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**MAKING SENSE OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM:
LIFE NARRATIVES OF POLITICAL ACTIVISTS FROM THE SOUTH
AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT**

University of Cape Town

**MAKING SENSE OF POLITICAL ACTIVISM: LIFE NARRATIVES OF
ACTIVISTS FROM THE SOUTH AFRICAN LIBERATION MOVEMENT**

LINDA PRICE

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ABSTRACT

This study uses life narratives to explore the meaning that elderly activists who were involved in the South African liberation movement have attached to their lives.

+ [Participation in a liberation movement provides a rich context to examine how individuals mediate the complex negotiation between selves and the worlds they inhabit.

Detailed interviews were conducted with 22 men and women from diverse race groups, ranging in age from sixty-three to ninety-six years. Interviews were recorded and transcribed and transcriptions were returned to participants to ensure that they were satisfied with the content. The analysis of the narratives involved one detailed case study and an integrated analysis of the remaining 21 narratives. Processes of analysis and interpretation were informed by the theoretical underpinning of the study, which combined the poststructuralist emphasis on the self as constructed through narrative with an interpretive exploration into the conditions and efficacy of personal agency.

The case study revealed how history and culture have shaped a long-term identification with activism and how the self is indispensable to a coherent story. The combined
+ [analysis examined how wider historical and social processes are given form in the narratives of self by shifting attention between the particular and the general. The illustration of how selves interacted with their social history by reaching forwards and backwards in time enabled the documentation of both personal experience and social change. The diverse intersection of gender, race and class with family life, education, relationships and age shaped narratives of self that were multiple and shifting.

Despite the lack of total narratives, there were clusters of experience that could be identified across the narratives. The tension and contradictions that emerged from performing multiple tasks were particular to the narratives of the women participants. A shared sense of gender solidarity was largely absent from their narratives in that some women claimed feminism as self-relevant while others presented feminism as a reference point from which the self could be distinguished as less militant and more feminine. All the participants described a process of radicalisation that began from an early age. Sites of radicalisation were located in the political involvement of family members, educational settings and the visibility of politically active organisations. Connections
+ [were made between fully-fledged activism and adulthood and organisational membership was seen to provide a framework to understand the world and the opportunity to act in

accordance with that belief system. The life of an activist was presented as demanding and required rigorous self-management that was derived primarily from the solidarity of the group experience. Constructions of activism in exile used organisational membership to mediate the hardship and loneliness of exile. The victory of the liberation movement represented a turning point across all the narratives. Constructions of self in relation to the dilemma between remaining in exile or returning to South Africa revealed the irreparable damage of exile. The profound integration with organisations that had sustained participants' activism up to this point shifted to accommodate a degree of ambivalence. This shift signalled a changing political landscape as the victory of the liberation movement represented a fundamental change in the nature of political work as well as in the identity of activists. Despite this ambivalence, constructions of self retained a strong commitment to political organisations. X NB

The vitality with which participants constructed their lives challenges pre-scripted notions of aging that depict old age in terms of a decline in productivity. Constructions of the present in relation to the past were informed by participants' ongoing and fluid relationship with their activism as well as their commitment to working towards socialism in the future. This projection into the future conveyed the notion of individuals whose lives were continually unraveling. The centrality of personal reflection to the narratives meant that they continually folded in on themselves, thus highlighting the ongoing negotiation between past, present and future. In the telling of stories that closely resembled the narrative genre of the hero/heroine making his/her mark on the world, the narratives translated impressions of past events into a form that allowed an immediate grasp of their significance. The narratives of what it means to be an activist in the late 1990s have also revealed how the meaning of stories in the present is linked to the storyteller's connection to the larger stories of the community to which he/she belongs. X genre
X activism
now

In sum, the study argued that selves actively construct themselves within and against the complex tapestry of past relationships, current investments and projected desires for the future. It advocated life history as a response to the need for life review amongst the elderly and as a meaningful opportunity for younger people to engage with their history. As the central argument of the study has been to show how activism is shaped by many diverse factors that are themselves always in process, it has advocated an approach to scholarship that views research as limited, in process and in continual need of adjustment.

COMING TO

Thirty-four years ago -
How many hours is that?
In a dusty, sun-webbed
Cape Town room,
A meeting of hungry
Food workers
Is called to order.
I write minutes.

My friend, Louisa Kellerman,
Fruit canning shop steward,
Eyes blackened
Teeth missing,
Forehead cut deep,
Oozing black pain,
Whispers comrade,
Love is a ball of shit
And tries awkwardly
To wink.
I write minutes.

Thirty-eight years old -
How many hours is that?
She looks sixty -
How many hours of bruises?
Seven children,
Husband drunk
Forever and ever,
Her battered body
Yet achieves
A fluid, suggestive caper -
A fuck-you-all-I'm -surviving
Dance of life.
I write minutes.

Johnnie Mentoer, grape picker,
From vineyards
Whose wines glow
On the President's table.
Stands stooped and sore.
His quavered Afrikaans
Tells how the tot system
Deadens fight, kills hope.

We are born befuddled, he says,
We grow slowly, stunted,
In half sleep,
And go unconscious
To our graves.
I write minutes.

He is seventy -
How many hours is that?
How many mind-numbed hours?
Into a century's wine-soaked
Blood-soaked dust
My minutes crumble.
Louisa and Johnnie -
They are here now,
Nelson.
Released with you,
She fights
Alongside her sisters -
All the women.

And he? He is at last awake -
His children wide-eyed,
Clear-eyed,
Visionaries,
For all their minutes,
Days, hours and years,
To see the sunshine,
Feel the warm rain,
Taste the fruit.

Philippa Murrell, July 1994

(Philippa gave me a copy of this unpublished poem when I interviewed her in July 1998)

THESIS OVERVIEW

This is a study of the personal and social construction of meaning that political activists who have been involved in the South African liberation movement attribute to their lives. It examines the lives of a group of activists who were situated at the heart of the anti-apartheid movement for more than four decades. Their resistance to the wide-ranging laws and non-legal devices that the state employed to maintain white, Afrikaner Nationalist rule became the benchmark against which they lived their lives.

1960 saw an intensity of state oppression and brutality from which some activists escaped with their lives, while others were killed or jailed for life. The struggle to create a society where humanity and justice would triumph over cruelty and racial division was set back a generation. It took nearly three decades of defiance and unrest before Nelson Mandela was released from prison and South Africans sat down to negotiate the Interim Constitution that would guide the country towards its first democratic elections. ANC members in exile received indemnity so that they could return to the country and participate in the negotiations and four years later a new South Africa based on majority rule was won.

Since these 1994 elections, South Africa has continued to undergo fundamental change from the old apartheid order to a new democratic dispensation. Oral stories are essential to this process as they contain memories of recent history that contribute significantly to contemporary political and social life, which in turn shape the future. The stories of the activists who comprise this study illustrate how their commitment to their cause and to themselves has shaped their lives, as well as those around them, and how meaningful engagement with the challenges of daily life can strengthen us as individuals.

Statement of aims:

The study adopts a qualitative approach to unravel the stories of elderly political activists.

*coming to
activism
narrative*

It uses life narratives to explore how they reconstruct their activist trajectories and make sense of their experiences in relation to changes in South Africa as well as the wider social and historical context. It emphasises the value of hindsight in coming to terms with experience and endeavors to reveal the complex representation of gender, race, class and ethnicity in their lives. By capturing the voices of the activists, and the personal and social meaning that they attach to their own lives, it aims to build on existing psychological understandings of activism, aging and memory and to initiate new ideas.

This attempt to uncover the unique, the social and the historical in the lives of the activists aims to illuminate how and why they construct their experiences in particular ways at particular times. The acknowledgement of this link between peoples' actions and their social and cultural heritage shows how their sense-making processes are located within a wider context of social remembering. This focus on how the activists share and continually reinterpret their memories reveals how their joint reconstruction informs the content and form of commemorative processes, which in turn influence the social frameworks within which a society learns how and what to remember.

Thesis structure:

The thesis commences by outlining its central theoretical argument. Humans are perceived as engaged in an ongoing sense-making process that enables them to adapt to the changes in their physical environment as well as the social demands that are placed on them. The study incorporates poststructuralist and postmodernist perspectives that locate human nature in the social world with an interpretive framework that emphasises the role of history and the conditions and efficacy of agency in the personal construction of lives (chapter one).

Chapter two locates the study further within the theoretical currents and contexts that have informed it by examining the dominant theoretical trends within the psychology of activism, memory and aging. This overview of the theory upon which the study rests is followed by an outline of the methodological process (chapter three). The chapter

highlights the meaning of my location within a research tradition that is committed to non-exploitative methods and a self-conscious, reflexive style of writing and reporting (Bhavnani, 1990).

The analytical process that is used to interpret the narratives is explained in chapter four. The personal meaning of activism in the context of a life story is illuminated in the case study (chapter five) and the emergent themes provide the framework for the integrated analysis that follows (chapter six). The analysis concludes with a consideration of the complex ways in which the activists use their memories of the past to adapt to the social world in the present and to orient themselves towards the future (chapter seven).

The thesis concludes with an overview of what the central findings reveal about the subjective experiences of the activists as well as an assessment of the contributions and limitations of the study. It also offers a critical reflection on my own role in relation to the study (chapter eight).

CHAPTER ONE: OVERVIEW OF RELEVANT THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

1.1 Introduction:

The purpose of this chapter is to provide an overview of the theoretical assumptions that underpin the methodological framework that is presented in the following chapter. The study has been shaped by philosophical, sociological and psychological approaches that grapple with the complex nature of subjectivity. Since the 1960s, debates in the social sciences have revolved around questions regarding the deterministic features of structure and agency and the postmodern 'linguistic turn' that emphasises language, texts and discourse (Anderson, 1995).

Within psychology, this discursive revolution is frequently located under the umbrella of social constructionism which advocates a psychological discourse of the individual that extends into the far reaches of contemporary western cultures (Henwood, Griffin & Phoenix, 1998). Social constructionism comprises a dual focus on the discursive constitution of the social and the construction of individual identities as multiple and transient. This emphasis on the personal and social meaning of experience has shaped a research agenda that attempts to tackle the limitations of positivism and determinism.

However a central critique of social constructionism is that it is detached from lived realities. Its post-modernist focus on individual, multiple and floating identities and the discursive constitution of the social fails to clarify the crucial interconnection between personal and social domains (Chamberlayne, Bornat & Wengraf, 2000). The study attempts to address this critique by inter-weaving the various components of whole lives with social, political and discursive processes. It achieves this by using a biographical method in the form of life narrative research.

Biographical social researchers describe people as historically formed actors whose individual life stories are imbued with connections to wider frameworks of understanding

(ibid.). Biographies thus straddle a consideration of how selves are constituted through language with an illustration of what is subjectively unique about life narratives. The presentation of an individual's life in storied form is seen as a human activity that contributes towards the maintenance of identity and the transmission of key cultural and personal elements (ibid.). While narrative constructions are seen as illuminative of culture and history, their form is particular to each individual as they emerge from the unique social relationships in which individuals are embedded.

In order to illustrate the above, the discussion will examine how the shift in thinking that has shaped the agenda of social science research has been informed by critical reflection on the nature of the interconnection between individuals and society. The central principles of postmodernism and poststructuralism as a response to positivism will be explored with an emphasis on the social constructionist project within psychology. The chapter will conclude by outlining the narrative construction of self as the theoretical point of reference for the study and by signalling key issues that will be used to shape the unfolding of the thesis.

1.2 Postmodernism:

Postmodernism represents a distinct historical stage in societal development that is characterised by social, economic and political systems that have evolved through industrialisation and capitalism (Crossley, 2000). It therefore arises out of, and in reaction to modernism, and represents a structural transformation of advanced industrial societies as well as a literary and cultural movement that has transformed the very idea of 'art' and its relation to other social practices (Crotty, 1998). The totality and completeness of the modern era has been replaced with notions of fragmentation and only the tentative, the temporary and the contingent remain. This "refusal to endorse things as they really are" (Rue, ibid. p. 192) directs attention away from the deeper meaning of existence and towards an interest in what surfaces.

Postmodernism thus distinguishes a historical period, an aesthetic style and a change in

the condition of knowledge. The lack of a uniform definition of postmodernism is explained in many academic discussions in terms of the disclaimer that it is impossible to be too specific about its parameters of meaning. Kvale (1992) provides a useful articulation of the three distinct dimensions that it embodies: postmodernism as a statement of style, postmodernism as a method of analysis and postmodernism as an epochal transition. Postmodernism as style is associated with a form of protest against formal, sterile, high-rise architecture. Postmodernism as a method within psychology emerged in the late 80s. It has roots within the paradigm upheaval in literary theory that was initiated by Jacques Derrida's 'deconstructionist analysis.' Derrida (1976) challenged the received authority of established interpreters of literary texts by uncovering the hidden cultural 'codes' that govern the discourse that is constrained within knowledge. As an epochal transition, postmodernism represents a crisis within modernity in that it fundamentally questions the validity of the governing trinity of human reason, science and progress that lies at the core of the modernity project.

The changes in the environment and cultural landscape that are associated with postmodernism have been linked to changes in psychological perspectives of the experience of self and subjectivity (Gergen, 1991). There has been a break with major assumptions about the subject matter of modern psychology, in particular "the decentering of the self, the move from the inside of the psyche to the text of the world, and the emphasis on practical knowledge" (Kvale, 1992, p. 1). The conception of a reality that is independent of the observer has been replaced with the notion that language constitutes reality. This linguistic and social construction of reality that lies at the core of poststructuralism emphasises the multiple and fragmented nature of existence and regards diversity as integral to lived experience (Chadwick, 2001).

1.3 Poststructuralism:

The relationship between postmodernism and poststructuralism has been portrayed in a variety of ways in the literature. Some writers regard the two as coterminous, as in the case of Sarup who believes "there are so many similarities between poststructuralist

theories and postmodernist practices that it is difficult to make a clear distinction between them" (in Crotty, 1998, p. 195). Lather (1991) maintains that the close alignment between postmodernism and poststructuralism is the result of poststructuralism as a more specific form of thought having been subsumed into the wider movement of postmodernism. Accordingly, postmodernism represents the larger cultural shifts that denote a break with the enlightenment heritage and poststructuralism entails working out the meaning of these shifts within academic theory. This involves a specific focus on the power of language to organise thought and experience and as such it is seen as "both carrier and creator of culture's epistemological codes" (Lather, 1992, p. 95).

Lather's distinction is not absolute since in many writings there is overlap in the use of the terms. It is also noteworthy that even Lather herself points out that the terms can be used interchangeably. As this work is primarily concerned with language and subjectivity, it will utilise the concept poststructuralism. An attempt to convey the key features of a poststructuralism critique inevitably involves an over-simplification of its ideas. This is partly due to poststructuralism's resistance to resting on any foundation that would comprise a definition and partly because there is a reluctance amongst theorists to label their work as poststructuralist. According to Crotty (1998) some of the writers that have been associated with poststructuralism include Michel Foucault, Jacques Derrida, Jacques Lacan and Julia Kristeva.

Despite these inherent difficulties in defining poststructuralism, the discussion will proceed to outline the key features of the critique that has undermined the legitimacy of hegemonic western thought. More specifically, it aims to illustrate how poststructuralism has brought modern psychology into crisis.

1.3.1 Poststructuralism and psychology:

The penetration of poststructuralism within psychology has essentially involved a destabilisation of the rationalist conception of the subject that has dominated the discipline since the beginning of modernity (Henriques, Hollway, Urwin, Venn &

Walkerdine, 1984; Smith, Harré & Van Lagenhove, 1995). This rejection of individualism, and more specially the notion that individuals are located at the centre of experience, ties in with a broader criticism of the assumptions of the enlightenment era.

Rationalism originated in the work of Rene Descartes, the Enlightenment philosopher whose ideas are often portrayed as central to the development of modern perspectives of the individual (Burkitt, 1991; Sampson, 1983). He perceived humans as composed of two systems, the mental and the material. The former comprises rational thought and the latter consists of an automation of sensations and impulses. For Descartes, all we can know with certainty is that humans are beings who have the capacity to think (Bakhurst & Sypnowich, 1995). Rational thought is viewed as God-given and innate. It is divorced from bodily experience and the body is perceived as a vehicle for the mind.

This dualistic perspective advocates a view of reason as the universal application of logical steps that achieve knowledge. It is an accepted recipe for acquiring empirical knowledge that involves "the modern study of how the individual mind applies reason or experience to the deliverance of the senses, to gain knowledge about the world in which it is embodied" (Still, 1998, p. 23). The dominant idea of this period centred on the superiority of reason as a mode of human thought and psychology has played an integral role in validating these individual mental processes. As a discipline, it has undertaken research aimed at producing insight into how people can logically collect, store and retrieve information and how they can translate these processes into behaviour (Gergen, 1994). This prescriptive approach represents psychology's enduring commitment to science's capacity to "thrust modernity forward through its re-description of the world and through technology" (Knorr-Cetina, 1997, p. 266).

Critical perspectives on the dominance of rationalism within psychology can be traced back to the seventies when widespread discontent was leveled at the discipline's course of direction. Apart from resistance to the prevalence of individualistic and experimental approaches that fail to incorporate a more social and contextual understanding of human behaviour, criticisms were also raised on an epistemological level. The work of Gergen

(1973) has made a significant contribution in this regard. He argued that history provides a more favourable model for psychology than the universalising claims of the natural sciences because it deals with subject matter that is culturally and historically specific.

This perspective challenges the essentialism and objectivity that underlies psychology's reliance on scientific knowledge. The poststructuralist critique rejects the possibility of absolute truth and objectivity in favour of the notion that all truths are aligned with particular ideological, moral and political purposes. The quest for objectivity, and claims of truth that purport to transcend the perspective of individuals or groups are therefore rendered illegitimate. Instead the historically specific nature of knowledge, as well as the interests that are invested in knowledge, are emphasised.

Gergen (1994b) tackled another key feature of enlightenment thinking by highlighting the existence of dualisms within psychology, specifically between the mind and body (or emotions). He showed how the distinction that is made between the selves that people present to others and the selves that they inhabit deep within translates into a search for an all-encompassing way of interpreting social life. This endeavor assumes a stable reality and is unable to accommodate change as an essential feature of social life.

Dualistic thinking advocates an understanding of society and individuals whereby individuals are perceived as self-contained entities whose social bonds are secondary to their existence. This separation between individuals' private and public selves implies a division between actions and feelings (Bakhurst & Sypnowich, 1995; Burkitt, 1991) and is most saliently reflected in experimental research which separates entities into independent and dependent variables and measures hypothesised relationships between them (Smith, Harré & Van Langenhove, 1995).

The dualism that is inherent to this fragmentation of social behaviour into manageable parts exists within many other psychological approaches. While coverage of the full spectrum is beyond the scope of this discussion, some of the approaches will be illuminated in order to show how the ethic of individual effort that pervades social

consciousness in contemporary western society has been prioritized by psychology. Behaviourism focuses on the external connections between measurable phenomena by regarding humans as passive receptors of their environment through reinforces that are either withheld or awarded (Leonard, 1984). Skinner's Social Learning Theory represents a strand of the behaviourist movement that examines the conditioning influence of the environment on behaviour (in Burkitt, 1991). Other social learning theorists (Bandura; Mischel, in Leonard, 1984) have challenged this emphasis on the conditioning influence of external stimuli for overlooking how "the individual's cognition enters as a significant variable in the determination of behaviours, *evaluating* persons and objects" (Mischel, *ibid.* p. 13, original emphasis). However the identification of the significance of motivational and emotional factors, without reference to the social relations through which people learn, advocates a notion of selves that is isolated from other aspects of personality and from other people (Burkitt, 1991).

X Cognitive social psychology extended its line of inquiry to understanding how humans make sense of their surroundings by developing trait theories that use inner mechanisms to explain unique differences in human responses to different situations (Allport; Cattell; Eysenck, *ibid.*). The notion of personality as comprising unique traits that are stable over time reflects the essentialist view that mental processes are inaccessible to public scrutiny, thus reinforcing the Cartesian separation between mind and body (Burkitt, 1991). The belief that wholes are more than the sum of their parts comprises the foundation of 'Gestalt Psychology.' Kelly's Personal Construct Theory rejects the notion that humans respond mechanically to their environments and advocates constructs that enable them to anticipate and adapt to future events by recapturing valuable aspects of similarly perceived past experiences (in Harré & Gillett, 1994). Despite Construct Theory's presentation of the individual as active in the face of experience, it fails to recognise any material limits on the way in which people interpret their worlds. By focusing on cognition, the domains of reality and representation are still viewed as separate from one another.

Attempts to incorporate the social context within mainstream psychological

understandings of self have thus failed to question the basic assumption that mental capacities reside within individuals. Connections between society and the individual, and mind and emotions, have not been made. The psychology of personality begins with the biological assumption that individuals are separate from one another. The isolated individual therefore becomes not a historical and social product but a biologically determined entity whose individuality is contained within from birth. This viewpoint pervades psychology because such an image of humans corresponds with commonsense understandings of human nature in the western world.

The binary treatment of the individual and the social is also evident in psychological theorizing that is founded on the counter-positioning of reason and emotion, man and woman, black and white and western and non-western (de la Rey, 1999). This dual focus on an exterior as the apparent, the observed and the given, and an interior as structure, force or process assumes that the exterior may only be understood with reference to the influence of the interior. Gergen (1994a) used Freudian psychology, with its sharp division between conscious rationality and drives, as well as between deep seated-needs and the moral demands of society, to further illustrate the prevalence of structuralism within psychology.

The current wave of questioning about the nature of subjectivity, the boundaries of the discipline and the abundance of innovative research methods that pervade psychology, is evidence of an ongoing response to the call for critical reflection. Shotter (1974) challenged psychology to extend the range of its subject matter by arguing that sources that have traditionally informed psychology's direction, namely physics and the philosophy of science, now look to psychology to create a conception of knowledge that tackles current intellectual problems. In his view, taking the lead in resolving these dilemmas would not involve an outright rejection of science but rather the incorporation of how understandings are generated. "The doing of science is itself a human activity and as such an understanding of its conduct is one of psychology's tasks" (in Smith et al, 1995, p. 3).

— This view of knowledge as the outcome of human activity involves a primary preoccupation with language. From a poststructuralist perspective language is seen as productive and constructive of subjectivity, social life and reality and as such meaning is created through an endless stream of relationships. Meanings are never fixed or pre-given but are released in the processes of reading and interpretation. This emphasis on the conventions of literary rendering illuminates the subjectivity of the scientist and shows how scientific accounts are shaped by social interests and not by the events themselves. This shift in thinking about knowledge as socially constructed is evident in a growing body of work and the discussion will now turn to the constructionist approach to the self.

1.4 Social constructionism:

It is important to note that analyses that eschew reductionism are not peculiar to poststructuralism. Social constructionism is a well-established perspective in sociology that can be traced to the work of Berger and Luckman (1966), Mannheim (1936) and Schutz (1970). It represents the idea that "social objects are not given 'in the world' but constructed, negotiated, reformed, fashioned and organised by human beings in their efforts to make sense of happenings in the world" (Sarbin & Kitsuse, 1994, p. 3). Given that "constructionism is itself a construction" (Cromby & Nightingale, 1999, p. 3), various and complex versions on the theme of social constructionism exist, making it extremely difficult to provide a definitive illustration of its meaning.

In general terms, elements of post-structural and post-modern critique have been crystallized in the social constructionist theoretical project. According to Burr (1995), the key assumptions that have informed its foundations involve the questioning of taken-for-granted knowledge by locating it within historical, social and cultural contexts and the acknowledgment that language and social practices are integral to the conception of knowledge.

Within psychology, this has involved the articulation of the connection between changing cultural and historical factors and human experience and the replacement of

psychological processes that have traditionally been understood as intra-personal with an interpersonal perspective. This orientation has historical precedence in the work of the American social philosopher George Herbert Mead (1934) and the Russian developmental psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1978). Despite the location of their work on the periphery of modern psychology, they have independently shown how psychological understandings emerge from a social and historical base and how the human mind and identity are integral to the social and cultural world of interpersonal relations (Sampson, 1983).

1.4.1 Subjectivity and the social world:

The recognition that the psychological cannot be reduced to the sociological, or the sociological to the psychological, shifts attention onto the social relations through which people learn. An understanding of how people adapt to their environments and in the process construct their own personalities is found in Mead's "sociological social psychology" (in Wetherell, McGhee & Stevens, 1998, p. 17). Mead commenced his inquiry with questions about the nature of the social world. He assumed that society and cultural life are pre-existent and that people are created through their communications and relationships with others. He was influenced by Darwin's notion of the adaptation of species to changing ecological conditions and he viewed the mind as the vehicle that enables people to adapt to their environment. Mead maintained that both mind and self emerge within the social and communicative reality of the group. He described this development of the self "as though it were a hermeneutic circle - the self is constituted through the Social, which is itself constituted by selves" (in Still, 1998, p. 31).

Accordingly, an individual's life is seen to begin before birth. It emerges from other lives and although it possesses its own inner time and substance, it emanates against the pressure and resistance of a surrounding culture and history. This inter-penetration of psychological and sociological domains infers that "the individual constitutes the social world as genuinely as the social world constitutes the individual" (Mead, 1934, p. 15).

Mead referred to Marx's division of labour as the macro structure whereby the material world is organised. As the division of labour is seen to provide the foundation for individual identities, all meaning, including the meaning of the self, is rooted in the material world (Burkitt, 1991). People actively employ social rules to jointly construct their relations and activities, and this shared reality is communicated through language. The knowledge that exists between people regarding their conscious mental states is fundamental to human group life. It is determined by the meaning that people attach to their experience. Thus neither meaning nor self is a pre-condition for social interaction: they emerge and are sustained by conversations occurring between people (Sampson, 1993). These meanings are modified through an interpretive process that involves self-reflective individuals symbolically interacting with one another. Their accounts of their behaviour are learned from others, as well as the popular culture that forms the basis for future behaviour (Burkitt, 1991).

Language thus represents the social activity through which people adapt to one another and modify their environment in order to survive. It comprises an objective interpersonal system of communication through which the attitudes of the whole group, as opposed to particular individuals, can be communicated. Initially communication takes place through gestures in which individuals signal their responses. These signals are used as an impetus to adjust their own response (Sampson, 1983). Self-reflection is necessary in order to select the appropriate response and self-consciousness arises from this reflection. The agency of self-consciousness therefore intervenes between stimulus and response in order to produce actions that are considered in a social context. Mead (1934) emphasises that this conversation of gestures does not have universal significance as the stimuli that are conveyed through gesture "call out different responses in the individuals in the group" (p. 54).

Individuals therefore use language to internalise the attitudes of the social group and also to take the attitude of others towards the self. Through the vocal gesture individuals are able to respond immediately to their own actions. Similarly, others communicate their response through language and individuals derive an objective sense of the way in which

they have affected others, and therefore an objective sense of their own selves as separate entities. The way in which we act on the world therefore determines our consciousness of it (Burkitt, 1991).

Sampson's (1983) conceptualisation of what he refers to as an 'address frame' provides a valuable illustration of Mead's formulation of thought and meaning. The address frame represents "the standpoint which people assume or adopt in imaginatively completing the responses to their own gestures. An address frame therefore is the *whom* that people address in their external or internal conversation of gestures, the *other* whose responses render people's own gestures meaningful" (ibid. p.171, original emphasis). Sampson goes on to emphasise that even our introspective thinking takes place in the form of an internal conversation with oneself, mediated by social language and meanings. What we call the private mind is in fact a conversation that is held internally with ourselves based entirely on language and social meanings.

Mead is not alone in offering an interpersonal theory of mind and human thought. Vygotsky offered a view of cognition that reinforced Mead's assertion that interpersonal formulations precede and lay the foundation for the development of intra-personal structures of the human mind (in Bakhurst, 1990). Vygotsky described the process whereby individuals internalise their social world as "the internal reconstruction of an external operation" (in Sampson, 1983, p. 166) and he used the example of a child's cultural development to illustrate its meaning.

Vygotsky explained how a small child reaches for a toy beyond his/her grasp by extending his/her fingers in vague movements. The care-provider interprets this gesture as "pointing" and responds by passing the toy to the child. "The child's unsuccessful attempt engenders a reaction not from the object ... *but from another person*. Consequently, the primary meaning of that unsuccessful grasping movement is established by others" (ibid. original emphasis). As the child develops, these uncertain grasping movements become refined into gestures of pointing and an internal representational system comes into being. This ongoing transformation of inter-personal

processes into intra-personal ones locates the origin of all mental functions in relations between human individuals" (ibid. p. 57).

Vygotsky concurred with Mead that the division of labour represents the foundation of personal identity. He argued that the dichotomy between individuals and society makes it appear as if consciousness and emotion are diametrically opposed, whereas in reality, labour provides the physical tools that transform the natural world, while language provides the psychological tools that work upon human nature and change it. Rationality, or what Vygotsky referred to as 'higher mental functions' emerges from humans acting to transform their reality. Language interprets and guides these actions in the form of an inner conversation (thinking) that is essentially an internalisation of communicative processes that operate in society (Sampson, 1983).

Uncontrollable innate lower mental functions evolve into higher mental functions through cultural development, and consciousness develops when sensual actions become open to voluntary control. Without language, and the thoughts that make it possible, there would be no awareness of bodily states. Consciousness and emotion are not therefore separate but develop together as part of the whole personality.

Vygotsky therefore made a clear argument against treating human mental capacities according to a model of physical phenomena that is governed by natural laws. This perspective is reinforced in Gergen's (1994b) assertion that psychology should become a social and historical discipline by recognising that the fundamental basis of human mental functioning is culturally and socially determined. These products of social history are preserved in human activity through "the social practices by which the members of a community preserve a conception of their past" (Bakhurst, 1990, p. 203). In a similar vein, the development of the child's higher mental functions are not the result of natural evolution, but represent the outcome of the child's internalisation of interpretive practices, in particular, natural language.

While Vygotsky and Mead offer a meaningful interpretation of how mind and self arise

from constantly changing social and communicative group processes, they both fail to consider relations of power (Burkitt, 1991). They attribute the foundation of the macro structure to the division of labour but make no reference to the social processes that have created this division. A broad understanding of the social context for mind is therefore advocated but the social divisions and inequalities that are reflected in the self through social organisation are overlooked (ibid.). An understanding of how power is manifest within communicative processes is crucial as it alerts us to the ways in which societal inequalities undermine peoples' control over their actions.

These wider social relations are addressed by Seve who uses Marx's historical materialism to illustrate how the degree of productive power that is required to transform the natural world can never be individually generated (in Leonard, 1984). The division of labour within capitalist society organises social activity in such a way that individuals become separated from their means of production and alienated from the society that they have created together. Their interdependence is experienced as an external force yet it is these very social relations that contribute towards the development of personality. Every human need is social because people work together to produce objects necessary for survival. As they produce they change the natural world, including their own needs and potentialities. Human consciousness is a social product and an individual's consciousness cannot on the whole extend beyond his or her place within the social order (Leonard, 1984). Individuals are therefore seen to develop according to the legacy that is handed to them through social relations. As such, it is both the limiting and the enabling factor (Burkitt, 1991).

Through Seve's illustration of how "human beings, in as far as they are developed personalities, are in the last analysis produced by social relations" (in Leonard, 1984, p. 32), he reinforced Mead's assertion that discourses are created by social groups. On the basis of this argument he criticised the discipline of psychology for recognising that humans are socially constructed yet remaining driven by the search for an objective timeless science of the individual. He identified "the abstract *general individual*" as the "skeleton in the cupboard of the psychology of the personality" (in Leonard, 1984, p. 31,

original emphasis).

Although Seve's materialist perspective reveals how activity is the foundation of meaning, his emphasis on social labour within the development of personality leads to an over-emphasis on economic structures at the expense of other social relations such as domestic, cultural and political dimensions (Burkitt, 1991; Leonard, 1984). He illustrates the limitations of personality that result from capitalist relations of power but fails to account for the ways in which power translates to, and influences, communication processes. ✕

The soviet linguistic Volosinov addresses this limitation in his argument that "relations of power distort the communicative process because there are different 'accents' within the social conversation which reflect different ideological positions in the class structure" (in Burkitt, 1991, p. 197). Both human consciousness and social action are significantly influenced by language, culture and values and ideology is present "not only in what we think, but what we think about, what we feel, how we behave, and the pattern of all our social relationships" (Althusser, in Burr, 1995, p. 83).

This perspective has informed an emphasis on the construction of language. Discourse analysis emphasises language as a focus of study in its own right and not as a window on to an underlying cognitive reality (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). Uncertainty about the precise nature of discourse (Parker, 1992) is reflected in the existence of various 'brands' of discourse analysis that each offers a particular view on the constructive and reproductive powers of language. Chadwick (2001) categorises this range in terms of work that has been inspired by Foucault (e.g. Parker, 1992), work that has its roots in the ethnomethodological perspective (e.g. Potter and Wetherell, 1987) and work that has been informed by psychodynamic theory (e.g. Hollway, 1989). ✕

The belief that power relations are inherent to communicative processes that can only be revealed through an examination of the psychological phenomena that are contained in argumentative dimensions of social life is common amongst discourse analysts (Billig, ✕

1987; Potter & Wetherell, 1987). For example, Shotter (1989) describes how social realities are created through conversation and traditions of argumentation. Accordingly, thinking is viewed as a form of internal argument that is shaped by social dialogue and the attitudes that people hold are seen to represent their stance on social problems and conflicts. Ideology influences these attitudes because people adopt the values and morality of their community as common sense understandings of their social world.

This emphasis on language draws attention away from the personalised world of experience and towards the structures of the external world that impact on the individual. The main dynamic upon which these constructions revolve is power and the narrator's talk is seen as discursively produced by powerful institutions (Henwood, Griffin & Phoenix, 1998). This does not mean that common sense represents a unified discourse. Billig (1988) illustrates this point by reminding us that people in conversation frequently argue with one another, creating and recreating endless ideological dilemmas. He believes that the analysis of conversation from a perspective that rejects single truth, in favor of dialogue, reveals these ideological styles of thinking.

Voloshinov (in Burkitt, 1991) points out that ideology often obscures the social context in which its meaning is produced, thus undermining the ability of individuals to confront social and psychological difficulties. In a similar vein, Barthes (1973) shows how economic and cultural conditions that have led to the stratification of society are reflected in ideological meanings that are embedded in the taken-for-granted meanings that circulate in everyday life. He argues that the task is to track down "the decorative display of what-goes-without-saying, the ideological abuse which is hidden there" (ibid. p. 54). By exposing how discourses become naturalised as 'truths' or 'realities,' discourse analysis illustrates how objects become 'fixed' and produce subjects within their parameters (Durrheim, 1997).

Squire (2000b) cautions that an over reliance on discourse as a means of exercising and reproducing power can result in comparing a range of decontextualised texts from a variety of sources "on the reifying assumption that unified discursive entities underlie

these segments." (p. 205). Despite its apparent concern with language, discourse can therefore subsume language into subjectivity by inferring a 'deeper' level of experience that is open to unproblematic interpretation (ibid.).

The central supposition upon which social constructionism draws a connection between language and the world as contingent is the perception that knowledge is constructed through the coordinated actions of humans. This emphasis on human activity prevents a sole focus on textual description. It replaces the notion of knowledge as the outcome of individual cognition with an acknowledgement of the social relatedness of knowledge. The relationship between language and the world it is intended to represent is afforded centre-stage and the sustainability of a given account of the world is not seen as the result of its objective validity but as the outcome of particular social processes. The significance of language in human relations is derived from the way in which it functions within patterns of relationships and the appraisal of existing forms of discourse thus involves evaluating patterns of cultural life which in turn give voice to other forms of cultural expression.

This shift in focus from what is the case about social life to the languages of description and explanation emphasises the social construction of daily life phenomena and has led to the development of alternative research frameworks. Within psychology, feminist scholars in particular, have turned to social constructionism in search of a framework that overcomes the limitations of empirical studies that focus on sex differences and the essentialism of standpoint psychology (de la Rey, 1999). Working from the central premise that science is a communal achievement, Gergen and Davis (1997) have identified five features that would achieve this end. These include a reflexive approach to research; recognition of how the respective group identifications of researchers and participants influence the nature of the work that is produced; an illumination of the value of research by placing it in context; a willingness to develop alternative forms of cultural life; recognition that knowledge claims are continually being developed and are never at an end state.

The study has attempted to incorporate these principles into its examination of how individuals have constructed their lives as activists. By rejecting the notion that selves are unitary and fixed, it has turned to a biographical method that explores how people make sense of their lives in relation to shifting social, historical and political contexts. The narrative approach to self represents a powerful vehicle through which to explore how selves are culturally and historically contingent and constituted through talk.

1.5 Social construction of self as narrative:

The constructionist perspective of knowledge assumes that "one of the primary ways human beings make sense of their experience is by casting it in a narrative form" (Gee, in Mishler, 1986, p. 67). Proponents of constructionism argue that narrative form is central to human life, as in the case of Barthes who claims that "there does not exist, and never has existed, a people without narratives" (in Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 14). Sarbin (1986) shares the view that narrative is the primary form by which human experience is made meaningful. It arranges human experience into temporally meaningful episodes and provides a structure for thinking, perception, imagination and moral decision-making.

The central idea is that story telling is a vehicle through which people make sense of their lives as well as their relationships. It is through stories about childhood, family life, sexual relationships and working experiences that people make themselves intelligible to themselves and to others (de la Rey, 1999). This notion that people understand and recapitulate their experiences in storied form assumes a dynamic, living past that is open to continual interpretation and reinterpretation, or in other words to "meaning-making in and for the present" (Ayers, in Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 114).

Interaction is understood to proceed the autonomous individual. Narrative, as a linguistic representation of social interchange, is thus open to continuous alteration and is not viewed as the product of an individual mind. The use of linguistic devices within narratives implies an audience, either real or imaginary, thus asserting that language is grounded in social interaction and practice (Gergen & Gergen, 1984).

According to Cohler (in Mishler, 1986) personal narratives are "the most internally consistent interpretation of presently understood past, experienced present, and anticipated future" (p. 68). They are generated as reminiscences of how and why something occurred or what led to an action being undertaken (Polkinghorne, 1995) and as such they guide our understanding of self and our experience in the world. The construction of narrative requires 'systemic introspection' through which individuals communicate their interests, beliefs and fears, as well as their understandings of experiences and events. It is important to note that stories are not only told once people have experienced their lives. People also live their lives in storied form. According to Scheibe, "people undertake adventures in order to construct and maintain satisfactory life stories. One's life story needs to include a series of progressive and regressive periods repeating over time (in Polkinghorne, 1988, p. 104).

Narrative as a locus of theory and research has developed into a burgeoning endeavour that currently occupies a place in the theory, research and application of various disciplines, including psychology, psychotherapy, education, sociology and history. Some have termed this historical evolution 'the narrative revolution' while others have viewed it as a manifestation of the demise of the positivist paradigm in social science (Bruner, 1990; Sarbin & Kitsuse, 1994). Although there is agreement that all forms of narrative share a fundamental interest in language, meaning and interpretation, there are notable points of divergence.

Josselson (1993) contends that the existence of numerous interpretations of the term narrative is in keeping with narrative research as a field that is in progress. In the literature narrative as a term tends to be used inclusively to refer to various forms of personal accounts such as biography, autobiography as well as life history. Instead of citing definition as the goal, Josselson advocates the creative and intelligent application of narrative as the central endeavour. In a similar vein, Lieblich, Tuval-Maschiach and Zilber (1998) advocate notions of "pluralism, relativism and subjectivity" (p. 2) as essential to the narrative task. However, they emphasise that this does not reduce the researchers' responsibility to provide a coherent rationale for the choice of methods as well as a clear explanation of the selected processes that have produced their results.

The capacity of narratives to convey 'truth' is a particularly divisive issue. Some believe that narratives have the ability to bear truth through accessing people's identity and personality (ibid.). Any limitations of the narrative are seen as the result of cognitive processes or the narrative events themselves. Others believe that narratives do not reflect truth, but construct it (Gergen, 1994). Narratives are themselves people's identities and any limitations are located in the historical and cultural sphere. By making the validity of narratives dependent on systematic observation, the former view is consistent with empiricism. The view that narratives do not reflect but create what is understood to be true is in keeping with social constructionism.

The social constructionist framework replaces the rational determination of the 'truth' of the meaning that is contained in narratives with a hermeneutic interpretation that offers an intuitively convincing account of the meaning of the text as a whole in light of its constituent parts (Bruner, 1991). This part-whole interdependence is crucial in that events lose significance if they are not linked to the narrative as a whole and the narrative, in turn, can not be realised without its parts (Gergen, 1988b). Narratives thus contain accounts that have been selected and shaped in terms of a commonly believed story or plot that in turn 'contains' them.

The construction of a narrative requires more than the selection of events, either from real life or from memory, followed by the placing of them in the appropriate order. The events themselves need to be constituted in light of the overall narrative so that they become 'functions' of the story because "narratives do not exist as it were in some real world, waiting there patiently and eternally to be mirrored in text" (Bruner, 1991 p. 8).

The telling of a story and its comprehension as a story is dependent on the human capacity to process knowledge in an interpretive manner. The discussion has already illuminated Vygotsky's (1978) contribution to this sense-making activity through his illustration of how narrative comprehension is amongst the earliest powers of mind to appear in the young child. Bruner draws on Vygotsky to emphasise how the problems that arise from interpretation have more to do with context (the conditions of telling) than

with what is actually being told. The different intentional states and background knowledge of both narrator and listener may lead to different interpretations of the events and feelings that are shared and these realities must be factored into the interpretation process.

Although from a social constructionist perspective, there is no reason that narratives should be consistent, consistency and stability of self tends to have cultural currency in several societies. Bruner uses the term diachronicity to explain the unique sequencing of events over time that is characteristic of narratives. As Ricoeur (1984) notes, the temporal sequence reflects 'human time' and not abstract or 'clock' time. It is time whose significance is given by the meaning that is assigned to events by the narrator (Denzin, 1989).

The social constructionist notion that selves are discovered and created through the story telling process is another point of debate. The rationalist view of a core identity is replaced with the view of self as relative to the social interchange that creates the narrative (Gergen, 1994b). The commonly held view that each person possesses a life story is replaced with the notion that people have access to multiple narratives (selves). Gergen makes an important distinction between accounts that span a broad period of time (macro-narratives) and accounts that depict events over a short time period (micro-narratives). He also makes the point that narratives may be nested in one another (de la Rey, 1999).

Macro-narratives are created through the collation of stories into a whole and this process is regarded by anthropologists as the way in which a culture, tradition or history is established. Narratives tend to conform to the rules of what constitutes a reasonable story within their referent culture, thus forging a connection between narrators and their canonical history. This sense of belonging enables individuals to create their own narratives of deviation while still maintaining complicity with the canon.

Narrative descriptions exhibit human activity as purposeful engagement in the world' and they show how "people do not deal with the world event by event ... they frame events

and sentences in larger structures" (Bruner, 1990, p. 64). Plot is the narrative structure through which people understand and describe the relationship among events and choices within their lives. The plot or narrative form that a person uses for telling a story is selected for specific occasions or functions. For example, the life narrative within western society is usually characterised by the narrator as the key protagonist who recounts his/her engagement with a series of linear life phases. The 'cultural clocks' that are particular to various social groups, for example the times at which people are expected to marry and have children, help formulate the parameters for how self-narratives are shaped (Antaki, 1994).

In addition to this recognition of how culture and history shape the form and contents of narrative, gender (Gergen & Gergen, 1993; Gergen, 1997a) and race (Foster, 1995; 1999) have also been identified as crucial to the social construction of self through narrative. Through her study of the typical autobiographical forms used by men and women to make sense of their lives, Gergen has shown how the cultural repertoires of narratives are deeply gendered. In his comprehensive review of the literature on race, Foster (1995) has identified a shift away from essentialist ideas about race towards a 'new' perspective that illuminates race as multiple, dynamic and relationally produced. Ahmed (2000) and Frankenberg (in de la Rey, 1999) have reinforced this notion of race categories as unstable and contextually specific. Frankenberg argued that people have historically shifted between categories such as 'non-white' by illustrating how Jewish Americans, Italian Americans and Latino Americans have at various times and from different standpoints been regarded as both white and 'non-white' (ibid.).

The changing construction of race over time is further illustrated in de la Rey's explication of the South African racial distinction 'coloured.' The category was legally entrenched in the 1950 Population Registration Act to refer to an individual who is neither white nor African. South Africans who were classified as 'coloured' during the apartheid era currently refer to themselves variously "as black, 'co-called coloured', 'coloured' and coloured." (ibid. p. 85)

Central to this notion of the intersection of gender and race in narrative is the way in which power operates to either oppress or enhance the articulation of particular voices. The kinds of stories and the forms in which they are told are constructed within particular contexts of power relations and it is very important to identify which constructions prevail (Bhavnani, 1991; Gergen, 1989; Middleton, 1993). The way in which people construct themselves in relation to gender, race and wider social institutions in their narrative constructions of self thus illuminates the hegemony that is contained within our intellectual and cultural heritage.

Attempts to account for individual agency in relation to shifts in power relations and structures over time has comprised the focus of oral historians since the 1980s. The use of life-history methods to illicit personal accounts has enabled oral historians to reach those sections of society, both in the present and the past, whose experience cannot be accessed through documentary or formal survey sources. This emphasis on the value of subjective experience has led to the development of biographical methods that focus on self-construction, life review and the shaping of identity. Moreover, the integration of reflexivity in biographical work has revealed how understandings of self and others are dependent upon an understanding of our own histories and how we have come to be who we are (Chamberlayne, Bornat & Wengraf, 2000). This reflexive approach to research involves researchers and participants in a process of self-reflection. It requires a focus on the whole person as a historically formed actor and current and past needs are accorded equal status in the social function of the narrative act.

