooked.

This 'double moment' of change and continuity can also be noted in studies of South African identity post-1994. Alexander (2006: 13) refers to two opposing views of South African identity after apartheid. The one view is that the social landscape of South Africa has changed to such an extent that identities have become fluid, changing and hybrid. On the other hand, as Alexander shows, scholars like Zegeye (2001) maintain 'a primary concern with political identity' after apartheid (Alexander 2006: 14). This dualism becomes clear in the ways in which specifically the category of 'race' in post-apartheid society has been studied. Nuttall (2006) identifies two streams of race studies. The first, and dominant, stream consists of work 'paying renewed attention to racism and identity'. This work, exemplified by Wasserman and Jacobs (2003) and Zegeye (2001), 'focuses on hidden, invisible forms of racist expression and well-established patterns of racist exclusion that remain unaddressed and uncompensated for, structurally marking opportunities and access, patterns

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of income and wealth, privilege and relative power' (Nuttall 2006: 271). The second stream of race studies, into which Nuttall categorises the work of Achille Mbembe (2004) and others, draws on discourses of 'multiculturalism' that simultaneously acknowledge the history of 'race thinking' and attempt to move beyond it. The latter type of study aims to highlight the agency exercised by actors in reshaping their identities, especially in assuming a role as consumers in the market economy. The increasing emergence of consumer identity, especially among young South Africans, is also a development identified by Alexander (2006: 60).

The renegotiation of identity in the contemporary South African context, whether in terms of a re-emergence of old identities (Alexander 2006: 39) or as part of 'new ways of imagining' (Nuttall & Michael 2000), takes place at the intersection of the local and the global. On the one hand, the influence of 'supranational forces' (Alexander 2006: 37) on the formation of identity has been marked; on the other hand, shifts in local discourses have led to different notions of citizenship, nationhood and cultural identity emerging in the post-apartheid period. These two sources of influence on identity formation should not be seen as separate – rather, the global and the local often overlap or feed off each other. While the consolidation of local identities frequently takes place in reaction against the perceived threat of 'McDonaldisation', discourses such as the 'African Renaissance' also position the construction of South African identity within a broader pan-African sphere of influence. The latter discourse, supported by President Thabo Mbeki, can be seen as a reassertion of African identity that represents a move away from the conception of the 'rainbow nation' that was the 'leitmotif of Nelson Mandela's presidency' (Alexander 2006: 40).

From the above overview it becomes clear that the study of identity and culture in post-apartheid South Africa has yielded multiple and often divergent insights. These concerns remain important for scholarship aimed at understanding the rapid and often complex shifts taking place in South African society, political life and cultural formations. However, while the media have emerged as important role-players in all these areas, they are still often relegated to a marginal position in identity studies as well as within the broader terrain of cultural studies. When the media do enter the discussion, they are mostly treated as textual artefacts containing representations of identity categories such as gender or race, rather than in terms of their implication in broader social, political and economic processes.

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If identity studies have diverged, as shown above, into a study of the emergence of new hybrid forms on the one hand and a study of the continuity of structural impediments mitigating against them on the other, the study of journalism and the media has equally been divided between structure and agency. Scholarly debates around the media's position in post-apartheid society have tended to focus either on structural shifts and continuities (by studying, for example, the media's place in the political economy of the transition; ownership and editorial changes; and the media's relationship with civil society); professional issues (usually taking the form of reiterations of functional orthodoxy, such as the media's role as 'watchdog of government' or protector of the 'public interest'); or symbolic dimensions (of which the representation of race and gender has enjoyed particular attention). These different aspects have until now seldom been connected. This collection of essays is intended as an exploration of these intersections. It brings together perspectives on the media's role in the transition that interrogate the relationships between identity discourses and political power, between new subjectivities and persisting legacies of apartheid, and between new narratives of nationhood and the increased commercialisation and privatisation of the public sphere. While this exploration takes the local specificity of South Africa as its point of departure, it remains aware of the acceleration of globalisation facilitated largely through the media. While the focus falls on the era after apartheid, it strives towards understanding contemporary developments against a wider historical backdrop. In doing so, the collection aims to investigate how the media's construction of identity in post-apartheid South Africa is inextricably linked with the politics of the transition in all its multifarious dimensions.

This collection of essays – many of which were presented at an international conference in Stellenbosch on the same theme in July 2006 – came about as a project to excavate the space between media and identity. The media, of course, have many forms, just as identity has many variations. Their interrelationship is a complex, shifting matrix as difficult to narrow down as it is important to the people who find their meaning within it. The media do generate, corroborate and accelerate identity formation, just as they diminish, overshadow and negate it. The variety of essays included in this volume reflects the various forms this process has taken during the first decade and more of democracy in South Africa.