1.5.1 Construction of self in life narrative:

Narrative, as a term that is traditionally used to denote any prosaic discourse, can be used in many different ways and it is important to clarify the meaning that this study has invested in the term. Although stories are deemed particularly suited as the linguistic form in which human experience can be expressed, the term story also carries a connotation of falsehood or misrepresentation. Accounts of events that are alleged to have occurred serve to illuminate a culture's world-view and legitimate its relative values

and goals (Lyotard, in Polkinghorne, 1995).

This study uses narrative to refer to the particular type of discourse that is invested in a story. As such, stories are seen to comprise events and actions that are drawn together and organised into a whole by means of a plot. It therefore uses the term, story, in its general sense, to signify narratives that "combine a succession of incidents into a unified episode" (ibid. p. 7). This usage is accepted practice amongst qualitative researchers working in the area of life histories (Josselson, 1993). A storied narrative refers to fictional accounts as well as narratives that describe 'ideal' life events, including biographies; autobiographies; histories; case studies and reports of remembered episodes that have occurred. It is "a linguistic form that preserves the complexity of human action with its interrelationship of temporal sequence, human motivation, chance happenings and changing interpersonal and environmental contexts" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 7).

The interplay of micro and macro domains that is peculiar to life history provides valuable insight into the process of change by illuminating how shifts in biographical history relate to the social history of a life-span (Sparkes, in Hatch & Wisneiwski, 1995). The discourses that impact on the experience of the social context are therefore revealed without losing sight of the role of human agency in shaping the experience. This focus on individual lives as lived emphasises how stories are told rather than what is told and the findings that emerge from this line of inquiry have practical value for a wider population of readers (Hatch & Wisneiwski, 1995). The positioning of theoretical understandings in a practical light illuminates any gaps in understanding between micro and macro perspectives and the bridging of these gaps renders the diverse meaning that people attach to their experiences accessible to a wider audience (Sikes, ibid. p. 118).

This emphasis on subjectivity distinguishes life history and narratives from other qualitative methods that remain dominated by scientific or empiricist standards. Lincoln (in Hatch & Wisneiwski, 1995) describes life history and narrative as "always and without exception phenomenological, naturalistic, only loosely coupled (if at all) to 'scientific' notions of causality and/ or generalisability" (p. 118). Narratives convey the

actions of people in particular settings. While these happenings are relevant to their beliefs, desires and values, narrative accounts cannot provide causal explanations between beliefs and actions because intentional states can never fully determine the course of events.

Intentional states offer insight into how people may feel about a particular situation but they cannot determine how they would act. This is because some measure of human agency is always present in narrative. Narratives therefore provide the foundation for 'interpreting' why a character acted as he/she did. "Interpretation is concerned with 'reasons' for things happening, rather than strictly their 'causes'" (Polkinghorne, 1995. p. 7). Instead of aiming to secure a reliable fix on the world, narrative interpretation endeavors to capture the meaning that the narrator attaches to the account. This is achieved by perceiving the narrative as emerging from the relationship between the researcher and the narrator.

Narratives use particular happenings to convey their meaning. The symbolic meaning of these happenings is derived from the particular cultural traditions within which narratives are embedded. The importance of narrative in peoples' constructions of their lives is illustrated by the ways in which "traditions of story telling, drama and literature have generated a range of culturally shared narrative forms" (Gergen, 1998b, p. 96). Once individuals attempt to understand their experiences and actions within these cultural forms, they are provided with a repertoire of sense making devices from which they derive a sense of meaning that links them with a certain past as well as with a specific direction for the future.

It is this connection of a life story to social events that distinguishes life history from other forms of narrative. The life is seen as being lived in a particular time and location, and under particular social circumstances, rather than a simple collection of events. This positioning of life within a wider context extends the narrative beyond 'the personal' and embraces the way in which individuals make sense of their experiences as well as drawing on the individual's experience to make broader contextual meaning.

This emphasis on how the life narrative comprises stories of people's lives that are told in various contexts to a variety of audiences rejects the assumption that a static and objectively measurable self resides in the life narrative. It represents a departure from qualitative research that focuses on the relationship between voice and self and presents a coherent self who tells stories that are ends in themselves. Instead it presents the view that stories are fragments of peoples' lives that are told in particular contexts to particular audiences. The social life of narratives is located in new and different contexts that are continually in flux. Lives are created in peoples' consciousness in order to give meaning to events that have no intrinsic relations and the telling of a story is in a real sense the construction of a life (Freeman, 1993).

The interpretations that people offer in relation to events in their lives are not seen as facts but as stories that they choose to tell. These stories are about themselves and their relationships with others. The stories therefore convey the particular meanings that they attach to events in their lives. "Thus life history is always the history of a life, a single life, a particular way of constructing the story of several individuals or a group" (Lincoln, in Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995, p. 115).

Since individuals' expression of self and the stories they tell about their lives are the data of life narrative inquiry, the poststructuralist vision of individual constructions of self as complex, situational and non-coherent must be reconciled with this interpretive capacity. Hatch and Wisniewski (1995) have termed this predicament the "post-structural paralysis" (p. 130). In attempting to work through the dilemma of how one embraces notions of dissolution, fragmentation and internal differences within selves while maintaining a concurrent acknowledgement of the active self as agent, this study takes a middle road.

It does not treat narratives as texts of fiction nor does it accept them as complete representations of reality. It takes the view that people are storytellers by nature. Drawing on Ochberg's (1996) belief that all stories are constructed around a core of life events or 'focal puzzles' that are worth exploring, it maintains that stories provide

coherence and continuity to our experiences and therefore have a central role to play in our communication with others. Labov argues that narratives are defined by two key components - what happened and why it is worth telling (in Bruner, 1991). This is an important insight in defining narratives because not every sequence of events that is recounted constitutes a narrative. The worthiness of a tale is determined by its deviation from an implicit canonical script. This 'breach' component of a narrative may be created linguistically or by purposively challenging the legitimacy of the plot, thus engaging the reader in fresh interpretive activity (Bruner, 1991).

In contrast to most discourse analytic practices where the self often becomes lost within an exclusive focus upon talk and discourse (e.g. Potter & Wetherell, 1987), the narrative approach illuminates the self, personal identity and subjectivity. This requires an emphasis on the freedom of the individual to creatively select and expand upon interpretation of those 'remembered facts.' It is through stories and narratives that we acquire selfhood and a sense of meaning in relation to the experiences and events that happen in our lives. It is also through narratives that we orient and position ourselves and rewrite our 'truths', realities and perspectives.

The narrative approach enables us to straddle a consideration of self and personal subjective uniqueness with an acknowledgement of the discursively constituted nature of selves. The analysis of the contextual and unique features of individual lives that result in the identification of the self within certain discourses, and not others, presents people as meaning-making organisms that construct their identities and self-narratives from building blocks available in their common culture. This perspective recognises that a life story is an instance of the life story - a hypothetical construct - that can never be fully accessed in research (Lieblich et al, 1998). It recognises that the particular story that is recorded and transcribed into text resembles a frozen still photograph of a dynamically changing entity. It therefore cautions against interpreting the text solely in terms of a static product that reflects an inner existing identity.

Regardless of the debates about the truth-value of narrative or the nature of its linkage to personal identity, the life story constructs and transmits individual and cultural meanings. Individuals construct their self-image within an interaction, according to a specific interpersonal context, and in relation to a wider social context. The study and interpretation of self-narratives thus enables us to access not only the individual identity and its systems of meaning but also the teller's culture and social world.

1.6 Highlighting the central points:

The view of human nature and experience that comprises the foundation of this study challenges the rationalist perspective within psychology. The empirical foundation upon which the epistemology and methodology of the social sciences is based is seen as inappropriate for psychology because it divorces human experience from context and presents cognition as the underlying structure that informs reality. Human development is thus seen as a linear progression from initial incompetence to final competence.

In contrast, the study is informed by the social constructionist approach that celebrates language as the means through which individuals construct their identities and the social worlds that they inhabit. Language is seen as a cultural product that mediates thought and endorses representations of reality. As the ideological beliefs that are contained within communication processes are constantly in flux, a consideration of the cultural and historical dimensions of human experience is deemed crucial. Peoples' individuality is seen to emerge in relation to others and to the material world in which they live and this separateness enables them to become self-conscious. It is only through reflection on the ways in which others respond to their actions that they become aware of their own existence.

Humans are thus understood as existing within their connections to other people. They transform their material environment through daily social interaction, and through this process, they construct their own identities as well as the identities of those with whom they interact (Burr, 1995). The process whereby humans transform the environment and

self leads to the emergence of new needs and innovative methods for their satisfaction. This process is biologically and historically specific as human action is motivated by social relations which structure activity and build into their personalities desires that are typical of the historical era in which they live. The capacities that people learn through transforming their environments also mark their place in the class structure. Identity does not therefore originate inside people "but from the social realm where people swim in a sea of language and other signs. The sea is invisible to us because it is the very medium of our existence as social beings" (ibid. p. 53).

However a sole emphasis on language and fragmented identities can result in a detachment of individuals from their lived reality because the crucial connection between personal and social domains is overlooked. This separation between language and activity denies human agency and relegates people to vehicles of expression. The study therefore attempts to link macro and micro levels of analysis by illustrating how social, historical and political forces intersect with peoples' active construction of their everyday lives. The study uses narratives to illustrate the inextricable link between the structure of thought and the language that conveys thought. It essentially shows how reality is both represented and constituted in narratives.

Identity is seen as constituted in personal narratives because they present an inner reality to the outside world while at the same time shaping the construction of the narrator's identity (Bruner, 1991). It is through storytelling that people organise their experience and memory of past events and the narratives that emerge illuminate how they have made sense of their motives and actions.

The central concern is not therefore how narrative as text is constructed, but rather how it operates as an instrument of mind in the construction of reality. Both thought and language are specific to cultural traditions and the narrative forms that emerge represent everyday explanations of human action (Antaki, 1988). The storytelling narrative that comprises the focus of the study is a form of discourse that is known and used in everyday interaction. The story is a familiar vehicle for social actors to talk to

researchers and recount their experiences and events. Atkinson and Coffey (1996) point out that stories serve a variety of functions for social actors. Memories are frequently ordered by a series of key happenings and "stories are often told and retold by members of particular social groups or organisations as a way of passing on a cultural heritage or an organisational culture" (ibid. p. 56). Tales of success and failure, usually featuring central personalities, are familiar genres that secure a collective sense of culture and identity.

The human action that is conveyed in narrative is thus "the outcome of the interaction of a person's previous learning and experiences, present-situated process, and proposed goals and purposes" (Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 11). The knowledge that is derived from narrative offers explanations as to why a person acted as he or she did and cannot be reduced to rules and generalisations across stories. The cumulative effect of narrative reasoning is a collection of individual cases in which thought moves from case to case instead of from case to generalisation. This concern for context alerts us to the significance of narrative intention and the background knowledge of narrators and listeners. Listeners assimilate their own intentions and background knowledge with the teller's intentions and this is aptly captured in Coleridge's dictum "we do not stand naked before the text" (ibid. p.17).

The study thus straddles a consideration of how selves are constituted through language with an examination of what is subjectively unique about life narratives. The illustration of how selves are fluid entities that construct interpretations that are derived from processes that operate between selves, discourses and structures will be considered in relation to the individuality and creativity that is invested in the particular selection and interpretation of remembered facts about the past. While the narrative constructions are seen as illuminative of culture and history, their form is also regarded as particular to each individual as they emerge from the unique social relationships in which each individual is embedded. This emphasis on personal and social meanings as bases of action will inform the following review of the literature on activism, memory and aging.

CHAPTER TWO: MEMORY, AGING AND POLITICAL ACTIVISM - A REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction:

The purpose of this chapter is to provide a review of relevant literature in the fields of memory, aging and activism from a perspective that incorporates personal agency and poststructuralist conceptions of subjectivity. From the onset it should be stated that the discussion does not attempt to span with even intensity the vast literature in these areas. Instead it aims to illustrate an awareness of relevant material that falls within the interdisciplinary nature of the thesis and to show how the diverse literatures can be integrated with the research topic. This constraint is particularly relevant to the discussion of the material relating to oral history and the life-cycle perspective.

The chapter will commence with an illustration of the inherently social nature of memory with specific reference to recollection amongst the elderly. The contribution of reminiscence work and oral history towards tackling stereotypical perspectives on the aging process will also be examined. The chapter will conclude with an illustration of how a comprehensive understanding of political behaviour requires insight into how elements of political thought are part of everyday social understandings.

2.2 The nature of memory:

Psychological studies of memory are frequently traced to the work of Ebbinghaus who studied his own recall of lists of nonsense syllables in the late nineteenth century (in Anastasi, 1998). This perception of memory as a definitive mental faculty that codes stores and retrieves information regardless of its personal and social significance has provided the foundation for subsequent psychological endeavors in the field. Contextual issues are viewed as variables that can be manipulated in order to influence the accuracy of the recollection process.

However recent psychological interest in language and cultural aspects of thinking has led to a wider view of remembering as an activity that people perform together. This shift in perspective is characteristic of what Riessman (1993) describes as the interpretive turn in the social sciences. Within psychology, it has involved a shift in emphasis from the self as entity to a focus on how the self is produced through language (Potter & Wetherell, 1987). This representation of subjectivity and truth through language locates knowledge within the realm of social relatedness.

Proponents of this emphasis on language and the world it is intended to represent have revived the work of Bartlett who as early as 1932 proposed a theory of remembering as reconstruction (in Middleton & Edwards, 1990). The dormancy of Bartlett's work over so many years is indicative of the prevalence of positivist, mechanistic frameworks within psychology. In contrast to the traditional claim that remembering is the report of internal pictures located in the mind, Bartlett demonstrated that remembering is constructed and reconstructed under the impetus of social and linguistic factors. He argued that the input of one individual is passed on as the output of the next individual and that any discrepancies between these relationships can be seen to represent the operations of memory.

However by presenting the flow of social influence in only one direction Bartlett constructed a view of memory as a creative activity that occurs 'inside the head' of the social individual. He advocated a view of individuals exercising 'capacities' to remember within the context of social and cultural factors and he overlooked the significant ways in which memories are constructed in relation to the past within a framework of shared cultural meanings. The recognition of this relationship between the process of remembering and specific communicative situations illuminates peoples' recollections not as "windows on to the cognitive workings of memory but as descriptions that vary according to whatever pragmatic and rhetorical work they are designed for" (Middleton & Edwards, 1990, p. 11).

It is within everyday conversation that these constructions occur and attention has therefore been redirected away from Bartlett's remembering subject and towards his reference to the

social practices that enable people to engage in the memory-making process. This belief that people share memories that are social in origin reinforces the reality that people inhabit a world that extends beyond the self. The way in which the past is recalled represents more than the simple accumulation of memories. People remember together by collectively operating "as integrated memory systems" (Wertsch, *ibid.* p. 7) because the process whereby they share their memories is informed by a continual uncovering of the past. It is these discoveries that become the context and content for what they will jointly recall and commemorate in the future.

This line of thought is reflected in the title of Rusty Bernstein's (1999) recently published life narrative. His work is titled *Memory Against Forgetting* and it originates from Milan Kundera's (1996) poignant assertion that the struggle of humankind against power "is the struggle of memory against forgetting" (p. 11). Kundera illustrates how social repression in Czechoslovakia, following the Prague Spring of 1968, has informed what the country has remembered and what it has forgotten about its past. He shows how records of the past that were created in the form of minutes and institutional archives reflect wider manipulations of what should or could be remembered.

This attention to the influence of power reveals how institutional forgetting and remembering shapes the identity of a community. It shows how the form and content of commemorative processes emerge from a joint reconstruction of the past, and how they in turn provide social frameworks within which people learn how and what to remember. The memories thus represent historically dominant forms of knowledge that are tied to powerful groups. Their domination is sustained by ideology in that prevailing memories render a dominant representation of reality integral to practices of everyday life (Foster, 1991).

This emphasis on context and de-emphasis on the accuracy of recall does not mean that people are seen as passive recipients of the memories that they hold dear. Billig's (1990) reference to the 'dilemmic' nature of collective memory draws our attention to the ways in which individuals actively strive for a balance between maintaining continuity in

preserving the past and altering the past to meet their concerns for the present. This leads to a direct consideration of the relationship between peoples' actions as individuals and their social and cultural heritage.

Harré and Gillett (1994) argue that people continually 're-remember' the past and that integral to this sense-making process is the contesting of one another's interpretations. The versions of events that survive are acceptable only in so far as they have succeeded over others. Their survival is dependent on the extent to which they are linked to social practices and hence contain a culturally evolved legacy of actions and ideas that are central to daily existence. The agency of individuals is thus seen as both constituted in and constrained by their social and cultural history.

This notion of remembering and forgetting as forms of social action that are inherent to daily life infers that the workings of memory only become evident when people collectively make sense of the past. Memories only make sense in light of the reasons why historical actors construct their memories in particular ways at particular times and such understandings are rooted in ideology, culture and the everyday pragmatics of communication (Middelton & Edwards, 1990). As it is autobiographical memory that comprises the focus of this study, it is important to shed some light on this particular construction.

2.2.1 Autobiographical memory:

According to Rubin (1996) autobiographical memory should not be viewed as distinct from memory. He begins his book *Remembering our past: Studies in autobiographical memory* with an explanation of autobiographical memory as comprising "storytelling, group communication, and concepts like the self. It is what we usually mean by the term *memory* in everyday usage and thus is the basis of many of psychologist's ideas and intuitions about memory in general" (p. 1, original emphasis).

Autobiographical memory is clearly not, in Rubin's view, a subset of memory. It is

concerned with the capacity of people to recollect their lives, or more specifically, the recollection of particular episodes. This 'reliving' of the individual's phenomenal experience of the original event involves visual imagery, the conviction that the remembered experience was personally experienced and that it is a valid record of the original event (Brewer, 1996). Autobiographical memories are frequently recorded in the form of verbal narratives that are either told to oneself or to another. The structure of the discourse affects the structure of recall.

The narrative form is learned from the culture in which the individual lives and it is similar to the narrative structure of other forms of social communication. The recall of autobiographical memories is thus a social act that defines social groups. For example, parents teach their children the culturally appropriate genre for sharing their memories in a socially interesting and informative way. This social genre provides both parents and children with access to their personal histories as well as a sense of the importance of sharing their memories of past events.

Brewer (1996) claims that imagery and emotions also play important roles in autobiographical memory. People are unable to relive an event without the image and emotions that sharpen their reflection. The specifics of personally experienced aspects of autobiographical memory are thus highlighted by the sense of emotionality, intimacy and immediacy of a communication when compared to abstract statements that remove the events described from the situations in which they occurred.

The narrative structure, imagery and emotions that comprise autobiographical memory increase the likelihood of communication by making that communication more believable. This view of autobiographical memories as constructions that are retrieved through the use of narrative, imagery and emotions provides the foundation for the understanding of recollection and aging upon which this study rests. The discussion will now build on the notion of humans actively collaborating to reconstruct the past within a framework of shared meanings by considering contemporary approaches to aging and memory.

2.2.2 Aging and recollection:

The renewed interest in the study of lives that was initiated in the mid-1960s has resulted in scholarly work in such areas as adult personality development, life history, psychopathology, and life span development. William Runyan (1982) provides a review of the vast amount of work that has been done during this period in his book *Life Histories and Psychobiography: Explorations in theory and method*. He notes that efforts in this area share a common concern for studying how life paths are shaped by an interaction of individuals with their social and historical worlds over time.

Important conceptual shifts in studies of aging (gerontology) have largely come about due to changes in attitudes towards reminiscence amongst scholars, as well as the elderly themselves. In the past reminiscence was viewed as "a denial of the passage of time and the reality of the present" (Dobrof, in Coleman, 1996, p. 50) and as a symptom of intellectual deterioration (Stokes, 1992). Elderly people were advised not to reminisce about their past for fear it would lead to misery and distress.

The case for viewing reminiscence as a constructive activity in old age was made in Butler's (1963) influential paper titled *The life review: an interpretation of reminiscence in the aged*. Butler argued that instead of discouraging reminiscence in older people or writing it off as mere nostalgia, it should be embraced as a natural and universal human process that helps people to come to terms with the aging process.

Although it is an oversimplification to attribute changes in attitudes to one particular individual, Butler's contribution was noteworthy. Dobrof explains how Butler's writings liberated the elderly as well as their care-providers: "the old were free to remember, to regret, to look reflectively at the past and try to understand it. And we were free to listen, and to treat 'rememberers' and remembrances with the respect they deserved, instead of trivialising them by diversion to a bingo game" (in Coleman, 1996, p. 51).

Butler drew from Erik Erikson's work (1950, 1959) on life span development and argued

that life review is essential for people to come to terms with their lives as they have lived them. Erikson's work is considered most influential for his concept of human psychological development over the life cycle. He advocated eight sequential developmental stages from infancy to old age and claimed "the experience of earlier stages comes to fruition in old age" (Stokes, 1992, p. 20).

This progression through the life cycle involves the negotiation of significant life tasks that are particular to the developmental goals of each life stage. Each stage involves the resolution of psychological tensions from the earliest childhood tension between trust and mistrust to the strain between ego integrity and despair that is associated with old age. The resolution of each stage facilitates the individual's development through the life cycle. The characteristics of the stage associated with old age encompass the feeling that life's major goals have been attained, acceptance of one's life without regret, harmony between past, present and anticipated future, and the absence of fear of death. Erikson implies that the fulfillment of these life tasks enables elderly people to accept a declining level of involvement and activity (ibid.).

Life-span development as a field within psychology tends to focus on the early years of life. Despite the view of the entire life span that is taken by Erikson, only two of his eight steps extend into adulthood (Andrews, 1991). Literature that examines later stages of life usually takes an individualistic perspective that reinforces traditional stereotypes of what it means to be old. For example, Bromley's 'disengagement theory' implies that inactivity and isolation are synonymous with old age (ibid.).

These cultural beliefs about the aged are reflected in the narrative form that is chosen by elderly people. Commenting on her own work with the narratives of elderly people, Gergen (1988) argues that the tendency to distance themselves from society is echoed in society's expectation that elderly people enter a period of disengagement. Psychology's endorsement of Erikson's work is also viewed by critics as another example of the discipline's failure to locate its explanations of human behaviour within social and historical contexts. Gilligan points out that Erikson's theory is based on male-oriented norms and

totally overlooks the impact of diverse social circumstances that exist between different social divisions on psychological development (in Clifford, 1995).

Despite his failure to account for social forces, Erikson is used extensively as a standard reference in psychology as he provides an understanding of psychological development in relation to which individuals can be assessed (ibid.). Within Erikson's framework of life review, the recollection of distressing memories is viewed as a psychologically positive act provided it results in reconciliation and self-acceptance. This is illustrated in the findings of McMahon and Rhudick's study of veterans of the Spanish-American War (ibid.). They showed how participants adopted an instructive approach to sharing their experiences of the past as their recollections were framed by their understandings of the value of the past in relation to the present. They also displayed a positive image of themselves as they had been in the past and in so doing their self-esteem was enhanced.

While McMahon and Rhudick contributed towards the emergence of a more favourable view of reminiscence, their emphasis differed from that of Butler. Whereas Butler regarded life review as a rigorous examination of the past involving a resurgence of unresolved conflicts, McMahon and Rhudick emphasised its story-telling function. They argued that traditional customs and values are passed from one generation to the next as the storyteller entertains his/her listeners. They also drew attention to the fact that veterans compensated for the loss of function and status that they experienced in old age by creating meaningful myths and exaggerations regarding the significance of their roles in the war.

This defensive capacity of reminiscence to protect self-worth at a time when elderly people may feel undervalued in an increasingly estranged lifestyle assists in their adaptation to fading social demands (Lewis, 1971). This reference to context emphasises the fact that it is current life situations, and not old age itself, which encourages elderly people to recall memories about their lives (Holland & Rabbitt, 1991). Society identifies social roles and patterns of behaviour in relation to the elderly that are consistent with prevailing attitudes and norms.

These perceptions are not static as they are linked to ongoing social change. This is evidenced in the extensive amount of research on aging that focuses on the experiences of elderly people who live in advanced industrialised nations. Fiske (1980) draws on the life-cycle approach to explain how "technological advance has revolutionised travel, communication and routines of daily living within a lifetime" and adaptation amongst the elderly "may only be achieved through a continuing series of 'identity crises'" (p. 6). This perspective can be related to Coleman's (1986) assertion that "the adaptational significance of reminiscence can best be understood in the light of Erikson's view that identity formation is a lifelong task" (p. 51).

McCulloch (in Coleman, 1986), studied how elderly people adjust to the discontinuities between past and present. He reported that some individuals enter a stage of 'moral siege' which is a form of psychological action that enables older people to cope with dramatic social upheaval by allowing them to remain content with their own lives. They value the past and denigrate the present because accepting the "values of modern society is tantamount to denying meaning to their own lives as they have led them" (ibid. p. 51). This inability to integrate the differences between past and present can also result in an alienated state of questioning wherein neither the past nor the present is accepted.

The therapeutic use of reminiscence in institutional settings as a means to stimulate elderly people is well documented (Bender, 1994; Bender, Norris & Bauckham, 1987; Fielden, 1990; Bornat, 1989, 1994; Gibson, 1989; Norris, 1989). Malcom Johnson's 1976 paper *That was your life: A biographical approach to later life* made a strong case for considering older people's past lives in relation to their present needs. He also argued a persuasive case for what he termed 'biographical listening' in the hope that researchers and practitioners would pay attention to older peoples' own definitions of their needs.

Working from the premise that knowledge of the past is essential to our wellbeing in the present, Gibson (1994) argued that reminiscence work is highly valuable for people who are suffering from dementia. As sufferers increasingly lose their grip on the past they simultaneously lose their connection to others. This loss of a sense of attachment

threatens their identity and they experience a restlessness and agitation that is associated with searching for past relationships (Bowlby, 1973).

According to Gibson (1994), an understanding of the life history of the person with dementia can help significant members of their present social networks to sustain a relationship that is to some extent reciprocal. Knowledge of people, places and activities that were significant in the past can be used as the basis for re-establishing connections. Sensory triggers such as family photographs, letters, newspapers or familiar possessions can be used to initiate these links and the past is thus used to work for the present. Carers involved in reminiscence work of this nature have reported increased interest in their clients as well as a renewed sensitivity towards them as unique individuals (ibid.).

However it should also be noted that the success of reminiscence work in institutional settings has also contributed towards it being perceived in a negative light (Norris, 1989). Living in the present is a powerful value that receives widespread approval in western culture whereas living in the past indicates a melancholic attitude. Younger people have numerous opportunities to reattempt perceived failures and to defer goals to the future but the absence of a psychological future remains critical to the experience of old age (Cunningham & Brookbank, 1988).

According to Woods and Britton (1985), elderly people are the victims of discrimination based "on the accumulation of birthdays and not on any rational basis" (p. 23). The peculiarity of ageism is that the very people who hold such prejudices are destined to become victims of the very discrimination they perpetuate. Such behaviour may be explained in terms of a psychological defence against the inevitability of the aging process because the elderly remind us of our own mortality (Andrews, 1991; Busse & Blazer, 1980; Butler & Lewis, 1982).

Ageism is thus facilitated by a belief that elderly people "are somehow different from our present and future selves and therefore not subject to the same desires, concerns and fears" (Hendricks & Hendricks, 1977, p. 29). The social construction of aging in this

light leads to a negative association between elderly people and reminiscence. Reminiscence is not justified on its own terms but is understood as a factor within the seemingly negative situation of old age. Whereas dwelling on the past may be viewed as evidence of maladjustment amongst younger people, it is excusable amongst the elderly because it represents a suitable form of defence or role that they can play in the community.

However there are many voices that have resisted this melancholic perception of reminiscence amongst the elderly. Bytheway (1995) argues that such negative attitudes reflect the ambivalence that arises from the association of old age with power and wisdom as well as with degeneration. He also refers to De Beauvoir's assertion that the extent to which older people are respected or rejected in a society reflects the "class struggle (that) governs the manner in which old age takes hold of a man (woman)" (ibid. p. 23). Coleman (1986) reminds us of Proust's insistence that events and personal experience can only be fully understood and appreciated with the value of hindsight. Proust is an extreme example of someone who resisted a melancholic perception of 'living in the past.' He renounced ordinary life in order to achieve "remembrance of things past" (ibid. p. 32), thus asserting that the extent to which we are able to understand the present is dependent upon our capacity to make connections with the past.

The view of reminiscing as the exclusive prerogative of older people is problematic because an understanding of our origins is valuable to young and old alike. Our sense of identity and personal confidence is largely rooted in our knowledge of where we have come from and to whom we belong. This is evident in the extensive efforts of Holocaust survivors to find even the most tentative knowledge about their families. In a similar vein, South Africans who suffered under apartheid have used the Truth and Reconciliation Commission as a means to derive a deeper and fuller understanding of the past.

Memories can thus be considered the raw materials from which we create our sense of identity and our understandings of self (Harré, 1983). The absence of a consciousness of

our past leaves us adrift in the present despite the fact that we may choose, consciously or unconsciously, to revise this knowledge in order to make our present more acceptable to ourselves and ourselves more interesting to others.

Acknowledgement of the role of human agency within the recollection process is thus crucial to the success of reminiscence work amongst the elderly (Biggs, 1999). While shared experience helps to build collective ties, individuality guarantees esteem and understanding in old age. Haight (1992) points out that this commitment to a basic philosophy of self-determination and social integration requires critical reflection on behalf of the reminiscence worker. He emphasises the importance of being sensitive to the psycho-development tasks that are associated with old age as well as to the diversity that exists amongst the elderly.

The work of oral historians is closely associated with that of reminiscence workers and the discussion will now move on to consider those aspects of oral history research that have informed the study at hand.

2.2.3 Oral history and the elderly:

Oral history is frequently described as a social movement that initially gained momentum in Britain in the late 1960s by focusing on the lives of ordinary people who have not in the past featured in established historical texts. Two large studies that involved interviews with older people were conducted at the Universities of Essex and Kent and numerous research projects that used the memories of elderly people to explain areas of the previously unrecorded past evolved from this preliminary project (Bornat, 1989).

The emergence of community publishing in the early 1970s is also acknowledged as integral to the development of oral history (ibid.). Working class people were encouraged to write and produce their own art and literature and pamphlets containing their reminiscences were printed and distributed within communities. Ordinary people thus became their own historians and biographers and they were actively involved in editing, designing and

promoting their own works.

The introduction of new ideas in relation to the psychology of old age also contributed towards the growth and support of oral history. The belief that recall of the past is a constructive mental activity has been captured by oral history which advocates reminiscence "as an activity which has outcomes which may go far beyond individual memory if we can all develop the capacity to listen and learn" (Bornat, 1989, p. 23). The legitimisation of recollection as a normal part of everyday life has merged in tandem with philosophies of care which now focus on the individual as a consumer rather than as a recipient of services.

Bornat also makes the interesting point that prior to the mid-nineteenth century, recollected experience was accorded the same status as recorded documents. Accounts of wars, political change and custom have prioritised the recollections of influential members of society and "memoirs of politicians have rarely been challenged by historians whose skills include deciphering documents and piecing together the past from written records" (p. 16). The history that has emerged from this practice is limited in content and uncritical in method. Accounts of women, the elderly and disadvantaged groups, as well as family and working life do not feature and there is no evidence of any reflection on the role of researchers in the collection and representation of the information (Portelli, 1991).

In the second edition of *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*, often referred to as the founding text on oral history, Paul Thompson (1988) reflects on the important shift in awareness that took place amongst oral historians following their early activities. This shift involved the recognition that researchers are actively involved in a two-way process of data collection as they build relationships with respondents who share very personal aspects of their lives. The content of training therefore expanded to include an emphasis on the shared nature of the interview experience, as opposed to a previous focus on capturing usable data. Thompson also makes specific reference to the significance of the interview in the life of an older person and emphasises that it is the responsibility of the researcher to understand and empathise with the strong emotions that an interview may evoke. Oral history thus

transformed the historian into an interviewer and "turned the practice of the historian into a personal interaction with the past within living memory" (Bornat, 1989, p. 17).

This shift in the method and meaning of oral history is identified by Plummer (1983) as dating back to 1918 when Thomas and Znaniecki published "the first substantive sociological engagement with 'the individual and the social'" (Chamberlayne et al, 2000, p. 3) titled *The Polish Peasant*. Their clear distinction between the 'objective factors of the situation and the subjective interpretation of that situation' (original emphasis, *ibid.*) signals the expansion of history to include the voices of people whose resistance in the past has contributed to the effects of industrial change. Another noteworthy contribution to the incorporation of subjectivity and marginal communities within oral history can be found in the work of Luisa Passerini (*ibid.*) who explored working class communities in Turin during the Italian fascist period. An appreciation of the historical experience that each individual holds within draws dominated groups from the margins of society (Andrews, 1991) and explains why oral history is considered both a theoretical and a social movement. Bornat (1994) makes the interesting point that in the same way that oral history works with memories of the past to create exhibitions, books, sound tapes and videos, so too can reminiscence work be seen as a theoretical and social movement that focuses on development and learned outcomes. The sharing of these outcomes with younger people, family members and the wider community strengthens bonds and provides insight into the process of change and development that is experienced by the older person. It also functions to connect people to their cultural heritage.

Although a comparison can be made between oral history's focus on recording and preserving the past and reminiscence work's focus on building understandings of self and others, the distinction is a fine one. The oral historian who focuses on life history generally takes the view that learning about the past, and an individual's part in that past, requires the encouragement of self-awareness and personal reflection on behalf of both the researcher and the informant (Adelson, 1997; Andrews, 1995).

Many writers are of the opinion that the most rewarding experiences occur when there is

awareness and promotion of the links between both approaches (Adams, 1984; Bornat, 1989; Grele, 1991). This is illustrated by oral historian Studs Terkel who describes meeting Bertrand Russell as "shaking the hand of the man who shook the hand of Napoleon was literally like talking to the past" (in Bornat, 1989, p. 17). Oral history does not restrict the sense of immortality that is gained through passing on accounts of individual lives to the lives of prominent individuals. It celebrates the experiences of ordinary people and provides alternatives to mainstream history that typically conveys stories of the lives of the rich and powerful in society (Thompson, 1978). The involvement of elderly people within this reconstruction of the past serves to bolster their individual and diverse identities as well as to advance their status which is undermined by western society's marginalisation of the aging process (Elder, 1977; Phillipson, 1982).

It is highly likely that this commitment to self-determination and social integration within reminiscence work may counter some of the difficulties in growing old with dignity. The extent to which a positive redefinition of previous tasks and lifestyles can be achieved is dependent upon an interpretation of the psychology of old age that extends beyond the present life situation to include an understanding of the life span. This emphasis on the whole of human life has generated the term 'differential gerontology' (Thomae, in Andrews, 1991) which maintains that only a life span perspective can appreciate diverse expectations and patterns of behaviour in old age. The adoption of this perspective within reminiscence activities has helped to integrate elderly people into their communities and has also given the oral history movement increased momentum.

2.2.4 Highlighting the central points: memory and aging:

For the past half century psychology has viewed memory as either the accumulation of information through reinforcement or as a system of storage and retrieval mechanisms operating in the manner of a digital computer. The ways in which social and cultural factors influence memory have been understood in two ways. Firstly, the contents of memory have been considered social in so far as they arise from social experience or are transmitted as lexical items in the course of communication. Secondly, experiences in

diverse social environments are seen to inculcate particular ways of remembering by influencing the particular social contexts that people inhabit.

This treatment of social factors as impacting on the physical background against which people exercise an individual capacity to remember represents a single-minded approach to understandings of memory. In its rejection of the strict separation between the individual and society, the study advances a view of mind and memory that extends beyond the individual to encompass both cultural and political contexts. It represents a shift from a predominant concern with individual memory, as process or content, to a direct consideration of remembering and forgetting as inherently social activities. This acknowledgement of the link between what people do as individuals and their social and cultural heritage advocates a view of remembering and forgetting as activities that are part of the ordinary circumstances of daily life.

Issues relating to power and self-determination are thus seen as integral to the inquiry. Oral history provides a valuable reference in this regard because it focuses on the entire life span and locates life histories within social and historical contexts both generally and specifically. It embraces the empowering principles of reminiscence work and regards elderly people as actively engaged in their own recollection processes. The social significance of these processes is evident in the ways in which people make sense of the past by constructing stories about their childhood, their families, sexual and working relationships. These stories are seen as the products of interacting individuals and they combine to illuminate a dynamic and living past (Ayers, in Hatch & Wisniewski, 1995). As such, they have the capacity to advance a viewpoint on the elderly that challenges the perception of aging as a process of decline and reduced productivity.

Now that the thesis has clarified where the elderly participants who comprise this study are positioned in relation to the memory and aging process, the discussion will move on to examine the psychology of political activism.

2.3 Defining political psychology:

Political psychology seeks to grapple with questions regarding the intersection between political and psychological phenomena. More specifically, it attempts to explain individual and group behaviour in a political context and it has captured the interest of academics from a range of disciplines. Political scientists are intrigued by the impact that individuals have in the political arena while sociologists are interested in exploring why individuals participate in political organisations. Historians seek to understand the role of the individual in shaping and being shaped by political events at certain points in time whereas anthropologists are interested in the relationship between individuals and political aspects of the cultures they inhabit (Hermann, 1986).

This inter-disciplinary diversity is evident within political psychology itself. The literature conveys a range of perspectives on the nature of the interaction between psychological and political phenomena and it sets different boundaries around what is considered political. The aspect of political behaviour that comprises the focus of this study can be broadly defined under the term radicalism. The term is conceptually understood as a nonconformist point of view that advocates extreme, rapid and fundamental change (Reber & Reber, 2001). While it is historically and politically specific, and can represent either progressive or conservative orientations, it is a progressive orientation that comprises the focus of this study.

Despite the multifaceted interest in the relationship between psychological and political phenomena, political psychology itself has failed to adopt a sufficiently political orientation. It tends to reduce political behaviour to the study of one or another psychological process and neglects the social, political and historical influences that command a crucial role in human development (Andrews, 1991). The realm of politics thus becomes psychologised and reduced "to a set of cognitive exercises...distracting us from the existence of political discourses and political movements, and the historical meaning of resistance" (Broughton, *ibid.* p. 14). This emphasis on intra-psyche processes becomes evident when one takes a brief look at the development of political psychology.

2.3.1 Intra-psychic focus:

According to Andrews (1991), the first three decades of the history of political psychology are marked by a distinctly psychoanalytic emphasis that can be traced back to Wallas's (1908) *Human Nature in Politics*. The link that Wallas draws between human irrationality and political behaviour is reinforced in Laswell's (1930) *Psychopathology and Politics* which advocates a generalised personality type that characterises all political agitators regardless of their persuasion (ibid.).

relevant Lasswell asserts that "the essential mark of the agitator is the high value which he places on the emotional response of the public. Whether he (she) attacks or defends social institutions is a secondary matter" (p. 17). According to this argument, it is low self-esteem that draws people into political life because politics offers an opportunity to win power and prestige and to overcome feelings of personal inadequacy (Sniderman, 1975).

This emphasis on the structure of political beliefs to the neglect of content has remained a central focus within mainstream political psychology. It can only provide a limited understanding of political thought and behaviour as failure to consider the social structures in which individuals become politicised results in the eradication of social meaning from behaviour. The concept of rebellion becomes meaningless and people who engage in such activity are simply portrayed as pathological (Andrews, 1991).

According to Brewster Smith (1997), the prevalence of theories that operate on this intra-psychic level of analysis is evident in the work of Adorno et al (1950), Eysenck (1954), Keniston (1968, 1971) and Rokeach (1960). They all explain "the origins of the personality type that is susceptible to anti-democratic ideas in terms of intra-individual, psychodynamic processes" (Andrews, p. 18). Eysenck traced tough-mindedness to intra-individual genetic origins while Rokeach located closed-mindedness within intra-personal, pre-ideological beliefs. Keniston explained activism by locating intra-individual dispositions to activism in the family environment and in child-rearing practices. This inter-personal perspective advocated a view of the young person as shaped

by social forces into a political orientation.

2.3.2 The socialisation perspective:

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Keniston's work on the development of radicalism amongst young American left-wing activists sparked the interest of a range of researchers who shared his interest in the relationship between adolescence and activism (Branguart & Branguart, 1990; Breakwell, Fife-Schaw & Devereux, 1989; Flacks, 1990; Ichilov, 1988; Kedem & Bar-Lev, 1989; Rothman & Lichter, 1982). The implied question that cuts across all their research is how a society is reproduced from one generation to the next and researchers addressed their efforts at identifying antecedent conditions such as social class or the direct inculcation of parental beliefs (Haste & Torney-Purta, 1992).

Political behaviour is not understood as the outcome of youths rebelling against elders and authorities but is seen to represent behaviours and attitudes that are learned from their childhood environment. The family is viewed as one of the key socialising agents that encourages a tendency towards political awareness and an active orientation to life. As Keniston (1968) notes "the issues that now concern them as political actors first became important to them long before they awoke to full consciousness of the broader political scene...from an early age (they) were more attuned to the historical currents in their lives than are most children" (p. 75). *XU*

The outcome criteria of work within this socialisation framework are frequently attitudes or attitude-related behaviours. The significance of childhood experience in the development of radicalism is also emphasised in Duncan's (1987) construction of the psychobiography of a left-wing political activist. She concluded that her subject's activism both "ties him to his parents, representing an identification with their idealism and stubborn individualism" (p. 189). Another example of research on familial influence is Ichilov's (1988) study of the relationship between levels of family politicisation and citizenship orientations amongst Israeli adolescents. Ichilov concluded that a high degree of family politicisation is correlated with a stronger sense of political efficacy and greater

political involvement.

In their publication, *The Roots of Radicalism: Jews, Christians and the New Left*, Rothman and Lichter (1982) discuss the influence of cultural factors that are mediated through the family in the predisposition to radicalism. They conducted a comparative study of the experience of radicalism amongst Jewish and gentile activists. Their study concluded that the former were raised in liberal family environments with high socioeconomic status in which the mother played a dominant role, while the latter were raised in politically conservative, patriarchal families with lower socio-economic status.

Moving on to a consideration of the psychological functions that being a radical performs for people, Duncan (1987) argued that the subject of her psychobiography "uses his political opinions and activities to express and manage his deepest emotions" (p. 188). Rothman and Lichter (1982) drew a link between the disproportionate number of Jewish radicals in America in the sixties and their marginal status in society: "unconsciously many Jewish radicals joined the New Left to gain strength against an evil and powerful establishment, which they saw as punitive and destructive" (p. 56). Gentile radicals, on the other hand, were seen to perceive the establishment as "evil but weak" and "their ultimate, albeit unconscious, goal was less to eliminate existing inequalities than to establish a new, more powerful and righteous authority structure that they could lead or join" (ibid. p. 57). Additional insight into the psychological function that being a radical performs for people is advocated in the life-cycle theory of psychosocial development

2.3.3 The life-cycle perspective:

Flacks (1990) explained student radicalism in terms of Erikson's life-cycle theory of psychosocial development by linking the formation of political values in the stage of youth with the development of self-identity and independence. This development is characterised by a questioning of established beliefs whereas a fundamental characteristic of the adult stage is the movement away from radical political perspectives and the embracing of traditional views.

Flack's perspective is supported by the findings of Branguart and Branguart's (1990) study of people who were active in the radical student movement in America during the sixties. They concluded that "the stage of youth is critical for trying to find meaning in life...idealistic young people (become) critical of their elders and the political legacy they created, and prone to participate in youthful movements for political change" (p. 249). They also drew attention to the impact of significant events and shared experiences within an age group growing up together during a certain period in history. Accordingly, a political generation was seen to emerge from a large youth cohort that has experienced societal breakdowns and upheavals. A generation consciousness surrounds this age group and it takes on a unique status that is derived from the historical circumstances surrounding its experience as well as it being at odds with established views.

Branguart and Branguart also point out that the formation of a political generation does not necessarily mean that all members of that generation will respond to the political situation in the same way. Members of a generation may share a belief in the need for political change but they may advocate different solutions to society's problems. The significance of belonging to a political generation lies in the participation in a decisive generation and the impact of these formative historical events on the individual's long-term political views. In this regard, Branguart and Branguart found a general continuity of political interest into adulthood with slight modification towards a less radical, less active approach.

According to Louw-Potgieter (in Andrews, 1991), the emphasis on political dissent that characterises political psychology has resulted in psychologists attempting to understand political behaviour by asking the question 'what kind of person becomes a political dissident?' The answers are sought in causal interpretations of dissent that are located within the 'deviant' individual and the social environment within which the 'deviance' occurs is indiscriminately accepted.

Psychological attributes are emphasised and any behaviour that deviates from the mainstream political experience "runs the risk of being portrayed as dogmatic, tough-

minded, closed-minded, or authoritarian" (ibid. p. 15). Societal variables, including the content and meaning of the political norms against which the political dissident is revolting, are overlooked and "the existing status quo is rarely questioned or criticised" (Louw-Potgieter, ibid.). In contrast, a focus on the experience of activism from the perspective of the activists themselves shifts the emphasis onto each individual's own construction of the political world.

2.3.4 The construction of activism:

This emphasis on the meaning that activists attach to their own lives differs significantly from prevailing viewpoints that present political thought and behaviour as a predetermined product of a cluster of personality traits and/or socialising agents. Questions focus on the way in which individuals make sense of their experiences and how their activism is constructed in relation to a complex organisation of beliefs and values within particular historical contexts, thus illuminating the social variables that limit or facilitate this sense making process.

Andrew's (1991) *Lifetimes of Commitment: Aging, politics, psychology* is a noteworthy illustration of the value of learning about the psychology of political activists from listening to what activists have to say about their own lives. Andrews illustrates the interconnection between politics and psychology and highlights the undesirability, as well as the impossibility, of separating the two domains. A comprehensive understanding of political thought and behaviour is thus seen as dependent on our capacity to gain insight into the ways in which elements of political thought become part of everyday social understandings. This essential process is overlooked by political psychology's tendency to reduce the role of the political and to heighten that of the psychological.

The study at hand addresses this limitation by adopting a theoretical framework which views the individual as actively making sense of the social world within a context and set of social constructions of that world. It uses life narratives to articulate activism as an enduring, lifetime experience and to reveal what, over time, has remained, been lost or

become important to the participants. These constructions of activism are revealed in the ways in which each individual has come to understand his/her own life story.

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The task of the research is not therefore to predict behaviour. It does not ask why these particular individuals, and not others, became politically active. It endeavors to explain activism by examining how and why the participants understood and subsequently responded to their environments in the ways in which they did. Drawing from Huxley's assertion "experience is not what happens to you, it's what you do with what happens to you" (ibid. p.113), the study aims to highlight the personal and social meaning that people attach to their activism throughout their lives. ^{metoo}
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2.4 Concluding points:

Within this chapter elements and concepts from various theoretical perspectives on memory, aging and activism have been explored in the interests of building a theoretical foundation for an investigation into how elderly people have made sense of their lives as political activists. Central to the endeavor has been an attempt to move beyond universalistic interpretations of rational, autonomous beings that are devoid of history and context and to engage with the complex relationship between cultural forms and practices and the production of subjectivity.

Instead of celebrating individual points of view and relativity as a critique of the rational unitary subject, the discussion has illustrated the value of understanding what fragmentation means to people in the construction of their lives. This attempt to align constructionist approaches to knowledge and subjectivity with a conceptualisation of the self as agent, capable of choice and personal interpretation, has resulted in a dialectical view of selves as both fluid and stable, determined and determining. A social perspective of memory as representative of the link between the actions of individuals and their social and cultural heritage and as a vehicle to understand how selves have come to be who they are has been advocated. Although the roles people occupy are not always self-chosen, they do have the choice to ignore them or to create an alternative representation of events.

Oral history has been advanced as a valuable method in this regard because it locates life histories within social and historical contexts, both generally and specifically. This deviation from the western autobiographical tradition that prescribes the development of stable identities along pre-determined life trajectories highlights the agency of personal accounts and opens the way for a fluid and complex construction of identities. The empowering principles of reminiscence work are used to position elderly people as actively engaged in their own recollection process.

This focus on how individuals have made sense of their activism throughout their lives illuminates the complex organisation of beliefs and values (personal and social) that have both created and constrained their activism. Issues relating to power and self-determination have been identified as integral to constructions of activism and the thesis will now move on to outline the methodological procedures that have been used to shed light on this relationship between historical context and personal experience.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.1 Fusing theory and method:

There are no clear lines of demarcation between epistemologies, methodologies and methods. While methodology concerns itself with the way in which research problems are approached and answers sought from a theoretical perspective, method refers to the specific research strategy or technique that is embarked upon. Regardless of whether or not the theoretical assumptions of researchers are acknowledged, they shape and form research questions, methods and modes of analysis. This inter-dependency has already become evident in the way in which the preceding chapters that outlined the epistemological position of the study have signalled some key issues relating to methodology. The purpose of this chapter is to outline how these theoretical commitments have translated into practical decisions regarding methods, research process and analysis of findings.

3.2 Qualitative research:

The last decade has witnessed an increasing interest in and application of qualitative approaches to research within academic psychology. Qualitative research shares a common emphasis on the subjective and contextual nature of human experience as well as on the problems that arise when we fail to question taken-for-granted knowledge (Silverman, 1997). This approach stands in stark contrast to positivist methods that employ research instruments to quantify and measure social phenomena. These methods primarily fall within the domain of quantitative research that uses natural science principles to determine the facts or causes of social phenomena and to yield findings that are amenable to statistical analyses (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000).

Applications of qualitative methodology share an interest in generating in-depth understandings of psychological and social life. These understandings are rooted in the

belief that people are fundamentally self-interpreting and self-defining. By emphasising the meaning of human experience, qualitative approaches maintain that research based entirely on the examination of observable qualities is fundamentally limited.

This critique of the dominant experimental paradigm that emphasises "universal laws of cause and effect based on an explanatory framework which assumes that reality comprises a world of objectively defined facts" (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1993, p. 14) is fundamental to qualitative research. The concept of objectivity as the ideal stance from which to generate knowledge is rejected and most qualitative researchers work from the assumption that peoples' representations of the world are always mediated. Interpretation is seen as integral to research and the researcher's perspective is incorporated as a key component within the knowledge generation process (de la Rey, 1999).

Many researchers have looked to qualitative research in response to the limited capacity of quantitative approaches to address questions of meaning and causality. While quantitative methods have typically been used as a benchmark against which to juxtapose and define qualitative methods, the recent growth and refinement of qualitative methods has cast doubt on this delineation of quantitative and qualitative methods as diametrically opposite (Banister, Burman, Parker, Taylor & Tindall, 1994). Moreover, qualitative research is no longer seen as a homogeneous category. It embodies many nuances and complexities (Henwood & Pidgeon, 1994).

This diversity is expressed in Denzin and Lincoln's (1994) description of qualitative research as comprising "different positions on the theory of knowledge; approaches to data gathering, fieldwork, and sampling and the kinds of analyses that should be developed through the detailed inspection of qualitative material" (p. 226). Miles and Huberman (1994) point out that the focus on dialogue, more specifically giving voice to human experience, opens the way for a degree of creativity and flexibility within the data collection process.

The growing realisation amongst social science researchers that the application of natural

science methods offers a limited understanding of social life has led to an emphasis on interpretation within the research process. Interpretation is heralded as the key means through which to do justice to the complex nature of subjectivity, and the interpretative process itself is seen as infinite (Denzin, in Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). In a similar vein, Billig (1988) argues that hunches and specialist knowledge should be prioritised above "formally defined procedures" (p. 199). Instead of designing methodological procedures that aim to exclude individual bias from the research process, researchers should include their subjectivity as a resource by reading as widely as possible in the subject under investigation. This breadth of knowledge would enable the researcher to make connections between phenomena that would otherwise be overlooked by restricted reading and a programme laid down in advance by a particular framework.

Billig's notion of research as involving the identification of clues that would edge it in different directions is shared amongst many qualitative researchers. Banister et al (1994) explain how qualitative researchers get the closest they can to an objective account by examining the ways in which their subjectivity has contributed towards defining the issue under investigation. They also argue that researchers who claim objective distance from their subject material are misguided in their efforts because the very stance of neutrality is a position in and of itself. The original text can never be the object of a methodological examination because the researcher will have built up knowledge of the topic before even attempting to understand its meaning.

Although qualitative methodologies share a holistic emphasis on people and contexts, a broad distinction can be made between approaches that embrace a structuralist understanding of the world and assume a relationship between underlying phenomena and surface manifestations and those that adopt a constructionist position (Wetherell, 1998). The former is commonly referred to as an interpretive or hermeneutic approach as the process of linking surface manifestations to underlying phenomena involves the act of interpretation. It recognises that people have multiple realities and knowledge is thus viewed as a dynamic entity that is subjectively derived from experience. Attempts are made to understand, not explain human behaviour, and it is assumed that such

understanding has truth-value.

The constructionist perspective, on the other hand, argues that knowledge is constructed between people through daily interaction in the course of social life. It abandons the search for an essential truth and casts doubt on grand theoretical claims (Sapsford, 1998). Instead knowledge is seen to represent peoples' unique perceptions of their reality and each construction brings with it a different kind of action. Language is viewed as central to this activity because "when people talk to each other, the world gets constructed" (Burr, 1995, p. 7). The transitory nature of the world and experience means that these knowledge constructions are relative to culture and history.

The recent proliferation of various linguistic and constructionist turns has been defined as an "age of narrative" (Josselson, 1995, p. 31) and human psychology itself has been termed "an essentially narrative structure" (Crossley, 2000, p. 46). As a result, the study of narrative does not fit neatly within the boundaries of either structuralist or constructionist thought. Within narrative, the 'self' can be seen as discursively constructed while at the same time functioning as an active and effective entity.

The potential of narrative to fuse a postmodern textual sensibility with an emphasis on personal subjectivity is created by recognising how social conditions, discourses and practices are linked with subjectively experienced needs and identities. Selves are seen to make choices by reconstructing pasts and imagining futures within a range of available possibilities (Andrews, Sclater, Rustin, Squire & Treacher, 2000). Instead of privileging either the social or the individual domain, they are viewed as constructed in relation to each other "in a distinct psychosocial zone" (ibid. p.1).

This emphasis on how language is used to construct selves and how selves use relations with other selves and structures to create identity and meaning represents the key focus of this thesis. As narratives illuminate the process whereby selves both create and are constituted by their story-telling capacity, the object of the investigation becomes the stories themselves. The methodological approach therefore aims to identify and analyse

the linguistic and cultural resources that the narrator uses to construct the story and to persuade the listener of its authenticity. As narratives are viewed as representations with no clear demarcation between fact and interpretation, the knowledge that emerges is seen as intuitive and open to debate (Burr, 1995; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

In addition to the illumination of constructions of subjectivity in narratives, connections between selves and power relations are also revealed (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000; Personal Narratives Group, 1989). The capacity of narrative to serve as a political commentary is dependent upon the incorporation of reflexive principles within the research process. Reflexivity views knowledge as the outcome of a discursive, dynamic and political relationship between the researcher, the researched and "pre-existing discourses which are grounded in ideas attributed to science and popular culture" (Nicolson, 1996, p. 135). Researchers operating within this domain remain aware, during the research and when reporting on it, of how their findings represent constructions that have been made by themselves and their participants (Sapsford & Dallos, 1998).

It is important to note that reflexivity is not limited to the domain of qualitative research. The notion of researchers reflecting critically on their work is also prioritised within quantitative research frameworks. It is the acknowledgement of subjectivity that is unique to the reflexive approach within qualitative research. Transparency in terms of how the researcher's interests guide the priorities and values of the research involves the researched in an investigation that is essentially negotiated, reciprocal and empowering. The discussion will now move on to a more detailed examination of the ways in which power operated within this particular study.

3.3 Power and reflexivity:

While both interpretive and constructionist approaches advocate the value of research into lived experience, they are challenged by critical science methodologies for their emphasis on empowering participants by 'giving them a voice' to the neglect of power and power inequalities (Bhavnani, 1990; Parker & Shotter, 1990; Wilkinson, 1996,

1997). If truth is simply relative to a range of diverse opinions then the possibilities for empowering people are minimal. Life histories contain multiple versions of the past that are created and recreated by individuals and groups who stand in very different relations to dominant power structures. Researchers frequently evaluate life experiences in relation to their own previously held expectations and an awareness of operations of power on behalf of researchers is necessary in order to illuminate precisely whose past is being recorded (Andrews, 2000). Riessman (1993) makes the valuable point that researchers cannot 'give voice' but can only hear the voices that they record and interpret.

Power can be defined as the extent of a person's access to resources and capacity to exert influence in the world. It is unequally distributed across social groups in society and discourses (particular versions of reality) operate to maintain this inequality. Research can only be empowering if it reveals how these discourses are manifest in different cultural and social contexts and how they are dependent upon the specific social and economic arrangements of that culture at that time (Bhavnani, 1990). According to Weisstein, research that fails to acknowledge ideology leads to "paralysis" in that "once knowledge is reduced to insurmountable personal subjectivity, there is no place to go; we are in a swamp of self-referential passivity" (in Wilkinson, 1997, p. 186).

The critical science perspective advocates the adoption of a reflexive paradigm to sensitise researchers to these operations of power. This sensitivity requires constant awareness on the part of researchers as to how, during the research and when reporting on it, the account to be presented is both the researchers and the participants' story (Sapsford & Dallos, 1998). The researcher remains aware of how her actions and beliefs influence the nature and interpretation of the findings and the extent to which she is party to the construction of knowledge. The knowledge that emerges is thus seen as arising from the ongoing and changing relationship between the researcher, respondents and the field of inquiry, and not simply the result of the 'discovery' of distinct psychological and social phenomena on behalf of the researcher.

Within psychology, this reflexive awareness originates in feminist research that

endeavors to find ways of transforming unequal power relationships within social research. Empowerment in this sense refers to the capacity to challenge historical forces and to make history. Flack's definition of power as the capacity to influence the conditions and terms of the everyday life of a community or society is relevant here (in Bhavnani, 1990). Commitment to 'giving a voice' to the oppressed is only empowering if the reasons for their oppression are revealed in the process.

This is illustrated within feminist claims that there are two versions of truth in dominant western constructions of knowledge: the patriarchal view which excludes the experience of women and the feminist view which incorporates women's lived experience of oppression. Feminist scholars focus their attention on highlighting the implications of positivist science methods that advocate value-free principles to strip human experience of its context for the purpose of constructing knowledge about women. They believe that the outcome of such endeavors "exhibits a demonstrable bias towards the pathologisation of women, particularly in relation to reproductive and mental health" (Nicolson, 1996, p. 122).

Research methodologies that distance themselves from phenomena and separate the world into experts and subjects by locating their investigations within the empirical paradigm of the natural sciences do not fall within the ambit of reflexive research. They view psychological phenomena as existing within individuals, resulting in what Sampson (1983) refers to as "a truncated subjectivism" (p. 146) because only a partial picture of human experience is developed. The integration of reflexivity within psychological research emphasises that people do not carry their uniqueness deep inside themselves. The way in which experience is rooted in interactions between people is emphasised and the understandings that emerge from the research are viewed as joint constructions by researchers and their respondents.

Bakhtin's (1981) dialogical method reinforces this co-operative relationship between researchers and the researched. He believes that distance-seeking strategies produce an undemocratic science and that the construction of knowledge should be viewed as an

ongoing dialogic process. This dialogical method involves researchers directing and organising the activities of themselves and their participants, as well as the structures of their passions and feelings about their conduct. This implies that there is no final word as "truth is not to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born *between people* collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogic interaction (Bakhtin, in Smith et al, 1995, p. 177, original emphasis). The way in which the discourse of science stamps researchers accounts of psychological phenomena as 'knowledge' or 'truth', and locates them in powerful positions relative to the people whom they are researching is thus called into question.

In a similar vein, Billig (1994) tackles the way in which conventional social psychological writing portrays disembodied images of people through their descriptions of "the mentality of subjects so that the pattern of reported responses is made psychologically understandable" (p. 322). He calls for the 'repopulation' of texts, in other words that they reveal how the selves that develop within theory are practical, linguistic constructions. Although he admits that such changes would impact upon existing theoretical and methodological practices, he believes that "far more hinges on issues of humanised and dehumanised texts than methodological preferences" (p. 329).

3.3.1 Research as writing:

The dichotomy between theory and method that prevails in the social sciences operates as a model to be tested through research. It creates a clear distinction between representation and reality and the findings that are reported represent the conclusion of the research. The method is therefore chosen on the basis that it will produce evidence for generalisations. Barthes challenges this emphasis on findings by claiming that it is "fiction that research is reported, not written" (in Game, 1991, p. 27).

Barthes advocates the notion of research as writing by incorporating the process of textual production into the research, as opposed to viewing it as a final reporting of results. The integration of reflexivity within research as a process that continually turns

back on itself emphasises the responsible role of method. It is seen as integral to writing, as opposed to waiting to be written when results have emerged.

The anthropologist Clifford Geertz reinforces this view when he argues that qualitative researchers should develop a writing strategy that reveals how their accounts are constituted in relation to the lived experiences that they are talking about. He claims that research "is always writing" (in Game, 1987, p. 28). In the process of translating the reality of others, the authoritative voice of the researcher relegates them to the role of informants.

This ties in with Billig's (1988) recommendation that methodological procedures should not attempt to exclude individual bias from the research process because what we see is always filtered through our own particular orientations. He regards individual 'quirkiness' as integral to scholarship and emphasises the value of wide reading in order to make connections between seemingly disparate phenomena. Spears (1994) cautions that an over-emphasis on this scholarly process could lapse into essentialist lines of thought as levels of reality and explanation beyond the realm of individual consciousness could be overlooked. He warns that 'depersonalisation' may undermine aspects of collective identity, understanding and action and so replaces Billig's celebration of individuality with an honest appraisal of the function of power in research. This reference to power leads us to a more direct consideration of the way in which ideology operates within the research process.

3.3.2 Role of ideology:

Numerous definitions of ideology have been put forward and there is general agreement with Althusser's interpretation that "it is not a "thing"(or) a feature of the environment but it *is* the environment" (in Sapsford & Dallos, 1998, p. 202, original emphasis). Ideology represents a pattern of ideas, values, and interpretations within which we locate ourselves and 'discover' what it means to be a person and understand our relationships with people and social institutions (ibid.). The meaning that is invested in ideology is historically and

collectively constructed and is often represented in terms of "the ideology of an age ... or group" (Mannheim, in Billig, 1990, p. 200).

The existence of social structure is dependent upon individuals to support it and these individuals are created in the realm of ideology. It is within this ideological relation to the social structure that individuals adopt a social role that "necessitates a certain form of individuation and the construction of a particular identity" (Burkitt, 1991, p. 86). Within contemporary western society, the ideology of individuation is the principle element in the construction of social life.

Bakhtin's dialogic theory uses a theatrical analogy to draw attention to the way in which ideology functions to create and maintain the social identities of individuals and how these identities function to reinforce relations of domination (in Sampson, 1989). He illustrates how major scientific and cultural views in western society present the white male as the leading protagonist who assembles his supporting cast and conducts performances that embody power and control. The individual is thus seen as produced by power relations, whose strategies and techniques turn the human body into a given, social subject.

The way in which ideology operates to sustain relations of domination is what defines it as an ideology (Foster, 1991). This symbolic realm of social life as represented by historically dominant forms of knowledge that are tied to particular powerful groups is emphasised in the work of Foucault (1972, 1977, 1994). Truth claims are thus viewed as integral components of the struggle for power in human groups in the sense that truth is imposed on the world by power. "Knowledge is therefore always the intimate of power" (Burkitt, 1991, p. 92).

Knowledge is organised in institutional sites or disciplines that control the discursive practices of individuals, and thus the very nature of their subjectivity. Power is a creative force that produces knowledge that is in turn controlled by prevailing discourses which render the dominant representation of reality as integral to practices of everyday life.

Power is not therefore located in a single site but is "produced and resisted through the disciplines and discursive practices whereby each area of social life seeks to demarcate itself from the next" (Sayers, 1990, p. 200).

In a similar vein, Gergen and Gergen (1991) alert us to the role of scientific theory in constructing reality and therefore changing or sustaining behaviour. Theory constructs the world and interprets the actions of individuals thereby inferring motives for action. It lends credibility to daily moral activity by investing it with meaning and the worldview that is fostered by theory only loses its validity when the theory loses its warrant. Theory plays a role in power relations within society and scientists who propagate a theory that achieves warrant gain power.

Foucault draws our attention to the link between the science of behaviour and power. This relationship highlights the social origin of disciplines that are concerned with managing, controlling and directing people, and in the process, magnifying powerful groups (Ransom, 1997). Foucault shows how the field of psychology has created and maintained the notion of the isolated, rational individual who is open to techniques of management that ensure wealth (Bakhurst & Sypnowich, 1995). This ideology of individualism is rooted in power relations whose techniques transform human bodies into social subjects. Through systems of classification individuals become divided from others and within their own selves. They are recipients of discourses that are embedded in regimes of power and discipline (Ransom, 1997).

This kind of analysis offers insight into people's beliefs and actions, and more specifically whose interests are served, in particular historical times. Nikolas Rose's (1990) examination of the history and influence of the discipline of psychology draws attention to the active contribution of psychologists in maintaining and shaping the social world: "Psychology is not merely a space in which outside forces have been played out, or a tool to be used by pre-given classes or interest groups ... in forcing others to move along particular channels of thinking and acting, psychologists have participated in the fabrication of contemporary reality" (p. 112).

The implication of this conception of psychology is that researchers should not view themselves as unbiased producers of truths about people. Their versions of events are awarded credibility because of the warranting voice of science but this is limiting as only one version of 'truth' or 'knowledge' emerges. The power of the researcher is not automatically taken into consideration because processes by which research material is omitted from either the analysis or the write-up come to be understood as natural or obvious (Bhavnani, 1990).

It is only through conscious attention and interaction with the dynamics of power within the research process that a complex view of how research participants view themselves and their world emerges. Bhavnani (1990) suggests that power can be better understood if we overcome the desire to present a clean, uncontaminated study. Tackling perspectives along the lines of Silverman's (1993) assertion that "a touch of *hygiene* may be useful in clearing our minds about the nature of phenomena that qualitative researchers attempt to study" (original emphasis, p. 196), she argues that the notion of striving towards creating a clean piece of research is a futile endeavor.

Bhavnani argues that a starting point for the analysis of power between researchers and the researched can be found "in the very messiness, the apparently awkward questions from participants" (p. 143). This uncovering of the complexities and realities of the interviewees' view of themselves, as well as of the researcher, highlights the unfeasibility of researchers offering their own readings of interviewees' accounts as 'truth.' The validity of participants' own accounts must be incorporated as an essential feature of what is referred to as reflexivity in research.

A reflexive approach to research thus embraces the view that knowledge of how social, economic and political conditions become manifest in individual thought and action emerge from relations between individuals, groups and wider social processes. The organisation of collective life is revealed through examining the processes by which people learn to see in the ways that they do rather than focusing on the properties residing in those we observe (Steier, 1991). Change is assumed to be a constant feature of social

life and research that focuses on social interaction and social process is able to accommodate these changes.

The individual and social domains are therefore seen as defined by one another. Their respective natures exist within the relationship between them and neither can make sense without the other. Ideology in the western world operates to distort this inter-dependence because it presents the individual (rationality) as superior to society (emotion). This awareness opens the way for a liberating view of human agency as it reveals the irrelevance of the question as to whether humans are active agents or products of society. If agency and structure are part of one inseparable system, then the effectiveness of human agency is just as real as the determining features of social structure (Burr, 1995).

The capacity of language to express both social and psychological domains is evident in Burr's (1995) description of reflexivity as "the way that theory re-constitutes the role of respondents, their relationship to the researcher and the status of their accounts" (p. 161). An emphasis on the constitutive nature of talk reveals how an individual's account is both a description of the event and part of the event. While important insight is gleaned into the ways in which the social is expressed within the individual, this perspective does pose some difficulties for research into lived experiences.

The central problem relates to its propensity to deny human agency. The social is viewed as synonymous with discourse and social practices and ideology are seen to exist beyond the realm of human activity and human influence. As language and knowledge are considered the only organising structures of social life, there are no limits on what can be produced in texts. Social and political analysis is deemed irrelevant because the underlying assumption is that all that is required to achieve social change is the rewriting of texts.

Narrative poses a challenge to this dualism between individual and society and enables the researcher to involve the researched in a democratised process of inquiry that is characterised by negotiation, reciprocity and empowerment. It integrates the

constructionist and interpretive approaches and offers insight into the ways in which the social is manifest within the individual as well as the processes whereby individuals exercise agency in relation to the physical conditions, discourses and practices that comprise their social world.

It is only through interpretation that the immediate and taken-for-granted world of the researcher is expanded. The participant, as opposed to the researcher, is regarded as the expert of the experience under examination (Mishler, 1986) and both parties are involved in the creation of meaning. This sharing of power expands the range of interpretations generated by the research and is related to Kuhn's analysis of paradigm shifts in science, whereby "changes in the nature of what we take to be knowledge are akin to "gestalt shifts" in perception" (in Gergen & Gergen, 1991 p. 77). The scientific endeavor of discovering facts is replaced by a relativist position that accepts the existence of many alternative constructions of events. The essence of this perspective is captured in the following comment by Hollway and Jefferson: "One of the good reasons for believing what people tell us, as researchers, is a democratic one: who are we to know any better than the participants when it is, after all, their lives?" (2000, p. 3).

This prioritisation of the moral and the political within research views knowledge as emerging from inquiry that is openly ideological (Wetherell, 1998). Lather (1991) terms this emphasis on critical consciousness 'research as praxis' which is borrowed from Gramsci's (1957) notion of becoming increasingly conscious of one's own actions and situations in the world. The incorporation of a reflexive paradigm within the research process facilitates the development of this critical consciousness as it prioritises people making sense of their own lives on their own terms. Research that is rooted in interactions between people is able to show how understandings are joint constructions between researchers and their respondents. The findings that emerge from such paradigms are seen to represent an ongoing and changing relationship between the researcher, respondents and the field of inquiry. This collaborative approach is central to narrative research.

3.4 Narrative analysis:

The widespread debate in the definition of what the term 'narrative' signifies reflects the existence of a variety of narrative forms. In broad terms, narrative can be seen as an umbrella term for research practices that focus on the interpretation of first-person accounts of experience. Although often viewed as stories, narratives do not all contain the conventions of a story in the form of a plot, protagonists, events and an ending. Whereas a story is concerned with particular happenings, a narrative uses these events to convey a wider meaning (Polkinghorne, 1995; Josselson, 1995). Narrative embodies a fragmented view of human subjectivity that carries with it "the pushes and pulls of various available narratives which are contingent upon social and cultural positioning" (Andrews et al, 2000, p. 8). According to Abell, Stokoe and Billig (2000), narrative is "constructive and performative, rather than a neutral reflection of social life" (p. 180).

Narrative research does not therefore confine subjectivity to the individual. In the process of constructing a narrative the individual also creates a self that represents how she or he wants to be understood in the social world. This orientation views the self as a social construction and language is regarded as the symbolic system which enables people to construct narratives that represent how they make sense of themselves, their relationships and events in their lives. It is this reliance on language that transforms the construction of the self into a shared social process (Riessman, 1993).

A feature that is commonly attached to narrative is the temporal sequencing of events (Bruner, 1991; 1995; Riessman, 1993). This perspective originates in the work of Ricoeur (1984) who argues that engaging with time comprises an integral aspect of human behaviour. The arrangement of experience in relation to time renders it applicable to different cultural situations and its significance is derived from the meaning that is assigns to events within its compass. Narratives do not contain 'objective' accounts of events across time but represent a creative means of exploring and describing experience. The legitimacy of individual accounts is dependent on being placed within a continuity that is provided by wider social history. Emphasis is thus placed on historical continuity

rather than the legitimacy of that history. Narratives are also historically specific as they change with the pre-occupations of the age and the circumstances surrounding their production. This sense of sequence renders narratives especially suitable for the study of life experiences, for as de Waele and Harré explain "life events are made intelligible by locating them in a sequence or unfolding process" (in Gergen, 1988, p. 97). If events are not tied to a larger story they lose significance.

Squire (1998, 2000b) cautions that an over-reliance on stories as vehicles to a creative negotiation of subjective meaning frequently overlooks language's own structures, more specifically the way in which subjectivity is embodied in language. She replaces an emphasis on the stories themselves with a focus on the narrative genres that are represented in the patterns of plot and theme that comprise stories. Genres can take various forms. Examples include the grand western, twentieth century autobiographical form, the feminine romance, the conversational form and the therapeutic genre that highlights the value of remembering, repeating and working through experience (ibid.).

This emphasis on an interpretive thrust is reinforced in Bruner's (1991) work on narrative. He also argues that there is no single method of narrative analysis. The distinction that Polkinghorne (1995) draws between 'narrative analysis' and the 'analysis of narratives' provides a valuable grid for illuminating the meaning of narrative. 'Narrative analysis' concerns itself with the production of stories or case studies. It conveys the uniqueness of the narrator by integrating the information rather than breaking it down into distinct analytical categories. The 'analysis of the narratives' adopts a 'paradigmatic reasoning' perspective which identifies consistent themes, settings and types of stories across the narrative. With a view to preserving the whole as well as providing a synthesis of themes across all the narratives, this study has used aspects of both 'narrative analysis' and the 'analysis of narratives.'

As identified earlier, the truth-value of narratives is a central debate within narrative research. Both Bruner (1991) and Riessman (1993) contend that the value of a narrative cannot be determined by the extent to which it reflects reality. According to Bruner,

narrative truth should be evaluated according to its "verisimilitude" (p. 4), and not its verifiability, because it does not depict reality. It creates reality in the same way that fiction is a literary tradition that creates a world of its own. The analytic interpretations that we apply to narratives are therefore partial truths that aim for believability and enlargement of understanding.

This perspective is supported by The Personal Narratives Group (1989) who maintain that narratives "do not speak for themselves" or "provide direct access to other times, places or cultures" (p. 264). People fabricate, exaggerate and become confused when they talk about their lives and the 'truths' that are generated are reached through interpretation.

Narrative assumes a point of view and the facts that emerge are the outcome of an interpretive process. "Facts and interpretations require and shape one another" (Stivers, in Riessman, 1993, p. 64). Narrative validation is therefore the process whereby claims are made for the trustworthiness of interpretations and not for their truth-value. This approach to validation is rooted in the social world and does not assume an objective reality.

There are also political implications attached to debates surrounding the 'truth-value' of narratives. People perceive their stories as unique to themselves and their own 'true' experiences and they are unaware of the role of power relations in the construction of their narratives. Tracing the transformations of voice in narrative involves risk-taking on behalf of researchers and consideration needs to be given to the ethical implications of these representations (Ross, 2002). Researchers have tackled this problem by replacing the notion of "*a* truth or *the* truth" (Personal Narratives Group, 1989, p. 6) with the recognition that narratives contain multiple truths.

By recognising that narratives derive meaning from the people who construct them, the notion of a single, master narrative is dispelled and the feasibility of several interpretations is acknowledged (Gergen & Gergen, 1984). An understanding of narrative as a social act automatically situates narrative research within a historical and cultural

context that renders tests of verification and reliability irrelevant.

This does not mean that narrative analysis should not concern itself with issues pertaining to rigour and quality. Traditional verification methods that adhere to an objective reality are replaced by an emphasis on the trustworthiness of interpretations and the analytical process is thus shifted into the social world. Riessman (1993) advocates the criterion of persuasiveness to denote the extent to which the narrative account is convincing. She claims it is greatest "when theoretical claims are supported with evidence from the participants accounts and when alternative interpretations of the data are considered" (p. 65). Persuasiveness thus ultimately rests on the way in which the researcher presents the interpretation. It is also important to note that the most persuasive interpretation of a narrative text at one historical moment may not be as persuasive at another moment.

It is also important to consider issues relating to the expropriation of narratives on behalf of researchers. Researchers are privileged with the authority to represent people's accounts and there is no possibility of adopting a neutral stance. Within the process of selecting the research area, reviewing the literature, collecting and transcribing material, deciding what is relevant and writing up the research, researchers are engaged in creating their very own narratives. Proponents of narrative research thus contend that the value of narrative work lies in the narrator's ability to provide a comprehensive interpretation that engenders others to determine the work trustworthy.

3.5 The researcher:

An outcome of the emphasis on subjectivity that characterises the poststructuralist movement is that the researcher is located at the centre of the research endeavor. Her interpretation is viewed as a representation of the human experience that comprises the examination. The nature and extent of the researcher's emotional investment in the research is thus legitimised by acknowledging that she is constructing accounts of the subjective experiences of her participants. This sense-making process is captured in Weber's concept of 'verstehen' that refers to an interpretive understanding of behaviour

that is derived from an initial grasp of the context of meaning within which the behaviour arises (in Crotty, 1998).

This thesis is a narrative about conducting research into the experiences of political activists and thus far the voice of the researcher has been concealed within the conventions of thesis writing. The literary style of the thesis will now shift to illuminate my involvement as the researcher and to narrow the distance between experiencing subjects and their accounts of lived experience (Denzin, 1992). As the thesis continues to unfold, my voice as the narrator will move backwards and forwards between the perspective of the passionate insider and the dispassionate perspective of the outsider (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992).

Drawing from the work of Middleton (1993) and de la Rey (1999) who endeavoured to make sense of their own lives in relation to the experiences of the women academics that they studied, I will attempt to describe the identities that resonate for me as I write this thesis. These identities are defined by my race as a white woman, my present involvement in academia as a UCT lecturer and as a doctorate student, my past involvement in NUSAS (National Union of South African Students) and the ANC Youth League and my status as a South African citizen. Moreover, the pursuit of this project has coincided with my assumption of identities relating to marriage and motherhood.

The above identities are experienced within the wider context of a country that is undergoing fundamental social, economic and political change while simultaneously revisiting and making sense of its own history. Working with people who have made such an active contribution towards this reality has stimulated my own reflection on the past as well as on the present. My status as a wife and mother has also facilitated a deeper understanding of the conflicting demands of political and family life.

Some of the participants have remained involved in the unfolding of the research process and they have also become personal friends. I am grateful for their contribution and consider myself extremely fortunate to have forged such meaningful relationships. My

connection with the history of South Africa, and in particular the part played by the liberation movement, has enabled me to identify with many of the emotions and commitments conveyed by the participants. These identities have culminated in a research experience that has been collaborative and engaging.

3.6 Execution of the study:

My initial interest in the study was aroused by the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Committee (TRC) that was established to assist South Africa to move through the difficult transition from oppression to democracy. The TRC confronted the country's grim past. It offered those individuals who had committed violations amnesty in exchange for public disclosure of the truth about their crimes and it provided the victims with an opportunity for a public hearing.

An important distinction needs to be made between storytelling and testimony. Whereas story embraces imagination and performance, testimony is seen to embody a level of authenticity. People frequently tell themselves stories but testimonies are usually directed at a wider audience (Laub, 1992). This convergence of public and private spheres is represented in the TRC's attempt to create a sacred place that essentially elevated storytelling to the level of testimony (Ross, 2002). The climate of forgiveness, healing and reconciliation in which testifiers relayed their experiences played a key role in the way in which the stories were told and heard.

The TRC aimed to create a shared memory that would bind the nation but the reality of transforming identities that were made in the apartheid era into a post-apartheid era turned out to be a complex process. Although people looked to the TRC to generate a 'whole truth', it concluded that no conclusive, undisputed picture of South Africa's past could be established. This position reflects Bakhtin's (1986) argument that language, as a social practice and not an individual activity, always comprises a dialogue regardless of the presence of an audience. The TRC became very conscious of how these multiple voices (audiences) speak through one voice and how different ideological perspectives

translate into different understandings of truth by different individuals (Bennet & Verbist, 2002).

Testimonies circulate beyond the immediate act of telling and when they are located in new and different contexts they have different meanings. This can result in the alienation of self from the story and academics engaged in interpreting the meaning of TRC transcripts have commented on the challenge of securing voice (agency) within their interpretations (Ross, 2002).

In broad terms, many South Africans have recognised the value of coming to terms with the past while others have maintained that the country should forget the past and look ahead to a new future. These debates concerning the ways in which memory should be negotiated in South Africa sparked my initial interest in the memories of elderly activists. It became clear to me that there are many stories to be told and my interest lay in capturing the voices of those individuals who had been part of the early stages of the anti-apartheid movement. As indicated in the previous chapter, reading Molly Andrew's book (1991) *Lifetimes of Commitment: Aging, politics, psychology* helped to sharpen my focus into an exploration of how individuals have made sense of their activism throughout their lives.

This interest in how elderly activists have made sense of the past directed me to the literature on oral history, narrative, memory, aging and political psychology. Working from the premise that the purpose of qualitative methodology is to reach an understanding of lived experience that is "both rigorous - based on systematic observation - and imaginative based on expressive insight" (Ellis & Flaherty, 1992, p. 5), I selected narrative research as the core methodology.

I followed what Neuman (1994) describes as a nonlinear and cyclical path whereby the researcher "makes successive passes through steps sometimes moving backward and sideways before moving on" (p. 319). With each cycle the researcher broadens her knowledge of the topic, the participants and the research context. In a similar vein, Glaser

and Strauss (1968) describe the process as involving continual movement between theory and data. While my initial questions focused on the broad unraveling of life trajectories in relation to activism, they gradually became more focused on the intersection of activism in relationships, family life, organisational membership, geographical location, work life and old age.

Embarking on a research process that progressed in relation to my movement between literature, interviews, transcriptions and analysis was felt to be particularly relevant to a study that deals with an aspect of South Africa's memory making process. Negotiating the past is an ongoing and dynamic process. The past decade has witnessed the emergence of numerous publications ranging from personal memoirs and biographies (e.g. Anderson, 1998; Bernstein, 1999; Clingman, 1998; Frankel, 1999; Jurgens, 2000; Krog, 1998; Matshikiza & Matshikiza, 2000; Middleton, 1998; Podbrey, 1993; Slovo, 1995; Taylor, 1995; Wolpe, 1994) to historical and socio-political commentaries relating to South Africa and the history of the liberation movement (e.g. Bernstein, 1994; Boraine & Levy, 1995; Boraine, Levy & Scheffer, 1994; Botman & Petersen, 1996; Dadoo, 1990; Ellis & Sechaba, 1992; Frederikse, 1990; Lazerson, 1994; Nuttall & Coetzee, 1998; Pinnock, 1997; Russell, 1989; Sparg, Schreiner & Ansell, 2001; Thompson & Prior, 1982; Tutu, 1999; van Kessel, 2000).

3.6.1 Participants:

The participants comprise 22 men and women who were active in the South African liberation movement since the 1950s and 60s. The group emerged from a 'snowball' sampling process that is described by Neuman (1994) as a qualitative method for identifying an interconnected network of people or organisations. Also described as chain referral sampling, it is based on the analogy of a snowball that begins small and becomes larger as it rolls and accumulates snow. The sampling thus begins with one or a few people and spreads out on the basis of links to these initial participants.

The first interview was set up with the assistance of a close friend and thereafter the

process literally 'snowballed' as one participant referred me on to the next. The fact that seventeen of the respondents are white could be seen as a weakness and requires some commentary. In his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, Nelson Mandela (1995) points out that the racial segregation of South African society did indeed permeate the liberation movement. Despite the fact that activists from diverse racial groups campaigned and worked together, and in the process forged strong links, South African life posed very definite restrictions. Apartheid legislation ensured that the residential, work and social lives of all South Africans were separated along racial lines. As a result, the sense of belonging that characterised participation in the movement was perhaps intensified amongst white activists by virtue of them representing an ostracised minority within privileged white society (Podbrey, 1993). The sample composition could thus be seen to represent the outcome of a snowball that has been confined to a tight network of individuals.

Table 1: Sample Profile

Race:	
White:	17
Black:	5
	(1 Coloured, 4 Indian)
Gender:	
Male:	9
Female:	13
Age:	
Below 70:	5
71 - 79:	8
80 - 89:	5
90 - 99:	2
Unspecified:	2
	Mean= 75
	Range = 63 - 96 years
Relationship status:	
Married:	11
Divorced:	3
Single:	1
Widow:	5
Widower:	2
Number of children:	
No with children:	18
No without children:	4
	Mean = 2 Highest = 4
In Exile:	10
Returned:	12

3.6.2 The interview process:

Potential interviewees were initially contacted telephonically. I outlined the purpose of the research, determined willingness to participate, answered questions, and set up a time for the preliminary interview. All interviewees elected to meet in their homes except for two individuals who were interviewed in their respective work environments.

Thompson (1988) describes the interview as a social relationship between people that is founded on mutual co-operation, trust and respect. He warns that a violation of these conventions may destroy the relationship. Gubrium and Holstein (1997a) point out that, while conventional approaches to interviewing recognise the significance of the interaction between the interviewer and the interviewee, they tend to concentrate on devising strategies to contain this interaction. The interview conversation is viewed as a potential source of bias that has to be controlled in order to open the way for the flow of valid and reliable information. Emphasis is thus placed on the interviewer's capacity to minimise distortions in respondents' knowledge.

The poststructuralist view, on the other hand, treats the interview as a social encounter in which knowledge is constructed (Mishler, 1986; Silverman, 1993). Respondents are not seen as repositories of knowledge awaiting excavation by the skilled questioning of interviewers. As Gubrium and Holstein (1997a) explain, "participation in an interview involves meaning-making work" (p. 114) and both interviewer and interviewee are actively involved in this sense-making process. This emphasis on the active nature of the interview illuminates the way in which knowledge is assembled. The process whereby meaning is produced is thus regarded as equally significant as the meaning that finally emerges.

This view of the interview as a symbolic interaction does not discount the possibility that knowledge of the social world beyond the interview can be obtained. According to Miller and Glassner (1997), the notion that interviews are meaningless beyond the context in which they occur offers little opportunity "to learn about the social world and to

contribute knowledge that can be beneficial in expanding understanding and useful for fostering social change" (ibid. p. 99). The rejection of the positivist research endeavour that seeks to derive a mirror reflection of the social world does not necessarily require an outright denial of the possibility of learning about the social world beyond the interview. Qualitative interviews provide a means to access the personal and social meaning that individuals attribute to their experiences and the social world, thus granting their "points of view the culturally honoured status of reality" (ibid. p. 100).

The nature and form of the interviews that were conducted in this study were therefore guided by a dual interest in the unfolding of the meaning-making process and in what was substantively asked and conveyed. The interviews were oriented around a central question that aimed to understand how and why each individual decided to participate in the liberation movement and how their activism unraveled throughout their lives.

An interview guide (see appendix 1) was used to shape the interaction around ten broad areas of questioning: childhood experiences, family and religion; primary and tertiary education; occupational development; socialisation into liberation movement; personal life in relation to activist life; detention and exile; experience of liberation; decision to remain in exile or to return to South Africa post liberation; feelings and impressions of current situation in South Africa; orientation towards the future.

These areas arose from reading in the field of political activism, oral history, life narrative, published biographies of political activists and socio-political commentaries on the South African liberation movement, as indicated earlier. There was no order to the questions and the interviews resembled conversations as respondents reflected on their experiences. I was cautious not to dominate the interactions and refrained from making too much commentary by limiting myself to as few open-ended questions as possible. With the endorsement of respondents, I took rough notes to prevent interruptions and I returned to points at a later stage.

My overall objective was to capture a subjective record of how the men and women in

the study spoke about their experiences. The way in which they ordered their reflections, what they emphasised and what they omitted, and the words they chose to describe their experiences were all considered crucial ingredients. Each interview commenced with the same broad question as stated above and additional probe questions were used such as 'What was that like for you?' 'How did you feel at the time?' and 'Can you tell me more about that issue?'

The duration of each interview was between one and a half and two hours, and with the permission of the interviewee, the interview was audio-recorded. Thompson (1988) maintains that interviews with elderly people should not exceed this time period as high fatigue levels may result in unwillingness to repeat the experience. Interviewees were also told that the tape recorder could be turned off at anytime and this did frequently occur when sensitive or confidential information emerged.

Commenting on the use of equipment, Thompson (1978) draws our attention to three situations in which respondents may resist having their experiences recorded. These include working with older people who may feel hostile to technology; working with individuals who have experienced persecution and fear that any information on tape could get into the hands of the authorities, and working with respondents who belong to close-knit circles where gossip may prevail. Despite the possible relevance of these circumstances to the participants, they all accepted the tape recorder and soon lost an immediate awareness of it.

The majority of the interviews were characterised by informality. Tea breaks provided useful opportunities for participants to show photographs and newspaper clippings that illustrated their memories. They also expressed interest in my own life circumstances. According to Clifford (1995), informal interview conditions facilitate the recollection of information that typically does not emerge from formal interviews. It is important to bear in mind that the recollection of memories may also generate painful emotions and it is crucial that the interviewer is sensitive to the meaning contexts that surround utterances (Lee, 1993). In this regard, I was responsive to participants and did not attempt to deflect

any emotional reactions. This meant that the recorder was frequently switched off when intimate matters were shared. Sources of bias, essential to social understanding, were thus integrated into the interview process rather than pretending that they could be nullified by a dehumanised interviewer "without a face to give off feelings" (Gubrium & Holstein, 1997b, p. 199).

Although an assurance was given that all names would either be changed or deleted in the final report, most respondents expressed the view that they were not unduly concerned about anonymity. And when it came to writing up the thesis the inclusion of fictional names did indeed seem pointless. The opinions and experiences of many of the participants have been quoted in numerous publications and some have published their own biographies. I also recalled Billig's (1994) emphasis on the value of humanizing methodological practices and responded to his call to 'repopulate' research findings by contacting participants to gauge their feelings on the issue. They all consented to the inclusion of their authentic names in the write-up with many commenting on the personal pride that they attach to the part that they have played in the struggle and how false names would somehow detract from this contribution.

At the end of each interview the interviewee was thanked for his/her time and for sharing his/her experiences. Once I had left, I wrote notes on the context of the interview, the character of the informant and additional remarks made off tape that were not deemed confidential. The interviews were then transcribed and the transcriptions were sent back to respondents for their perusal. This initiated further discussion in the form of follow-up interviews, telephone conversations and/or written correspondence. This collaborative approach provided valuable opportunities to correct errors and/or uncover remaining disagreements about how particular events were to be interpreted. It is also important to comment on the complex power relations that may have operated to shape the interviews. I have identified these relations in terms of race, gender, age and experience.

3.6.3 Relations of power in the interview process:

Participation in the interviews was voluntary and participants were encouraged to direct the flow and pace of the interaction. The tape recorder was only used with their permission and they could request that it be switched off at any point. Participants could terminate the interview at any time and they were at liberty to ask any questions of me.

When I initially set up the interviews I wondered how the participants would feel about sharing their experiences with someone so much younger. I was also aware of the fragility and vulnerability that accompanies old age and how talking about the past may generate painful memories. These concerns were allayed within minutes of meeting each participant. They were eager to share their reflections and also expressed a strong belief in the importance of recollecting and capturing information relating to their involvement in South African history. For my part, listening to the stories older people shared about the past provided an invaluable opportunity for personal growth. This is reflected in Myerhoff and Tute's (1992) commentary on the synergy that operates when young people research the experiences of the elderly and how it offers the former "an encounter with history as a meaningful concern in human terms" (p. 251).