South Africa offers a rich context for the study of the interrelationship between media and identity because its recent emergence as a democracy out of the quagmire of profound racial conflict, as well as the history of that conflict, has

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been closely tied to the role of its sophisticated media sector. During apartheid, large sections of the media were complicit in the legitimation of the ruling class's logic of separateness, or what Zegeye (2001: 1) has called 'imposed ethnicity'. Some media, however, also played a role in the resistance against apartheid. With the shift to democracy, the South African media have had to reposition themselves ideologically, politically and culturally. The influence this repositioning has had on the shaping of new identities in this period is investigated from various angles in this volume.

The essays are organised into three sections. In the first section, 'Identity in theory', contemporary theories relating to media and identity are interrogated and applied to the South African context. In his chapter 'Media, youth, violence and identity in South Africa', Abebe Zegeye draws on notions of the 'subaltern' in postcolonial theory, especially as it has been developed by Gayatri Spivak, to show how the legacy of the youth protests against apartheid led to their silencing in scholarship. Challenging what he calls 'elitist sociology', Zegeye investigates a number of structural conditions within which the identities of the youth of South Africa today are formed.

In his discussion of essentialism, Kees van der Waal emphasises the challenge to studies of identity, culture and language to 'probe for the assumptions underlying the discourses that form part of the encounters in this field' and to pay attention to human interactions and the context of events. Van der Waal's injunction against essentialism is a vital warning that fittingly frames the chapters to follow, given the dangerous tendency to homogenise and lapse into binary thinking when investigating identity issues in a context marked by a history of systemic polarisation, as was the case in South Africa. Van der Waal reminds us that '[a]ll forms of essentialism need to be questioned and seen as political attempts to frame constructions in a specific way, based on a set of interests and relationships'.

The normative theoretical concept of the 'public sphere' developed by Jürgen Habermas has become one of the standard theories by which the role of the media in contemporary society has come to be described. Ruth Teer-Tomaselli, in her study of the relationship between the public broadcaster, the public, the nation and the state, problematises the way that this concept 'has been applied to media with an almost canonical reverence'. She points out how the confluence of South Africa's democratising process and accelerated globalisation has put the South African public broadcaster in a precarious position. It has to balance the demands to reconstruct national identity after

apartheid with the imperatives of a postmodern, globalised media market in which older notions of the public broadcaster – and therefore also the 'public sphere' – are forced to undergo revision. Public broadcasting in South Africa has thus become a terrain where the media's role in constructing identity has become severely contested.

In the following chapter, the Habermasian concept of the 'public sphere', as well as Benedict Anderson's well-known notion of the nation as an 'imagined community', is again found not to be suitable for an understanding of developments in the South African media. In their study of a Cape Town tabloid, the *Daily Voice*, Ian Glenn and Angie Knaggs suggest that the field theory of Pierre Bourdieu provides a better way of understanding the issues of media and identity in general and the tabloids in particular.

Sonja Narunsky-Laden also draws on the work of Bourdieu to develop a theory of cultural economy in South African media. Narunsky-Laden points to the salience of consumer culture in post-apartheid South Africa as a discourse through which new identities are forged, even as old racialised identities are reactivated in the context of consumption. She argues for a more dynamic approach to the formation of identity through media use than that entailed in theories of political economy or race. She sees the discourses of consumption, consumer culture and promotional culture as 'the dominant register of public debate in post-apartheid South Africa today'. These discourses are important to study because of their influence on social conduct, aspiration and cultural identity.

The overall impression left by the contributors to the first section of the volume is that, while investigations of the relationship between media and identity in post-apartheid South African society should take cognisance of theoretical approaches that seek to explain this relationship, these approaches should also be contextualised to fit the imperatives of the local and the contemporary.

The second section of the volume, 'Media restructuring and identity formation after apartheid', explores in more detail this contemporary local context. South Africa's media system underwent massive change in the wake of the country's political transition from apartheid to democracy in the early 1990s. Broadcast was the first sphere to experience dramatic transformation with the deregulation of the state monopoly in the run-up to the 1994 election. This process was fuelled by political concerns, principally from a liberation movement and broadcast-rights community hitherto excluded from access to state-dominated airwaves. The Independent Broadcasting Authority (IBA)

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Act No. 153 of 1993 was the outcome of broad multi-party negotiations and established an independent regulatory authority to administer the newly liberalised airwaves. Within 10 years, almost 100 community radio stations had been granted licences by the IBA and its successor, the Independent Communication Authority of South Africa.

In addition, the introduction of a free-to-air television channel (e.tv), the privatisation of several radio stations that had once fallen under the ambit of the state-owned South African Broadcasting Corporation, and the arrival of satellite broadcasting propelled South Africa from a narrow, closely controlled broadcast sphere into a diverse and largely liberalised zone. This opening of the airwaves, and the appearance of the voices, languages and agendas therein, inevitably impacted on the articulation and development of South African identities. In the first chapter of this section, 'Finding a home in Afrikaans radio', Johannes Froneman provides an overview of the development of the South African broadcast media together with case studies of two Afrikaans radio stations, radiosondergrense (RSG) and Radio Pretoria. He asks how these two very different stations have become sites of struggle in the creation of meaning for an ethnic and language group stripped of its political power. Both stations, he finds, are entrenched in their ideological positions vis-à-vis the new political dispensation. RSG provides a home for an increasingly mixed racial grouping of Afrikaans speakers who broadly accept the non-racial imperative of the 1996 Constitution and who recognise the need for cultural and linguistic diversity. Radio Pretoria, on the other hand, 'insists on the right to reject the dominant political paradigm, while pragmatically seeking to find some minimum accommodation and ensure cultural and economic survival'. The existence of both stations, and the manner and direction of change in their audiences, demonstrate the diversity of identity within the Afrikaans community as well as the challenges and opportunities that this presents to a responsive broadcast media.

In the print media sector, similarly powerful developments were experienced with equally important consequences for the manner in which South Africa's many communities were represented. The country's small but influential alternative press, starved of foreign funds and with little appeal to commercial advertisers, struggled on into the mid-1990s before collapsing. Only the *Mail & Guardian* continues, now with foreign owners rather than overseas funders. Foreign capital also made its mark on the mainstream print media with the arrival of Tony O'Reilly's Independent Newspapers group just before the

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democratic election of 1994. With African National Congress (ANC) approval, O'Reilly bought the Argus newspaper group, formerly the country's largest collection of print media titles. Nigerian investment also saw the launch of a new daily in South Africa in 2003, *ThisDay*. The paper lasted just under a year.

One of the most significant trends of the post-1994 period in the South African print media was the arrival of tabloid newspapers. In 1994, the biggest selling daily newspaper – which sold an average of 191 322 copies per day in the first half of 1994 – was *The Star* of Johannesburg. By 2006, the *Daily Sun* was selling over 450 000 copies a day and had a daily readership of 3.44 million. The arrival of the tabloids, as the authors of the second chapter in this section point out, sparked fierce controversy among media analysts. At first, commentators bemoaned the apparently poor journalism of the tabloids seemingly founded on dodgy ethics and pandering to the lowest common denominator. Since then, according to Nicola Jones, Yves Vanderhaeghen and Dee Viney, more critical thought is being given to the impact and importance of the tabloid phenomenon.

In their chapter on the rise of South Africa's biggest tabloid, the *Daily Sun*, these authors argue 'while tabloid journalism may have many faults, it can also be seen as an alternative arena for public discourse'. Within this domain, new possibilities have been created for the provision of access and for the representation of citizens previously excluded from mainstream print media discourse. The authors suggest that the concomitant rise in literacy, in levels of participation and in the frequency and verisimilitude of self-identification necessarily supports a deepening of the quality of democracy. They also explore the relationship between cultural consumption and questions of cultural identity and investigate, in particular, how the *Daily Sun* has acted as a mechanism for identity change by offering 'tools of identity making' to its millions of daily readers.

Racial identity has never had more currency than in the post-apartheid era, argues Tanja Bosch in her chapter on online coloured identities. And with the Internet, new possibilities have been created for the exploration and articulation of these identities. Conducting a virtual ethnography of the Internet portal Bruin-ou.com, Bosch examines how the meaning of 'coloured' is explored on the Internet and how identity is constructed and contested via the site. She finds that coloured identity is linked more to global notions of blackness than to a South African black identity: 'coloured identity is still more than a dated apartheid label; it has been invented and reinvented'. She argues

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that the creation of virtual communities in cyberspace facilitates cultural empowerment as minority groups are able to consolidate their cultural identities despite geographic borders or other constraints.