The racial policies of apartheid comprised a large focus of discussion in the interviews but it is difficult to isolate exactly how race influenced the interview process. Bhavnani (1990) draws attention to the power imbalances that arise when white researchers work with black participants. She refers to such work as 'researching down' and as an Asian she describes her work with white participants as 'researching up'. Given the delineation of the elderly to the margins of society, working with them might also be perceived as 'researching down'.

However my respect for my participants' steadfast commitment and all that they have endured would lead me to describe the experience of working with this particular group of people as 'researching up'. Many of the respondents are well-known figures who have received local and international recognition for their political work as well as for their

own publications. They have occupied leadership positions in the liberation movement, some hold positions of power in the South African government, and all have remained critically engaged with the South African social, political and economic arenas.

It is also valuable to consider the dynamics that arise when a woman researcher interviews women. Finch (1984) stated that a female researcher is able to elicit information from female participants with ease, especially when the subject of the interview concerns aspects of participants' lives that are central to their identities as women. She also cautions that the situation could become exploitative as women participants are more likely to trust confidentiality assertions made by women researchers. I did experience an ease of common ground with women interviewees particularly when the discussions touched on their experiences as daughters, wives and mothers. I would also describe the interviews with women participants as intimate but I am confident that confidentiality has not been breached. Although the interviews with male participants were not as intimate and tended to focus more on events as opposed to emotions, I would describe them as marked by a degree of personal disclosure and ease of interaction.

3.7 Transcripts:

The use of a life story approach meant that participants recounted their experiences in terms of a sequence of key happenings that followed a chronological order. The transcribing process involved the transformation of these orally generated stories into written texts that could subsequently be analysed. Van Maanen describes this process as 'textualising' the interviews as "only in textualised form do data yield to analysis" (in Polkinghorne, 1995, p. 13).

There is no doubt that the spoken word becomes distorted when taken down on paper. Although efforts are made to remain as faithful as possible to the character and meaning of the original dialogue, a loss of gesture, tone, and timing is inevitable. According to Atkinson and Heritage (1984), the production and use of transcripts is essentially a

narrative activity because it involves repeated listening to recordings in order to identify previously unnoted features in the organisation of the dialogue. The deletion of pauses and distracting hesitations in the interests of readability alters the rhythm of speech to meet the demands of prose. The transcript in this sense is a literary form.

The sending of transcripts to participants for correction has the advantage of picking up errors, misspellings of names and stimulating new information but it also has drawbacks. These relate to participants finding it difficult to resist rewriting the original conversational speech into a conventional prose form. They also tend to delete sentences and rephrase others to alter an impression given from some particular memory. This was borne out in the responses of many participants and their transcripts were re-worked accordingly. This frequently involved sitting together and making the necessary changes, and contrary to these drawbacks, I found the process highly beneficial. It provided the opportunity for clarification, deeper understanding and enhanced personal connections.

Riessman (1993) sums it up succinctly when she describes transcribing discourse as an interpretive practice. Different transcription conventions lead to and support different interpretations and ideological positions. It is therefore the researcher's responsibility to construct a sound argument for displaying the text in a particular way. As the process of transcription is integral to the analysis of the narratives, this aspect of the method will be discussed at length in the forthcoming chapter.

3.8 Conclusion:

A reflexive approach to research offers an understanding of how relations between individuals, groups and wider social processes are embodied in individual thought and action. It aims to uncover the organisation of collective life by examining the processes by which researchers and the researched learn to see in the ways that they do. This focus on social interaction and social processes signals the relevance of reflexivity to narrative research.

Narrative research embraces the constitutive nature of talk whereby an individual's account is seen as both a description of the event and part of the event. Interpretation is the means through which the immediate and taken-for-granted world of the researcher is expanded and both researcher and participants are involved in this construction of meaning. The process whereby the researcher became increasingly conscious of her actions and situations in the world will be further illustrated in the narrative analysis that follows.

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CHAPTER FOUR: ANALYSIS OF THE NARRATIVES

4.1 The analytical strategy:

Working from Bruner's description of narrative as the principle whereby "people organise their experience in, knowledge about, and transactions with the social world (1990, p. 35) the analytical strategy aims to unravel the many layers of narrative representation. This requires the researcher to preserve the voice of the narrator while simultaneously relaying her own insights and observations. The researcher is not simply involved in the classification of findings but is also actively recounting the experiences of others (Riessman, 1993). Developing an understanding of the narratives thus involves "the attribution of meaning, causal connection, typicality and not merely description" (Rustin, 2000, p. 42).

This essentially involves the construction of accounts of what she encounters in talk, text and interaction (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996). A number of representational decisions are made regarding which aspects of the data are worthy of note, and in this regard, it is poignant to consider Riessman's advice that the researcher remain consciously reflective about the claims that she makes. The analytical strategy thus aims to highlight the storytelling component and to reveal the selves that I interacted with (myself and others) during the interview, transcription and analysis processes.

4.2 Levels of representation:

The central representation decision relates to how the interpretations can be interwoven with academic theory and personal anecdotes to shed light on 22 narratives that are too vast and complex to be contained within the thesis. This difficulty is tackled by integrating the oral history approach that situates the voice of the narrator at the heart of the analysis with the analytical strategy of Polkinghorne (1995) who advocates the preservation of the unique and whole narrative as well as a synthesis of themes across

narratives. Along with other writers (Coffey & Atkinson, 1996; Cortazzi, 1993; Riessman, 1993), Polkinghorne alerts researchers to the limitations that arise from reading narratives simply for content and neglecting features such as structure, form and function.

Although life-stories may be criticised for their presentation of selves as self-contained entities, their use in light of an understanding of the integral relationship between subjective and social domains, enables the generation of the rich material that is needed for a complex engagement with questions of subjectivity. The uniqueness and particularity of the narratives will be illuminated through the merging of particular stories with concrete, embodied, complex and specific persons.

An appreciation of the rich and multi-layered composition of narrative has informed the decision to present a single life narrative and 21 core narratives. The comprehensive documentation of the process involved in the generation of one life narrative aims to illuminate the richness of narrative study that is frequently lost when narratives are collapsed together and findings are merged. It also gives the reader an idea of the depth and scale of the research endeavor as the same process was followed to generate the narratives of all the participants.

The central narrative that will be unraveled belongs to Blanche La Guma, a seventy-five year old 'coloured' woman. Blanche's involvement in politics spans her entire life and includes participation across multiple levels of the liberation movement. She constructs her activism as a fundamental identity that has informed her life choices and her personal development throughout her life. The decision to shine the light most brightly on Blanche's narrative was informed, on the one hand, by its rich ingredients and comprehensive representation of the narratives as a whole, and on the other hand, by her unique positioning as a black woman in a sample of majority white participants. Her story exemplifies the negotiations and contradictions that are experienced at the interface between selves and structures, thus highlighting the processes whereby the personal and the political collide.

The core narratives have been generated from close listening to the tapes followed by repeated readings of the transcriptions. They are core narratives in that they contain the skeletal details of the lives of the narrators with attention to basic content and plot line and the exclusion of descriptions and explanations. This will enable the reader to identify commonalities and variations across the narratives. Narrative features, such as direction and movement, are also evident. The summaries are presented in order of interview sequence in appendix 2. The analysis and interpretation extends beyond the core narratives to include quotations and material from the full transcripts. As the transcription process represents an additional level of representation, it is dealt with in more detail below.

4.2.1 Transcription:

The dismissal of the notion of language as transparent, that is characteristic of the interpretive turn in social research, has led to a far more serious approach to transcription (de la Rey, 1999). As the entirety of the data cannot be represented, a number of representational decisions have been made concerning the level of detail to be reflected.

The selective nature of the transcription process is in keeping with the emphasis that qualitative research places on a narrow, more detailed focus and the avoidance of excess descriptive reportage. It is also prudent to consider Billig's (1994) advice that the researcher be honest about identifying his/her own intentions. In this regard I followed the guidance of de la Rey (1999) who conducted narrative research into the career trajectories of academic women and who was also constrained by the upper limit of 80 000 words that is determined by the UCT Higher Degrees Committee for doctoral dissertations. In a similar fashion to de la Rey, I chose to work with core narratives and to conduct an analysis that illuminated the difference and commonality across the narratives, while at the same time revealing the contextual processes that are embedded in the narratives. However, the inclusion of one full narrative distinguishes the study from de la Rey's approach.

My decision about the form in which the narratives would be interpreted and conveyed to the reader was thus determined by the task of transcribing 22 narratives, and the knowledge that the analysis would focus on form and content, and not on pauses, pitch and changes in conversation. Although Blanche La Guma's transcription has not been subjected to the same degree of editing as the core narratives, it has nevertheless been altered by the inevitable loss that accompanies the translation of the spoken word into written form. A full transcript is presented in appendix 3.

All the transcriptions have, to quote Riessman (1993), a 'cleaned' appearance. The process whereby I transcribed the interview and then forwarded a copy to Blanche for her endorsement (as outlined in the forthcoming chapter) was followed with all participants in the study. This served to integrate their voices as far along the line of transcription as possible as well as securing participants' satisfaction with the content. Another representational issue concerns the progressive nature of the narratives.

4.2.2 Progressive narratives:

The narratives of this study can be located within Gergen and Gergen's (1984) categorisation of typical narrative forms. Life narratives fall neatly within their definition of progressive narratives as each life history embodies an escalating movement towards a goal state or valued endpoint. The telling of progressive narratives was initiated from the onset of the interviews as I asked individuals to begin with their childhood experiences and a chronological format ensued. Individuals recounted their activism in relation to unfolding life events from childhood to the present time and this focus comprised the main line of the plot. The valued endpoint was reached when narrators felt that they had constructed a comprehensive representation of such events and these experiences have informed the structure for the analysis.

The valued endpoint was also influenced by the ways in which the life stories of the participants were framed by their political consciousness and desire to represent their political lives in line with their collective identity as activists. This point is supported by

Stanley (1996) who interviewed elderly socialists in Britain and commented on how "the consciousness with which socialists frame their story" is informed by "the spirit of homage to fellow comrades and the movement" (p. 60). The endpoint also represents a culmination of events on a macro-level as the trajectory of the liberation movement ran parallel to the unfolding of individual life stories over time. These macro-events have been incorporated into a time-line in appendix 4. The events that it depicts have been derived from the narratives themselves and they will be referred to as the analysis unfolds. The time-line does not purport to provide a comprehensive overview of historical events. Its purpose is to offer a broad contextual reference for the study and to locate the participants within the historical era that has framed their lives. Appendix 5 contains a glossary of acronyms to assist the reader with terminology in the time-line as well as in the thesis as a whole.

Events at the micro-narrative level are frequently positioned as deviations from the overall forward movement of the narrative as they are framed as potential threats to the attainment of the valued endpoint. They are essentially digressions from the central sense-making activity that involves individuals constructing accounts of their activism in relation to the unfolding of their lives. Gergen and Gergen (1984) explain how such deviations create an overall sense of narrative drama in a similar fashion to the way in which theatrical dramas attempt to arouse the audience. This dramatic engagement is also evident in the inclusion of moralistic tales within the narratives.

According to Coffey and Atkinson (1996), the success of a story is dependent upon its capacity to convey a moralistic tale. Such tales usually contain unfortunate aspects that serve to caution others to avoid such events themselves. As narratives typically comprise moral tales, it follows that they may serve a moral evaluative function. The social function of the moral fable serves a collective lesson of what not to do or how not to be (de la Rey, 1999). All the narratives contained such evaluative components and they were typically made explicit towards the end of the interview, thus serving the purpose of offering guidance on how to lead a fulfilled life.

Another structural feature of progressive narratives, according to Gergen and Gergen (1984), is the way in which specific turns and developments in the narratives are tied to the lives of others. The narratives are not simply chronicles of the actions of individual narrators but also convey the actions of others. The analysis will show how these connections relate to the gendered nature of the narratives. The use of figurative language in narratives also offers insight into how individuals and groups organise and articulate their experiences. Coffey and Atkinson (1996) identify metaphor within narratives as the inclusion of all forms of figurative speech such as similes, analogies and imagery. Metaphors in the narratives will be considered in relation to contextual issues that will in turn shed light on the values, knowledge and cultural domains that are shared by members of particular groups.

The above discussion of representational issues has drawn attention to how the meaning of narrative form and content is informed by features such as figurative language and moral function. These features will be used to uncover how race, class and gender have shaped the stories of how the participants have made sense of their lives as activists, and how they have constructed their activism from their subjective locations of daughters, mothers, wives and grandmothers, sons, fathers, husbands and grandfathers. The conscious articulation of their activism over the course of their lives serves to illuminate the shifting constructions of these identities. The thrust of the analysis will thus be marked by an exploration of how the life narratives of the activists are tied to locations of gender, race and class in the South African context.

Before we begin Blanche La Guma's life-story, the 21 other activists who participated in the study will be briefly introduced so as to enrich the presentation of their voices within the analysis. As indicated earlier, a fuller explication of their experiences is contained in the core narratives in appendix 2.

Francis Losman is a white woman who has always lived in South Africa. She is ninety-four years old and currently resides in an apartment in Sea Point, Cape Town. She had a Jewish upbringing and describes herself as an atheist.

Johnny Sachs is a sixty-five year old, white man who had a Jewish upbringing. Since 1991 he has been involved in medical research on behalf of the ANC and shares his time between London and Cape Town. He describes himself as an atheist.

Ninety-six-year old **Julius Baker** lives in Hampstead, London. He is an atheist who was raised in a Jewish household. Julius has recently been investigating the feasibility of returning to South Africa on a permanent basis.

Gerald Goldman is a Jewish man who lives in West Hampstead, London. He has chosen to remain in exile and visits South Africa regularly.

Ethel de Keyser is a Jewish woman who lives in Highbury, London and works for the Canon Collins Educational Trust for Southern Africa. Ethel was awarded an OBE in 2000 in recognition for her commitment towards working for human rights in South Africa.

Hilda and Rusty Bernstein were living in exile in England when they participated in the study. Unfortunately Rusty has subsequently passed away. He was eighty-two years old at the time. Hilda still lives in England. She is eighty-seven years old. Hilda was raised in a Christian household and Rusty had a Jewish upbringing. They both described themselves as atheists.

Esme Goldberg was seventy-one years old when she participated in the study. Sadly, Esme has since passed away. I interviewed her when she was running a boarding house in East Finchley. She was living with her spouse, sixty-nine year old **Denis Goldberg**, who was released in 1987 after serving a 22 year prison sentence in a South African jail. Both Esme and Denis were raised in Jewish households and they described themselves as atheists. Denis has recently taken up permanent residence in South Africa and occupies a position in the Department of Water Affairs and Forestry.

Iris Festenstein is a seventy-four year old woman who converted to Judaism when she married. She lives in East Finchley, London.

Krishna Moodaley lives with his spouse, Navi, in Middlesex, London. He is an eighty-year old, 'Indian', Hindu man. Krishna visits South Africa annually but has never returned from exile.

Philippa Murrell has also chosen to remain in exile. She is a seventy-year old, white woman who had a Catholic upbringing and describes herself as an atheist. She currently shares an apartment with a friend in London.

Wolfie Kodesh is an eighty-four year old, white man. He was born into the Jewish faith and describes himself as an atheist. He returned from exile shortly after the release of Nelson Mandela in 1990. He lives in an apartment in Gardens, Cape Town.

Rica Hodgson is an eighty-two year old woman who returned from exile in 1990 and lives in an apartment in Hillbrow, Johannesburg. She was raised in a Jewish household and describes herself as an atheist.

Amina Cachalia is a seventy-two year old, 'Indian', Muslim woman who lives in a townhouse in Rosebank, Johannesburg. She has never left South Africa and lived under house arrest for almost ten years prior to 1990.

Shantie and Ramney Naidoo are sisters who were raised in an 'Indian', Hindu household. Shantie is sixty-seven years old and Ramney is sixty years of age. They returned from exile in 1991 and have settled into their respective homes in Lombardy-East, Johannesburg.

Seventy-six year old **Alan Lipman** lives with his seventy-three year old spouse **Beate**, in a townhouse complex in Hyde Park, Johannesburg. They are a white, Jewish couple and they previously lived in exile, in Wales and Zambia respectively.

Blanche La Guma is a seventy-five year old coloured women who resides in an apartment in Claremont, Cape Town. She returned from exile in 1990 having lived in England and Cuba.

Lorna and Leon Levy also live in Sea Point. They returned from exile in 1994. Lorna is sixty-three years old and Leon is seventy-three years old. They are both Jewish.

The thesis will now move on to examine how **Blanche La Guma** and her comrades became activists and how they have sustained the diverse meanings that they have attached to their activism throughout their lives. The following chapter opens with **Blanche's** narrative, followed by an analysis of its structure and content.

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CHAPTER FIVE: ONE LIFE NARRATIVE

5.1 Introduction to the story of Blanche La Guma:

I initiated the interview with Blanche when I met her at the premier of a documentary on the life of the deceased activist Cecil Williams. The film was titled *Driving Mandela*, produced by Mark Gevisser. Technical problems delayed the screening of the documentary and I was afforded the opportunity to get to know Blanche a little while we stood in the queue. Shortly thereafter I telephoned Blanche at her apartment in Claremont to set up our first interview. Our meeting was postponed for a couple of months as Blanche was nursing a good friend who had undergone a serious operation. During this time we had numerous telephone conversations. On one occasion Blanche explained that it meant a great deal to her that she was in a position to care for her friend because she had supported Blanche and her husband at a crisis point in their political careers. As a woman who was not politically involved herself, she had sacrificed much to get Blanche and her family secretly out of the country.

By the time her friend had recovered, and I found myself driving towards Blanche's apartment on a hot mid-February morning, I was conscious that the apprehensive feelings that usually accompanied me on my first interviews were absent. This was probably due to the comfortable dialogue that had developed between Blanche and myself as a result of our initial meeting and subsequent telephone conversations.

Blanche lives in an apartment building above a busy shopping complex with the South African mandatory security gate and intercom system on the ground floor. As I entered the front door of her apartment, and commented on the hustle and bustle downstairs, she remarked with a smile that she is the first black person to have moved into the building three years ago. Before we settled into her comfortable lounge, she took me on a tour of the apartment, pointing out the many alterations she has made since she moved in.

An inviting tea tray was laid out on the dining room table and we agreed that we would begin the interview and have tea when we felt that we needed a break. The informal manner of our interaction shifted once we sat together in the lounge to begin the interview. I outlined my interests in the interview and assured Blanche of the confidentiality of the proceedings. She had agreed to the use of the cassette recorder prior to our meeting and I requested her permission to take notes as well. This would enable me to jot down points for further elaboration without interrupting the flow of the interview. A box of photographs sat on the coffee table and I felt honored when Blanche said that I was welcome to look through them.

So with Blanche and I comfortably seated on her couch, the record button was pressed and the interview began. The discussion flowed and Blanche spoke spontaneously about her activism in the context of her life story. She was direct in her storytelling and the interview was facilitated by our shared interest in her past in relation to her activism, almost as if it was an unspoken connection between us. The interview ran for eighty minutes before we broke for tea. We chatted informally over tea and fairy cakes. The focus of our conversation now shifted onto myself as Blanche inquired into my family life, my vocation and my own past involvement in the liberation movement. I enjoyed the feeling of reciprocity that came with this mutual sharing and once we had finished our tea we resumed our positions on the couch to continue with the interview.

We had already covered a fair amount of ground and the interview ran for an additional forty minutes. At the start I had indicated to Blanche that we should stop whenever she felt it appropriate, and we could resume on another day. As it so happened Blanche felt that she had covered all the relevant areas by the end of the interview. We concluded our time together with Blanche showing me photographs of herself, her late husband and parents and her two sons at various stages of their lives. This activity provided an intimate closure to the afternoon's proceedings and before I left we agreed that I would drop the interview transcription off for her to read within the forthcoming few weeks. Accordingly, Blanche read through the transcription, wrote in additional comments and made corrections to names, places and dates where appropriate. Once we had discussed

these additions, I typed the changes into the transcript, and we had a final meeting to clarify that Blanche was happy with the material. This meeting was also held in Blanche's apartment.

5.2 The narrative:

I grew up on the Cape Flats. I was born in 1927. Athlone is the exact area where I was born and raised. It was one of the first areas to be put aside years ago as a segregated area for non-whites, particularly coloureds. It was long planned and it was amazing because later the whole of the Cape Flats sprang up. So we were already out of the city long before the Nationalist Government. I am the youngest of my family. I have an older brother and a sister. My mother and father were both very active in politics and my mother would never leave me at home when she went to meetings. When the time came for me to attend high school I went to Trafalgar High. It was one of two options for coloureds and it became part of apartheid. And what is worse, it is still there today. By the time that I had started high school different acts were already coming in and many people in my community were beginning to resist these acts. I remember in 1943 the Coloured Advisory Council was formed. And Trafalgar High School was very active in resisting it. My parents were also involved. Being young and not knowing enough yet, I wasn't active in the meetings and mainly distributed material and sold the literature of the party. The ANC was also very present while I was growing up but the coloured people were more involved in the Communist Party than the ANC. And so I grew up in this sphere and that's how I became interested in politics. However it wasn't pure politics. I was very fond of dancing and I belonged to swimming clubs, athletics clubs and things like that as well. I wasn't overly involved at an early age. Perhaps you might interview people who have been. But I enjoyed other sides of life as well.

Although Alex and I both grew up in the movement, it was only much later that we started courting. By this stage I had joined the Communist Party as a junior member and I was fully involved. The ANC concentrated on getting the support of the African people. But the Communist Party always supported the ANC. We were largely coloureds and whites

in the party. But by the time of the Treason Trial many of the Africans were communists and there were a lot of Africans in the party. And as far as the women were concerned, there was the Women's Federation. But equality between races was the central thing that we stood for in the movement and men and women and gender was beside the point really. It was largely about colour. Once the party was banned in 1950 I was no longer able to do as much political work and I took up nursing. I wrote articles such as 'Nursing by pigmentation' and 'Apartheid can ruin a noble profession' and I led a march of nurses to protest against the entrenchment of apartheid in the nursing profession. I can't say that I always wanted to be a nurse. But there were only two professions open to coloureds. Nursing and teaching. I don't think we ever ran short of nurses in our country because of all the Africans, coloureds and Indians who took it. But we grew to love it. And I did grow to love it. I did it for more than 20 years.

It was over the period of time that I was nursing that I met up with Alex again and we started courting and eventually got married. And we were both very involved in the movement. We worked together all the time. It was ongoing throughout our lives together. I was very fortunate in Alex because he really kept to the rules of playing his role equally in the home. But it didn't last for long because in no time we had the Emergency on us and the Treason Trial. And from then on it was a case of me looking after the children and working, and him not being around. By this time I was doing district nursing, or midwifery as it is more commonly known today. It suited me better because I could be at home more and I could go to the people's homes and deliver the baby there and nurse them there and so on. Prior to that I worked at a hospital. But when these difficulties arose I found I couldn't continue. I couldn't say to the hospital: "I'm going to visit Alex in prison today" or "I need to get home to my children this afternoon" because it would disrupt the whole system. And so I left. Alex was in prison at different times for a total of eleven years. And in the meantime I had to see to Eugene and Bartholomew and carry on with my work. I was called out night and day and I always had to have someone in the house. I couldn't afford to pay anybody. So my mother played a very big role in helping me. But I always felt that I wasn't the only one. There were other people having the same, if not worse, difficulties. I think we, in our

community, had more support than the whites. I don't think our white comrades had the same level of support because it suited many of the whites to have apartheid. They were living well.

Even those in my community who were not directly involved in politics knew about struggle. All around us were people in the same boat. And closeness in the community came with that. The situation was such in the country that you stuck together. That is why I think the Congress Movement was formed. The whites trying to tell the other whites: "Look we mustn't live like this, we must think of others who are denied the rights that we have." And we were also speaking amongst ourselves, explaining how we were having it a bit better than the Africans but that we must throw our lot in with the Africans. It's only when we do the work together that we can make a change in the country. It's a lot of hard work and it's relentless. It is relentless.

We kept the children informed about what was going on throughout and we never kept the extent of our involvement a secret from them. I used to tell them: "Daddy went to prison because he's trying to make it better for you to grow up with other children of different races." We'd go to the OK Bazaars, for instance, and I'd buy an ice cream for them, and we would have to sit separately from the tables where the white children were sitting. And then I used to tell them straight out "This is what Daddy's fighting for, why he's in prison, so that we can also sit there." Little things like that. So I kept them informed and it paid me well. They grew up as normal children, only they had to take responsibility at an earlier age.

The harassment was ongoing. They just never let up. The security police would call night and day at our house. When they called at night while Alex was in prison they would try bullying tactics like banging on the table while questioning me, and raising their voices, asking the same questions over and over, two of them shouting questions at the same time. At one stage petrol bombs were being thrown into the homes of political activists. In 1961 while Alex was in hiding during the Anti-Republican campaign, I was awakened at about two a.m. by a terrible noise. I saw a man running from my house and

jump into a moving car that sped away. And I immediately thought that it was a petrol bomb and that we would all burn in the house. My neighbors also woke up and came to my rescue and I handed my children to them through a bedroom window. It was real terror that I felt even though it turned out to be boulder that had been thrown through the window and not a petrol bomb. On another occasion, I think it was in 1958, Alex was sitting at the window at about ten in the evening when two shots were fired at him. One shot grazed the back of his head and there were drops of blood dripping onto his collar. He reported the matter at the police station but nothing was done about it. This incident took place over the weekend. On Monday Alex went to work and received a note that read: 'Sorry we missed you, will call again' signed 'the Patriots.'

And of course we knew that we were being watched all the time. One day my eldest son came home from school, all untidy, and told us that the Security Branch had been fetching him after school. They would wait for the children of activists and insist that they got into their cars. They wanted to know who's talking to Daddy, and who are the visitors that come over, and they were giving him light smacks around the face. And on another day they came to the house with my son and started knocking him around right in front of us. I just couldn't take it. We were all so upset by this. That's when I first felt it was time to leave. And afterwards I said to Alex: "You know, I think the time has come for us to go." And he said: "What about all the other children? The same thing is happening to them." And I remember his very words: "They will have to take their chances along with all the others." Although the children certainly did concern me, I never regretted my political involvement. I never felt I would have preferred another kind of life. The question that often arose for me was: "What makes you do it when so many other people do nothing?" I still ask myself that question today. "Why me and not others?" There's no answer. From an early age, long before I met Alex, I was already doing little things. The bigger things only grew later. And probably with the support of Alex and my parents and parents-in-law, I was able to carry on. But I never felt that I shouldn't have a family because I'm in politics. The strain was very much there but I often felt that the children spurred me on to greater heights.

Alex had been arrested at the beginning of the 90 Day Solitary Confinement Act and every time he was released he came back to house arrest, until he was arrested again. I was also banned and this restricted my capacity to go out and earn a living. I had to request permission to live with him because he was under house arrest and I was banned. And later on came the 1966 Solitary Confinement Act that made it 180 days of solitary confinement. And it was in 1963 that the torturing started. And Alex went in again around this time. And I was extremely worried about what was happening to him. We never knew how long he would be in for. And I think Alex was definitely affected by spending so much time in solitary confinement. Even though he was always very quiet and calm. I could visualise him sitting in prison with a book and a bomb could explode on him. Except that he was not allowed to have any reading or writing matter - only the bible. He used to cut chess pieces from plastic cutlery and play chess with himself. But he was also very concerned about me and the children and what was happening politically outside. It was a very difficult time. Some friends quipped that there was never a dull moment in our home. But I could have done without that kind of fun or excitement! We were hearing about people disappearing in prison all the time. Thrown out of the tenth story of police station buildings where interrogation took place. And there was also the fear that if they didn't kill Alex, he may be maimed. In his case it definitely affected him mentally. I also spared a thought for my other comrades.

When I was arrested it was the neighbours who came together and said that they would give my children the freedom of their homes. They were only seven and four years of age and Alex was already in prison and it really knocked me very badly. The terrible thing for the children was that Alex had usually been arrested, not me, and suddenly I also went. I felt that my arrest was just real nastiness on their side. Part of their objective was to break up the home. I had been involved in the underground but I don't think I was caught for that. My arrest could have been because of Alex or because of my earlier activities. I was deeply worried about my children while I was in prison. They were at school when I was arrested and I knew that no one would be home when they got back. I knew my mother would eventually take them and my mother-in-law was also around. The horrible thing was that just before I was arrested I had received phone calls stating that

my children would be kidnapped. That really knocked me. On the one day I ran from one school to the other to collect them myself. And when I thought about this in prison, I became very frightened. After I was released the bond that was always present in my community really came through for me. I had lost all my patients because they couldn't wait for me to come out to have their babies. They didn't know when I was going to be released. Alex was in prison and I had no income. But they started coming back to me. They would tell me: "My husband said that you and your husband are fighting and doing things that we are afraid to do and we must support you." That was very significant. My practice grew, I'm telling you.

Eventually we were told that it was time to get out. Alex was still in detention when I received the message. The movement decided who should leave the country and who should stay to carry on the fight here. My next visit wasn't due for two weeks and I wondered how I was going to get this message to him. Now every day I used to send food to him. I was banned and restricted to one magisterial district so I couldn't take the food myself. I used to meet someone at the boundary of my restriction area and she would take the food on to him. So I had to get the message to him somehow through the food delivery. After some hard thinking I made a pie. Even though Alex was very fond of potatoes, I put only one small potato into the pie and inside I put a tiny piece of paper with the message 'Think of leaving - decided' scribbled on it. I knew he had to eat it. He loved potatoes. I squeezed the note into the potato and then refried it. And when he was released we applied for passports. We were refused passports and granted exit permits instead, which meant that we could not return to South Africa.

And so we left for England. You know I never thought we'd ever leave. We stayed until it was decided that we should leave. At that time members of the movement didn't just go abroad on their own decision. We left with the children in October 1966 and we arrived in England under the banner of the ANC. A lot of our people were there already. It was a big wrench to leave South Africa but we settled down. We didn't live like all the other South Africans - all clinging together. We lived apart and we integrated with the other people. And of course the Anti-apartheid Movement was established by then and it was

very supportive. The children settled in very well and they made friends easily. I was the last one to settle in. I found it extremely difficult in the beginning. But the children weren't being harassed and family life had a degree of normality to it. Alex was hardly home but at least he was out of prison. I didn't pursue my nursing again but went into management instead. I joined a Soviet firm of publishers and worked there until we left to go to Cuba. The ANC decided that we should go to Cuba to set up and run the ANC mission station. Alex was the representative and I assisted him. We had been in England for ten years and our children were now at university. They decided not to come with us.

Cuba was lovely. It was just Alex and I - the two of us working together. A mission is mainly for disseminating information and our purpose was to inform people about what was happening in our country. And I enjoyed the work very much. We never imagined that we would be in exile for as long as we were. We eventually just worked on and on, and stopped thinking about going home. We had a job to do. It was our duty. It was what we'd been sent to do. And this is what we did until we were eventually informed to come home. It was very much what the movement dictated because it could only operate on strict discipline - collectively. You're either in or you're out. And they know. They've got their tentacles all over and they can tell you there's a meeting going on here, there and God knows where. And you made sure that you were there. What they said went. And you got quite used to it. And in any case that is what you wanted to do. I didn't find it a problem at all. We were in Cuba for eight years. And Alex always used to say: "Don't think because we are in Cuba we are doing the rumba every day!" Alex was only sixty when he died. He had a heart attack. It was the stress and strain of the years past. It all emerged. He was an introvert in that respect. He could go to meetings and speak to large groups of people but there were certain things that he never even spoke to me about. Sometimes I didn't know where he was. I felt I understood him but there were a lot of things I never knew. I think he still operated as in the earlier years when he could not tell me certain things. It's 15 years now that Alex is dead. He had gone to lie down one afternoon because we were going to a reception that evening. And when he got up I said to him: "What about a cup of tea, then darling?" And he said: "Yes, but first give me a tablet, I've got heartburn." And I said to him: "All right, pregnant women usually get

heartburn and I hope you're not pregnant." And he said to me: "And if I am, you're to blame!" And then it suddenly hit me - heartburn! I dashed through into the room and got a tablet for him and he chewed it rapidly. And then he suddenly collapsed into the chair. I called my neighbor and we carried him into the car and rushed off to the hospital. I was driving and I could see him sinking in the rear view mirror. He was sitting in the back and he started calling: "Blanche, Blanche" and as I looked back his head fell. My neighbor got out to stop the cars and we continued driving with the hooter and lights on. But when we reached the hospital they simply confirmed that he was a goner. That really knocked me. Because I was the one who always saw to everything. And I always knew what to do and I did it correctly. But I didn't know what to do then. It was terrible.

I was asked to stay on in Cuba but I found that emotionally I couldn't stay. At first the ANC had difficulty with my decision but they accepted it in the end. I returned to London and slowly found my direction again. I knew I had to start working right away. The house in which we had lived was now too big and I started the process of selling with a view to finding a smaller place to live in. It was tough having lost Alex so suddenly, journeying back to London, selling my home and buying another, and all alone. But life goes on. The wound partially healed in time. By the time I was back in England talks in South Africa were already getting on. I had applied several times to visit over the years but I was consistently refused. I applied again when my mother was ninety-seven years old and dying. They went round to my mother's house to confirm that she was dying and granted me permission three weeks after her death. Nevertheless it felt great to be back. I could see that some things had changed but I was also disappointed to a degree because it seemed that our people hadn't moved on since the time we had left. They hadn't got to grips with events. But as far as other things were concerned, you could travel on the bus, you could sit where you liked. I went to beaches that I couldn't go to before. I came out on a banning order so I couldn't have interviews and I had to be out of the country within three weeks. They phoned me once a week to check that I was still taking the same plane. And this was in 1991! I never lived that down. It was just nastiness until the very end. And later on that year I heard that I would have permission to come back, dual

citizenship for that matter because by this time I had British citizenship. So I applied again and in the end came back for good. I knew I was ready to come home because I spoke to a friend of mine and she said: "Blanche, you've been away for a long time. Things have changed." But I knew I would be ok because Alex had warned me. He always used to remind me: "Look, it might not be the way you want it. What you fought for. These great changes! Things might not work out that way. We don't go getting the very things we want all the time."

And that is certainly how things have panned out. Apartheid is still here in many ways. But it was still the right move. I didn't just pack up and come over either. We were briefed in London as to how things were going. And among the things that emerged very clearly over time was: "Don't come home if you haven't got a job and you haven't got a home." Because the ANC couldn't give everybody work and provide everybody with homes. I came over for good on the 19th July 1994. I'm extremely happy to be back but it hasn't been easy either. I've had a lot of difficulty. Take the TRC. I've become a bit hard. I don't agree that all these people who have committed all these terrible crimes should go free. And what surprises me is how the parents and relatives of the victims say that it's all right as long as they tell the truth. It doesn't wash for me. I think they should take their turn in punishment. They're getting away with having done terrible things. It hurts me. It hurts me for the sake of the families of the victims. I'm not a Christian but this just can't be the way to do things, I'm sorry. They committed a crime and they must serve their sentences. They are getting away 'scot-free' because they said they are sorry. I don't think that is just. I knew some of the people who were killed personally. They did good work and they got killed. But I do feel positive about the country generally. Initially I felt that things were negative. I wanted it all to happen too quickly, I suppose - that we should have achieved everything that we fought for. But it doesn't work like that. You are dealing with politics and the process of how to work towards getting hopefully a better life-style for all and getting rid of apartheid takes time. It hasn't been all that I hoped for but I was probably hoping for too much, too soon. I also think people became tired of struggle and the way that we fought for our freedom. When I first got back I worked for the local ANC candidate in my area but I haven't been doing much lately as I

have developed a heart condition. And I also have raised blood pressure. I canvassed so hard in the last elections that I nearly collapsed. Going up and down stairs every day to visit people to talk to them about the ANC. These days they don't do much of that kind of direct canvassing. It's hard work. You go to peoples' doors and they aren't in so you go back again until you find them home. I don't go for this easy telephone campaigning when you sit on the phone and call people. That's how they do it these days. Your telephone bill goes sky-high and I don't believe in it. Also, one gets the answering machine and people never return the calls. Although I'm not as actively involved these days I still strongly support the ANC. I don't go for all this corruption that's taking place but I still feel that the ANC is by far the best out of the lot and I will work for them and remain committed to their principles. Oh yes! And I take up issues around me. As I said earlier, apartheid is still around today. And whenever I'm faced with it in my own life I take it on. I was the first black to buy a flat in this building. And when I had my flat bought and paid for, and the transfer had gone through, I couldn't enter that door because I didn't have a key. Can you believe it? I had to get a key through my lawyer to enter the building. I had a feeling it was because after I had bought the flat they realised 'Oh my God, she's black!' And more recently I had a problem with a noisy air conditioner that one of the businesses below installed under my bedroom window. It was on night and day, weekends and all, and it made a terrible noise. It took me nearly two years to get them to remove it. The other issue that arose was that they were going to open a pizza place at the back of our building, which meant the back area would be very busy with lots of cars, not to mention the fumes from the kitchens. And I fought them on that score too. So I do see results from my battles. And if need be I'd go to the ANC for support with my battles. They've got so much on their plate that I wouldn't want to burden them. But if the need arises I can always call on them for guidance and support. But we'll have to get things straightened out because, as I said earlier, apartheid is still around today. I'm very confident that it will come right. I also feel that there's a future for socialism here, and in the world generally. As long as its perpetrated in the right way by the right people it can go far. There mustn't be a tyrannical approach. So I think I've learnt over the years that you should never give up a battle. Whenever I feel my rights are being compromised, the struggle continues.

5.3 The analysis:

Blanche's narrative contains two distinct themes. She weaves the theme of defiance and courage that resonates with conventional discourse about activists who fought for liberation in South Africa. This is an intelligent and familiar story in our society. Her resilience is contrasted with a second theme that alludes to the passivity and insecurity that she experienced in light of the difficult circumstances that emerged from her activism.

This second story is perhaps much more difficult to tell as it also points to the way in which Blanche took a back seat in relation to her spouse and dedicated herself to sustaining her family. These feelings of passivity surface in her narrative but they are never integrated into it. According to Chase (1995) women often experience difficulty bringing together these two distinct experiences of self - the accomplished and successful agent and the dominated individual. This difficulty is cultural and not personal and acknowledgment of the tension between what is upheld and what is demonstrated in Blanche's narrative highlights the ways in which complex identities and identifications cut across established cultural categories (Squire, 2000a).

This tension is manifest in the two voices that convey the complex meanings Blanche attaches to her story. They are heard across four clusters of experience that comprise her story and they provide the structure for the analysis. They are presented as clusters of experience rather than as separate categories in order to embrace the continuity between them and to provide a useful map for locating Blanche's shifting constructions of self in relation to her activism across the duration of her life. They are as follows:

5.3.1 Childhood history

5.3.2 Active involvement

5.3.3 Exile

5.3.4 Returning to South Africa

Links between these clusters are also created through the intermittent self-questioning that Blanche uses to make sense of her experience. These reflexive lines of questioning bind the story together by illustrating what is common and unique across the narrative. They also show how the self is not a fixed entity and how the relevance of a life-story is specific to the time and context in which it is relayed (Sacks, 1995).

This context is revealed through Blanche's interpretation of the history of the liberation movement in relation to her own life story. The way in which this interpretation frames the narrative will be illuminated and expanded upon as we commence our examination of her childhood years.

5.3.1 Childhood history:

From the onset Blanche places her life in the historical context that has shaped it by displaying a consciousness of how race discrimination has shaped events in her life. The history of white-controlled social relationships in South Africa is embedded in her description of the area in which she was raised as a '*non-white*' area. The term '*non-white*' embodies negativity as it essentially encapsulates the '*absence*' of identity.

According to Brown, naming is a powerful linguistic device because "appropriating the power to name objects is appropriating the right to predicate" (in Mkhonza, 1995, p. 197). The classification of people into a '*non-white*' category has the effect of diluting their power by '*emptying their personal identity*' and making individual identities indiscernible. Labeling and naming are linked to the construction of personal identity. Blanche's self-identification as a '*coloured*' is essentially a product of this intimate connection between social and power relations.

Although segregation was not a fully-fledged ideology in South Africa until the early twentieth century, racial separation in terms of work, residential and social life can be traced back to the late 1800s (Bickford-Smith, 1989; Marks & Trapido, 1987). The legislation for race-specific townships in the form of the Group Areas Act in 1950

cemented a process that had already begun. The Act encouraged black people to think of themselves as 'coloured,' 'Indian' and 'African' rather than as blacks or workers or oppressed people who had many problems in common (Platzy & Walker, 1985).

The tactical haste of the network of legal, spatial and ideological controls that developed to maintain race-specific communities on the outskirts of white urban areas is reflected in Blanche's comment: *"It was amazing because the whole of the Cape Flats sprang up."* Attempts by the government to channel the social unrest that emerged as a direct result of poor living conditions in these areas were directed through institutions such as the Coloured Advisory Council (CAC).

Resistance to the CAC represents one of Blanche's earliest memories of her active political involvement. The nature of this resistance addressed the need to formulate, and translate into practice, a policy of independence, as opposed to a policy of collaboration with the oppressor (Alexander, 1989). The significance that Blanche attaches to such events is captured in her memory of the exact date when the CAC was formed.

The temporal ordering of events that Blanche uses to remember and recapitulate her past is characteristic of classic western narratives (Labov, in Bruner, 1991). This narrative sequencing is reinforced by the strong sense of place that Blanche attaches to her recollections. The ironic reference that she makes to symbols of oppression that remain in South Africa today (*"I went to the Trafalgar High. It became part of apartheid, and what is worse, it is still there today"*) indicates that in Blanche's mind the struggle is not yet over.

The way in which the school serves as a reminder of Blanche's oppressive past is illustrative of M. Gergen's (1994) point that narratives function to unite the past with the present, and also signify the future. The extent to which apartheid remains a feature of present day South African society is a recurrent theme throughout Blanche's narrative.

By locating her story as an activist within her family history of activism, Blanche conveys a culturally distinctive understanding of activism. According to Sacks (1995), ties of family and kinship, especially among women activists, are key agents within the mobilisation process. Blanche's reference to family structure also resonates with Keniston's (1968, 1971) earlier work on the role of the family as a key agent of political socialisation. The visibility and accessibility of political organisations during Blanche's childhood are also central to her political consciousness. She positions herself as developing and growing within the space provided by the movement.

This initial period marks the beginning of Blanche's story of a self that is in dynamic dialogue and interaction with a structure. Reference to political structures, as well as the activism of others, serves to locate her narrative in historical terms and to highlight the socially embedded nature of her experience. The validation of self and sense of community that Blanche feels is evident in her use of the possessive pronoun: "*many people in my community were beginning to resist.*" This resistance was not limited to oppressed communities and struggling against racism bound activists together despite differences in age, race, class, language and ethnicity. The role of the movement in forging these links is evident in the way in which Blanche uses her relationship with the structure to make sense of this diversity as well as the shifts and transformations in her own life. This sense-making activity is central to the narrative form and in the process the movement itself is reproduced.

Although Blanche locates the movement as significant in relation to her childhood, she claims to have "*enjoyed other sides of life as well.*" Her previous comment "*perhaps you might interview people who have been*" points to the positioning of herself between two worlds - the world of activism and the world of childhood. By occupying the space between these two worlds she conveys a sense of the dynamic dialogue that operated between them, and how she felt at ease with both political and childhood discourses. The location of self between two worlds highlights Blanche's agency as she negotiated her commitment to the political sphere.

This notion of occupying the inter-play between two worlds can be extended to Blanche's location of self within her community. Her involvement in the movement marks her in some way remarkable and distinct from 'regular' people but she also feels connected to them as they share a discursive space through their common struggle against racism.

The impact of organised resistance upon Blanche's consciousness and her world of relationships retains its prominence as we move on to consider the period in her life when she embraced the world of politics.

5.3.2 Active involvement:

Blanche frames her organisational membership in relation to wider political processes, more specifically the relationship between the Communist Party and the ANC. This reproduction of the movement within her narrative illustrates the process by which individuals weld themselves into a group and how they establish the trust that is required to take the movement forward. At this level the process of movement building is an inter-personal one.

By the time Blanche became an active member of the party in the 1940s it had steered away from its previous focus on a white-led proletarian revolution to embrace the mainstream struggle of the oppressed black majority (Villa-Vicencio, 1990). However the budding alliance between the ANC and the Communist Party was met with hostility from many black nationalists who feared that "white workers were saturated with imperialist ideology and could not be trusted" (ibid. p. 44). Suspicion also arose from the belief that it was an undiluted African nationalism that would liberate the oppressed.

Despite this initial mistrust, black nationalists forged increasingly close ties with communists and found themselves drawn to Marxism for its logical analysis and prescriptions for mass action (ibid.). These developing relationships in the context of political organisations that were clearly defined by their racial composition comprise a significant focus in Blanche's narrative.

In contrast to her emphasis on race, gender does not feature in Blanche's construction of self. Her perception that gender awareness in the movement was subordinated to an emphasis on racial oppression ("*Gender was beside the point really*") is reflected in the literature on the history of feminism in South Africa. It was only in the early eighties that feminist issues became incorporated in the agenda of the liberation movement (Bozzoli, 1983).

Although Blanche's activism represents a departure from the traditional twentieth-century view of women occupying passive roles in their communities, there is no point in her narrative when she directly constructs her activism in relation to gender. There are no instances of gender discrimination and it is clear that Blanche adheres to stereotypical gender roles. Her comment "*I was very fortunate in Alex*" reflects a discourse that operates to construct gender inequality as ever-present, and not experiencing it is seen as a matter of privilege and good fortune, rather than rights. By constructing herself as more fortunate than other women, Blanche engages in a discourse that acknowledges gender discrimination as a problem but fails to challenge the inequality that exists. Being a successful activist, mother and worker was enabled by the involvement of other women who were prepared to take up responsibilities in the domestic sphere, thus allowing the gender differential to continue unchallenged ("*My mother played a big role in helping me*").

Blanche's failure to recognise gender within her construction of self is further evident in the way in which she describes the racial demarcation of the labour market: "*I don't think we ever ran short of nurses in our country because of all the Africans, coloureds and Indians who took it*". She overlooks the reality that it was women who dominated the nursing profession and the omission points to the value of placing equal weight on what is said and not said when attempting to understand the meaning of narratives. This relates to Nielsen's (1999) contention that the unconscious structure of a narrative emerges if we look for the spots where something does not fit or seems to be missing.

The entrenchment of social processes in Blanche's narrative is further evident in her

comment *"We grew to love it"* as it illuminates how women from working backgrounds receive little cultural encouragement to be ambitious and plenty of encouragement to work selflessly for others. Although community memberships are not always understood to be choices, "they are still choices as in any culture there is a contingent character to the scripts that are on offer (Seale, 2000, p. 43). The grand cultural scripts that are passed down from one generation to the next have the appearance of being natural or inevitable as they encourage people to include their personal biographical stories within them. Nursing was therefore both a choice and a non-choice in that it was a vocation that was forced upon Blanche yet she constructs it as a choice in relation to her activism.

Her presentation of a self-identity that is denied choice in her selection of nursing as a vocation is thus countered by her agency in using her vocation as a vehicle for her activism: *"Once the party was banned in 1950 I was no longer able to do as much political work and I took up nursing. I wrote articles such as 'Nursing by pigmentation' and 'Apartheid can ruin a noble profession' and I led a march of nurses to protest against the entrenchment of apartheid in the nursing profession."*

The way in which Blanche roots her activism within the cultural script of family and community serves to create the impression that all aspects of her life were moulded to accommodate her activism as the central priority. This included her choice of marriage partner and the political commitment that they shared intensified the bond between them: *"We were both very involved in the movement and it was ongoing throughout our life together."* Despite their mutual commitment, it is clear that Blanche accommodated her husband's political career by sustaining the family: *"It was a case of me looking after the children and working and him not being around."* The impact of gender type socialisation, as well as Blanche's willingness to endorse the situation, is indicative of Kaltreider's (in de la Rey, 1999) observation that husbands and wives are differentially willing to accommodate themselves to each other's careers.

Blanche's account of her marriage is embedded in notions of love that are particular to western culture. It pivots on issues of intimacy and sharing (Rubin, 1996) and is also a

deeply woman-centred account of the gender-based division of labour in traditional marriage. Sacks (1995) argues that life-history narratives about work show how families provide women with a sense of the worth of both their waged and non-waged labour and of their right to be treated as competent adults. This is illustrated in the way in which Blanche describes her work. Instead of outlining a list of tasks that she is involved in, she stresses the unity of planning her life in relation to both paid and unpaid work. At the heart of her work lies the ability to take responsibility and initiative for knowing what needs to be done and for acquiring the necessary mental, manual and organisational skills.

It is at this point that the tension between loyalty and duty towards family and the movement, and the ability to take her life into her own hands, initially surfaces. Although her moral imperative for self-realisation is rooted in the struggle, Blanche hints at the anxiety that is sandwiched between the descriptions of strength and resilience that dominate her narrative. Her anxiety is mediated by her identification with a collective suffering: *"I always felt that I wasn't the only one"* and the support that she derived from her community and organisational memberships. The language of negation that Blanche employs to indicate that things were not as difficult as they may seem relates to Nielsen's (1999) argument that the act of story-telling involves attempts to make our lives not only more intelligible but also more bearable.

The way in which racial and economic oppression bound Blanche to her community is indicative of the power of collective suffering: *"Even those who were not directly involved in politics. We all knew about struggle. All around us were people in the same boat."* The empathy with which she contrasts her cohesive community with the alienating surroundings of white activists serves to construct her activism along non-racial lines and to emphasize how activism cut through the racial divide: *"I don't think the whites had the same level of support that we had because it suited many of the whites to have apartheid."*

The reproduction of the movement through the strength of the inter-personal is further

evident in Blanche's description of the Congress Movement. The notion of organisations as spaces where relationships are forged is evident in the ripple effect analogy that she uses to convey the thrust of mobilisation: *"The whites trying to tell the other whites: 'Look we mustn't live like this' and we were speaking amongst ourselves, explaining how we were having it better than the Africans"*. The Congress Movement represented an important phase within the history of non-racial collective resistance in South Africa and culminated in the writing and adoption of the Freedom Charter at the Congress of the People, on 26 June 1955.

The meaning of wider political events is intensified by their presence within the domestic setting that is located at the heart of Blanche's story. An example of how she connects her family and political responsibilities is evident in her description of a supermarket expedition with her children: *"After our shopping I'd buy an ice-cream for them and we would have to sit separately from the tables where the white children were sitting. That's when I would explain that this is why Daddy is in prison, he's fighting for them to sit with the white children"*. Once the essential provisions have been purchased they treat themselves to ice creams, however the indulgence is tainted by racism and Blanche uses the incident as an opportunity to reinforce the moral prerogative of her political convictions to her children, and also to justify the absence of their father.

The relevance of an imprisoned father to her children's separation from the white patrons also illuminates the capacity of narrative to link key characters and events, and to show how relationships provide the fulcrum around which stories unravel. The effect of exclusion is contained in Blanche's desire for her children *'to sit with the white children'* and her subsequent comment *"little things like that"* highlights the insidious way in which institutionalised racism permeated the fabric of people's daily lives.

Despite Blanche's insistence that she harbours no regret in relation to the impact of her activism on the lives of her children (*"I never felt that I shouldn't have a family. Having the children spurred me on to greater heights"*), she clearly experienced tension in meeting the conflicting demands of mother and activist. This is sharply evident in her

response to the harassment of her children at the hands of the security police (*"I just couldn't take it"*) and represents a point of disharmony between herself and her husband. She conveys a deflated acceptance of her husband's definitive words: *"They will have to take their chances along with all the other children."* The impersonal manner in which Blanche conveys Alex's sentiment illustrates her feelings of powerlessness and highlights her anxiety in relation to her children.

The brutality of the police force features in her numerous accounts of the harassment of her family. These descriptions heighten the drama of the narrative, not through the use of emotive language and imagery, but through the way in which she bluntly articulates such terrifying events. Examples of these pronouncements are as follows:

"I immediately thought it was a petrol bomb and that we would all burn in the house so I handed my children to my neighbours through a bedroom window"

"Alex was sitting at the window ... two shots were fired at him ... there were drops of blood dripping on to his collar."

"They came to the house with my son and started knocking him about right in front of us"

The location of kin relations at the centre the drama does not however translate into personal doubt about the route that she has taken in her life. Instead her reflection is cast outward towards the complex social world that she inhabits and she asks the question: *"What makes you do it when so many other people do nothing?"* Although she answers the question with reference to the cultural discourses of family and community memberships, it remains only partly resolved and serves as an ongoing impetus for self-reflection. By appealing to the notion of 'the individual' the question masks gender, race and class dimensions, as well as the institutional power relations that sustain them.

This focus on the potential of an individual to effect change represents an uncritical position with regard to large-scale social change. While one would expect Blanche to

convey a resistance to the notion of the neutral individual at the centre of action, one also recognises that the question is in line with the western conception of selfhood, whereby selves are obliged to construct themselves as bounded, coherent and consistent. The question also represents a point of self-reflection for Blanche as she considers the suffering of her family at the hands of the security police. The array of repressive actions that Blanche and her family were subjected to clearly aimed to generate a climate of fear that would operate in favour of the state. The drama of the narrative escalates into stories of arrest and detention that further intensified Blanche's anxiety for her family.

Banning and detention were part of a steadily growing package of security measures that were passed in the 1950s and 1960s to quell the growing militancy of political opposition. The petty conduct of state officials is evident in Blanche's comment: *"I had to request permission to live with him because he was under house arrest and I was banned."* Banning generally involved forced resignation from political organisations and restriction from attending gatherings of any kind. Nelson Mandela (1995) describes it as a "walking imprisonment" (p. 126).

Police officers were empowered to detain any person without a warrant on grounds of suspicion of a political crime and to violate or ignore a banning order was to invite imprisonment. It was a strategy designed to remove the individual from the struggle, allowing him/her to live a narrowly defined life outside politics. Those arrested could be detained without trial, charged, denied access to a lawyer, or protection against self-incrimination for up to ninety days (Foster, 1987).

In 1965 detention under solitary confinement became a permanent feature of South African law. Detainees could be held for six months in solitary confinement and only state officials were permitted to have access to them. No court had jurisdiction to order the release of persons so held and this meant that detainees were held for undefined periods of time. Blanche identifies this uncertainty as one of the most debilitating aspects of detention: *"I was extremely worried about what was happening to him and we never knew how long he would be in for."*

The imprisonment of the wives and children of activists was one of the state's most

disturbing techniques of applying pressure and Blanche viewed her own detention in this light: *"Their aim was to break up the family unit."* She juxtaposes these derisive actions with repeated reference to the solidarity that existed amongst the oppressed: *"There was always this bond in my community. And when I was arrested my neighbours gave my children the freedom of their homes."* This support is further illustrated when Blanche describes how her practice grew when she was released from prison: *"My husband said that you and your husband are fighting for things that we are afraid to do and that we must support you."* Once again the discourse of marital relations whereby women seek direction from their husbands is evident.

The emphasis on men in the lives of women is also evident in how Blanche simply refers to her experience of solitary confinement but goes into detail on the impact of solitary confinement on her husband. The phrase: *"I could visualise him sitting in prison and a bomb could explode on him"* serves to highlight the fact that regardless of his quiet disposition: *"Alex was definitely affected by spending so much time in solitary confinement."* According to Lucas (in Foster, 1987), solitary confinement is a form of torture that typically comprises three major dimensions of isolation, namely, social isolation, confinement and sensory reduction. The effects of solitary confinement are largely contained in the written anecdotes of castaways, explorers, isolated small groups, and prisoners. Although they all report the experience to have been stressful, their descriptions of survival tactics and adaptive strategies show that people do cope with prolonged and extreme conditions of social isolation. In this regard, Blanche describes how her husband *"used to cut chess pieces from plastic cutlery and play chess with himself."*

The introduction of torture in prisons intensified the anxiety: *"There was the fear that if they didn't kill Alex, he may be maimed."* Once again we are reminded of the solidarity of the movement and the way in which Blanche constructs her identity in relation to dominant reference points in her social world: *"I also spared a thought for my other comrades."*

As the effectiveness of activists became increasingly restricted through the introduction

of an array of security measures, exile began to present itself as a viable option. The prospect of contributing more meaningfully to the struggle as a free individual outside the country served as motivation to seek refuge abroad.

5.3.3 Exile:

By the time Blanche states: *"We were told that it was time to get out"* the narrative tension has intensified. We have witnessed the harassment of her family, as well as the detention and banning of both herself and her husband. It is not the first time that we have been introduced to the notion of exile, as Blanche has already raised it as an option in light of her concern for the wellbeing of her children. Her ingenious decision to sneak the message to her husband inside a potato offers light relief while simultaneously highlights her hard-pressed circumstances.

The image of Blanche as a messenger communicating a directive from the movement to her husband captures her passive position in relation to the dominant structures in her life: marriage and the movement. Her discussion of events in relation to exile reveals how her actions were predicated on the mandate of both her husband and the movement. She offers a strong endorsement of the way in which the movement operated. The categorical tone of *"You're either in or you're out"* reflects its inability to tolerate anyone countermanding an instruction and the use of the noun *"tentacles"* points to its capacity to maintain a grip on its members. However the anonymity that is contained in the use of the pronoun *"they"* points to the movement's preoccupation with security and has an unsettling resonance: *"They know. They've got their tentacles all over and they can tell you there's a meeting going on here, there and God knows where...and what they said went."* The merging of personal and political selves is evident in her concluding commentary: *"You got quite used to it. And in any case it is what you wanted to do. And you made sure that you were there. What they said went."*

The personal reward for such dedication is conveyed in the pride that Blanche attaches to her family's arrival in England: *"We arrived in England under the banner of the ANC"* and the tentacle metaphor can be extended to her comment *"A lot of our people were already there."* While her description of the early stage of exile contains evidence of her own dislocation, her emphasis remains on the wellbeing of her family: *"The children settled in ... they were no longer being harassed. Family life had a degree of normality*

to it." It is also clear that she continued to take charge to the domestic sphere: *"Alex was hardly home but at least he was out of prison."*

Blanche's accentuation of her family's separation from other exiles (*"We didn't live like all the other South Africans - all clinging together"*) stands in contrast to her previous emphasis on their integration in the community. The verb *"clinging"* could indicate that spending too much time with fellow exiles would represent an insecurity or weakness. This sentiment contrasts with the dominant perspective on exile that maintains that the stark contrast between the status, purpose, and strong-knit comradeship of life in South Africa and the dislocation and loneliness of exile reinforced the unity of the homeland group in exile (Bernstein, 1994; Israel, 1999).

Regardless of the extent to which they were socially immersed in the exile community, Blanche and her spouse worked along with other exiles to build strong political structures that created international awareness of the evils of the political system that had driven them out of South Africa: *"We eventually just worked on and on and stopped thinking about going home."* Blanche's willingness to submit the direction of her life to the demands of the movement is further evident in the loyalty that she attaches to her role: *"It was a duty. It was what we'd been sent to do. And this is what we did until we were informed to come home."* The noun *"duty"* embodies obedience and fortitude and conjures up an image of the heroine embarking on a mission that she has been entrusted to fulfil. The staunch tone is softened by her reference to the intimacy that she shared with her husband, thus reinforcing the notion that their political commitment bound them together: *"It was just Alex and I - the two of us working together."*

The deep connection that she shared with her husband comes through vividly in her description of the events that surrounded his death in exile. She imparts a dialogue between the two of them that preceded his death, thus indicating the immediacy of the event in her mind. The dialogue could also signify an ongoing re-working of his death that is linked to her coming to terms with the loss. The narrative activity is also symbolic of the restorative practices that we employ in order to orient ourselves toward life and away from death (Seale, 2000).

The use of the phrase *"That really knocked me"* to convey emotional distress is peculiar

to Blanche and she uses it on numerous occasions in the course of her narrative. She frames her husband's death in terms of her feelings of diminished agency and control: *"I was the one who always saw to everything. And I always knew what to do and I did it correctly. But I didn't know what to do then. It was terrible."* The personal dislocation that results from the absence of her familiar marital role represents a dissolution of the social bond which everyday narrative actions otherwise sustain by allowing individuals to claim membership in the human social group (Seale, 2000).

Blanche's detailed description of the death of her husband reflects Gergen's (1997a) comment that 'woman stories' highlight how emotional interdependency - being with others and needing reciprocal affections - is integral to humanity. Whereas men tend to relay emotional connections in terms of facts in their lives, women are inclined to unravel the meaning and significance of their emotions. Blanche's stoic assertion: *"Life goes on"* is undermined by her subsequent comment: *"The wound partially healed in time"* thus inferring that his absence is still felt today. Blanche's adoption of a medical narrative to describe the cause of her husband's death is indicative of her membership to a discourse that acknowledges the medical profession as a dominant reference. She also links his untimely death to his activism, and more specifically the long periods of solitary imprisonment: *"It was the stress and strain of the years passed. It all emerged."*

This relates to Foster's (1987) contention that detention should be understood in terms of a physical and psychological process and should not be viewed as an isolated event. The process incorporates procedures of arrest, the concrete conditions of confinement and interrogation, as well as the effects of exposure to harsh circumstances. The severity of detention refers to physical conditions, isolation from support groups, the threatening attitude of authorities, and the mental state of the detainees, particularly with regard to the unpredictability and uncertainty of the situation. Fears about the possibility that subsequent events would involve political charges, prolonged detention, physical abuse, or being coerced to turn state witness, all compounded the mental fragility of detainees. Alex's prolonged exposure to such circumstances, along with the emotional implications of operating in an organisation that was steeped in secrecy and danger, are implicit in Blanche's comment: *"I felt I understood him but there were a lot of things I never knew. I think he still operated as in the earlier years when he could not tell me certain things."*

The death of Alex also signifies the first time that Blanche openly defies the movement and as such it represents a turning point in her narrative: "*At first the ANC had difficulty with my decision but they accepted it in the end.*" A dictionary definition describes 'a turning point' as a point at which a decisive change takes place; a critical point at which something changes direction. In the context of life experiences, a turning point marks a change in people's lives. "What precedes the so-called event is perceived as qualitatively different from what follows" (Ben Ari, 1995, p. 155).

This dramatic point in Blanche's narrative is signalled by the crossing over of the two voices or themes that were identified at the start of the analysis. The passivity and subservience with which she subjected herself to the demands of the movement and her marital relationship are replaced by a far more autonomous and active voice. Blanche's attempts to personally organise her experiences around the turning point in her life initially take the form of orchestrating practical events. She returns to England and embarks on a process of finding employment and a suitable residence. The qualitative shift in her narrative relates to the long-term thinking that she adopts as she sets her sight on terminating her exile and returning to South Africa. The responsive manner in which she dealt with life events up to this point is replaced by a more self-directed approach.

5.3.4 Returning to South Africa:

Although the opportunity to visit South Africa shortly after the death of her mother was fraught with ill intent on behalf of the state, it reinforced her resolve to return on a permanent basis. The connection that she felt with her late husband helped in managing the ambiguous feelings that she experienced during the visit: "*I remembered that Alex always used to say 'It might not be the way you want it. What you fought for. These great changes! We don't go getting the very things we want all the time.'*" This reference to Alex is illustrative of how Blanche endeavours to keep her connection with Alex alive and signifies the maintenance of social bonds as the most essential human motif (Seale, 2000).

Blanche's perception that South Africans had not kept abreast with the political shifts that had taken place could be linked to the dissonance that she experienced having spent so

many years in exile. Exposure to different circumstances and changes in the nature of her political work in exile would have impacted on her consciousness: *"I could see that some things had changed but I was also disappointed to a degree because it seemed that our people hadn't got to grips with events"*. The use of the pronoun 'our' symbolises her identification with previously disadvantaged South Africans, and the verb 'grips' provides an effective illustration of people struggling to make sense of the changing political landscape.

In the same manner in which the movement directed Blanche into exile, it guided her return to South Africa: *"We were briefed in London as to how things were going. And one of the things that emerged very clearly over time was: Don't come back if you haven't got a job and you haven't got a home."* The significance that Blanche attaches to her return is evident in her memory of the exact date on which she returned: *"I came over for good on the 19th July 1994."* The triumphant tone in which she describes her choice of residence signifies her intention to root herself firmly within the new political dispensation: *"I was the first black to buy a flat in this building and I had to get a key through my lawyer to enter that door. I had a feeling it was because after I had bought the flat they realised - 'Oh my God, she's black!'"*

The vigour with which she resumed her political work is indicative of her ongoing commitment. However her age consciousness amounts to a critical arena for her activism, both in terms of physical stamina and a different approach to work: *"I canvassed so hard in the recent local elections that I nearly collapsed. I don't go for this easy telephone campaigning when you sit on the phone and call people. That's how they do it these days."* The connection between Blanche's attempt to understand herself as an aging woman and her discomfort with regard to current political work is intensified by her use of the impersonal pronoun "they." She accommodates the dissonance of change by juxtaposing her personal morality with public discourse (Bornat, Dimmock, Jones & Peace, 2000). Blanche's detached positioning of self stands in contrast with her previous accounts of political work wherein she emphasises the intimacy and solidarity between activists as well as an unquestioning acceptance of the operations of the movement. It is also possible that she constructs her aging as freeing her up to say what she thinks and as enabling her to recognise that the movement does in fact owe her something.

Her dissatisfaction is also lodged with the Truth and Reconciliation Committee: *"It hurts me. It hurts me for the sake of the families of the victims. I'm not a Christian*

but this just can't be the way to do things, I'm sorry." The task of the TRC has been to delve into South Africa's grim past with the view that "stories help us to understand, to forgive and see things through someone else's eyes" (Kuzwayo, in Tutu, 1996, p. 7). The telling of the tragedies was a form of witnessing that was shared within the tacit context of a biblical tradition of sacrifice and forgiveness. Having dedicated her entire life to the struggle against injustices perpetuated by apartheid, Blanche feels unable to embrace the spirit of openness and acceptance that was advocated by the TRC. In her view: *"They're getting away with terrible things. They must take their turn in punishment."*

She asks that justice be added to the requirement for 'truth' and dismisses 'reconciliation' and the notion of 'divine retribution' as fraudulent: *"What surprises me is how the parents and relatives of the victims say that its all right as long as they tell the truth. It doesn't wash with me."* Blanche's demand for 'reckoning' may represent an attempt to resolve her own tension between anger and grief. She implies that her anger would dissipate if cases were heard within the legal system, as attempts by amnesty applicants to evade the legal consequences of criminal acts would be blocked.

The critical discourse that Blanche attaches to the movement does not translate into a questioning of her organisational allegiance: *"I don't go for all this corruption that's taking place but I still feel that the ANC is by far the best of the lot. And I will work for them and remain committed to their principles."* She advocates a self-serving rationale for her membership to the ANC that justifies her life long commitment to the organisation: *"If need be I would go to the ANC for support with my battles. They've got so much on their plate that I wouldn't want to burden them. But if the need arises I can always call on them for guidance and support."*

Although Blanche repeats her belief that *"apartheid is still here in many ways"* she offers numerous qualifying statements to quell the disappointment that she clearly feels. Pronouncements like *"I wanted it all to happen too quickly"* and *"It takes time to get things right"* and *"People became tired of struggle and the way we fought for our freedom"* represent her own negotiation between what she fought for and what has transpired post-liberation. At this point in the narrative the tension between what is upheld and what is demonstrated becomes integrated in her simultaneous expression of defiance and apprehension. Although she presents socialism as the hope for the future, she acknowledges feelings of apprehension by referring to the necessity of sensitive

implementation: *"As long as it's perpetuated in the right way by the right people it can go far."*

The optimistic lens through which Blanche views socialism is indicative of the connection that she feels to an ongoing, wider political struggle: *"There's a future for socialism here, and in the world generally."* It is abundantly clear that Blanche's activism has not come to an end with the liberation of South Africa. She constructs her activism as integral to her identity and engages with the complexities of life whether it involves challenging issues in her immediate civil society, or confronting them in the wider political arena. It is therefore fitting that she concludes her narrative with a lesson on life that connects the past to the present, and also signifies the future: *"I've learnt over the years that you should never give up a battle. Whenever I feel that my rights are being compromised, the struggle continues."*

5.4 In summation:

Learning about activism from Blanche's account of her life has created the opportunity to penetrate activism in terms of the personal meaning that she has assigned to her experiences. By dissolving the distinction between activism and a life through the construction of a narrative, the indispensability of the self to a coherent story has been illuminated (Weiland, 1995).

As Blanche's life unfolds through her narrative, we become aware of how she embraces activism as a long-term and stable identity, and how she relies on the history and culture of the liberation movement to explain the nature of her activism. By repeatedly referring to the movement, she locates her life in the historical context that has shaped it and illustrates the narrative's powerful positioning of self in relation to the movement and her work there.

The processing that occurs between the structure of discourses and the structure of subjectivity is key to understanding agency. The location of Blanche's organisational membership within a grand cultural script that was passed down by previous generations is not inevitable. The telling of the self that is shared by Blanche places her life in a historical context and in so doing reveals how events experienced in one time are retained and re-worked at a later time.

Her dynamic construction of self in relation to the movement represents an ongoing negotiation between her individual orientation and her group orientation. On the one hand she conveys her dedication to the collective struggle and on the other hand she explains how she endeavoured to give priority to her family. These two linked voices show how and why Blanche became politicised, and what it means for her to be political.

This tension between what is upheld and what is demonstrated runs throughout the narrative and is representative of unresolved contradictions within Blanche. They are contradictions that are present in her narrative because she is, in effect, still trying to come to terms with the issues they raise. She locates her moral imperative for self-realisation in the liberation movement and as a result grapples with the desire to take her life into her own hands and meet the demands of motherhood and marriage. These tensions only emerge when we extend our analysis beyond what goes on around the narrator to include unconscious passions and sufferings within the narrator (Nielsen, 1999).

Gender roles are the fulcrum around which Blanche describes her married life. At the same time the marriage is embedded in a social and cultural context that has unique imperatives and dynamics, beyond the gender issues. These social structural differences are mirrored in Blanche's narrative. The gendered nature of Blanche's narrative is not therefore an objective reflection of the world as it is, but rather an illustration of how presumptions about the world serve as interpretative networks through which we make sense of what there is (Gergen & Gergen, 1993). According to Heilbrun (1988), women hinge their discovery of self on another being and stories of their lives are often modelled on the "archetypal male version that typically embodies his strength" (p. 22).

The failure on behalf of women to directly emphasise their own importance leads to an undermining of both the pain and the successes in their lives. It is only after the death of her husband that Blanche admits into her narrative the claim for achievement and the recognition that accomplishment was neither luck nor the result of the generosity of others.

This turning point in Blanche's narrative is illustrative of the way in which we use stories to organise experience and to restore a sense of order and meaning to our lives (Bruner, 1986, 1990). According to Seale (2000), disruptions by death are particularly instructive as they remind us that the body takes precedence to its narrative construction. By emphasising how we live in and through bodies, Seale alerts us to the material life that underlies everything that we do and to the unconscious effort that we expend daily to turn ourselves away from death.

Spatial metaphors and ways of talking are rife within Blanche's narrative and represent another mechanism of organising experience, interpreting events and creating meaning while maintaining a sense of continuity. The importance of spatial configurations for her sense of self is signalled by the way in which she structures her story against and within and between descriptions of spatial geographies. The places and worlds that she inhabits are only fixed for the moment in which they are narrated because the plot is determined by the temporal ordering of events and not by the truth or falsity of the story.

Blanche adopts a western rationality to account for her activism by linking stories to explain how her interpretations of her life in relation to her activism have evolved and changed over time. She presents a consistent and integrated process of socialisation as a determining factor in explaining her initial recruitment to the struggle and defines her passage from childhood to adulthood in terms of her full-time involvement in the movement. The cultural context is crucial in defining which social customs aid youth in achieving their transition to the adult world (Ochberg, 1996) and this context is reflected in the prevalence of the liberation movement during Blanche's childhood.

The period in Blanche's life when she became actively involved in the movement coincided with her marriage and family life. It was characterised by police harassment, banning and detention and ultimately led to her exile. She left under circumstances of intolerable stress and her deep involvement in all things South African transferred itself into anti-apartheid political activity in her country of exile. The first point at which she prioritised her individual needs was when she refused to remain in Cuba after the death of

her husband.

As she had left South Africa with the intention to return, Blanche remained rooted in the struggle until circumstances dictated that the time was right to go back. Descriptions of her return are laced with the joy of liberation as well as a degree of ambiguity with regard to the meaning of her freedom. These four components of her narrative are defined by key lines of questioning when Blanche reflects on events and explains her motives for taking particular courses of action. Some of these reflections take the form of conversations with people from her past, for example the conversation with a friend prior to her return from exile. The vivid presence of her husband throughout her narrative serves as a clear indication of the way in which she constructs conversational images of the past to assist her to make sense of her life in the present.

In the telling of her life story Blanche is engaged in an act of interpretation that in its very nature contains an evaluative or moral framework. She is involved in an act of generating value by judging the worth of her life, as well as the lives of others in the context of the social practices that have shaped them (Abma, 1999). The way in which her narrative concludes with a view to the future is indicative of such evaluation. She takes an instructive position by proposing socialism as a potential solution to the uncertainty that lies ahead.

Blanche's accumulated life events parallel the downward spiral of the apartheid government which gives her life a resonance beyond the here and now. The unresolved contradictions that she attempts to resolve relate to Lieblich and Josselson's (1999) comment that "the art of living in our time is to be able to live with tensions and paradoxes and not to find solutions of either/or but in terms of integration" (p. 213). The telling of stories provides a vehicle for integration because it connects significant events and relationships in a person's life. This was clearly evidenced with Blanche as she was an active speaking agent who offered a fresh interpretation on her activism as she mulled over and evaluated her experience in the process of telling them.

However a story never fully belongs to any one person. A story is born out of and within an interaction and exchange, and beyond that there are still many other stories that are continually evolving and changing. We are left with a multitude and series of inter-textual traces, never a 'real' and 'true' story or subject behind the story (Hollway & Jefferson, 2000). The stories that fill our lives serve to bind us to one another in the same way that our emotions bind us to one other in a continually negotiated membership.

Through narrative constructions of our personal biographies we formulate self-identities that are embedded in social networks and whose currency is that of emotional exchange. It is in this light that the analysis will move on to explore the narratives of the lives of the other participants who shared Blanche's dedication to the South African struggle for liberation. The discussion will build on the analytical and contextual framework that has been illuminated in the unravelling of Blanche's life story.

CHAPTER SIX:

THE COMBINED NARRATIVES

This chapter of the analysis presents a discussion of the remaining set of narratives (21 participants). The combined analysis offers an overall picture of the data and makes no attempt at any kind of 'generalising' statements. Given the enormous task of evaluating 21 narratives, the analysis does not pay equal attention to content and structure, as is the case with Blanche Laguma's narrative. Instead, it prioritises content and provides a limited analysis of narrative form and linguistic device. The intention is to show how selves are constructed in relation to activism across the life trajectory with a view to theorising the relationship between selves, organisations and discourses. As all the participants were involved in the construction of life stories in relation to their activism, the discussion is shaped by the same clusters of experience as the analysis of Blanche La Guma's narrative. For ease of readership, each cluster is broken down into additional sub-headings.

6.1 Childhood history

6.1.1 Family life:

Most of the stories of activism are embedded in family histories. They locate kin relations at the centre of the narratives thus highlighting the process whereby selves make sense of what Bruner (1991) terms their cultural "toolkits" (p. 20). Ramney Naidoo's assertion: *"I come from a family of political activists, four generations, all committed to the struggle"* provides a clear illustration of a culturally distinct understanding of activism. Similar sentiment is contained in Leon Levy's powerful metaphoric assertion: *"My activism came with mother's milk,"* as well as Amina Cachalia's description of the passing of political teachings from one generation to the next: *"My father used to gather us children around in the evenings and explain the political context that we lived in."* The framing of resistance in historical terms serves to connect the actions of the narrators to the lives of individuals who have lived before them, and perpetuates their sense of belonging to a

tradition of political resistance.

Early exposure to the activism of family members gave participants access to political organisations and also facilitated their involvement in political work. According to Shantie Naidoo: *"I was nine years old and I went from door to door distributing leaflets for a trade union meeting that my father was organising."* The political involvement of older siblings is also identified as significant to a growing political consciousness, as in the case of Amina Cachalia: *"My oldest sister threw up her university studies and led the first group of women to prison in Durban in the Passive Resistance Campaign. I was so impressed and realised that this is where I belong."* In a similar vein, Ethel de Keyser describes how: *"My older brother was involved politically from the age of 16 or 17 and I admired him enormously."*

The emphasis that participants place on the political careers of family member's signals the importance of family as a socialising agent. It also points to Poole and Langan-Fox's (1997) contention that relationships and roles in the home represent the mechanism through which young people become socialised into occupational roles. This was borne out in the pursuit of vocational paths in the liberation movement amongst participants who located their initial exposure to politics in the home. According to Ramney Naidoo: *"I worked for the movement throughout my life."*

A lucid illustration of the powerful representation of activism in childhood is contained in Ramney's recollection of a favourite childhood game: *"As kids we never played with dolls houses. We used to play what we called 'Meeting, Meeting.' We lived in a double storey house and my older brother used to stand on top of the stairs and he used to say 'Ladies and gentlemen the British brought us here to work in the sugar plantations and now we can't taste the sugar.' And we used to clap from the bottom of the steps."* Ramney uses the game to position herself as different from other children and also to illustrate the form of activism that shaped her early life. The game offers light relief in her narrative as it is preceded by an in-depth discussion of the hardships that her family endured as a direct result of their activism. She follows her description of the game with an evaluative

statement: *"With all the sadness of our lives - harassment, detention, exile - the best part of our lives was when we were together as a family, this time of our childhood."* This final comment can also be understood in the light of M. Gergen's (1994) observation that society values progressive narratives that speak to how difficulties have to be endured in order to achieve positive outcomes.

The process of "narrative accrual" (Bruner, 1991, p. 18) whereby a culture accumulates its meaning through the narrative constructions of individuals who belong to the same social group is not evident across all the narratives. Some participants made sense of their political awareness during childhood in terms of a breach with convention. According to Denis Goldberg: *"I had a privileged and cosseted upbringing and the only way I used to express my growing political understanding was to constantly annoy my teachers by stating that I was a communist and that blacks should be treated equally."*

The extent to which race consciousness breached the canon amongst white participants who were raised in politically unaware households depended on their capacity to reflect critically on their own lives as well as the lives of those around them. Gerald Goldberg recalls his *"anger at my mother addressing mature black men and women as 'boy' or 'girl'"* and Julius Baker remembers his mother *"referring to black people in yiddish as 'chezze schwartze.'" The reinforcement of inequality through an uncritical acceptance of racism is captured in Iris Fesenstein's comment: "You either became a racist or you became 'the other'. Simply because from the very earliest awakening of your childhood, you were there as a privileged white person."*

6.1.2 Race and class:

Variation in constructions of race consciousness in the childhood narratives of white activists is linked directly to class status. Whereas Alan Lipman describes his childhood as *"typically white South African, middle class and oblivious to the injustices surrounding me,"* Wolfie Kodesh *"landed up in the slums of Woodstock"* where he became acutely aware of the negative implications of racial prejudice. The element of undesirability that

is conveyed by the verb "*landed*" indicates that it was not the norm for white families to live in such impoverished circumstances. This sentiment is reinforced in Wolfie's subsequent comment: "*I know of many people who live in such conditions all their lives. They are usually black. And when we finally moved out my sister and I used to talk and say 'we're out but all the other people have to live their whole lives like that. There must be something wrong here.'*" The temporal experience of living in poverty afforded Wolfie the insight to assimilate the experience with his improved living conditions. He cites the key learning in terms of an understanding of the inseparable nature of racial and economic oppression.

The way in which race and class functioned to shape participants' constructions of self during childhood is further illustrated in Iris Fesenstein's narrative: "*Although I grew up poor I was a privileged white person. Below you, there were black people who called you 'nkosazane', which means 'princess'.*" Her desire to distance herself from the inequality that is encapsulated in this naming process is evident in her use of the impersonal pronoun "*you*." Fairclough points out that language is a vehicle through which power is imposed on people through the creation of ideologies that make people accept what is said to be true. Although language does not create inequality in society, it is one of the main means that is used to maintain it (in Mkhonza, 1995.)

Although discourses of privilege and separation operated to distance whites and blacks, one must be cautious not to present white and black experiences in completely contrasting terms. Evidence of variation across the narratives of black activists is contained in Krishna Moodaley's narrative: "*I came from a middle class background in Durban. The fact that we weren't allowed to vote didn't affect me very much.*" The extent to which Krishna's experience differed from other black participants can be explained in terms of class status and the absence of politically active family members.

Affluence during childhood did not preclude political awareness. Esme Goldberg recalls her confusion with regard to her mother's political involvement and material expression of wealth: "*My mother was politically active in the way white South Africans could be -*

without giving up anything. It took me a long time to realise that worrying about what was happening in the townships did not preclude you from worrying that you didn't have a new-look dress or the best car." This excerpt reveals what Billig, Condor, Edwards, Gane, Middleton and Radley (1988) refer to as "the dilemmatic quality of everyday thinking" (p. 17). The conflicting themes that are contained within such dilemmas represent the social beliefs that frame events and emotions in our daily lives. The construction of self through narrative thus shows how clashes between individual and social interests can only arise because of the values, norms, and expectations that people share. Esme's internal debate represents a deliberation over the common understanding that she shares with her parents. She recognises that she needed to engage with this kind of argument in order to reach her own understanding (ibid.).

6.1.3 Education:

Participants who were not raised in politically aware households also identified individuals in their communities who were influential in shaping their political consciousness. Julius Baker recalls: *"One man who ran the dairy and another was one of my schoolteachers. They used give me books to read on socialism and we would discuss things."* The link between teachers and a growing political awareness was also made in the narratives of Rusty Bernstein and Denis Goldberg:

Rusty: *"What I think was responsible for starting me off on the downward path of politics was one of my schoolteachers. He was a young man who had just come out from Britain and he was strongly anti-fascist. He started me thinking in a particular light."*

Denis: *"Miss Cook taught us about prejudice, about a little boy with a harelip who got blamed for something that he didn't do. And I adored her. In fact I thought about her often in prison and decided that she was to blame for my imprisonment!"*

The above extracts show how language is used to organise and make sense of experience. Rusty's wry description of following 'a downward path' illustrates his experience of

stepping out of the familiarity of his social world and taking a fundamentally different life-course that would be frowned upon by society. The metaphor is also symbolic of the unraveling of Rusty's political orientation, which up until this point had largely comprised an unquestioning acceptance of the status quo: *"I wasn't really conscious of the extremes of justice or injustice in South Africa. It didn't bother me."*

The capacity of narratives to reveal how relationships connect the past with the present (Gergen & Gergen, 1984) is reflected in Denis holding his teacher responsible for his imprisonment. His use of humor to frame the negative experience of imprisonment in a positive light contains a moral evaluation that highlights the injustice of his plight.

6.1.4 Religious identity:

Despite the emphatic insistence on behalf of the majority of the participants that they are not religious, the majority commented on how religious practices and teachings during childhood had impacted on their political consciousness. They identified the moral foundation of religion as the impetus behind their commitment to social justice. According to Amina Cachalia: *"I come from a Muslim background. I'm not religious but Islam is a wonderful religion that teaches you complete equality and that you must resist wrongs in any way that you can."* Similar sentiment is conveyed by Krishna Moodaley: *"I was brought up in a Hindu household under the influence of Ghandi and ever since then I have always believed that everyone should be treated equally regardless of race."* And for Iris Fesenstein: *"I consider myself an atheist but my exposure to religion as a child has always influenced my sense of right and wrong."* The rejection of God and religion during childhood is also identified as integral to the process of becoming political. Hilda Bernstein explains: *"I was always concerned with the injustices in the world as a child but religion never offered me any real answers. But when I started to read about historical materialism as a teenager it provided me with a structure for understanding - that there is an economic basis for everything."*

The prevalence of Jewish participants in the sample resulted in considerable reflection on

the meaning of Judaism in their lives. There are numerous references to the influence of Jewish immigrants on the lives of participants during their childhood years. The pervasiveness of Jewish immigrants in South Africa dates back to the late 1800s when many people fled Eastern Europe in the wake of the Russian Revolution. According to Julius Baker: *"My mother and father were both Polish immigrants. They met in England in 1895 and boarded a ship to South Africa to seek their fortune on the gold mines of Johannesburg."*

Political discussions in the homes of Jewish families assumed a local and an international focus, as illustrated in Iris Fesenstein's narrative: *"A relative who had come from Lithuania with his family lived with us for some time. He was a member of the Communist Party and he became involved in local politics."* The narratives also reveal how the persecution of the Jews abroad shaped identity constructions amongst Jewish participants during their childhood years. According to Ethel de Keyser: *"I was very conscious of what was happening in Germany and I used to have a big thing about trying to project myself into that situation to work out how I would have behaved."* The impact of these events is further illustrated in Alan Lipman's comment: *"It was the trauma of the Jewish people that made me feel connected to my Judaism as a child."* The strength of this link between suffering and Jewish identity is evident in the way in which participants have sustained their Judaism throughout their lives, as in the case of Denis Goldberg: *"I do not live a Jewish life. But as long as there is anti-Semitism I will always be Jewish."*

This does not mean that identity constructions are rigid and not subject to change. Julius Baker recalls a childhood memory of the war that sheds light on the complex processes that shape identity. *"There was a tea room near where we lived that was run by a little German woman. One day there was a march in town against the Germans and they came and totally destroyed her shop. This little old lady was standing in the street crying and I remember being absolutely shocked. And for a while I became an anti-British and pro-German Jew."* The arousal of a sense of injustice clearly impacted on Julius' construction of self and caused a shift in his identity formation.

The capacity of Jews to identify with the oppressed has been put forward by Shain (1994) as a reason for the prevalence of Jewish activists in the liberation movement. This viewpoint is reinforced in Leon Levy's comment: *"The Jewish immigrants brought with them their ideas of social justice and I feel that they would have been active in any country they went to."* However the notion of anti-Semitism as a social tenet of the Jewish faith to explain political involvement is not shared by all the Jewish participants. According to Ethel de Keyser: *"As a child I had this fanciful idea that all Jews would be vociferously anti-discrimination. I always thought that you learned from experience but it's quite the opposite really. You want to protect yourself from that experience afterwards."*

The construction of Jewish identity in relation to wider social prejudices is a concurrent theme across the narratives of Jewish participants. Denis Goldberg describes how *"Neighbors used to threaten me and call me 'Jew boy' and I felt like there was something against me all the time. And I certainly didn't go around thinking 'Am I or am I not a Jew?'"* Some participants even attributed their South African upbringing to anti-Semitism, as in the case of Beate Lipman: *"My family was not very conscious of its Judaism in Germany. But the Nazis made them very conscious of it and we escaped to South Africa when I was four years old."* Beate's experience resonates with Amina Cachalia's recollection of how her racial identity emerged as a result of apartheid legislation: *"I grew up not knowing that I was black until I was forced to attend a school for Indians,"* thus signalling the impact of social categorisation on personal identification.

Although consciousness of religion and class were identified as important factors within the political development of the participants, it was consciousness of race that featured in their accounts of growing up in South Africa. While individual interpretations of racism and racist experiences differed, they all shed light on relations of power that were operating at the time. It is important to note that the experience of being black, white, poor, rich, Jewish, Hindu, Catholic or Muslim is not in itself a sufficient catalyst for radicalisation. They were merely factors that coincided in the narratives of the activists. Even those individuals who positioned themselves as blacks or Jews with a long history

of identification with injustice did not directly attribute their activism to these factors. Without active reflection on their experiences, they might have experienced themselves simply as victims of circumstances beyond their control (Andrews, 1991). The impetus for such analysis has been located in relationships with family members and friends, in religion, literature and educational settings, as well as the visibility of left-wing organisations. These stimulants served to highlight class and race consciousness amongst the participants so that they began to perceive themselves as members of a movement of resistance. This understanding is taken further as we move on to the second cluster of experience that locates participants within the active political sphere.

6.2 Taking action:

The identification of a particular period in their lives when participants immersed themselves in politics is common across all the narratives. Reflections on this time are framed in the western notion of individuals taking charge of their own lives and engaging in a moral imperative for self-realisation that was rooted in the struggle. While social events and social movements serve as sources of self-definition and personal meaning, individuals do not derive the same personal meaning from the same social event, and they experience the event as significant at different times in their own development (Stewart, 1994).

While some participants framed their active involvement as symbolic of their passage from childhood to adulthood, others described a more gradual involvement that intensified in early adulthood. The former was marked by excitement at having increased responsibility and independence, as in the case of Amina Cachalia: *"I was seventeen years old, earning an income, and feeling like the whole of South Africa was there for me to defy."* Considering that rites of passage are social customs designed specifically to aid people in their transition from one developmental stage to the next (Hatcher, 1994), it follows that joining the movement for liberation represented a designated social custom for adolescent South Africans who were raised in politically active households.

Participants who were not exposed to politics from an early age identified their experiences at university as significant in accelerating their involvement. According to Julius Baker: *"It was at university that I became active in politics and my involvement just continued from that point onwards."* The evaluative function of narrative (Gergen & Gergen, 1984) is one again illuminated in Julius framing the opportunity to pursue university studies in light of his rank in the family: *"My oldest brother Jock had to work manually most of his life. And my older sister, Dolly, also didn't finish her schooling. But when it came to me, my father was now in a position to give me a wonderful education."*

The relationship between economic circumstances and educational opportunities represents a common theme in all the narratives. According to Shantie Naidoo: *"We were all forced to leave school to become breadwinners because my father was arrested and sentenced to ten years imprisonment and we all had to club in to make ends meet. Of course we were all politically active and therefore in and out of prison ourselves, so the economics of the family came and went."* The extract conveys the impression that economic instability and limited education were inevitable given the political imperative of their lives.

The framing of educational opportunities in relation to the economic circumstances within families illustrates how the course of an individual's life is crucially linked to the lives of others. The precedence of activism in Shantie's family entrenched her within her domestic circumstances and denied her access to the transforming capacity of an education. In contrast, Julius' education afforded him a life-style that deviated significantly from his past: *"I had choices in a way that no one before me in my family had ever experienced."* The unfolding of his political involvement represented one such choice.

Prosperous financial circumstances also enabled Krishna Moodaley to pursue a university education and he links the opportunity to his political development: *"My political consciousness only really developed at Wits when I became fully acquainted with the activities of Mahatma Ghandi and the Communist Party."* His enrolment when

universities were still free to determine whom to admit as students meant that he was not subjected to the role of education in reconciling black people to their subordinate places in the social order: *"Most of the coloured people went into teaching or nursing. But my father could afford to send me to medical school so I escaped all of that."* The use of the verb *"escaped"* could refer to the feeling of captivity that Krishna attaches to racially defined occupations.

6.2.1 Vocational paths:

Entry into the world of work is perceived as an important social convention in many cultures and the way in which political commitment shaped participants' vocational paths signals the significance of activism in their lives. According to Ethel De Keyser: *"I wanted to make a contribution and it soon became a way of life."* The consuming nature of her political work is illuminated in the following description: *"You learn to do everything. You work with trade unions, parliament and organisations outside of parliament. You work with students and youth groups and professionals and with all kinds of organisations, including sport and the arms embargo. You learn how the society operates and what is the best way of approaching a particular problem and who are the best people to approach."*

Ethel's account reinforces the findings of Stanley's (1996) investigation into the work experiences of Communist Party members in Britain. Stanley concluded that descriptions of working life present individuals as "deeply experienced in organisations ... often describing a contextualised self, a self experienced in relation to a wide range of other people, almost speaking for and on behalf of others..." (p. 63).