An important trend in South African journalism, as well as in the world at large, has been the shift toward convergence. This process implies both the presentation of the same or similar content on a range of platforms as well as the concentration of those platforms into multi-use devices. Examples include the development of information and news websites by newspaper companies and the increasing multifunctionality of cellphones. Both trends are characteristic of the South African media sector in the post-1994 period. Both also demonstrate how the restructuring of the media has not been simply about changing ownership patterns, new media platforms or increased diversity. It has also been underpinned by shifting relationships between media forms and the manner in which these forms are accessed. In her chapter on Antjie Krog's account of her experience of reporting on the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), *Country of My Skull*, Anthea Garman illustrates exactly this notion and contemplates its implications for identity formation.

The TRC was the most important of the new South African state's attempts to deal with the past, Garman writes. Krog's book combines her own witnessing of the TRC's work with personal testimony from perpetrators and victims, and reportage of behind-the-scenes events and discussions. The product, argues Garman, is a work of journalism that the traditional journalistic outlets of radio, television and print could not convey equally well. The book allowed Krog to combine her skills as a poet with her insights as a reporter to present an understanding of what happened at the TRC and what it meant for South Africa.

Writer Andre Brink has argued that trying to contemplate the importance of the TRC would be 'irresponsible' without reference to Krog's text. In her chapter, which again leans on developments in public-sphere theory, Garman claims the text of *Country of My Skull* enables readers to participate in a 'mass subjectivity' that allows for an imaginary but demonstrable notion of national unity: '[I]t is this very construction of public-private subjectivity in relation to texts that allows for participation in an imagined, public and unknowably large community.' The chapter is a reminder that new forms of media are in the process of being created all the time and with them new avenues for the articulation, or subjugation, of identities. We therefore need to re-evaluate constantly the restructuring of the media matrix and of the place of identity within it.

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Since 1994 South Africa has experienced a significant transformation of its political and media landscapes. Not surprisingly, these transformations have impacted on both collective and individual identities of South Africans. On the one hand, those identities that had emerged and grown under apartheid were destabilised by post-1994 hegemonic shifts. On the other hand, the reconfiguration of the country's socio-political and media landscape created the conditions for – and promoted – the emergence of new individual and collective identities. A complex process of identity construction, deconstruction and reconstruction has effectively characterised post-apartheid South Africa. Section three of this volume, 'Expressing identities', examines some of these processes through discussions of various media examples.

The authors contributing to section three have all focused on different identity formations. Only one author, Simphiwe Sesanti, deploys a form of perennialism to understand identity, while the other six authors contributing to this section share a common understanding of the phenomenon of identity. These six implicitly use constructivism, wherein identity is viewed as the outcome of a construction process. Sesanti's chapter thereby offers an interesting counterpoint to the way the other authors have viewed South African identity.

Overall, section three offers a series of case studies depicting the tensions and struggles associated with the birth of new and the mutation of old identities in contemporary South Africa. The case studies show how old identities have been reconstructed (or, alternatively, have resisted reconstruction), how new identities have been constructed out of the resources made available by a transformed media environment, and how new identities have grown from appropriating and/or reconfiguring media constructions imported from America via an increasingly globalised media system. The case studies also highlight the role of the post-1994 state in constructing new ideologies and identities, and the relationship of the news media to aspects of South African identity formation.

The result has been a dynamic environment for the birth of new identities and the mutation of old identities. If one examines the resultant process of identity formation and mutation through the case studies in section three, one is struck by the importance of:

- the role played by new (post-1994) media genres which function within the logic of neo-liberal globalised economics;
- the way in which identities emerge both 'organically' (from grass-roots

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engagements with the world) and through the 'organised' labour of media professionals;

- how individuals construct their identities from the stories and images carried in the media, as well as from how they choose to relate to people around them;
- the impact of television and film images imported from America;
- the contradictions between, on the one hand, the preferred discourses of progressive media producers and ANC leaders and, on the other, realities on the ground (these contradictions get encoded into media products which then impact on identity formation);
- the resilience of old identities and ideologies;
- the local context which sets the parameters within which identity formation ultimately takes place; and
- the contradictions inherent in the contemporary nation-building and hegemony-building exercise that South Africa is grappling with, and how these contradictions impact on identity formation.

When reading these case studies, one is reminded of Karl Marx's observation that humans make their own history but are not free to make it as they please. Humans may be active builders of their worlds and their identities, but they are simultaneously constrained by existing social, economic and political conditions and by the weight of the past that is always already encoded into existing conditions and existing identities. Post-1994 South Africa illustrates all too well how the world is not a tabula rasa upon which the new can be inscribed afresh.

Wiida Fourie's analysis of letters to the *Beeld* newspaper is revealing of how Afrikaners, in adjusting to the post-apartheid environment, have reconstructed a number of key elements of their self-identity. Equally significant, Fourie shows how some core features of Afrikaner identity have remained resistant to change. In particular, letters to *Beeld* suggest that Afrikaner perceptions of 'the other', as well as attitudes about how Afrikaners should relate to 'others' (i.e. group boundary maintenance), have remained resistant to change. This mixture of change and resistance is revealing of the complexity that is identity construction.

Adam Haupt's analysis of the construction of South African black masculinity tells us much about the impact of popular culture on identity construction. In particular, we see the way in which black males are influenced by media images of African Americans and how these American media-made identities are both incorporated and reconfigured by South Africans as they construct their own identities.

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Significantly, both Fourie's and Haupt's work reveals how the processes of post-apartheid identity reconstruction can be painful – and not only for white Afrikaners as might have been expected, but also for members of the emergent black middle class.

Both Haupt and Jane Stadler reveal the significance of images delivered by a globalised media, and how these global images are appropriated and localised in a South African context. Stadler's work unpacks how film images have simultaneously served to reproduce old identities, construct new identities, and disseminate and popularise American identities (especially African American identities) in a South African context. But, most significantly, Stadler's work on 'Coconuts' and 'Wiggers' shows us how South Africans have also subverted, deconstructed and reconfigured (that is, localised) these identities imported from America.

Stella Viljoen's work on South African men's magazines shows us something similar: when commercialised global media genres were imported into South Africa after 1994, they encountered a local context that demanded modifications. Viljoen's analysis suggests that identity construction among Afrikaner and black males requires a significant localisation of the content of media products. Again we see that, although American-derived media content is a resource South Africans do use in constructing their identities, it is an appropriation that often localises and modifies such content.

Anita Howarth's approach to identity is different from the other contributions insofar as it focuses on the government's attempts to manufacture a state identity. Howarth argues that South Africa's collective identity constructed and popularised since 1994 is now under threat due to a struggle over how South Africa should respond to the Zimbabwean crisis. This crisis is undermining some elements of the 'self-vision' South Africans have constructed of themselves. If Howarth is correct, South Africans may end up reconceptualising their collective vision, which would reconstruct key elements of their collective identity.

Marguerite Moritz and Sesanti both focus on the relationship between the news media and aspects of South African identity. Moritz examines how the discourses and practices of crime reporting generate a particular genre of news story which, in turn, helps construct a particular understanding of South Africa. Of interest is how these discourses and practices vary little from pre-1994 journalistic practices. Another point brought home in Moritz's chapter is

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that while journalists cherish criticising others, many journalists are themselves very sensitive to criticism. There is often a refusal to turn the mirror. Moritz observes that 'South African journalists acknowledge that the impact of their approach to crime reporting has been largely unexamined by journalists and by the media organisations they work for'. The question is, why? Is it the avoidance of deeper probing that may unearth the existence of inadequacies in the process of carrying out their duties? Or is it the refusal to acknowledge the bitter truth that journalists are not as 'independent' as they often claim to be or want to be – that more often than not they have to bow down to companies' newsroom culture that is often driven by profit imperatives as opposed to the often bandied-about 'public interest'?

In many ways both Moritz and Sesanti are concerned with the resilience of the sorts of journalistic practices and discourses that would have been familiar during the apartheid era. Through an examination of the reporting of incidents involving Jacob Zuma, Sesanti develops a full-blown critique of contemporary South African journalism. Sesanti's chapter is timely because it addresses the conflicting narratives of a Western-inspired liberalism underpinning the professional ideologies of South African journalism on the one hand, and a (largely state-sponsored) narrative of the 'African Renaissance' on the other. The discourse of Africanness is pervasive in post-apartheid society (for instance, one university has declared itself a 'World Class African University'; a newspaper has declared itself 'Distinctly African'; and former South African president FW de Klerk, in response to President Thabo Mbeki's 'I am an African' speech, declared that 'I am an African too'). Yet Sesanti criticises mainstream South African journalism for failing to understand African identity (which he sees as rooted in a perennial African culture) due to the resilience of Eurocentricism in South Africa's newsrooms.

Ultimately, each of the case studies in section three reveals that a struggle over South African discourses, practices and identity continues.

The essays in this collection show, from a range of perspectives and approaches, that South African identity formation remains an intriguing work in progress – and one worthy of ongoing analysis. We hope that this volume will make a lasting contribution to finding new ways of thinking about this complex, multi-layered and fascinating process.

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