Participants who pursued vocations beyond the movement drew a tight link between their activism and their work. According to Johnny Sachs: *"My identity is two-fold. I am an activist and an immunologist. An active immunologist I guess."* Denis Goldberg's identity as an engineer is also framed in terms of his activism: *"I wanted to be a civil engineer - to bring water through the desert and to build houses for the masses. What you build and*

where you build is politically determined and directed by the government." The strength and emotional significance of Denis' political conviction is signified through the aspirant tone of his language. The way in which he merges political and work identities also illuminates the intersection of power relations in his understanding of self: *"I was always very conscious of working as a civil engineer. As a boss. Giving orders to mostly black people and going off to a home with supper waiting. I would have a wash, eat and then go off to meetings in my car to meet comrades who had probably been up since six in the morning and hadn't had a meal or been home yet."*

Vocational pursuits frequently located individuals beyond their politically conscious reference group, as in the case of Hilda Bernstein: *"Work gave me contact with people outside of our small social group and served as a constant reminder of how different my world was."* Faced with similar circumstances, Gerald Goldman chose to reinforce his distinctiveness: *"I made a point of telling a-political people in the workplace to steer clear of me. I used to tell them 'don't have anything to do with me!'"* In both instances, the movement is seen to represent a space that is separate from the 'outside' and the 'real' world. It is a world with its own information and patterns of discourses. Hilda and Gerald found themselves caught in a dilemma between these two worlds and they were forced to deal with the contradictions between these spaces. What they had learned in the movement was played out when they engaged in the regular and 'real' world and they experienced a personal struggle at both intra-personal and inter-personal levels.

Some participants found that they were unable to align their political aspirations with their vocational paths, as in the case of Hilda Bernstein: *"Political commitment meant a renunciation of trying to be an artist. I was unable to convince myself that such talent as I had was more important than the political demands."* And Julius Baker's career as an attorney was significantly hindered by his political work: *"I was asked to leave the legal firm that I was with because of my political involvement."*

The fact that many of the participants were making career decisions in the context of the Second World War is also significant. Gerald Goldman, Wolfie Kodesh and Alan

Lipman joined the Springbok Legion and they all identified their experiences in the military as having a significant impact on their growing political consciousness. According to Wolfie Kodesh: *"I got in touch with socialist thinking through the influence of two very impressive men in the army... And also finding myself amongst the Italian peasants and realising that it's the very poor that suffer the most during wartime."* Wolfie uses his experience in the war effort as a constant reference for making sense of his activism, as indicated towards the end of his narrative when he explains: *"What also stood me in good stead as an activist was my experience as a soldier. I was committed to following and participating fully. I never took any decisions individually."*

6.2.2 Relationships in the movement:

The value that participants have placed on their collective identity as activists is evident across all the narratives. Leon Levy commences his own narrative with the strong assertion: *"I say 'I' when I'm telling you all about my experiences in the movement but you must remember that there were very many of us."* The momentum that was generated through the experience of being part of the collective is encapsulated by his later comment: *"Your cause really took you right to the end."*

The personal significance of these deeply committed relationships is illuminated in the recollection of everyday events, as in the case of Denis Goldberg's narrative: *"I remember a close colleague phoning me one cold, rainy night because the ANC car had broken down. And after we had towed the car and I was driving him home he said to me 'I knew you were having supper because I could hear you chewing, but I knew I could phone you because I knew you would come.' And this was very important to me."*

Organisational membership was deemed significant and the majority of participants identified their initial involvement in the Communist Party as key to their growing activism. According to Hilda Bernstein: *"The party gave me a theory which laid the basis for change in the world - not just in South Africa - but in the whole of society. It gave me a structure to make sense of the world."* The sharing of a political ideology that

translated meaningfully into the political programme of the liberation movement created close ties between activists. These relationships relied heavily on trust, as is evident in Iris Fesenstein's use of an emotive metaphor: *"We held our lives in one another's hands."* Her sentiment is reinforced by Wolfie Kodesh's unequivocal comment: *"The trust that we placed in one another was everything to us. There was no question about it. We always had that link with one another."*

The non-racial composition of the liberation movement was also identified as significant to a growing political commitment. According to Rusty Bernstein: *"I remember the turning point for me was going to my first Communist Party meeting. And for the first time in my life I was meeting on an equal footing with blacks. It dawned on me as such a peculiar thing - that I'd lived here for twenty years and I'd never had such an experience."* The use of the noun 'turning point' conveys a clear departure from the past and the onset of something new and the phrase 'it dawned on me' depicts Rusty's awakening to the absurdity of apartheid and the life he had been leading up to that point.

In spite of the racially integrated lives of activists, the geographical segregation of South African society along racial lines shaped the nature of black and white activism differently. Whereas active engagement in the politics of resistance rooted black people firmly in their communities, the adoption of a similar orientation amongst white people relegated them to the margins of society. According to Hilda Bernstein: *"We were a tiny sect. A minority within a minority."* Given these contrasting circumstances, white and black activists were forced to actively reach out to one another and to create a world that represented their political aspirations. The process whereby the self is both producer and produced by the movement is illustrated in the following excerpt from Rusty Bernstein's narrative: *"We existed in this tiny enclave of our own. And our involvement in the Communist Party gave us entry into the black community, to people who thought like us."*

The paradox of building a non-racial organisation within the confines of an established racial net is examined in Rusty's autobiography *Memory Against Forgetting*: *"There was no way for us to grow outwards and avoid the racial divide. The more we involved*

ourselves in the wider world, the greater became its pressure on us to conform" (1999, p. 53). Residential branches of the party were either predominantly black or white depending on the race pattern of the area. Trade unions were either white or black in accordance with industrial laws and the legal framework restricted election campaigns to racial categories.

It is interesting to note that the narratives of black participants do not place the same emphasis on reaching out across racial boundaries as those of the white participants. This could be understood in terms of a common abhorrence of white supremacy amongst white activists and their desire to identify with, and to be seen to identify with, the forces that rallied against the government and white society (Lazerson, 1994). By affirming relationships on a microscopic level that they sought to create generally, they were publicly aligning themselves with the cause of African liberation and the destruction of apartheid.

6.2.3 Nature of political work:

Within this context, descriptions of political work contain emotive language and imagery that conveys the drama of defiance. The personal affirmation that came from participation in public demonstrations is evident in Denis Goldberg's narrative: *"The police were threatening to baton charge and I asked to use the microphone to talk to the crowd before we dispersed. And I gave a little talk about why we were there and that we had achieved our purpose. It gave me such a thrill."* The significance of projecting oneself into the public arena and making one's mark on the social and political landscape is also communicated by Iris Fesenstein: *"I will never forget the first time I spoke at a public meeting. It was in a church and it was all about discussing Group Areas and the different laws and how they should be changed and what the Women's Federation stood for."*

The escalating passion that is contained in participants' narratives about their political work reflects the groundswell of resistance that marked the South African political

landscape in the early 1950s. The narratives were laced with feelings of invincibility, as in the case of Denis Goldberg's statement: *"nothing seemed impossible"* and the personal agency that lay at the heart of their actions is captured in Ethel de Keyser's comment: *"I had a strong desire to make my mark."* These constructions of activism are also illustrative of the western narrative whereby the hero or heroine is located at the centre of the action.

The drama of political work is intensified by descriptions of how the banning of political organisations instilled a secretive element to their work. According to Rica Hodgson: *"We all worked underground. We would go out at night when we shouldn't have and we would deliver pamphlets at factory gates in pitch darkness. It was certainly scary. But when you've got a cause that you believe in you do those kinds of things. And it's not as if anybody owes you anything either."* It is noteworthy that this is the second time in Rica's narrative that she makes the point *'nobody owes you anything'* and it could be indicative of the high demands that were placed on activists relative to limited immediate rewards during the struggle years.

The narratives also contain evidence of how the secretive nature of the work filtered into the fabric of intimate relationships, as in the case of Iris Fesenstein: *"'H' and I never discussed what we were doing unless we were doing it together. We did this to protect one another as well as other people that we worked with."* Direct reference to the value of this practice is made by Esme Goldberg: *"I was very grateful that I hadn't known what Denis had been up to because when I was in prison and being interrogated I did not know the depth of his involvement. If I had known I think I may have told them because I was terrified and hysterical and wanted to get out to be with my children."*

Accounts of activism are also filled with intrigue and adventure, as in the case of Alan Lipman: *"I remember walking down the street one day and a woman I knew but didn't know approached me. I felt very unsettled when she turned out to be my wife wearing a wig and strange clothing. It was a mad time."* It was only when Alan was directly confronted with the fantasy of his wife dressed in disguise in the context of his everyday

life that the ambivalence of his activism dawned on him. The notion of sliding between reality and fantasy is also evident in Wolfie Kodesh's narrative: *"We were never able to acknowledge one another or our rank in MK. So when I'd taken Nelson Mandela to my place in Yeoville to hide him for a couple of months, we never openly acknowledged that he was my commander-in-chief. It often felt like playing a charade."* Wolfie's reference to a 'charade' indicates how the formal organisational culture contrasted with their everyday lives as activists. The blurring of boundaries was peculiar to the underground nature of their work but adherence to organisational protocol served as a constant reminder that they were involved in a struggle that superseded the intimacy of their circumstances.

The dramatic engagement of the narratives is also intensified by the battlefield imagery that punctuates descriptions of political work. Alan Lipman describes the white community in which he lived as *"hostile territory."* He goes on to explain how: *"Our black comrades could disappear amongst the masses but we whites, couldn't. We were terribly vulnerable and terribly exposed."* And Wolfie Kodesh evokes the militaristic notion of camouflage and subterfuge when he describes how: *"Mandela's milk on the window-sill of my flat attracted attention. No one in the white community put milk in the sun to go sour. We had made a mistake and it was time for him to move on."*

Reference to the stark contrast between white and black communities also reinforced the notion of subterfuge, as the daily living conditions of activists were not in keeping with their political convictions. According to Hilda Bernstein: *"Going to the homes of our black comrades and seeing what townships were like influenced our attitudes. And vice versa. Most of the white people among whom we lived had never gone near a township, never set foot in black areas."* Activists had a lot to learn from one another and the forging of relationships across racial lines also posed challenges. This is illustrated in Wolfie Kodesh's narrative: *"I had to walk with Moses (Kotane) down Burg Street ...and this was the first experience I had socially of walking with a black man in the middle of town, or anywhere for that matter. And I can remember thinking 'My God, I wonder what's going to happen if some of my friends see this, me walking with this black man.'"*

It was a combination of political naivety and unfamiliarity that characterised Philippa Murrell's early experiences in the movement: *"Initially I was very much in awe of all the people I met. I used to sit in absolute silence during meetings, too scared to say a word, listening to these greater beings. It was also a huge step for someone in the early fifties to go to parties and dance with black people. The first time I found myself in the arms of a black man I could hardly believe it. I was pinching myself."* This excerpt conjures an image of Philippa stepping into a social world that initially assaulted her senses and then drew her in. As time passed the novelty wore off and she was able to establish deeper connections. The excerpt also resonates with the mythological image of 'the white rose and the powerful black man' and illuminates the symbolic meaning that is contained in narratives.

The majority of participants met their lifetime partners through their political work. They tell similar stories about how their shared political commitment enriched their lives together, as in the case of Iris Fesenstein: *"We were very, very close. It's a wonderful thing when in a marital partnership the two of you are involved in something like this. It was very binding and we were bound up with the people with whom we worked."* The location of inter-personal relations at the heart of the organisation intensified the momentum of organisational growth and development. The use of the verb 'bound' reinforces the strength of these connections and also introduces the notion of captivity that could represent the political movement's ability to solidify political resolve amongst its members.

The unfolding of intimate relationships in relation to a shared political conviction is also evident in Esme Goldberg's narrative: *"My choice was to be with Denis and one of the most important things that made me love him was his political commitment."* In a similar vein, Rica Hodgson attributes the strengthening of her political resolve to her relationship with her spouse: *"I was active in politics, but when I met Jack and fell in love, that's when my serious political work began."*

Guided by their political ideals, the activists formed close-knit social bonds and it is

understandable that life partnerships emerged from these networks. The merging of political and personal selves impacted significantly on family life, as is evident in Ramney Naidoo's narrative: *"I married somebody who was also politically active and he was always in and out of jail. We used to joke that he came out of prison to make babies because every time I fell pregnant he would be detained again."* Ramney's wry humour serves to position herself as an active agent rather than as a passive recipient of her difficult circumstances.

6.2.4 Gender consciousness:

The wave of western feminist thinking that emerged during the sixties, primarily in England and America, was also evident in the narratives. Constructions of gender both reproduced and contested institutional power relations. According to Beate Lipman: *"A lot of women in the struggle were re-thinking their roles within the family."* Domestic settings, in particular relationships between spouses, were presented as key sites for the expression of gender equality. Francis Losman describes her marriage as *"an equal partnership"* and attaches intra-personal meaning to the relationship: *"This was something I just knew about. It was part of my make-up. I believed in equality and when I said equality, I meant equality."* The authoritarian tone of this excerpt indicates that it was Francis who initiated this equality and not her spouse.

In contrast, Beate Lipman conveys a mutual embracing of gender equality: *"Gender issues were always on the table with us. When we got married we had an agreement that we would both darn socks and both cook."* She goes on to draw a direct connection between her commitment to gender equality and her activism: *"We tried to be equal and separate. We were on the radical edge in all sorts of ways. Not just in liberation politics. There was generally a whole onslaught on our consciousness as white middle class men and women."* Beate's use of emotive language indicates the extent to which revolutionary ideas penetrated the consciousness of white activists and how engaging with these concepts resulted in their marginalisation from mainstream white South Africa.

Despite these assertions of equality, all the narratives revealed how the onset of family life coincided with women limiting their political involvement in order to focus on the domestic domain. The way in which parental identity is defined differentially for women and men is evident in images of men continuing to make their mark in the public sphere with the same intensity and the willingness of women to endorse the situation. According to Iris Fesenstein: *"I played a big role in his success. I don't hide that away and I'm not modest about it. It was done purposely. And if I hadn't played the role I played, it would have been a lot more difficult for him to do what he did."* In a similar vein Rica Hodgson explains: *"When Jack married me he sat me down and said 'Rica, I want you to know that politics will always come first!' And that's how it was and I can't imagine it having been any different."*

The absence of gender equality from the agenda of the liberation movement during the time when participants were active in its ranks may explain the prevalence of gender-type socialisation in the narratives. According to Hilda Bernstein: *"Feminism wasn't an issue in the movement. And there weren't really any groups like the feminists, the greens or homosexuals operating at the time either."* This is confirmed in the literature on feminism in South Africa as it maintains that it was only in the eighties that feminism became incorporated into the movement (Bozzoli, 1983).

Interestingly, some participants identified the failure of the movement to embrace a consciousness of gender as the impetus behind their own gender awareness. According to Philippa Murrell: *"I am a complete feminist. Things happened in the movement that directed me along this path. I was supposed to be amongst enlightened communists and sexism should have been on the agenda at every single meeting. I once tackled a married man who made no secret of the sexual favours that he enjoyed but when he discovered that his wife had also been unfaithful, everyone had to hear about it and he filed for a divorce."*

Philippa's construction of her feminist identity in relation to the movement is powerfully conveyed by the verb '*directed*.' It also captures the fluid nature of the identity as an ongoing construction in her life. Gerald Goldman also connects his initial awareness of gender issues to his experiences in the movement: *"Feminism wasn't an issue during*

the time that I was politically active yet the women with whom I worked, African women in particular, were very powerful."

The different approaches adopted by Philippa and Gerald to convey their respective interpretations of feminist consciousness can be seen to reflect the distinction that Gergen (1997a) makes between 'manstories' and womanstories.' Gerald provides a more distanced commentary on the personal qualities of women whereas Philippa positions herself at the centre of the dialogue and uses an emotive voice to draw attention to the importance of affiliations between people. Her attempt to re-create an emphatic emotional response from the listener stands in contrast to Gerald's presentation of his emotional ties as 'facts.'

Many men adopted a retrospective view to illustrate how their personal constructions of gender have changed over the course of their lives, thus drawing attention to the value of life stories in illuminating a self that is dynamic and ever changing. According to Johnny Sachs: *"In principle I'm a feminist but when I look back on some of my relationships I fear I fitted into the pattern of chauvinism without realising it. Some of my ideas and patterns were not satisfactory and I hope I've now adapted my approach."* The value of hindsight in identifying shifting constructions of self is also evident in Wolfie Kodesh's description of his journey to the police station after he had been arrested: *"I want to say that I was giggling like a little girl, but I won't."* These conscious articulations of gender show how constructions of the self are constituted through social interchange, and more specifically how gender operates as social agreement.

The intersection of gender and race in understandings of the self is clearly illustrated in the following extract from Alan Lipman's narrative: *"One of our closest black friends used to eat with us often. And after months and months I finally had the certainty to throw a dishtowel at him and say 'Here, you dry!' Because he is a guest, he mustn't do anything. And more so, because he is a black guy I mustn't ask him to do anything for me."* The excerpt also reveals how an active negotiation with power relations was essential for forging meaningful non-racial relationships.

—The way in which women integrated their gender consciousness in the movement also involved a challenging of power relations. Rica Hodgson explains how gender stereotypes designated particular roles for men and women: *"There were always prescribed duties for women in the movement, for example, during the Congress of the People the women arranged accommodation and food. And it was the women themselves, and not the men, who pushed themselves forward to take on wider tasks."* Not all the women expressed a consciousness of gender inequality in the movement. Amina Cachalia states categorically: *"I was unaware of gender inequality in the movement. I never felt I couldn't do what men do. I'm certainly not a feminist. I got rid of my bra because I hated it. I believe that women must act individually and take their commitment into their own hands."*

Amina's perspective could be explained in terms of the position of many South African women who rejected feminism during the anti-apartheid struggle as intellectual imperialism and as potentially divisive amongst black South Africans (de la Rey, 1999). Within this viewpoint, feminist theory was seen as the domain of white, university-educated women who produced theoretical knowledge from their investigations into the experiences of black women, who in turn became the objects of investigation. This rejection of feminism as a body of knowledge should not be mistaken for a disregard towards gender oppression, as has become clear in the narrative analysis. South African women, in particular black women, have a history of organisation and mobilisation that enabled writers such as Patel to justifiably refer to "a rich tradition of organising and mobilising women against class exploitation and national and sexual oppression" (in de la Rey, p. 65).

They brought a feminist thrust to the movement by refusing to separate issues of individual identity that dominated bourgeois forms of feminism in the western world from the wider economic and political objectives of the struggle. As far back as 1913 women were thrust into national prominence with their campaign against carrying passes in the Orange Free State (Villa-Vicencio, 1990). Sol Plaatje wrote of the events at the time: "after exhausting all constitutional means on behalf of their women ... the male

natives of the municipalities of the Province of the Orange "Free" State saw their women folk throwing off their shawls and taking the law into their own hands ... " (ibid. p. 35).

A similar scenario is painted in Amina Cachalia's description of the 1956 Women's March to Pretoria: *"We went from door to door talking to women and getting permission from their husbands and fathers to allow them to participate...we went to factories that employed mostly women ...and on the day I'll never forget that feeling of seeing all those women coming through in their hundreds and hundreds. They were so colourful. Women in blankets, women with babies on their backs..."* The excerpt celebrates the strength and unity that created the momentum to drive protest action on a large scale as well as the notion of women taking responsibility for their own oppression.

Amina experienced herself as an active agent within the context of this powerful collective expression of activism. The way in which her personal sense of agency directed the political course of her life features across her entire narrative: *"I persuaded my mother that I should move to Durban and live with my sister so that I could participate in the Passive Resistance Campaign. I also decided to do Matric privately and to take a course in shorthand so that I could find myself a job and earn some money. And I was learning about the struggle, and being involved at the same time, and working for a living. And that's when my life really took off."* Feelings of independence and personal empowerment are captured in the phrase *"my life really took off."* The Women's Progressive Union provided a meaningful outlet for the expression of this autonomy: *"We worked to uplift women so that they could go out and become economically self-sufficient and get away from their dependence on males in the household."*

Amina attributes such convictions to her family background and not to any personal feminist leanings: *"I knew lots of girls of my age and older when I was growing up who had no skills and no interests. They were dependent on their husbands, fathers or brothers. But I grew up differently and I thought this was wrong. My father was very liberal in that sense even though he was a devout Muslim."* The positive influence of a father figure in relation to feelings of empowerment as a woman is also identified by

Philippa Murrell: *"My father was an intelligent man and he encouraged me to think for myself."* The consideration with which he engaged with her is evident in a later description of an unsettling incident between them: *"We had this tremendous argument about how my children were suffering from my involvement. I burst into tears shouting that he should think about all the other children in the country. Afterwards he came upstairs and sat on my bed and said 'Why are you crying? You've just made me into such a bloody fool!'"*

The challenge that the behaviour of Philippa and Amina's fathers posed to traditional norms for women is contrasted with Rica Hodgson's description of her own father: *"He refused to allow me to pursue a vocation because I was female. It was only after he had died that I was able to train as a nurse."* These excerpts convey crucial evidence of the importance of significant relationships to our constructions of self throughout our lives. They are peculiar to Gergen's (1997a) 'womanstories' because they highlight emotional interdependency - being with others and needing reciprocal affections - as integral to humanity.

The explication of gender awareness and solidarity that is conveyed in the narratives of the women respondents represents feminism on the one hand as individual achievement and on the other hand as a political movement rooted in collective action. Although all the women expressed interest and involvement in taking up gender issues through the Women's Movement, there was a lack of shared experience in relation to gender and gender discrimination in their personal lives. For some women gender was acknowledged as salient and significant but for others gender was constructed as an issue of little or no relevance to their activism. Some identified instances of gender discrimination and others claimed an experience unaffected by the discriminatory effects of gender. It is noteworthy that the narratives of the black women, in particular, tend to underplay the intersection of gender and race discrimination in their constructions of self. Although this perspective is indicative of the historical period in which they were actively involved in the apartheid struggle, it is interesting to note that this viewpoint remains prevalent in more recent feminist investigations (de la Rey, 1999; Nicolson,

1996; Walker, 1998).

6.2.5 Harassment, banning and detention:

A dominant theme of escalating resistance features in the accounts of activism, as is captured in Hilda Bernstein's comment: *"We were slowly but surely walking along a path of illegal activities that went in one direction."* This predestined route was marked by an array of repressive actions that aimed to generate a climate of fear that would operate in favour of the state. The narratives are filled with particular happenings that are used by the participants as vehicles to convey their resilience in the face of the increasingly oppressive apartheid government. Amina Cachalia communicates a hair-raising incident that serves to represent the central thrust of these accounts:

"I remember one night while Yusuf was in prison they were shouting questions to me at the kitchen table and one of them grabbed me and twisted my wrist. Before I knew it I had sunk my teeth into his hand and blood spurted out of my mouth. I got such a fright. Thank heavens Aids never entered my mind! And he shouted to everyone: 'Sy het my gebyt! Sy het my gebyt!' (She has bitten me! She has bitten me!) By this stage I was really frightened and overwrought and I ran into my bedroom and climbed into bed with my children and held them on either side of me. They were both crying. And then what was so amazing was that, even though we were banned, all my neighbours came into the house. And I found so much strength in myself from their presence."

Amina's retaliatory action arose from fear and desperation but also represented a challenge to the power of her harasser to wield terror as a means of subjugation. Her lapse into Afrikaans also denotes an attempt to diminish his power as the Afrikaans language was considered to be the language of oppression. Language is used to direct actions and Amina's use of Afrikaans to convey his response also serves to create an emotional distance between them. Afrikaans is frequently used to describe the accounts of interactions and encounters with police in all the narratives, as in the case of Wolfie Kodesh: *"We called Security Branch and all their supporters 'the boers.'"* By grouping

the security police together under the name "boers" their individual identities become indiscernible and their power is significantly reduced. This creation of a social identity through naming also serves to dilute the fear that predominated in many of the accounts of state brutality.

The drama of the incident is also intensified by Amina's reference to HIV-Aids. Although the virus was unknown at the time of the incident, recounting the event in the present renders it a compounding factor. This is illustrative of Ricoeur's (1984) argument that narratives comprise 'human time' and not abstract 'clock time.' The significance of the time is therefore dependent on the meaning that the narrator assigns to events within its compass. The way in which social support mediated Amina's stress is a recurrent theme across all the narratives. The action of climbing into bed with her children provided mutual reassurance and the presence of her neighbours created a buffer between herself and the police.

In addition to raids on their homes, many activists were issued with banning orders that required them to resign from indicated organisations and restricted them from attending gatherings of any kind. Although ignoring a banning order invited imprisonment, the narratives were filled with incidences of defiance, as in the case of Rica Hodgson: *"We were restricted to our apartment building in the middle of Hillbrow. But we didn't stop our political work. My husband continued to experiment with making bombs on the kitchen table and I continued to do my work as a fundraiser."* The contempt with which activists responded to their banning is evident in Alan Lipman's recollection of *"writing to Minister Swart, saying if we're not allowed to attend gatherings with two or more people with a common purpose, can we go to bed with our spouses?"*

6.2.6 Children:

The defiance that frames constructions of activism in the narratives is considerably diluted by the tensions that existed between parental and activist identities. According to Amina Cachalia: *"The police used to sit outside our house 24 hours of the day and night. My kids suffered tremendously during that period. They couldn't have friends over and I couldn't even go to their school to talk to their teachers."* Acknowledgement of the

impact of activism on children did not necessarily translate into reduced political involvement. Many participants justified this impact with reference to the wider oppressed population. Amina's comment: *"I always thought of all the other children"* resonated across many of the narratives. The insidious way in which the lives of children were affected is further illustrated by Julius Baker: *"Whenever a car of one of my daughter's friends was parked outside our home the police would note the number plate and go and see the father of the youngster who was visiting. Their fathers would in turn insist that they never came to our place ever again. But others had it far worse."*

Reference to the suffering of other children is common across all the narratives almost serving as a buffer against feelings of unease and guilt in relation to their own children. However this stoicism crumbled when participants shared interpretations of their experiences in prison, as in the case of Philippa Murrell: *"I used to think about my little girl and couldn't stop myself from bursting into tears. I was so ashamed of myself."* Her self-reprimand reflects a social expectation that her resilience as an activist should not be challenged by softer maternal emotions. Although the accounts of imprisonment amongst women activists offered more emotive insight into their concern for their children, male accounts also identified the strain of separation from their children. According to Denis Goldberg: *"My children were growing up each day and I was not part of their development."*

6.2.7 Detention:

Detention emerged in the 1950s and 1960s as part of a steadily growing package of laws to restrain activists. The purpose of detention was twofold. It removed people from political organisations and isolated groups in order to dilute their opposition (Foster, 1987). It also attempted to gather information, partly for particular purposes in political trials and partly for the general purpose of policing opposition. These objectives are illuminated in Shantie Naidoo's narrative: *"Six months into my detention I was brought to court to give evidence against Winnie Mandela and Joyce Sikekane. I refused and I was sentenced to another two months in solitary."*

Shantie identifies her experience of solitary confinement as having an ongoing effect throughout her life: *"I think you're always affected by having been in solitary confinement. The whole experience of sitting alone, day in and day out, for months on*

end." Research into solitary isolation and physical confinement identifies symptoms involving subjective restlessness, worry, inefficient thoughts; concentration and memory; and problems with impulse control (ibid.). According to Shantie: *"Even today I sometimes feel anxious and wonder whether it has something to do with my time in prison."* The emotional strain of imprisonment is frequently dealt with through the internalisation of an individual's physical confinement, as in the case of Denis Goldberg: *"There was a time when I needed help - a therapist to talk to. But there was no way I could ask for it because that would put my mind in the hands of the enemy. You impose walls around your emotions because you're not going to let your enemy see your weaknesses."*

Two distinct patterns in the construction of activism in relation to imprisonment can be identified across the narratives. The first pattern celebrates imprisonment as a pinnacle within the political trajectory of the activist, as in the case of Leon Levy: *"It was an honour to be in prison and our political resolve thrived"* and Amina Cachalia: *"Going to prison was an honour. We were there for the cause."* Imprisonment fuelled the moral fibre of the activists and served to justify the actions and beliefs that had led to their imprisonment, thus contributing towards the overall forward movement of the narrative. The second pattern represents imprisonment in terms of an abrupt cessation to the passionate momentum that had driven activists along their individual paths of resistance. Imprisonment represented a culmination of their resistance and they began to question the nature and extent of their involvement. It was not the moral imperative of the struggle that was questioned but the implications of their activism on the lives of their families, as in the case of Krishna Moodaley: *"I started to think 'I'm married now, I have two children and things are only going to get worse.'"*

Structurally, this second pattern represents a deviation from the forward movement of the narratives that up to this point had centred on a celebration of deepening political involvement. This structural shift is illustrated in Philippa Murrell's narrative: *"I remember thinking 'Gosh, all these people have been banned and some have been to prison.' And I almost wanted it to happen to me - because it was so dramatic. But later on, when the reality came, when I was arrested, I was very, very scared. There was no*

more excitement and reality had set in." The reality-fantasy metaphor is one again illuminated in the way in which Philippa associates her activism with fantasy and the reality of her imprisonment with feelings of powerlessness. The dramatic appeal of activism that served to create narrative momentum prior to the account of her experiences in prison is highlighted by the replacement of the heady sensation of activism with a sombre acceptance of imprisonment.

Regardless of whether imprisonment signalled a time of questioning or an intensification of inner resolve, certain features of prison life were common across all the narratives. Feelings of helplessness were generated from uncertainty with regard to the duration of imprisonment as well as the harsh living conditions. According to Gerald Goldman: *"I found it very disturbing to be totally disempowered. I was living in appalling conditions with no knowledge of when I would be released."*

The inability to temporally organise one's life around social rituals that is characteristic of our social world is identified by Denis Goldberg as fundamental to his own feeling of impotence in prison: *"There was nothing to mark the difference between December 15th and January the 15th. You haven't changed jobs, haven't been to a wedding and you knew that whatever you wanted to write would be censored."* Despite the censorship and the uncertainty as to whether correspondence would in fact reach recipients, participants speak about the value of writing as a means of making sense of their circumstances and dealing with their seclusion. According to Iris Fesenstein: *"Every single day I wrote to him. Whether I posted it or not. It was vital."* Prison correspondence has been privileged as an important vehicle for remembering the past in South Africa, as is evident in recent publications like Ahmed Kathrada's (2000) *Letters from Robben Island*.

A spirit of defiance prevailed in all the narratives and centred on the ways in which activists built and sustained solidarity with one another during their imprisonment. According to Rica Hodgson: *"We were rude to the authorities, telling them what we thought of them at every opportunity."* Denis Goldberg describes some practical activities that further entrenched their commitment to one another: *"We had a committee of prisoners to take care of solidarity things. We would make birthday cards, Christmas presents and stage plays. I had a pennywhistle that I used to play and years later a man came up to me at a political gathering and told me how he used to listen to my playing in his cell."* This solidarity is powerfully expressed in Denis' illustration of how

they supported one another in even the most tragic circumstances: *"We used to sing freedom songs throughout the night before political prisoners were hanged."*

Communication between inmates is identified as an essential coping strategy, as in the case of Shantie Naidoo: *"Even in solitary you always found ways and means of communication. It made all the difference. One time I was interrogated for five days and five nights without sleep. And they used to change shift every four hours."* As a mode of psychological violence, the substantial number of deaths in detention and the widespread rumours of vicious treatment and torture at the hands of the security police served to generate a climate of fear amongst political prisoners (Foster, 1987). The communication between prisoners served to mediate this fear, as Denis Goldberg explains: *"We would smuggle notes to one another. I used to sign mine because I figured they would know my handwriting anyway if they found them. Issy Heyman had been broken under interrogation and he told me that receiving my note with my signature made all the difference."*

Attempts to maintain the democratic principles that guided the operations of the movement are also evident in accounts of communication in prison. According to Krishna Moodaley: *"We always managed to get messages to one another so that we could take decisions about important things like how we would respond to the Security Branch's questioning."* Contact with events in the liberation struggle beyond prison was seen as crucial to sustaining the continuity of participants' sense of belonging to the wider resistance movement. Gerald Goldman recalls: *"a demonstration outside parliament and it was lovely because we could hear the noise all through the night."* The self-validation that was associated with this wider social connection is clearly illustrated in Denis Goldman's recollection of a particular interaction: *"As more and more young people came in they would tell us about demonstrations and campaigns. I remember someone saying to me: 'The people always talk about you at meetings.' I said: 'You're joking! But it meant a lot to me to know that I was remembered.'"*

This valued social recognition enabled Denis to construct a self-identity that extended beyond the confines of his imprisonment. It was an identity that located him at the heart of the liberation movement from which he was able to derive strength and affirmation that in turn validated his imprisonment. The excerpt also indicates the social foundation of the memory-making process as it signals the capacity of the collective to produce a history that is filled with people.

The strong solidarity amongst women in prison also features in the narratives. Rica Hodgson identifies particular activities that served to strengthen their resilience: *"When we were told that we were moving prisons with no explanation we all lay on the ground and refused to move unless they told us what was happening. Eventually the women warders had to carry each and every one of us into the vans. We also went on a hunger strike for eight days. We had political discussions and sang all the old worker songs."* The complex construction of women's identities is illuminated in Philippa Murrell's description of Rica's arrival in prison: *"There was a noise of high heels coming down the corridor and in came Rica Hodgson with a policeman carrying her suitcase. And she had everything in her suitcase - a 'nightie', face cream, make-up, nail polish - and she cheered us up a lot."* The celebration of femininity contrasts with the severity of the prison environment and it can also be seen as a symbol of defiance. The buoyancy of such narratives of prison life was curtailed with reference to tensions between motherhood and activism, as in the case of Hilda Bernstein: *"If it wasn't for the children I sometimes quite enjoyed it because we bonded amazingly and I've never experienced such feelings of sisterhood."*

Activists also comment on positive aspects of imprisonment in terms of their own political development. According to Gerald Goldman: *"I learned a lot in prison. Robben Island was termed the University of Robben Island for good reason."* In a similar vein, Amina Cachalia recalls how: *"We held study groups and discussed what we would do when we got out."* Despite the self-questioning that some participants entered into during the course of their imprisonment, none of them withdrew their political involvement on their release from prison. In a sense their activism expanded as the majority went into exile and became active in the anti-apartheid movement abroad. This does not mean that they remained unaffected by their imprisonment. While their political involvement helped them to cope with the adjustment from prison-life to the outside world, it also created a degree of stress in their lives. This is illuminated in Denis Goldberg's description of his experiences following his release from prison: *"I couldn't get over the colours, the brightness, the cream cakes when I was released. And I entered into this crazy life of visiting different countries and speaking on television and on the radio. Being so involved certainly helped me to adapt but it also tired me out."*

Research has identified that difficulties experienced by people on their release from prison are primarily of a social or interpersonal nature. Problems include emotional lethargy, mood changes, irritability, aggression, depression and increased

emotional sensitivity, problems with communication, withdrawal and reduced trust in people (Foster, 1987). These difficulties are evident in Iris Fesenstein's account of her husband's re-adjustment into civil society: *"It took him a long time to adjust to being free again. His concentration was not the same and he was just somewhere else all the time. He was trying very hard to fit in. To become 'Daddy' again and everything else that he felt he should be."*

The themes that have emerged during the period when participants were actively involved in the movement revolve around their organisationally bounded lives. All the narratives identified membership to organisations as crucial in shaping and sustaining their commitment. For participants who were raised in politically active households, fully-fledged commitment represented a transition to adulthood whereas individuals who had not been exposed to the activism of family members identified tertiary education as a stepping-stone to their political immersion. The unravelling of vocational paths in relation to activism was evident across all the narratives and took the form of either working directly in the movement or the expression of activism through vocational trajectories.

From a political perspective, organisations provided individuals with a framework to understand the world as well as the opportunity to act in accordance with that belief system. The nature of their political work bound them to one another and they moved beyond the confines of their racially defined social worlds to forge relationships that created the momentum for a powerful collective of resistance. The solidarity of the group supported individuals as they endeavoured to make their mark on the world. This shared commitment opened the way for intimate connections and many lifetime partnerships developed through political work. Despite the absence of feminism from the agenda of the liberation movement, relationships between men and women were characterised by an awareness of gender equality. However the onset of family life saw the majority of the women limiting their political work to focus on the home and to accommodate the political careers of their spouses.

The overall structure of the narratives is shaped by the forward movement of

accumulating resistance in relation to the constant retaliation of the apartheid government. Increasingly harsh reactions to the escalating resistance restricted participants' activism to the point that in spite of their resilience it became clear that they would be more effective outside the country. Accounts of expatriation continued to embrace organisationally bound selves whose personal growth and direction was crucially linked to the movement. Their experiences will be illuminated in the following section that examines constructions of activism in relation to exile.

6.3 Exile:

Exile was represented as integral to the life trajectory of activists as it enabled them to re-engage in their political work. With the shattering of political leadership that had occurred in the 1960s came the realisation that activists could be more effective outside the country. What was striking across all the narratives was the way in which individuals located their exile within the continuing struggle that they had left behind. The link between 'home' and 'exile' politics ebbed and flowed with the fortunes of the struggle inside South Africa, as is evident in Leon Levy's comment: *"We never regarded ourselves as anything more than exiles waiting to return."*

The majority had left South Africa on the advice of their organisations to continue the fight to bring an end to apartheid. They therefore perceived their time in exile as an extension into a different dimension of the struggle in which they had been involved. According to Julius Baker: *"The movement decided that I should leave and work at raising funds in England."* Many of the women activists attributed their exile directly to the actions of their spouses thus providing further evidence of the prevalence of stereotypical gender relations in their constructions of self. According to Esme Goldberg: *"I wasn't ready to leave but Dennis ordered me to go. Apparently he had been given an instruction to try and escape from prison and he said he would only do it if we were out of the country."* In a similar vein Rica Hodgson describes how: *"Jack was under house arrest and we received an instruction to leave so that he could carry on training people abroad."*

6.3.1 Leaving South Africa:

Given the oppressive political climate, departures were swift and furtive, as in the case of Rica Hodgson: *"I was preparing a birthday dinner for my son when the message came through that we should get out that night. We were not allowed any luggage. I put a pair of panties in one pocket and a bra in the other pocket."* Intentions to depart were often concealed from loved ones for the purpose of self-protection and also to protect those left behind from reprisals and allegations of complicity. The absence of rites of farewell to mark departures added a sense of guilt to the pain of unresolved separations. According to Ramney Naidoo: *"I had no time to think about leaving the country and leaving my family that I was close to because it all happened so quickly."*

Accounts are filled with examples of how the government attempted to hinder departures. According to Wolfie Kodesh: *"Special branch claimed that they had granted me permission to leave because I had informed on my comrades. It was in all the papers, in England and South Africa, and I was very upset by it all."* Shantie Naidoo's departure was postponed for months: *"I couldn't go to the airport to catch my flight because I was banned and the airport was outside my magisterial district."* The Security Branch also extended its network into the lives of activists in exile, as in the case of Ramney Naidoo: *"You had to look over your shoulder all the time and you couldn't discuss anything on the phone because it was tapped. One day we came home to find that our whole house had been ransacked."*

6.3.2 Living in exile:

Exile represented a wrench from the past and a projection into unfamiliar surroundings and an uncertain future. According to Iris Fesenstein: *"I had absolutely no idea what was going to happen."* The dislocation was eased by the huge part of their history that they carried with them, as is evident in Leon Levy's narrative: *"I was very much in the same sort of mould as when I was in South Africa. I was active in the anti-apartheid movement organising demonstrations and political campaigns."* Some individuals took up formal employment in the ranks of the movement, as in the case of Wolfie Kodesh who was sent

to ANC headquarters in Zambia: *"I was in charge of logistics which meant that I had to ensure that we had enough food and general materials."* Others pursued separate vocational paths and described their life-styles along similar lines to the ones they had led in South Africa: *"I was practising as a lawyer, reading Sabenza and African Communist and running along to every demonstration called for by the anti-apartheid movement, in addition to being active in my neighbourhood ANC branch of course."* (Julius Baker)

The majority of the participants settled in England. Ramney Naidoo attributes the political and social accessibility of the country to: *"The strong anti-apartheid organisation in London and our British neighbours who knew all about apartheid and what a terrible country South Africa was to live in."* The mediating role of culture is also evident in Beate Lipman's narrative: *"We had read Dickens and Shakespeare and took along a lot of clobber in our heads."* The emotive intensity with which exiles engaged in all things South African is common across all the narratives. According to Rusty Bernstein: *"We moved into a South African community of exiles. We focussed all our attention and activities around the anti-apartheid movement and the ANC offices."* The reinforcement of personal identity through cultural practices is further evident in Alan Lipman's narrative: *"Each weekend we'd get together and 'nostalgie' and have 'braai' (barbecue) evenings no matter how cold it was."*

Exile also expanded participants' political consciousness, as in the case of Ramney Naidoo: *"We realised that the struggle wasn't confined to South Africa. There was Chile. There was Greece and solidarity with the Turkish people."* Leon Levy comments specifically on how his knowledge of an enlarged world would not have been possible within the confines of South Africa: *"It was only in exile that I realised that there were a lot of things one could do in addition to one's political activities. I received a scholarship to Oxford where I studied economics and political science."* Leon's subsequent comment illuminates how his construction of self as an activist in the South African liberation movement created the foundation for his life in exile: *"I became involved in factories and industrial concerns in Britain because you pack your orientation with you wherever you go."*

The recognition of what has been gained from exile adds another dimension to the exile experience but does not invalidate the dislocation and personal loss that they endured. According to Hilda Bernstein: *"You never get over the fact that you've left*

South Africa. Exile is permanent. You don't just become a citizen of another country and gradually shake the dirt off your feet." The notion of South African soil being ingrained in the soles of her feet symbolises Hilda's inability to root herself into her country of exile. Feelings of detachment were intensified by the uncertainty that accompanied the experience of exile, as is evident in Rica Hodgson's narrative: *"You hanker to be home every day. And not knowing how long you will be away for is terrible."* In contrast to the vital and focussed lives that they had led while engaged in the struggle inside South Africa, Esme Goldberg recalls: *"I never knew how long I would be there for and I just went with each year as it passed me by."*

The narratives are filled with descriptions of the sense-making mechanisms that participants employed to come to terms with their dislocation in exile. Alan Lipman recalls: *"walking down the street and feeling like there was another Alan hovering a yard or two above my head. And he would say to me: 'What are you doing walking down this street? You should be in Rissik Street or Bez Valley. This is not you.' And I'd rush home and look for news of South Africa in the Guardian and South African news on the radio."* The strong sense of belonging that participants invested in South Africa is evident in Wolfie Kodesh's memory of *"standing at the border between Swaziland and South Africa and feeling this magnet drawing me towards home."* The compelling nature of this connection was intensified by relationships with loved ones who had remained in South Africa. According to Rica Hodgson: *"It is one of the worst things - not being able to come home and comfort family members when loved ones have died."*

The exclusion from South Africa's history while irrevocably remaining tied to it is peculiar to the South African exile experience. Exiles from other countries in the world tend to have left their home country in retreat, having suffered a major defeat, and they take the trauma and pessimism of defeat with them (Bernstein, 1994). They focus on a past that is essentially sterile and grows more distant as the years pass. The South African exile experience was uniquely different in that the link with the struggle at home was steadily renewed through the anti-apartheid movement abroad as well as the successive waves of exiles that came out at different times over a period of more than thirty years.

This strong connection with the homeland was passed on to the children of exiles. According to Ramney Naidoo: *"Our children grew up in the thick of it. We used to have a lot of parties and invite only anti-apartheid and ANC people. I worked for a political organisation and we went to every demonstration and took the children with us."* The notion that children had no choice in the unravelling of their lives in relation to the activism of their parents resonated across the narratives. Iris Fesenstein describes how *"The children were totally confused. One day Michael said to me 'Mommy, you mustn't talk so badly about the police because they will come and get you.' And I realised that a child should have confidence in the police and I must explain that the police in England are our friends."* The excerpt also points to how difficult it was for exiles to adjust to the 'normal' world, to no longer be constantly on guard and to loosen the discipline and secretiveness that had been so essential for their survival in South Africa.

It was during their years in exile that many of the participants experienced the death of their spouses and the loss represented a significant element within their life trajectories. The narratives of loss belonging to women were detailed and emotive whereas the men provided factual accounts along similar lines to all the other facts that comprised their lives. This does not mean that the loss was experienced as less significant for men but it does illuminate Gergen's (1997a) assertion that the cultural repertoire of heroic stories requires different qualities for men and women.

While men stick to the narrative line and restrict their emotional lives women emphasise the inter-dependency between themselves and the lives of others. The emphasis that women place on continuity with others is evident in the way in which participants linked their accounts of personal loss to the anti-apartheid struggle. According to Iris Fesenstein: *"The night that 'H' died we had been watching television and Tutu was addressing an enormous meeting on the Parade. I'll always remember him shouting 'We are unstoppable' and the crowd roaring in response."*

It was this remarkable unity between life in exile and events within South Africa that enabled exiles to feel themselves to still be part of something grand, positive and heroic in spite of the hardships and loneliness of exile. Their involvement in anti-apartheid political activity in their country of exile and their ongoing contact with new exiles prevented them from becoming a static community of aging individuals living on the memories of the past.

The unrelenting resolve of activists both inside and outside South Africa resulted in the eventual capitulation of the apartheid government. On 2 February 1990 a large number of illegal organisations including the African National Congress, the Pan African Congress, and the Communist Party were unbanned. From that date onwards the status of exiles changed fundamentally as the possibility of return was opened up. The concept of "going home" had been a dream deferred over the years and it was all the more sweet because of its remoteness. Once the legal obstacles to fulfilling the dream were removed, the ambivalence and irreparable nature of exile surfaced. Constructions of self in relation to these negotiations between the desire to return and the difficulties involved in assimilating back into South African life exposed the emotional damage of exile. It forms part of the complex construction of activism in the context of liberation that comprises the focus of the final section of the analysis.

6.4 Towards liberation:

The extent to which the legalisation of political organisations in South Africa signalled a watershed in the lives of exiles is captured in Wolfie Kodesh's narrative: *"In all my adult life I have never been so emotional. Never mind that South African male machismo 'men don't cry' stuff! I couldn't control my blubbing."* The inversion of stereotypical gender relations to convey the centrality of this event within Wolfie's life is indicative of his sensitivity to the limited emotional resources available to men. While his use of the verb *"blubbing"* communicates a self-reprisal, it also indicates the containment of amassed emotions that was a requirement of exile.

Amina Cachalia's description of an interaction with Nelson Mandela on the day after his release from prison reveals the elation and uncertainty that faced activists as they began to lay the groundwork for a democratic South Africa: *"Nelson was sitting quietly in a chair deep in thought. And I went up to him and whispered in his ear 'penny for your thoughts?' And he said 'I'm thinking about what this all means. It hasn't sunk in completely.'" The intimacy of this excerpt celebrates the depth of the inter-personal ties that bound activists to one another in the face of their arduous work. Acknowledgement of the shift that was required in the nature of their political work once the clear demarcation between good and evil that had characterised the struggle years had been replaced by a less defined reality was common across all the narratives. Amina explains: "We inherited such a mess. During the struggle years it was simple. The enemy was so*

clear."

6.4.1: Going home:

The strength of their connection to South Africa drew many participants back from exile, as in the case of Rica Hodgson: *"There were lots of compensations in England - wonderful people and the culture is great. But it's just not home and the best thing that happened to me since leaving was coming back."* The narratives of those participants who returned were marked by a sense of purpose and resolve, as in the case of Lorna Levy: *"It was imperative that we return - giving up a comfortable life in Britain and returning to SA to offer whatever contribution we could make."* This inner resolve is further captured in Beate Lipman's assertion: *"The term 'integrated' never applied to me. I came home and it felt right from the second I was here."* The emotional significance of return is highlighted in Wolfie Kodesh's statement: *"When I came back and stepped off the plane, I looked towards Table Mountain and Devils Peak, and as I put my feet on the tarmac, they both bowed towards me"*

The ease of settling back into South Africa was not shared by all the participants, as in the case of Beate's spouse Alan: *"I came back and found a friend with whom I'd been corresponding on a monthly basis for 27 years shallow. He'd had life experiences that I hadn't and vice versa and it just didn't work."* Similar sentiment is conveyed by Shantie Naidoo: *"After 27 years away, you're coming back with memories of your relationship with your family and people you left behind. And there are changes - marriages and different people have come into the family - and you have to pick up again."*

Attempts to reconcile the vision returnees had of South Africa when it was 'home' and the way in which they now view the country from their changed place locates them and their objectives beyond parochial boundaries. This perspective is captured in Johnny Sachs' description of himself as *"a citizen of the universe."* Underlying this assertion is possibly the recognition that he can never entirely return to the familiar. He has been irrevocably changed by his experience in exile and the country to which he has returned has also changed: *"I had taken an integrated lifestyle for granted in England whereas people here hadn't had such an experience."*

On a wider level, participants were confronted with the challenge of a society that

remained fundamentally shaped by apartheid. Johnny explains how: *"The disparity between white and black and rich and poor is much more difficult to cope with when you come back from the outside. And it hits you very strongly."* Initial periods of return were also marked by harassment from conservative social elements, as in the case of Beate Lipman: *"When we first moved in Alan went on a television discussion with Pik Botha and when we arrived home eggs had been thrown against our house."* The oppressive political climate that had preceded their departure many years ago also filtered into their consciousness, as in the case of Shantie Naidoo: *"Sometimes I find myself thinking 'am I being followed?'"*

Despite these concerns, constructions of activism remained consistent and solid. This continuity was attributed to the link between their political experiences abroad and their work at home. According to Ramney Naidoo: *"I've picked up and learnt a lot politically from all those years in Britain and if I had stayed in South Africa I wouldn't have picked up that much."* The adoption of formal political portfolios also facilitated their integration back into South African life, as in the case of Alan Lipman who *"stood for the ANC in the local elections"* and Rica Hodgson who *"took up the position of personal secretary to Walter Sisulu."*

The spirit of victory that fuelled the agenda of the liberation movement as it worked towards the 1994 General Elections is evident across all the narratives. According to Amina Cachalia: *"Those few years until 1994 were so meaningful and important. I remember thinking 'now we're going to have so much to do.'" The fulfillment that came from being tangibly involved in the creation of a new and democratic South Africa was also evident in participants' accounts of the elections themselves. Ethel de Keyser described how: "It was most extraordinary and very, very moving to see this long queue of voters snaking round. It was the greatest moment in my life."*

The outcome of the elections and subsequent political changes were generally viewed in a positive light. According to Johnny Sachs: *"People may not have material power but they are part of society and they have dignity."* Similar sentiment is conveyed in Rica Hodgson's narrative: *"The changes are evident. Black children in schools. Black people working as cashiers in supermarkets and in banks. We never saw this before we left."* The accounts did not gloss over the way in which apartheid ideology continues to hinder the transformation process, as is clearly conveyed by Wolfie Kodesh: *"The poison of*

racism gets into your skin. It's taken people like me years to get rid of racism. And it will take years before this racism goes away."

6.4.2 Émigrés:

Although all exiles left South Africa with the intention of returning, many became émigrés. The self-justification function of narrative was illuminated in the detailed explanations that they offered for their decisions to remain in exile. Decisions were attributed to strong familial ties as well as the absence of a clearly defined political role for themselves in South Africa. According to Iris Fesenstein: *"South Africa will always be home and if I thought I could play a role there I might go back. But I'm very settled in England. My children and grandchildren are here."* It is noteworthy that Iris is not categorical in her position. She points to the paradox of exile in that 'home' remains South Africa yet her family represents the extent to which she has become transplanted in England. It is likely that a second separation would be as painful as her initial departure from South Africa. Returning to the familiar would involve a new migration and the uncertainty that Iris expresses with regard to the nature of her political involvement could also be reflective of the inescapable fact that no return is solely a return. Those who have returned are not the same people they were when they left. The place they have returned to is not the same place either.

The joy that émigrés expressed in relation to the victory of the liberation movement was tainted by feelings of guilt and disassociation, as in the case of Ethel de Keyser: *"When I go back to South Africa now I get the feeling that people are saying 'You weren't here. We went through all this and you weren't here.'"* Ethel's comment relates to Marmora and Gurrieri's argument that the quality of the reception that exiles receive on their return is dependent upon their relationship to political structures in the home country as well as the structure of the change that allowed them to return (in Israel, 1999). Despite the ongoing link between the struggle inside and outside South Africa and the inclusion of indemnity for exiles in the negotiation strategy of the ANC in relation to the National Party, it remains feasible that tensions between those who stayed and those who left may prevail.

The clarity and potency of earlier constructions of activism amongst participants who remained in exile shifted to embrace feelings of disconnection and doubt in relation to the extent to which the political objectives of the liberation movement have been met.

According to Krishna Moodaley: *"The vast number of African people are no better off than they were during the apartheid regime."* This critical perspective is also evident in Ethel de Keyser's narrative: *"We didn't win a war. We had to compromise and some people feel that the compromise is too much."* The disillusionment could also be attributed to the dissolution of the anti-apartheid movement and the reality that activists who have remained in exile no longer feel part of a collective and no longer have an outlet for their political zeal. This sentiment is evident in Iris Fesenstein's comment: *"It hurts me to see what's happening and I feel impotent to do anything about it."*

The negative perceptions of post-liberation South Africa in the narratives of émigrés may also represent a validation of their decisions not to return. According to Philippa Murrell: *"The thought of living in a country with high walls around your house and where it's difficult to go out on one's own at night - I couldn't do it. All the same I'll always be a South African."* The permanency of Philippa's identity as a South African represents her fundamental link with the country that she has left behind. Despite the imperative of exile at the time when participants left South Africa, those that have remained in exile tend to represent their departure in terms of a desertion. Attempts to restore their unravelled relationship to South Africa are evident in their preoccupation with South African politics and many participants spoke about how they still turn first to the 'foreign news' in their daily paper, seeking, before else, any item on South Africa. This orientation is captured in Krishna Moodaley's categorical statement: *"I am first and foremost South African."* For some émigrés, their ongoing identification with South Africa has translated itself into an active contribution towards its new democracy, as in the case of Denis Goldberg: *"I have set up a project that raises funds to purchase computers and books for rural schools in South Africa."*

6.4.3 Reconciliation:

Participants' perceptions of the extent to which the perpetrators of apartheid have been admonished also feature in the narratives. Attention in this regard is focused on the TRC whose role has been to delve into South Africa's grim past and to seek its future from the human rights violations that characterised the apartheid era. There is general agreement that the TRC played a valuable role in alerting the public to the horrors of apartheid, as in the case of Amina Cachalia: *"The TRC is difficult but wonderful in that it brought to the fore the terrible things people did to others."* However the central tenet of the TRC

whereby a break from the past and the building of a positive future is seen as dependent on forgiveness does not sit comfortably with the majority of the participants. According to Iris Fesenstein: *"The TRC is necessary but I have my doubts regarding Tutu's philosophy of forgiveness. I still have this feeling that people are walking away having done terrible things."*

The belief that public confession is no guarantee of contrition or of any fundamental shift within the confessor is common across the narratives, as in the case of Alan Lipman: *"These human beings have wallowed in their bigotry and they have even killed for it. I don't want vengeance. I want them to be truthful about what they did so that we know our history and our past. And they are lying through their teeth."* Amnesty is thus seen as a highly vexed issue as is clearly the case in Julius Baker's narrative: *"There is no question of reconciliation. These people are evil and it does irreparable harm to expect people to forgive and forget. They are jumping onto the bandwagon of amnesty."*

Of particular relevance to this study is the way in which participants comment on the TRC's use of stories as a vehicle to deal with the past. The TRC involved a process of communication, confession, forgiveness and reconciliation in the form of stories and it was through these stories that victims and perpetrators, as well as those who thought they were just innocent bystanders, realised their complicity. The value of this opportunity to participate in this collective humanity in story form is captured in Leon Levy's narrative: *"It was quite an important thing for me to be able to have said what I said and have it written into the record."*

6.4.4 Revolution is still coming:

Perhaps one of the central reasons why many participants remain critical of the TRC lies in their belief that liberation is not an end in itself. The categorical endorsement of the movement that characterised earlier constructions of activism is replaced by a more critical commentary, particularly with regard to the extent to which the movement has achieved its objectives. According to Shantie Naidoo: *"The struggle is not over yet. We always thought we would have a big, no compromise revolution."* This sentiment is shared by many of the participants and Krishna Moodaley makes the categorical statement: *"The real revolution that will do away with economic inequality is still coming."* He goes on to instil the responsibility to accomplish this in a future generation:

"Today there is not a single democratic, socialist state. It is my hope that the young people of South Africa will be the first to achieve this within their lifetime." This projection of victory into the future facilitates the construction of activism as an ongoing engagement that extends beyond the individual, as in the case of Amina Cachalia: "We still have a long way to become an ideal, just society and there is a lot of work to be done."

The continued commitment to socialism and activism amongst the participants serves as a link across time. It is a constant and fundamental expression of themselves in the present, past, and future. It is the way they have come to live their lives. Participants who returned to South Africa have located themselves at the heart of the political sphere and continue to play an active role in building a new democracy. Participants who decided to remain in exile have put down roots that they feel unable to dislodge in spite of the pivotal role that South Africa and its struggles occupy in their lives. 'Home' is still the name they give to the country they left behind. Yet home is now elsewhere, not simply in location but also through the shifting viewpoint of the culture that they have absorbed from their host countries.

What is significant across all the narratives is that all the participants remain engaged in their activism whether they have returned to South Africa or have remained in exile. The sense of purpose and meaning that they derive from their political commitment sustains them on a daily basis and it is this central theme that will comprise the focus of the following chapter that examines constructions of activism in relation to the aging process.

CHAPTER SEVEN:

LINKING PAST, PRESENT AND FUTURE

The discussion of how the memory-making process has generated participants' constructions of self in the present aims to highlight the active self-shaping quality of human thought and the power of stories to create and reshape personal identity. Thus far, the narratives have unraveled participants' lives through work, recreation, misdemeanors, danger, happiness, anger and fear. In the process they have revealed a growing awareness of the power of self-agency, the ability to make a difference, to master a skill and to operate effectively in the social world.

Even in the memories of fear and danger, participants generally expressed their ability to handle the situation. These individual senses of power have been shared and collectivised in order to effect change in the social and political realms and to advocate an experience of aging that is vital and productive. The forward momentum of the narratives represents the ongoing movement of individual lives who embarked on a journey towards a liberated South Africa.

The analysis will now illuminate how the act of storytelling involves selectively rearranging elements and descriptions so that the stories that emerge convey versions of the past that can be related to present actions and imagined futures. It will show how participants' strong grip on the past connects them to people and events in the present, and how their active agency empowers them to resist social attitudes that relegate the elderly to the margins of society. It will also reveal how discontinuities between the past and the present are consciously and unconsciously present within these constructions of self.

This insight into how participants use their memories to appropriate the social world and to construct themselves as older people will build on our existing understanding of how participants have used their activism to shape their life trajectories. The key themes that have emerged from the analysis thus far will therefore be used to show how activism, memory and aging within the context of life narratives are constructed.

7.1 Constructions of personal agency:

7.1.1 Activism and aging:

The experience of self as an active agent that lies at the heart of all the narratives serves to frame the life trajectories in terms of an ongoing engagement with personal growth and development. According to Philippa Murrell: *"I'm always an activist. I don't feel particularly old. I believe I've still got a long way to go. I want to continue writing and thinking and not allowing myself to become desiccated."* Philippa uses her activism to counter the negative effects of aging and so defies the commonly held assumption that people experience themselves as less productive in their latter years of life.

Her use of the term *"desiccated"* indicates her own negative association with old age and is illustrative of how individual agency functions to maintain identity and meaning by incorporating elements of public discourse into personal accounts (Bornat, Dimmock, Jones & Peace, 2000). Nonetheless, Philippa's conscious resistance to aging as a negative experience sets her apart from cultural expectations of what it means to grow old. This active positioning of self as separate from the aging process signifies the degree of resilience that is required to deal with old age and is further illuminated in Alan Lipman's comment: *"When you get to my age people start retiring and dying around you. But I've come to terms with these experiences. I don't feel immersed in it."*

The ability to respond flexibly to inevitable age-related changes and to avoid them dominating the final years of life was identified as significant across many of the narratives. According to Francis Losman: *"I'm always searching - in music, in theories. I'm always searching in life."* This commitment to leading a life that is driven by a sense of purpose and inventiveness is further captured in Iris Fesenstein's assertion: *"I'm reinventing myself as a jazz singer at 72 years of age."*

It is noteworthy how participants use their particular constructions of aging to denote their distinctiveness from social expectations of what it means to grow old. At the same

time the significance that they attach to living full and meaningful lives is not limited to this particular period in their lives. The creativity that Iris embraces in her exploration of an entirely new vocational trajectory in her seventies resonates across the narratives in that innovation is advocated as an essential ingredient for engaging critically with experience throughout the life course. This perspective requires an appreciation of the fluidity of life and a belief in the capacity of humans to effect change around them, as is clearly captured in Alan Lipman's comment: *"I'm just one human being. I'm going to be continually astonished, surprised and fascinated by what everybody around me does."*

The sense of fulfillment and openness to life that has facilitated participants' adjustment to old age is crucially linked to the value they place on their past experiences. This value is clearly derived from framing their life experience in relation to their involvement in the liberation movement. The way in which this self-knowledge connects the past to the present is clearly illustrated in Leon Levy's narrative: *"Since my childhood I have expressed my social conscience through politics. I've always been aware of racism and I've always been committed to social justice. That's the way I describe myself."* This continuity across the lives of participants, as created and sustained by their activism, is further evident in Esme Goldberg's self-description: *"I am a person who lives out my principles in my life-style. This is not conceit. I'm simply very resourceful."*

The South African political landscape has provided the impetus for this active engagement throughout their lives whether they returned post-liberation or remained abroad. For example, Krishna Moodaley frames his decision to remain in exile in relation to the following comment: *"I always turn to news of South Africa first in the newspapers and my wife and I visit South Africa every year."* This strong connection to a country that is marked by transition has required a continual adaptation to change in various forms. These changes are represented through participants' interpretations of how they have experienced their deepening involvement in politics in relation to state repression; how they have come to terms with the upheaval of exile and settling into a foreign culture; and how they have made sense of the meaning of liberation.

The extent to which these interpretations of change build on one another to create a sense of vitality across the lives of the participants is captured in Beate Lipman's comment: *"We're jolly lucky at our age to have recreated yet another life."* Activism has provided the impetus behind this sense of living multiple lives and it also represents the glue that binds each experience to the next, as is evident in Amina Cachalia's comment: *"I still have doubts about whether I am being watched. I still find it difficult to realise that I am free."*

The sense of separation from mainstream society that is afforded through their activism also operates to counter any feelings of stagnation that may be associated with old age. According to Philippa Murrell: *"It's very surprising how many people who wouldn't speak to me before come up and say 'Oh Philippa, if only I had done what you did. You know, I never believed in apartheid. Which of course is a load of rubbish!'"* Constructions of self-identity as activists are not only limited to participants' engagement in political resistance. The identification represents a fundamental self-definition as individuals who constantly engage with their worlds. This consciousness is evident in Alan Lipman's comment: *"I believe that I change the world daily. I respond to myself and to people around me every day. No matter how minor it may be."*

A common theme across the narratives is how activism is sustained by a commitment to social justice throughout the life trajectory, as in the case of Krishna Moodaley: *"My commitment is based on my feeling for justice. I might be in a comfortable situation myself but I couldn't live with myself if I saw and did nothing about injustices around me."* According to Gilligan (1982), it is this sense of responsibility that makes the ethic of justice possible. Constructions of justice in the memories of participants thus extend beyond principles to the level of application and illuminate an understanding of how justice is embedded in context. This is aptly conveyed in Iris Fesenstein's comment: *"I broke laws in South Africa that I believed were unjust because I believed it was correct to do so."* Resisting injustice in the context of apartheid South Africa thus involved a moral

imperative to court danger and it was this belief in the inherent justice of their actions that bound activists to one another.

The feelings of pride and accomplishment that are associated with this resistance are sustained through ongoing participation in the political arena. The narratives are filled with references to involvement in a range of activities. For example, Beate Lipman describes how: *"Alan stood for local government elections. There was a wonderful poster of him lining the streets. They still call him 'com' at our local garage and give him the 'amandhla' salute."* According to Amina Cachalia: *"I'm busy raising money for purchasing beds at Baragwanath hospital; a project in Soweto that makes parks out of wasteland; workshops to teach women home industries and I'm also assisting veterans to build a centre in Soweto."* The integration of vocational and political identities that has shaped the lives of many participants has also continued into old age, as in the case of Johnny Sachs: *"I'm involved in evaluating the technology of health programmes in Cuba as well as the HIV vaccine that the Cubans are developing."*

The vocational paths that have been followed by many of the children of participants also function to sustain the meaning of their activism in the present. Ramney Naidoo explains how: *"My daughter has always been committed to returning to South Africa and practicing her medicine where it is most needed."* The extension of an identification with activism through the lives of children is also evident in Rica Hodgson's narrative: *"My son is working in Public Works because he wants to make an input into government and I've never seen anyone work as hard as he does."*

Micro-narratives about the vocational pursuits of children represent yet another illustration of the multi-layered construction of activism in relation to the life trajectory. They are illustrative of how constructions of self emerge from attempts to make our actions intelligible to ourselves and to others (Harré, 1983, 1986). Eliciting life stories amongst elderly participants reveals how they use historical events to make sense of not only their own lives, but also those of their children and the times they are living through (Bornat, Dimmock, Jones & Peace, 2000). This sense-making activity requires a reflexive

consideration that embodies an intimate connection between remembering and reflecting. The narrative that is created through this process thus contains snapshots of subjectivity in relation to a wider memory-making process. It is therefore fitting to consider how the agency that is embedded within narrative constructions of aging that challenge the denial of personal and social agency in old age relate to wider social processes.

7.1.2 Reflexivity and the construction of memories:

The personal memories that are generated from participants' reflections on the past are shaped by a wider memory-making process in that South Africa as a nation is invested in its own process of coming to terms with the past. Many participants framed their involvement in the study in terms of the political responsibility that they feel towards making a meaningful contribution towards this process. According to Rica Hodgson: *"It is crucial that this information is documented. South Africans must know their history."*

The process whereby participants subjectively remember significant events and construct themselves in the present in light of these reflections illuminates the importance of memory to constructions of self. The location of these personal memories within the reservoir of South African history as the country itself actively engages in a re-remembering of the past serves to elevate their significance to a wider political and social realm. The endorsement and facilitation of the construction of personal memories through this collective memory-making process is illuminated in the anecdotal information relating to personal experiences of key events that have shaped the history of resistance that pervade the narratives.

Given the extensive international awareness of the apartheid struggle, the social recognition that comes with such involvement is not limited to a local scenario. According to Denis Goldberg: *"In America I've had African-American people say to me: 'You did it for us. You're a hero. You fought for us.'" The sense of personal power and agency that is embodied in the social recognition that comes from being celebrated as someone who actively contributed towards demolishing the apartheid government is*

evident across all the narratives. For example, Rica Hodgson states very clearly how: *"My life has been worthwhile. I have made an input in the struggle. I know it is something that I have tangibly done."* This pride is sustained by the presence of a liberated South Africa that exists as a living testimony to their contribution, as is articulated by Ethel de Keyser: *"You can see the changes. They are real."*

The fact that many of the participants were involved in writing their memoirs during the time that they participated in the study is also significant. Their ongoing engagement with the active process of self-reflection that is required to generate personal memories resulted in a clarity and sharpness of recollection in the interviews. Participation in the study was also deemed valuable to this personal documentation process, as is clearly stated by Iris Fesenstein: *"I've been busy with my memoirs for some time now and this conversation is reminding me of more things that I would like to write about."*

Participants' descriptions of the memoir writing process provide numerous illustrations of the inter-personal manner in which people interact with their past experiences and how they select and create constructions of who they have been and who they are today (Freeman, 1993). The re-writing of the self is thus dependent on individuals entering into conversations with their memories. By engaging with them and responding to them in relation to the meaning of their lives in the present, they are able to construct themselves and the social worlds that they inhabit (Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault & Benton, 1992). Accordingly, Denis Goldberg commences his narrative by stating: *"If what I have to say sounds glib its only because I've spent many years reflecting and writing about my experiences."*

The process of personal construction whereby people attempt to wrestle meaning from the world is marked by a struggle for intelligibility. The outcome is socially produced in that the process involves individuals grappling with resolutions that have been sought in the past. This is clearly evident in Gerald Goldman's statement: *"Part of the reason why I want to write my memoirs now, is that in my desire to get away from my conservative home life, I never asked my parents or grandparents about their lives."* It is only in

hindsight that Gerald is able to recognise the personal loss that resulted from his desire to distance himself from his family in order to pursue his politics.

Memories thus provide the medium through which actions are given direction and evaluated. They contain traces of the continuing process of social appropriation whereby the self is constructed. By uncovering the processes of social construction that are captured in the memories and reflections of the participants, the emotions, motives, actions, choices and moral judgments that play their part in that construction are revealed.

The location of emotion at the centre of the memory-making process enables us to see how it manifests as an interactive social process that draws its resources from human consciousness, and from the world that surrounds the person (Denzin, 1992). This understanding of how the emotions that manifest in specific contexts are molded and shaped by society signals the importance of including appraisal in our understanding of the memory-making process. Emotions implicate meaning and language because "the capacity to experience genuinely either shame, or guilt, or remorse, hinges on a mastery of a natural language involving cultural knowledge and reasoning conventions" (Coulter, in Crawford et al, 1992, p. 33).

These conventions are evident in the emphasis that all the narratives place on representing the liberation movement in a positive light. This is achieved through constructions of organisational loyalty and accountability and the shaping of the narratives according to this imperative will be expanded upon as we move on to consider the relationship between organisational commitment, memory and aging.

7.2 Constructions of organisational commitment:

The significance of group membership and the extent to which participants feel bound to one another is reflected in their memories of togetherness. These memories are framed in terms of the pride they feel in relation to their involvement as well as the importance of behaving in a collectively responsible manner. The experience of having been part of

the struggle in South Africa has empowered participants to experience their agency at an individual level while at the same time circumventing the feelings of loneliness that often accompany individuals as they take action in the world.

According to Iris Fesenstein: *"I'm very proud of the small role we played. I feel very proud of our comrades, particularly those who suffered and those who died."* Similar sentiment is echoed in Hilda Bernstein's narrative: *"Apartheid imposed its own imperative on our lives. And that was what we did and it gave the most meaning and substance to my life."* This imperative did not come to an end with the liberation of South Africa, as is clearly stated by Shantie Naidoo: *"There is still so much to do. The struggle is by no means over."*

Stories of personal fulfillment through activism strike variations upon a repertoire of socially available narratives that in turn legitimise the community of activists to which participants belong and guarantee its continued existence (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997). The construction of history, as dependent upon time and memory, is thus far more than a contingent, arbitrary construction. Stories are told and retold and they provide the foundation from which individual life narratives can be constructed. The story of an individual life is therefore connected to one or more historically and socially transmitted narratives that serve as prototypes for the development of personal identity (ibid.). This is how communities are formed and maintained and how individuals are recruited into available roles.

However, stories are lived before they are told and individuals often create interpretations that differ from these grand, culturally pre-determining scripts. New interpretations illuminate personal agency and open the way for debate and reevaluation. Deviation from the grand narrative of solidarity amongst activists is represented in a more sedate approach to tackling political issues in the present as well as a more critical attitude towards the movement itself. Amina Cachalia explains how: *"I put the struggle first in every possible way and I would have felt guilty if I wasn't fighting or protesting. There is still work to be done and I take things on. But now that victory has been achieved I want*

to do all the things I couldn't do before. Go on holidays, spend time with my grandchildren, read."

In place of the sense of immediacy in relation to political work that characterised descriptions of activism during the struggle years, some participants identified areas that require active political engagement in the present but did not feel the need to project themselves into those arenas. They tended to adopt an instructive approach, as in the case of Beate Lipman: *"If I was young and idealistic I would work with rural women. I see this sector as the greatest area of struggle today."* This positioning of self as an older person offering political insight towards the idealistic youth represents a departure from the intense agency that is contained within past constructions of self. The use of an instructive voice is also identified as one of the central criteria of narratives (Bruner, 1991) in that the evaluative aspects of stories often convey lessons for a younger generation.

There is also evidence of a shift in the way in which many of the narratives of latter years depict organisations and the actions of leaders. The strong organisational loyalty that was evoked to convey the committed nature of personal relationships in the movement is replaced by a more critical viewpoint. According to Alan Lipman: *"I'm ANC but I'm uncomfortable. I'm very critical. On the other hand there's a kind of residual loyalty that makes me spring to the defense if anybody is critical."* There are also numerous instances when participants explain the political rationale for certain actions but also draw attention to their own personal discomfort in relation to the event. For example, Esme Goldberg describes how: *"When Mandela embraced Clinton I felt I would vomit but I'm not the one hoping for American aid and investment. We can be idealistic and absolute. But not when we're in power."*

This reference to the distinction between mainstream and opposition politics resonates across many of the narratives. According to Ethel de Keyser: *"We've got a much more challenging and a much more complicated task than we had in opposing apartheid. Opposition is very creative and it's simple to be in opposition in that way. And now it's*

much more difficult." This detachment from revolutionary politics has implications for how participants construct themselves as activists, as is evident in Beate Lipman's wry comment: *"We're the 'cosy' older generation that 'did it' in the 50s and 60s and now we've become establishment."*

Understandings of moral predicament and individual agency are thus inextricably connected with constructions of self. The reflection, the appraisal and the choices made take place within sets of social relations, and in the case of the participants of this study, the social institution of the organisation serves an integral role in shaping this construction. The unquestioning organisational loyalty that was ascribed to in the past is replaced by vacillation between criticism and commitment. For example, Wolfie Kodesh takes pride in the knowledge that *"the ANC offices know that they can always call on me"* but also comments on how *"when I think of what some of those people are up to I cringe in my boots."* The use of the pronoun *'those'* indicates his feelings of detachment.

The replacement of cohesive descriptions of relationships in the past with reference to dislocation and uncertainty in the present signifies variance and change across the life trajectory. Evidence of such shifts is contained in Alan Lipman's explanation of how: *"We were in an underground cell together and he's as close as hell. But I can't talk about the subject that's at the forefront of my mind - my disillusionment with the Soviet Union. It hangs like a bloody great lead ball between us."* Some participants attribute this lack of harmony to the difficulties associated with settling back into life in South Africa, as in the case of Ethel de Keyser *"I never felt welcome. I think people in South Africa are nervous about people who came into the country from abroad, whatever their record or their commitment."* There is also evidence of age and race consciousness, as communicated by Johnny Sachs: *"I'd like to be more involved but it seems as though a white male over 65 is not really in a good position even if he's got good pedigrees and I can accept that."*

Despite the articulation of this deviance from the tightly knitted social groups that comprise descriptions of relationships in the movement pre-liberation, there is common

agreement that socialism is the only political dispensation that is able to cater for the needs of all human beings. Krishna Moodaley's prediction: "*The real revolution is still coming. The one that will do away with economic inequality*" echoes across the narratives. This shared conviction that socialism remains the way ahead functions as a link across time and it has remained fundamental to participants' constructions of self throughout their lives. Past involvement in the liberation of South Africa serves to connect the past with the present and socialism represents their hope for the future. In the same way that their activism has created continuity in their lives over time, their commitment to socialism represents a connection between the present and the future (Andrews, 1991).

Our understanding of the construction of activism in relation to the memory-making process has thus far revealed how selves are constructed through memories that reflect the expectations of others. These relations are governed by social rules that enable individuals to move and grow in a world of taken-for-granted common understandings of the way things ought to be. Although that there is no single common interpretation and no homogeneous social world, activism has shaped the lives of participants in particular ways. The construction of gender provides further evidence of the substance of these social conventions and the discussion will now consider the diverse ways in which men and women participants have remembered events in their lives.

7.3 Constructions of gender in the memory-making process:

The narratives do not contain evidence to support the dominant psychological contention that the experience of aging is more difficult for women than it is for men. Typical reasons cited include the tendency of women to live longer and to experience financial hardship in old age and how the narrowly defined scope of their lives, as primarily determined by the degree of their physical attractiveness, impacts negatively on the aging process (Cunningham & Brookbank, 1988; Stokes, 1992).

The location of memories amongst the male and female participants does however

provide an indication of how women and men situate themselves differently within the social sphere. There is a tendency amongst the women participants to locate the meaning of their activism inside the home whereas the men appear to be more invested in its meaning in the external domain. The narratives of the women are filled with stories about their activism in relation to the home environment. For example, Hilda Bernstein explains how: *"Our children suffered a great deal because of the fact that within our home there was one kind of moral code and as soon as they stepped outside the front gate there was a different one."*

While the theme of responsibility cuts across all the narratives in that the men and women share a concern for injustices in the social and political spheres, their constructions of responsibility in the domestic sphere differ. According to Denis Goldberg: *"How do you divide your time between your political commitment and your family? How do you say to someone who's been thrown out of a squatter settlement or whose house has been broken down or raided – 'No, I can't come this weekend. I'll come next weekend.' By next weekend they won't be there."*

This location of personal responsibility in the external world is common across the narratives of the male participants and it contrasts sharply with how women rooted their responsibility in the home. The memories of women tend to focus on the implications of their activism for family life, as in the case of Francis Losman: *"You had to take a decision. And I decided that I could not sacrifice my family"* as well as the ways in which their own lives unraveled in relation to constructions of activism on behalf of their spouses. According to Rica Hodgson: *"My husband was a hard-liner. There were no grey areas. He was only ever engaged in his political work and I don't think he ever earned more than R1000 per month – ever. We never owned anything. In principle, he refused to purchase a house."*

The narratives of the women are filled with reflections on how their spouses inspired their own activism and directed many of the choices that they made in their personal lives. Their focus on the internal dynamics of family life provides an intimate

perspective on some of the tensions that resulted from the penetration of activism in their daily lives. According to Esme Goldberg: *"I was pregnant and they thought I was going to lose the baby. I was sent to bed and I vomited and vomited and vomited. And Denis went from meeting to meeting to meeting. It was as important to him."* The interdependency that women experience in relation to loved ones is further captured in Iris Fesenstein's description of the impact of the death of her husband on her life: *"You hear of people saying that when somebody dies it's like losing a limb. Well it really is. It's now nine years since he died and I still feel that a part of me is not with me anymore."*

Whereas women tend to locate themselves inside the substance of their memories and to grapple with the meaning of their inter-personal relationships, men tend to position themselves at a distance from the events and emotions that have shaped their lives. The narratives of the male participants are framed in a wider context and take the form of individuals providing a factual commentary on events in their lives. This is evident in Gerald Goldman's account of the events that preceded his decision to go into exile: *"Of course it was very hard on my wife while I was in prison. When I was released I had decided that I wasn't going to be forced to leave South Africa but when it came to work people wouldn't touch me with a barge-pole and we were being watched and I eventually decided what the bloody hell!"*

This 'inside/ outside' dichotomy contains a wealth of symbolic meaning in that it identifies a set of understandings that are shared by women in our society and not by men, and vice versa. The empowerment that men project over their circumstances signals their feelings of autonomy within the social world. The way in which women shape the meaning of their lives in relation to others is indicative of their feelings of dependency as well as the responsibility that they feel towards those around them (Rowland-Serdar & Schwartz-Shea, 1997).

There are numerous instances when women explain the motives behind the behaviour of others, in particular their spouses, as is evident in Iris Fesenstein's description of her partner's behaviour when he was released from prison: *"It was a lot more difficult than*

he let on. It was as if he was on another planet...He couldn't do anything...He was just somewhere else." The prevalence of women's interpretations of the emotions of men across the narratives may point to their capacity to understand men's emotions. It is possible that they are more aware of men's understandings because they are raised in a social world whose meanings have been shaped by a dominant male order. Although they make choices and construct emotions within a moral realm that is different from the moral realm of men, their location of self within male hegemonic structures may enable them to feel that they understand the rationale behind the actions of men (Crawford et al, 1992).

7.4 In summation:

The examination of the role that is played by memory and emotion in the construction of self amongst elderly activists has revealed the social processes that lie at the heart of this construction. It has shown how the inclusion of socially prescribed emotions within constructions of self demonstrates a commitment to cultural values that are exemplified in particular situations. This acknowledgement of the collective composition of memories that comprise an individual's reflections embraces Mead's (1934) notion that inter-subjectivity precedes subjectivity. It locates the meaning of actions beyond the actor's head and in the common meanings that he or she negotiates with others - both at the time of the episode and in reflection.

The reflexive capacity of self-intervention that enables individuals to recreate themselves is thus intimately connected to the collective re-appraisal of memories (Shotter, in Crawford et al, 1992). The foresight and memory that is required for this self-agency is contained in the memories themselves because they represent the link between specific events in the past and specific events in the present. It is these links that enable individuals to direct their mental activities. Memories thus contain the conditions for individuals to develop themselves into the future and an examination of the memory-making process that participants have been engaged in has enabled us to trace the course of their self-construction.

Constructions of the present in relation to the past have clearly been informed by participants' ongoing and fluid relationship with their activism as well as their commitment to working towards socialism in the future. This projection into the future conveys the notion of individuals whose lives are continually unraveling. It also empowers individuals to experience themselves as having lived meaningful lives and affirms their integrity in old age. The life narratives are therefore not viewed as ends in themselves but as inter-connected, embodied processes that will continue to unfold into the future.

The self is seen as "a 'work in progress' that can be 'revised' as circumstances require" (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997, p. xix). It is through story telling that impressions of a distant event can be translated into a form that enables an immediate grasp of its significance. The meaning of stories in the present is related to the storytellers' connection to the larger stories of the community to which he/she belongs. As a result, the community becomes embodied with a stock of shared memories that are kept alive through stories. The roles that people occupy in stories are not always self-chosen but people can choose to ignore them or to create an alternative representation of events.

Now that the analysis of the narratives has been completed the thesis will move on to draw its central findings together and to comment critically on the value and contribution of the research.

CHAPTER EIGHT: REVIEW AND REFLECTION

The purpose of this closing chapter is to provide a summary of what the key issues that have emerged from the analysis reveal about the subjective experiences of the activists who participated in the study. It will highlight the ways in which these new ideas build on the existing literature, provide fresh insights and indicate points for further exploration. The chapter will also reflect critically on the process of conducting the research in terms of the implications and limitations of the study. It will conclude with a commentary on my own story in relation to those of the participants.

8.1 Overview of the research process and key features of the analysis:

The linear unfolding of an argument that comprises this thesis does not reflect the actual process of conducting the research. Instead, it was a circular process with continual movement between the voices of the participants, the literature and my own evolving understanding. There have also been numerous digressions accompanied by the feeling that the direction has been lost. During these times it was the voices of the participants that illuminated the way forward and clarified the development of the thesis argument. This privileging of the inter-personal space in which the narrative accounts were generated, analysed and written should not discount the role of the researcher. Invested with authorial power, it is my voice as the researcher that ultimately narrated the accounts of the participants for the purpose of developing the thesis argument.

The decision to use a case study approach was based on a desire to generate a comprehensive understanding of the personal meaning of activism in the context of a life story. This understanding revealed how history and culture have shaped a long-term identification with activism as well as the indispensability of self to a coherent story. The connection between past and present is embodied in this agency because it illustrates how events experienced at one time are retained and re-worked at a later time. An examination of how this sense-making process is embedded in culture, history and social

relationships illuminates what is general and what is particular in peoples' understandings of themselves in relation to the past, the present and the future.

The detailed analysis of one narrative signalled unresolved tensions in the process whereby an individual becomes political as well as illuminating what it means to be political. By paying attention to narrative form and content, the analysis revealed how experience is organised and interpreted through spatial metaphors and ways of talking. It showed how the continuity that is created by the location of self in relation to spatial geographies is only fixed for the moment in which it is narrated. This is because the overall narrative plot is determined by the temporal ordering of events that comprise the story line and not by the truth or falsity of the stories themselves. The stories are linked to one another to explain how activism has evolved and changed over time and the cultural context is illuminated through the linear progression of an unfolding life story in relation to activism. These social practices provide a framework through which the motives for taking particular courses of action are explained (Abma, 1999).

The case study also revealed how Blanche experiences herself as an active agent in the world. It illuminated how stories about her evolving politicisation and the meaning of her multiple identities as mother, wife and activist in relation to her harassment from the security force, her imprisonment, her exile and her final return to South Africa have been shaped by an ongoing process of self-reflection. These events are all narrated in light of stringent organisational membership, commitment to the collective as well as to the family, thus illuminating Gergen's (1994) contention that women experience themselves through their connections with significant others. However the experience of dealing with the death of her husband represents a turning point in the narrative and from that point onwards events are narrated from a more self-motivated perspective. While the marital relationship remains a central reference for the narration of self, claims for achievement and recognition are no longer framed only in terms of luck or the generosity of others.

The way in which stories provide vehicles for integration through connecting significant events and relationships in a person's life was therefore clearly evidenced in the case

study. It revealed the symbolic meaning that is conveyed through narrative by extracting meaning from the numerous stories about other people that comprised Blanche's narrative.

By presenting Blanche as an active speaking agent, the case study showed how she offered a fresh interpretation on her activism as she mulled over and evaluated her experiences in the process of telling them. The accumulation of her life events paralleled the downward spiral of the apartheid government and gave her life a resonance beyond the here and now. She presented an interpretation of the aging process that contrasts with conventional perspectives that view older people as less productive members of society. Her adoption of an informative position to comment critically on contemporary work in the movement, and to propose socialism as the way ahead, reflects the value that she placed on her own wealth of experience. It is also indicative of the instructive manner in which older people frequently interact with younger generations and illuminates the way in which individuals use evaluative frameworks to make sense of their lives.

This illustration of self as an active agent engaged in a dialectical process of production in terms of the self and the social world provided the framework for the combined analysis that followed. The analysis thus attempted to consider the notion of selves as active agents in relation to the dominant poststructuralist position that depicts selves as recipients of the powers of discourse whose identities are multiple and floating. It aimed to reveal how selves engage with themselves as products of social interchange and how this embodiment of contextually relevant social and historical processes is manifest in points of difference within and across the narratives. This diversity is represented through class, gender, race and ethnicity in the context of the legacy of apartheid and the liberation movement. The diverse ways in which these differences permeated the lives of participants prevented the development of a singular collective narrative of activism. As a result the combined analysis is shaped by a focus that shifts continually between the narratives of individual social actors and the identification of patterns of events and descriptions across the narratives as a whole. Despite this absence of total narratives, there are clusters of common experience that can be identified across the narratives and

they will comprise the focus of the discussion that follows.

8.1.1 Process of radicalisation:

Following the approach adopted by Andrews (1991), the analysis commenced with a consideration of how the participants understood the process whereby they became politicised. It embraced an active perspective of self to show how diverse and common constructions of activism amongst the 21 participants are dependent upon their individual interpretations of how race and class have intersected with relationships in the family and the community, with religious practices, literature and educational settings.

All the participants became politically aware from an early age and there are two patterns within the process of radicalisation that can be identified. Participants either located their politicalisation within the politically charged households that they were raised in or they identified factors beyond the home in the form of education, literature and social relationships. Participants who regarded the family structure as significant interpreted their fully-fledged commitment as symbolic of their transition to adulthood, thus reinforcing Bruner's (1991) contention that narratives indicate the cultural toolkits that are employed by people to make sense of their lives. The permeation of activism in the vocational trajectories of all the participants who were raised in politically active households also confirms Poole and Langan-Fox's (1997) observation that the home is significant in achieving occupational socialisation.

This connection between activism and adulthood was also present in the accounts of participants who had not been exposed to the activism of family members. They identified tertiary education as a stepping-stone to their political immersion, signalling independent thought and increased control over their lives. The impact of apartheid legislation also featured in these accounts in that the relationship between racial identity and educational opportunity was also noted. Although they did not seek formal employment in the political sphere, their activism intersected with their careers and prevented the unravelling of conventional and linear vocational trajectories.

8.1.2 Organisational membership:

Regardless of the nature of participants' initial exposure to politics, they all perceived the growth and intensification of their activism as directly related to their involvement in political organisations. Their organisational membership has provided a framework to understand the world as well as the opportunity to act in accordance with that belief system. It has also exerted an influence on how they have structured their stories about their lives.

The life of an activist was presented as highly demanding and the fulfillment of broadening obligations required rigorous self-management. The strength to struggle and manage the self in the face of numerous obstacles was derived primarily from the solidarity of the group experience. Their political work bound them to one another and this shared commitment paved the way for intimate connections that further intensified the strength of the collective. This profound sense of integration with organisations has sustained them throughout their lives and it is only in later years that there is evidence of ambivalent emotions. While the emergence of critical voices five years post-liberation signals a changing political and social landscape, the continuity of their organisational commitment remains intact in that, when pushed, it is their loyalty that prevails.

8.1.3 Gender consciousness:

Despite the absence of feminism in the ranks of the liberation movement, the accounts contain numerous references to the importance that was placed on gender equality within personal relationships. This awareness of the gendered organisation of social institutions such as marriage and family did not extend into the organisation of gender relations in the movement. It was therefore the gendered implications of family life, and not the gendered implications of functioning as an activist, that pervaded the narratives.

The recognition that activism is an important goal for women did not significantly alter the story lines that are popularly adopted by women to live their lives (Aisenberg &

gender id X activism

Harrington, 1988; de la Rey, 1999). The onset of family life signalled the multiple positioning of activists, wives and mothers in such a way that marriage and motherhood were advocated as the fitting goals for women and their activism was shaped accordingly. The narratives of the unfolding of women participants' lives in relation to their activism were interspersed with inter-connected stories of husbands and children, thus reinforcing Gergen's (1997a) observation that women evaluate their performance beyond the home in relation to their emotional ties within the home. This is further evident in the way in which women primarily located the unfolding of life events inside their homes whereas men tended to locate their memories outside the home (Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault & Benton, 1992; Rowland-Serdar & Schwartz-Shea, 1997).

These two story lines - women actively making their mark on the world and women as dependent, caring wives and mothers - coexisted in the narratives and were manifest in the tension and ambivalence that resulted from performing multiple tasks. In particular, there was evidence of how the emotional discomfort that was evoked from the experience of maternal ambivalence was the outcome of inhabiting a culture that shies away from the very existence of something that it has helped to produce (Parker, 1997).

These tensions are further illustrated in the way in which the narratives draw a distinction between being a wife and having a wife. While having a wife was uniformly portrayed as enabling performance in the world of activism, depictions of being a wife were filled with ambivalence and contradictions (de la Rey, 1999). Motherhood was consistently presented as difficult, particularly during periods of police harassment and imprisonment, and even in situations where men participated more actively in child rearing, the degree of their involvement was limited.

It thus became clear in the unfolding of the narratives how differential gender roles and expectations in relation to career, marriage and parenthood are endorsed and maintained by the continuation of long-standing traditions, social conventions and structural arrangements (ibid.).

Women participants engaged extensively with the meaning of their multiple roles and adopted a variety of interpretations to make sense of the tensions that arose from pursuing their activism and sustaining their investment in family life. These responses included rendering the situation as natural and consistent with an essential self, being ingrained with good fortune and advocating moral tales of how success in both domains was dependent upon hard work and sacrifice.

This contradiction between individualistic constructions and gender consciousness within the narratives of many of the women participants indicates a dominant construction that gender had little relevance to personal success (de la Rey, 1999). There was a tendency to take up women's issues only in relation to feeling at ease with oneself as a woman. The narratives of the women who did claim feminism as self-relevant were seen as embedded within the context of their encounters with feminist ideas that were generated abroad. The extent to which they embraced feminism as a personally meaningful framework thus reflected the spatial politics and race differences that have fragmented feminism in South Africa (ibid.). The narratives therefore illuminated how wider debates of differences in feminism have meaning at the level of personal life history.

8.1.4 Activism, repression and exile:

The analysis then moved on to explore how participants' constructed their activism in light of the escalating repression of the apartheid government that ultimately led to their exile. Micro-narratives of banning, house arrest and detention did not however deviate from the overall progressive flow of the narratives. Instead, they intensified the momentum of resistance in that the stories were filled with anecdotes about how activists continued to engage in political work despite these restrictions. The agency that was embedded within the flow of resistance that channelled their lives forward was also sustained in exile. Decisions to leave were based on the belief that their activism would be more effective outside the country and accounts of expatriation continued to embrace organisationally bounded selves whose personal growth and direction were crucially linked to the movement. Apart from one individual who expressed resistance to

responding to the dictates of the movement by leaving South Africa without permission, all the participants narrated their departures in light of the movement's endorsement.

The relocation of self into a foreign culture and environment generated profound personal reflection and the emotive intensity with which participants engaged in all things South African transferred itself into anti-apartheid political activity in their country of exile. The establishment of South African political organisations in exile thus became responsible for adopting and sustaining the content and application of their identity as exiles (Israel, 1999).

Constructions of activism in exile used organisational membership as a springboard to illustrate how unity amongst exiles, as well as the support that they found amongst locals, served to generate feelings of pride in their connection to a grand and heroic movement. The hardships and loneliness of exile were further mediated by continual contact with new exiles. This contact kept them abreast with the progress of the liberation movement inside South Africa and prevented them from becoming a static community of aging individuals living on the memories of the past (Bernstein, 1994).

The identity of exile thus represented activists' political loyalty to South Africa and confirmed that they were not at home in their country of exile. This legitimated their resistance to settle and created a space in which they could grapple with the ambivalence of exile and the rebuilding of meaningful lives.

8.1.5 Activism post-liberation:

One of the central points that cut across all the narratives is the way in which participants constructed their activism in relation to the victory of the liberation movement. The event was represented as a significant 'turning inwards' in that the capitulation of the apartheid government meant a fundamental change in their identities as political activists and exiles. The possibility of returning home required them to engage with the reality of a dream that had been all the more sweet because of its remoteness (ibid.). Constructions of

self in relation to this dilemma between the desire to return and the difficulties involved in assimilating back into South African life revealed the ambivalence and irreparable damage of exile.

Whether they chose to return to South Africa or to remain in exile, all the participants remained engaged in their activism. However the nature of their work represented a transition from involvement in the politics of resistance to creating a political agenda that meaningfully reflected their newly found position of power. Constructions of self at this point in the narratives were generally less invested in the collective with a concern that individual interests should take more prominence now that liberation had been achieved. In addition, a more critical view on organisations was adopted along with the concern that socialism had not been realised.

The opening of a space to reflect critically on the movement and the involvement of self therein was not represented in terms of a diminished commitment to activism. The continued allegiance to the socialist principles that lay at the heart of constructions of activism in all the narratives remained a fundamental expression of self in the present, past, and future. It has functioned as a link across time as it has informed the way participants have come to live their lives and the sense of purpose and meaning that they have derived from this political orientation has sustained them throughout their lives (Andrews, 1991).

The South African political landscape has provided the impetus for their activism and there can be no doubt that participation in the politics of liberation has channeled this consciousness into all facets of their lives. It is this self-knowledge that functions to connect the past to the present and having developed a broad understanding of the construction of activism through the life trajectory, the analysis moved on to consider the relationship between constructions of activism and the memory-making process.

8.1.6 Agency and self-reflection throughout the life trajectory:

The connections between activism, memory and aging in the context of life narrative have highlighted the ability of individuals to make a difference through mastering skills that enable them to operate effectively in the world. Each narrative is told from the perspective of the end of the story, and through a process of reflection to the beginning, each participant was able to capture how he/she remembered and ultimately made sense of what happened. Andrews (2000) provides a succinct description of this process in her claim that "representations of the past which emerge in the present are precisely that, representations, with the stamp of the present upon them" (p. 181).

The regenerative and creative way in which all the participants have continuously reshaped their lives stands in contrast to the pre-scripted narratives of aging that are well in place in western society. Resistance to the social construction of aging as a process of gradual decline represented later life as an opportunity for growth and achievement. The memory-making process thus took the form of life stories that illuminated the ways in which participants have come to understand their lives as activists. The social processes that lie at the heart of these self-constructions were revealed through eliciting memories of activism in relation to work and leisure, danger and security, happiness, anger and fear.

The self-reflection that is integral to this process is manifest in narratives that continually fold in on themselves, thus affirming the sense of agency that participants attach to their lives. Their training in self-responsibility made them remarkably self-reliant and even their memories of fear and danger were framed in terms of their ability to handle such situations. These individual senses of power were shared and collectivised in order to effect political change. The forward momentum of history, as fueled by the struggle for liberation, reinforced the intensity of their collaboration. The prevalence of change throughout their lives required participants to continually construct new identities that were compatible with their changing scenarios.

Of particular note across all the narratives is the emphasis that was placed on representing

the liberation movement in a positive light and ensuring that its history is appropriately captured in the present. This awareness of how the perpetuation of a communal tradition is dependent on stories that socialise people into accepted ways of thinking is a key feature of narrative research. Attempts to make experience intelligible to the self are thus guided and constrained by culture. The memories that are preserved in narratives establish consensus by conveying particular values and behaviour patterns which in turn become the canonical symbols through which people interpret, negotiate and create their world (Hinchman & Hinchman, 1997). The narratives have been shaped by a wider memory making process in that South Africa as a nation has been engaged in a process of coming to terms with the past.

Memories thus contain evidence of the ongoing process of social construction whereby selves are constructed and cultures are transmitted. They provide the medium through which actions are given direction and evaluated and the uncovering of these social processes reveals the emotions, motives, actions, choices and moral judgments that play their part in that construction. The fact that many of the participants were involved in writing their memoirs at the time that they participated in the study is also significant. The memoir-writing process requires active reflection on one's life and illuminates the inter-personal manner in which selves interact with past experiences. The narratives contain numerous references to how memoir-writing involves entering into conversations with one's memories, and how by engaging with them and responding to them in relation to the meaning of one's life in the present, people construct both themselves and their social worlds (Crawford, Kippax, Onyx, Gault & Benton, 1992).

Reflection is thus at the heart of memory-work and without continual reflection the narratives would not have unfolded in the manner in which they did. The stories that participants told about themselves and their pasts were thus shaped by their construction of themselves in the present. The inclusion of some memories as components of their constructed past, and the exclusion of others, presents the past as a product of the present (Andrews, 2000).

Although reflection is experienced as an individual process, memory-work alerts us to the social world that is inherent to the individual. It shows how the meaning that is attached to actions is not found in the actor's head but in the common meanings that he/she negotiates with others - both at the time of the episode and in reflection. An understanding of the ways which individuals collectively re-appraise their memories of events locates agency within psychology without falling into psychological individualism. The reflexive powers of self-intervention enable selves to recreate themselves and it is memories that contain the conditions for this development (Shotter, 1990).

Understandings of individual agency are thus inextricably connected with constructions of self. The reflection, the appraisal and the choices made take place within sets of social relations and, in the case of the participants of this study, the social institution of the liberation movement has made an integral contribution towards shaping this construction. The unraveling of self-development in relation to the collective has been illustrated in an ongoing negotiation between selves and organisational politics. As political objectives became realised, the notion of intensely involved, immersed selves located at the heart of the movement was gradually replaced by more critical and less engaged selves who took an instructive voice towards a younger generation of activists.

The experience of liberation coincided with the experience of aging, and while constructions of self remained integrally shaped by activism during this time, there are numerous instances when participants reflected on their desire to live a more balanced life in their latter years. They did not frame these constructions in terms of reduced engagement with their worlds but in terms of a desire to attend to personal needs that had been sacrificed in relation to their all-consuming political involvement in the past.

Concerns for self may also be linked to loosened personal connections in that the uniformity that characterised descriptions of relationships in the movement was replaced by reference to dislocation and uncertainty. Nonetheless, the intensity of these past connections permeated the present through a shared conviction that socialism remains the

only political dispensation that is able to meet the needs of human beings. This conviction provides a future orientation for these relationships and does not restrict them to the reservoirs of history. It also points to the way in which a future perspective can determine the meaning that is attached to life in the present (Freeman, 2000). The victory for socialism that is envisioned across all the narratives serves to cast the activism that has shaped participants' lives, both past and present, in a purposeful light.

8.1.7 Feelings of pride:

The social prescription of emotions is demonstrated in the emotional intensity with which participants engaged with their commitment to socialism and is further representative of the cultural values that are exemplified in particular situations and episodes. The proud note on which participants concluded their narratives reflects the emotional satisfaction that they derived from their activism. The identification with activism and their devotion to the struggle throughout their lives has provided participants with a sense of dignity and self-respect.

The pride that is manifest through the constancy of their memories and staunch adherence to their particular way of remembering the past is reinforced in recently published literature including autobiographies, diaries and political commentaries. The kinds of stories people tell are brought into being within particular power relations (Middleton, 1993) and the celebration of activism in the context of the liberation struggle in South Africa provides a key vehicle through which participants are able to maintain a meaningful grip on the past.

Having identified the key features of narratives that have been revealed by the analysis, the discussion will now move on to consider how the study builds on existing knowledge and theory.

8.2 Implications, contributions and limitations:

8.2.1 Political activism:

Previous work in the field of activism has placed strong emphasis on the socialisation perspective. Along with all life-span development theories, it tends to focus on early development, particularly the political socialisation and development of adolescents (e.g. Keniston, 1968; Rothman & Lichter, 1982; Branguart & Branguart, 1990). Interest in this area was initially sparked in the United States in the 1960s by adolescents' involvement in national political concerns such as the Vietnam War and the civil rights movement.

Andrew's (1991) study represents a departure from these 'generational' studies of politically active people. By adopting a life history perspective, she extends the limited focus on particular periods in the lives of political activists to include their entire lives. As my reading of Andrew's book *Lifetimes of Commitment: Aging, politics, psychology* created the initial impetus behind my own research, I would like to offer some commentary on how the study relates to her work.

In broad terms the study shares Andrew's story of a group of socialist activists who have dedicated their lives to working towards progressive social change. It also focuses on the intersection of politics and social psychology and incorporates Andrew's central question "does growing up (old) necessarily mean growing out of our ideals?" (p. 206). The study confirms Andrew's conclusion that the development of complex political understandings in response to wider political and social change sustains a commitment to socialism, which in turn generates a sense of purpose and meaning in the lives of activists. By placing value on the wealth of experience that elderly people possess, the study has also responded positively to Andrew's challenge that we regard our elderly citizens not as a social problem but as a vital resource.

The theoretical positioning on which this study rests builds on the critique that Andrews

levels at the tendency of social and political psychology to focus exclusively on intra-individual psychological processes while neglecting the historical and cultural processes that influence their production. It builds on Andrews' perspective that this limitation can be addressed by focusing on the meaning that activists attach to their own lives by locating itself within the 'linguistic turn' in the social sciences and exploring how selves are constructed through the story-telling process. By highlighting agency and self-reflexivity in the narrative constructions of activism, the study attempts to show how humans with agency actively negotiate the multiple meanings that comprise their life situations.

The study focuses on how people create meaning in their lives through the activity of narration (Bruner, 1991) and how narratives of activism represent personal identities through presenting an inner reality to the outside world while at the same time constructing the personality and reality of the narrator (Denzin, 2000). By revealing how narrators act in relation to the characters that they embody in their stories, the study highlights the transience of their constructions. This emphasis on the temporal sheds light on what is concealing, enabling and constraining in the activists' continual reshaping of their lives.

This ability to show what is consistent and contradictory in the construction of activism is dependent upon an appreciation for how people select aspects of their past that lend congruity to their present and future selves. The emphasis that is placed on the study of experience through representation means that critical differences between accounts are not determined by their content but by the narrators' interpretations of them.

By tracing the interconnections between memory, aging, activism and culture in the context of life narratives, the study is able to show how discontinuities between past and present are consciously and unconsciously present in the constructions of self. The narrative identity that is located at the core of the story telling process is viewed as a social construction, thus highlighting the link between accounts of activism and the wider historical context.

The inclusion of history, culture and subjectivity in a study that falls within the ambit of political psychology represents a valuable contribution to the discipline. The emphasis on rationality and behavior that is seen to deviate from it within political psychology has a misleading standard that negates the development of a full picture of how people think and act (Jervis, 1989). Formulations of rationality disregard the content of political beliefs and how they change yet these are among the questions that most concern political psychology. The study has clearly shown how the drive to generalise and understand the cognitive dynamics that inform behaviour overlooks individual differences and the patterns that exist within individuals.

8.2.2 Exiles and émigrés:

Apart from Bernstein (1994) and Israel's (1999) work on the experience of exile amongst South Africans in the United Kingdom, almost no attention has been directed at the construction and articulation of South African exile from any academic discipline. In particular, this study makes a contribution towards understanding the experiences of those political activists who sustained the anti-apartheid struggle throughout their years in exile yet chose to remain abroad despite the option of return.

The study has shown how the initial departure from South Africa and the demands of settling into a foreign environment placed considerable strain on activists. It forced them to establish, for themselves as well as for other people, exactly who they were and what they were doing in the exile country. The construction of an exile identity created the opportunity to regroup and fight on and it mediated the ambivalence and displacement of exile.

The study has also revealed that the identity of exile was not homogeneous amongst all the participants. Some attached a claustrophobic feeling to the identity and made a point of extending their social connections beyond South Africans. Some desired to distance themselves from the apartheid regime and embraced the ambivalence of exile by feeling that they were neither South African nor British and others maintained that they had

integrated into British society. Regardless of their specific orientation to exile, all the participants rallied around the political cause for a liberated South Africa and contributed towards building organisations that would advance this end.

The diverse constructions of exile that exist across the narrative accounts show how exile is not a natural category of experience. At particular historical moments a group of displaced South Africans invented and maintained an image of exile that legitimated their decisions to leave and to continue working towards liberation from outside the country (Israel, 1999). The announcement of the apartheid regime on 2 February 1990 that it intended to undertake fundamental political reforms, and the release of Nelson Mandela nine days later, thus represented a defining moment for the exiles. Up until that point the remoteness of the possibility of returning to South Africa made the longing for it clear and unconditional.

For those who decided to return and reclaim the country that they had fought for, it was not simply a return but a re-migration. It meant leaving friends and family behind again, including children. Those who stayed felt that their exile had never ended and some expressed difficulty in coming to terms with the realisation that their lives would end far away from their country of birth. Some identified ill health and old age as obstacles to their return and others, particularly women, felt that the death of a spouse had dampened their desire to return. Regardless of their reasons for remaining abroad, they all visited South Africa frequently and felt a strong connection to their home country.

8.2.3 Psychology of justice:

Although psychological perspectives on justice have not been included as an area of investigation in the study, its relevance calls for brief comment. There are several longstanding themes about justice that have been debated in the literature without reaching much clarity, most notably the justice motive (e.g. Appelgryn, 1992; Lerner, 1980, 1981), the principle of equality (e.g. Greenberg & Cohen, 1982) and processes of procedural and distributive justice (e.g. Deutsch, 1985; Lerner, 1980; Mikula, 1980;

Schokkaert, 1992; Tornblom, 1992). The predominant approach within psychology has been to view human assessments of justice in relation to natural laws of justice as initially posited by Kant and Locke, and much later in the work of Rawls (1971). This emphasis on rational principles of justice privileges the rational capacity of human subjectivity to engage with abstract, disembodied concepts of reason (Flax, 1993).

The application of this perspective to how assessments of injustice are played out in the political sphere is evident in Barry's (1989) contention that there are two approaches to the question of justice as motivation. On the one hand, the classic self-interest approach understands action in terms of the advantage that accrues to the individual from behaving in a just manner. On the other hand, impartial injustice assumes that human behaviour can be defended in its own right and does not rest on personal advantage.

Working from Barry's perspective, a strong case can be made for acting according to one's belief in the justness of a cause as a primary motivation. While it is unlikely that the immense efforts that are required to drive large scale political movements could be generated without a strong belief in the cause itself, the justice motive does not sufficiently explain how the perception of an injustice can also result in silence or unquestioning loyalty to the perpetrator of the injustice (Jennings, 1991).

Some theorists have argued that a key psychological factor in generating social unrest is a sense of relative deprivation (e.g. Crosby, 1976; Davis, 1959; Gurr, 1970; Runciman, 1966). The degree of deprivation is positively related to the intensity of the political protest. The role of social comparison is fundamental to this perspective in that it assumes that people, as either individuals or members of a group, experience relative deprivation because they compare their conditions with those of others. These assessments are based on principles of proportionality and equality whereby people should either be rewarded according to how much they contribute or need, or the notion that all individuals deserve the same allocations, regardless of their contributions or needs. The experience of the participants in this study stand in contrast to this perspective as the majority were not members of the most deprived group under the

apartheid system, yet they became active in the resistance movement.

The notion that personal and group deprivation cannot solely account for the vast numbers of people who become motivated by a sense of injustice throughout the world was the rationale behind Crosby and Gonzales-Inthal's extension of relative deprivation theory (in Jennings, 1991). They shifted the attention from an explicit focus on individuals and their group memberships to that of other individuals and groups, thereby introducing a third-party perspective. This additional category comprises the resentment that is generated from acknowledging the deprivation that is experienced by another person or group. It is conceptually radical because it deals with felt injustices about another groups' undeserved deprivations and goes some way to explaining why members of privileged groups help fuel social and political movements.

Despite their expansion of relative deprivation theory, Crosby and Gonzales-Inthal still adhere to the notion that felt injustices are determined by universal standards of proportionality and equality. Their concern with procedures whereby justice is measured and accomplished differentiates the rules of justice from the actual outcomes and is in keeping with the rationalist perspective that dominates psychological theories of justice. In effect, this means that just rules could produce an unjust outcome or a just outcome could be achieved even if the procedures employed are unjust (Sampson, 1983).

The notion of justice as a condition that exists separately from the processes involved in its production overlooks the way in which social understandings of justice become self-understandings and it is in this regard that the study makes a valuable contribution. It has illustrated how the sense of justice that has driven participants' activism, as shaped by the South African liberation movement, has filtered into other situations where injustices are perceived. By illustrating how a sense of injustice is translated into political action through people living conscious lives, the study represents a shift away from universal notions of justice. It also illuminates how justice is intimately linked with power and how the constitution and analysis of subjectivity must be located within wider contexts of social relations in order to reveal how these relations, for example, race and gender, are

structured by and through domination.

The narratives reveal how participants derived their sense of justice at an early age not least because they were all to some extent conscious of their own marginalisation as Jews, immigrants and blacks but also because they were marginalised in a classic Marxist sense. Theorists following the tradition of Marx (e.g. Herring, 1987; Wolfe, 1977) suggest that political alienation exists when political institutions extract power from citizens and subsequently re-impose that power in the form of decisions and policies which have harmful effects on those from whom the power was originally derived. For them, political alienation is an objective condition that exists when political institutions do not serve the interests of the governed.

This understanding of justice in relation to the structures that generate human activity, along with the acknowledgement that structures only exist through activity, illuminates the inter-subjective nature of justice. In this instance it is justice via socialism that remains paramount for participants. The study is not about searching for justice as the realisation of some intrinsic property of human cognitive structure but rather as a process whereby people collectively assess the legitimacy of their lives and act accordingly.

Justice is rooted in subjectivity because assessments of justice implicitly and explicitly assume and generate assumptions about peoples' identities and the reasons why they live together (Sampson, 1983). Differences are never perceived as equal or attributed the same political consideration, as was clearly illustrated in the various constructions of gender consciousness across the narratives. Approaching these differences with essentialist claims about human nature would prevent us from determining which differences should be respected within particular political arrangements.

The study of life narratives reveals how justice is the outcome of a set of interrelated practices through which peoples' goals and purposes continually change. The narratives have shown how engagement in just practices has created modes of relatedness with others that harnesses peoples' creativity and sense of purpose. The perception of justice

as an ongoing process, rather than a fixed set of procedures or a universal standard to which we must confirm, illuminates how justice is of this world. "Its existence is dependent upon our fragile, unstable, embodied and heterogeneous selves" (Flax, 1993, p. 128).

8.2.4 Life history, aging and memory:

The value of life history amongst the elderly is that it is responsive to the need for life review. This is evident in the nature of the narratives. The remembering, repeating and working through of events took on both a conversational and therapeutic form, thus highlighting life history as a vehicle through which people are able to explain change and as a resource to assist them with the challenges to identity that are associated with later life. It also provides younger people with the opportunity to engage meaningfully with history. Social changes and events become more than mere dates, thus creating a deeper connection to the past and a sense of continuity between the present and the cultural heritage that is embedded in the past. It also provides a unique opportunity for younger people to envision their own destinies and to overcome the alienating perspective that treats old age as something that happens to a disparate segment of the population as opposed to us all (Myerhoff & Tufe, 1992).

Life history also reveals how individuals who belong to a generation that is acutely self-conscious become active participants in their own history and provide their own clear definitions of themselves and explanations for their destiny, past and future. This distinctive state of consciousness is evident in the personal and collective concerns that comprise the narratives of the study. The participants are represented as conscious actors in a historical drama that they have scripted with the purpose of bearing what Hareven calls "generational memories" (ibid. p. 232).

They are heirs to a set of memories of a culture and a society and they are acutely aware that no one after them will have direct experience of this aspect of the past. This cohort consciousness is illuminated in life narratives that are invested in creating

intergenerational continuity through the reflexive construction of memories. It could also explain why the most obvious genre in display in the narratives is the heroic activist, a largely western, twentieth century form of autobiography that charts the process of coming to terms with an activist identity (Squire, 2000b).

8.2.5 Memory and history:

At a time when there is so much debate amongst South Africans as to whether the past should be forgotten or uncovered, it is relevant to conduct a study that investigates the way in which memory is negotiated. Although the central focus of this study has not been to define or theorise memory, it has made some contribution towards the ongoing debate about how memory is created and inscribed. It has addressed questions relating to how memories are produced and how it happens that certain versions of the past are privileged over others.

The analysis of the life narratives has clearly shown how the social world is both reflected in and reproduced by the interpretive realities that are located in participants' memories. In choosing to focus on the reflections of individuals who have been actively involved in the liberation movement, this study has privileged their particular interpretation of South African history.

8.2.6 Feminism:

While this study did not set out to specifically locate itself within a feminist paradigm, the issues relating to gender that have arisen can be viewed in terms of their contribution towards feminism. The inclusion of challenges to patriarchy and oppressive gender relations will hopefully incite women to reflect critically on their histories as well as their futures. Although the study has primarily focused on the experiences of the women participants in relation to feminism it also sheds some light on constructions of feminism amongst the male participants. It points to the value of exploring the implications of women's empowerment for men as the personal and political choices that women make

will require changes in men's lives and in the structures which define our social world.

8.2.7 Narrative method:

Working from the assumption that there is no single method within narrative research, the study has chosen to mix methods for the purpose of generating the richest possible representation of data. While the case study facilitated the representation of self in all its complexities, the general analysis signalled continuity and discontinuity between the narratives of individual social actors and the patterns of events and descriptions across the narratives as a whole. The case study laid a valuable foundation for the combined analysis as it highlighted the processes whereby selves construct, position and negotiate themselves in their environments. The inclusion of the case study also maintained the connection between self and narrative that frequently becomes lost within investigations that rely solely on a general analysis. Both methodologies embraced the central tenet of narrative research in their development of contextualised interpretations of human experience. This study has therefore attempted to illuminate the value of combining methodologies in the interests of advancing meaningful interpretations of subjectivity.

8.2.8 Agency and the social:

The study uses the 'language revolution' in the social sciences as the impetus behind its illustration of how the personal and social meaning that people attach to their lives is shaped by an interpretive process that involves self-reflective individuals symbolically interacting with one another. The aim of narrative research is widely acknowledged as the interpretation of experience as story-shaped (Bruner, 1990; Personal Narratives Group, 1989; Reid, 1992; Squire, 2000a) and the study has fulfilled this aim in offering an interpretation of the life experiences of the participants. It has been theoretically located within a poststructuralist framework that views experience as contextually and linguistically defined.

This shift away from universalistic tendencies opens up numerous epistemological and

methodological challenges relating to the implications of abandoning the self as an autonomous and unitary being and what it means to contextualise research. The study has tackled these challenges by proposing that selves are both producers of subjectivity and textual products. By incorporating reflexivity within the research design, it has shown how an understanding of self and others requires an understanding of personal history. This understanding of how people have come to be who they are reveals the historical circumstances that have shaped their lives. Individual biographies are therefore seen as necessary to render historical action in context fully intelligible (Chamberlayne, Bornat & Wengraf, 2000).

The accounts that people narrate about their lives are seen as learned from others as well as from the popular culture that forms the basis of future behaviour. The language they use to describe their experience thus represents the social activity through which they have adapted to others and modified their environment in order to survive. It is through this activity that social groups become organised in methods of production and communication and the separation of language from this activity denies human agency and relegates people to vehicles of expression (Burkitt, 1991).

The process of narrative construction thus reveals how humans with agency actively negotiate the meanings that are brought to their life situations. From a poststructuralist viewpoint, these narratives, as well as the subjects that inhabit them, are temporal constructions that create the realities that they describe. They construct particular interpretations of their experiences that are derived from the relations, processes and dynamics that operate between selves, discourses and structures. However, selves do not experience themselves as fluid entities responding to the powers of discourse. Their stories are lived before they are told and they therefore regard themselves as fixed entities, with agency to act according to their own will.

The use of an individual case study approach served to highlight the particularity of this interpretive process and the differences between and within the narratives that were identified in the general analysis served to represent the participants as active,

interpreting agents. This acknowledgement of the agency of selves in relation to the poststructuralist emphasis on contextually mediated experience has directed the theory towards mapping and understanding how sense-making processes are constrained by the positioning of selves in relation to race, gender, class, ethnicity and history.

Attempts to denote difference and commonality within the analysis of the narratives have therefore grappled with a tension between the specific and the general. According to Riessman (1993) this tension is typical of narrative studies. Attention to the specific has involved a representation of the participants as individual persons who are engaged in a process of interpretation. The notion of the self as a multiple, contradictory and changing entity has been illuminated by identifying internal contradictions in the process whereby participants negotiated the experience of their activism in unique and different ways. This points to the value of theoretical claims that are sensitive towards the dynamic and complex transactions that endlessly occur between selves, discourses and structures. Despite this dynamism, it is clear within the analysis that, in line with a western conception of selfhood, selves experience themselves as continuous, rational and fixed entities. The narratives were marked by stories of change in which the change was constructed as the logical outcome of a development trajectory.

The analysis also attempted to show how the narratives reflect what is contextually general by pointing to connections across narratives. It has engaged the tension between the general and the specific by adopting a view of narrative as a social process that is historically and culturally situated. Thus, the meanings and selves portrayed in the narratives were examined in relation to the historical and social circumstances of South African society. By revealing how the lives of individuals are embedded in and shaped by apartheid, the value of viewing the present through the lens of the past is affirmed. The events of the past were shown to play a significant role in how the participants constructed their life trajectories and how they currently understand their own location and their relationships with others.

The theoretical interpretations that have shaped the analysis have therefore produced a

complex representation of the subjective experiences of the participants. This diversity is evident in the multiple and context specific ways in which participants have interpreted their activism in relation to positions of gender, race, class and ethnicity. The view of activism as a dynamic and fluid process points to the limitations of essentialist understandings of what it means to be an activist. In contrast to political psychology's reduction of the political realm and elevation of the psychological domain, a view of activism as an enduring, lifetime experience has been advocated.

The adoption of a theoretical framework that regards selves as actively making sense of the world within a context and set of social constructions indicates the interconnectedness of their subjective experiences. The capacity of the narrative approach to illuminate the tensions and ambiguities that are inherent to these interconnections reveals the fluidity of subjectivity as well as how the telling of experiences is framed in cultural understandings. These social and historical understandings are frequently represented in natural categories that impart an experience of the self as unitary and fixed over time. While life narratives enable selves to construct themselves as stable entities that change over time only in response to logical events and experiences, the analysis has shown how they are also engaged in an ongoing process of change and adjustment to new structures, relationships and discourses.

8.2.9 Limitations of the study:

The study has made no attempt to reach any generalisable conclusions. The complex realities of people's lives have not been investigated for their own sakes but have been pursued in order to understand the relations that operate to construct accounts of activism. While a sample that is more reflective of the racial composition of the liberation movement may have provided the opportunity for a more detailed exploration of these relations, the important task has been to work meaningfully with the group of participants that emerged from the snowball sampling process. As such, the aim has been to focus on questions of theory and process and to interpret the narratives in an accountable and reflexive manner.

In its attempts to develop a conceptual framework that incorporates a meaningful connection between activism, memory and aging in the context of life narratives, the study has not explored each dimension to its fullest. While there can be no doubt that the depth and complexity of each warrants a study in and of itself, it is hoped that any theoretical shortcomings will be viewed in the light of building an overall framework of understanding that meets with the objectives of this particular study.

The continual movement between the polarities of individual and social realms that have informed the theoretical mindset of this study, and the ultimate settling in the dualism that they both inhabit, represents a theoretical dilemma that this thesis has not succeeded in resolving. Although there are many instances when participants acted on their own accord, for example not always obeying the movement and relinquishing unquestioning notions of organisational commitment, their agency was still shaped by cultural and historical forces. By attempting to merge human agency with the narrative constructions that create the very events that they reflect upon, the study is locked in its own dialectic and has not managed to carve a meaningful path through it.

The study has also attempted to highlight the meaning of my own location within a research tradition that is committed to empowering methods and a reflexive approach to writing and reporting. It therefore remains for me to comment on my own story in relation to the research.

8.3 Reflecting on my own story:

In the process of researching and writing this thesis I have become acutely aware of how a story never fully belongs to any one person. Every voice assimilates and transforms other voices that already exist in the discourse that circulates around us. A story emerges from an interaction and beyond that exchange there remain many more stories that are also continually evolving and changing. Gergen's (1994b) analogy of the text as a skipping stone that is flung along a pond provides a meaningful illustration of this process. As the stone skips, ripples, sinks and blends into depths far beyond its starting

point, it leaves behind a series of inter-textual traces. These stories fill our lives and connect us to one another in such a way that there can never be a single 'true' story or subject behind each story.

It is therefore appropriate that this concluding chapter identifies the many voices that are represented in this thesis. These voices include my own, the 22 participants and the various theorists who have contributed towards the building of a coherent academic argument. In addition there are the less explicit voices that exist in the spaces between these voices. These include the voices of history, the voices of liberation and the voices of past and present relationships.

This thesis is essentially my own narrative about conducting research into the life narratives of activists and as such my own story needs to be located within the thesis. The chapter on method has already clarified some aspects of my subjective positioning in terms of my race, gender, and my connection to activism. It is hoped that the accountable and reflexive nature of this research will be further illuminated in the personal commentary that follows.

Throughout the writing of this thesis I have been aware of my own identity as a wife, a mother, a Jew, an academic and a South African citizen. I have experienced these identities as particularly fluid in that the process of engaging with the life stories of the participants has ignited many points of consternation and self-questioning. In addition, the research has coincided with my own marriage and passage to motherhood. Issues relating to gender equity and shifting constructions of self in relation to the occupation of new and diverse roles in the lives of the participants have thus resonated strongly with me.

Prior to this research, my interest in the lives of activists who were involved in the early stages of resistance in South Africa centred on the political campaigns that were initiated and the meaning that was invested in the cultural expression of resistance. The immersion into the personal lives of activists that has characterised this study has

therefore expanded my understanding and set in motion my own process of personal reflection.

As someone who considers herself relatively detached from the Jewish faith, the construction of Jewish identity in light of the link between perceived injustices and the experience of being subjected to discrimination has also resonated with me. While my immediate response is to undermine such constructions for being embedded in negativity, suffering and ultimately leading to reactive behaviour, I am left with the unsettling feeling that aspects of the Holocaust remain impregnated in my own consciousness.

My own positioning as a member of the liberation movement has led me to conduct the research in a spirit of homage to the comrades who have shared their stories and the movement as a whole. I share the concern of the participants that our understanding of the past imparts an accurate interpretation of the principles of the movement as well as the motives and actions of its members. As someone who is also living through the trials and tribulations of a post-liberated South Africa, I have been sensitive to the ways in which the stories of the participants have provided insight into my insecurities and strengthened my confidence.

My disciplinary location within psychology has also been relevant in the shaping of this thesis. The theoretical-methodological approach that I outlined in the chapter on method represents the outcome of a complex and difficult academic and personal journey. Up to the point of commencing my doctoral studies my training and teaching in the field of industrial psychology and management studies had located me firmly within a positivist paradigm. The extent of my sensitivity towards qualitative research revolved around an appreciation for the impact of contextual factors on behaviour and experience. My tentative awareness of the complex nature of the relationship between psychological and social spheres gradually directed me towards literature in the field of phenomenology, discourse and postmodernism.

The decision to locate my thesis within narrative research thus required an immersion

into a range of post-modernist debates that at times left me feeling confused and bewildered. The key challenge of working with life narratives has involved grappling with the fluidity and relativity of experience while at the same time embracing the notion of human agency. The recognition that research and theory are open-ended processes implies tacit acceptance that there will always be unanswered questions and inconclusive interpretations. As the thesis has unraveled in relation to my own developing understanding, my teaching has followed a similar transition.

The challenges of integrating this evolving paradigm into my teaching have been exacerbated by the location of my students in the commercial field. Given the prevalence of empiricism within their academic training, they inevitably experience an initial resistance to interpretive lines of thought. It is my hope that as my confidence has grown so too has my ability to create meaningful paths of learning for my students.

Throughout the research process my concern has been to capture the complexity of the subjective experiences of the participants while at the same time ensuring that the method is applied in a rigorous manner. In the context of the general acknowledgement in qualitative research that every text is open to a variety of interpretations, my attempt at rigour has centred on a commitment to be aware of and open about the representational decisions that I have made. This approach follows Riessman's (1993) advice that the personal and idiosyncratic nature of narrative work requires such transparency. I have therefore shown how my personal narrative has informed the writing, reading and interpretation processes that have comprised this thesis.

The presentation of the narratives of the participants has been shaped by the weaving of my interpretive statements into the analysis thus linking the different elements and pointing to ways of understanding. At times I have also fractured the narratives by selectively presenting quotations and alerting the reader to features relating to narrative form. This reduction of the narratives by selecting features and sections from the narratives as a whole is balanced by expansion in the form of my own interpretations of the literature and my own knowledge of the context.

8.4 And finally:

This study has explored complex constructions of self in relation to activism, memory and aging through the analysis of the life narratives of a sample of South African political activists. It has operated from the central theoretical premise that individuals are engaged in ongoing sense-making activity that enables them to adapt to their physical and social environments. As such, it has attempted to integrate a view of human nature as inherently social with an interpretive perspective that emphasises the role of history and agency in the personal construction of lives.

The study has built on existing psychological understandings of activism, aging and memory by using narrative methodology to show how individuals reconstruct their life trajectories and make sense of their activism in relation to the past, present and future. It has shown the value of hindsight in coming to terms with experience and it has revealed the complex representation of gender, race, class and ethnicity in people's lives.

This attempt to uncover the unique, the social and the historical in the lives of the activists has illuminated how and why individuals construct their experiences in particular ways at particular times. This reference to social and cultural heritage shows how individual sense-making processes are located within a wider context of remembering. The life stories of the activists are linked to the process whereby South Africa continues to unravel itself from the old apartheid order to create a new arrangement based on democratic principles. Oral stories represent a key element within this process as they contain memories of the past that help to shape contemporary and future political and social life.

The study has shown how sharing reinterpretations of the past at the individual level leads to a joint reconstruction that informs the content and form of commemorative processes, which in turn shape how and what a society remembers. This became evident through a consideration of the ways in which individuals use their memories to adapt to the social world and to direct themselves towards the future.

The central argument has been to show how activism is not a single entity and how experiences of activism are shaped by many diverse factors that are themselves always in process. The location of these experiences within life narratives has provided a meaningful context for identifying human agency and for developing an interpretation of subjectivity as historically and socially constituted through language.

This understanding of how selves construct themselves in relation to the expectations of others and the social rules that govern those relations has illuminated how individual agency is constrained by common taken-for-granted understandings. The unfolding of coexisting critical and consenting narratives in relation to gender, family and politics has thus shown how the constructed self and the active self are inseparable. The thesis continually moves between a self that is created within the limits of the present, from the resources of the past, and the potential of the future, to an active, free self that is either transcendent, or subjectively separate, from the constructed one.

In keeping with the theoretical-methodological foundation on which the study rests, the interpretation that has been offered is viewed as tentative and open-ended. The study has rejected the pursuit of certain knowledge and recognises that no one speaks alone. This acknowledgement of the existence of numerous understandings opens the space for other voices and interpretations because "every voice is the absorption and transformation of other voices." (Gergen, 1997b, p. 605).

It is my hope that in the hearing, recording and interpretation of the lives of my participants I have done justice to the depth and wealth of their experience. Confronted with the task of making sense of their narratives has left me with the acute awareness that there is so much more to say about their lives. I therefore present this study as a contribution towards a wider and ongoing knowledge-making process.

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APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDE

University of Cape Town

INTERVIEW GUIDE

As indicated in the Methodology section, the following areas served to shape the interview and to ensure that relevant material was covered. They were not adhered to in strict format.

1. Growing up in South Africa

- family life
- education
- community
- political context

2. Political awakening and process of radicalisation

- socialisation into political life
- organisational membership
- relationships (mentors/ colleagues/ friends/ leaders/ lovers)
- gender relations

3. Occupational trajectory

4. Nature of political work

- activities
- obstacles and challenges
- political commitment
- state repression
- the personal and the political

5. Family life and activism

- exile
- departure from South Africa
- settling into life in exile
- nature of political work

6. Liberation

- the meaning of freedom
- returning to South Africa or remaining in exile
- reflecting on the present in relation to the objectives of the liberation movement

7. Orientation towards the future

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APPENDIX 2: CORE NARRATIVES

University of Cape Town

Francis Losman

The daughter of a Lithuanian immigrant father and a South African mother, Francis spent her childhood living in an apartment above the general merchandise store that her parents owned in Cape Town. Her father only spoke yiddish, and numerous immigrants stayed with them over the years. Francis' mother occupied a dominant role in the family and community. Francis recalls attending Zionist meetings with her parents but maintains that she was never a Zionist supporter herself. She felt drawn towards socialist literature in her teens and over the years became active in the Left Book Club, a distributor of the Guardian newspaper and canvassed extensively on behalf of Communist Party candidates in local elections. During the war years she collected money for Russia and met and married a Polish immigrant who had fled from the Jewish persecutions. Whenever Russian ships were in port the sailors would visit their home. The birth of her children meant a fundamental shift for Francis as she limited her political involvement in order to fulfill her role as a mother. In 1965 Francis visited Russia which served to cement her socialist convictions. Francis has lived through the liberation of South Africa and she feels very positive about the future of the country as well as for socialism in the world generally. She currently lives in Cape Town.

Johnny Sachs

Johnny Sachs comes from a Jewish family with a strong political background. His father was a trade unionist and his mother was an active member of the South African Communist Party. His eldest brother became active in the resistance movement while Johnny was still at school. Johnny studied medicine at the University of Cape Town and he was very involved in student politics. He was arrested for promoting unrest. Johnny suffered from a heart disorder that required a series of operations abroad and as a result he left the country after completing his degree. By the mid-1960s he had made a full recovery but the political situation was so bad in South Africa that he was advised by the movement to remain in England. He specialised in immunology and became active in the

ANC Health Group. The extent to which he integrated his vocational and political commitment is captured in his self-description as an "active immunologist." He returned to South Africa in 1969 but was refused re-entry until 1990. He currently lives in Cape Town and is working in the area of HIV-AIDS research.

Julius Baker

As the youngest son of immigrant Eastern European parents, Julius was born into a working class family in Benoni, South Africa. He was raised in the Jewish tradition although his father's atheism also predominated in the home. His father was a general merchant and avid socialist and Julius recalls endless discussions about the 1917 Russian Revolution and putting up posters about the revolution on street corners. Julius learnt to play the violin at a young age and he performed at receptions for the Labour Party and Independent Socialist League. Julius also identified the political unrest that culminated in the 1922 Miner's Strike as relevant to his own political development. He has vivid memories of the conflict, including living next door to a mine boss who built a trench around his house and fired at police all day. Julius was the only child amongst his six siblings to complete school and he also went on to university where he studied law. It was around this time that he joined the Junior Labour Party and the Independent Socialist League. He came into contact with people who were active in the growing trade union movement and he established a bookstore called 'Peoples Books' in the Trades Hall in Johannesburg. In 1950 the bookshop was closed down as the government passed legislation that entitled it to investigate any company with communist leanings. By this stage Julius had become actively involved in the Communist Party and the distribution of literature through the bookshop comprised one of his central responsibilities. In 1960 Julius was detained under the Emergency and after his release he fled to Swaziland where he stayed for four months. Thereafter he traveled to England. His wife and children joined him six months later. Julius worked in the legal profession and immersed himself in the anti-apartheid movement. He has returned to South Africa on numerous occasions since 1994 and he remains committed to returning on a permanent basis.

Gerald Goldman

Gerald grew up in a wealthy Jewish family in Johannesburg, which he describes as politically conservative. He identifies the three years that he spent in the Springbok Legion as a time of radicalisation in that he came into contact with communists, read a fair amount of socialist literature and entered into political discussions. On completion of his military service, Gerald pursued a degree in architecture at the University of the Witwatersrand and thereafter moved to Cape Town where he became active in the Communist Party. He was arrested and detained and shortly after his release, he relocated to Durban where he took up a lectureship position at the University of Natal. In 1964 Gerald left South Africa with his wife and children to study Town Planning in London. He became active in student politics and set up a committee of South African students who focussed on the situation at home. He describes his apartment in London as a centre of political activity, and despite his initial intention to return to South Africa, has remained in England with his family. Gerald has visited South Africa regularly since 1990 but has decided not to return on a permanent basis. In his latter years he has explored his talent as an artist and was preparing for an exhibition at the time of our interview.

Ethel de Keyser

Ethel de Keyser grew up in a Jewish family in Cape Town, South Africa. The daughter of Russian immigrants, she attributes her involvement in politics from the young age of 13 to the general political awareness of her parents, and more specifically, to the influence of her older brother. He was actively involved in the liberation movement from 16 years of age and he served a twelve-year prison sentence in a South African jail. Although Ethel moved to England shortly after completing her secondary education, she returned to South Africa regularly and involved herself in a range of underground political activities. As a result, she was eventually arrested and deported to England where she immersed herself in the anti-apartheid movement. She describes her life in terms of an ongoing commitment to South Africa, initially spending ten years working

against apartheid inside South Africa, continuing her involvement abroad, and remaining invested in work that promotes the well-being of the country post-liberation. This extensive commitment to South Africa is reflected in her career trajectory. She served as president of the anti-apartheid movement, held the position of director of British Defence and Aid for Southern Africa and directed the activities of the Canon Collins Educational Trust which aims to uplift the quality of education that is offered at previously disadvantaged schools in South Africa. Despite her investment in South Africa, Ethel did not locate herself in the heart of the exile community and she chose not to return post-liberation. She visits South Africa regularly and describes her witnessing of the 1994 General Elections as the greatest moment in her life. While she feels disappointed in the outcome of liberation, she still derives a strong sense of fulfillment from the passionate and conscientious manner in which she has lived her life as an activist. This satisfaction is linked to her firm conviction that a more fundamental revolution remains in store for South Africa.

Hilda Bernstein

Hilda Bernstein was born in England and came to South Africa when she was in her teens. Her father was an atheist and she has no recollection of any religious influence in the home. She attributes her initial involvement in politics to a growing awareness of political injustices in the world which culminated in her joining the Labour League of Youth and involving herself in the anti-fascist struggle. It was in the Labour League of Youth that she met her husband. Hilda's work connected her to people throughout the world who shared the conviction that the Soviet Union represented the ideal model of socialism. Hilda was a founder member of the South African Peace Council and she later joined the SACP. The international focus of Hilda's work did not detract from her sensitivity to racial discrimination in South Africa. She identifies the late 1930s as a time when she became increasingly aware of racial injustices and the 1940s as a period in which she began to feel part of a growing movement that would be capable of bringing about change. In 1944 she became a member of the Johannesburg City Council and she dedicated her work to tackling political injustices. Hilda was arrested and detained

during the 1960 Emergency and in 1964 she went into exile where she became active in the anti-apartheid movement and the British Peace Committee. Hilda has been living in exile for thirty-four years and despite health problems and the presence of her four children in England, she has never stopped considering returning to South Africa.

Rusty Bernstein

Rusty describes his upbringing in a Jewish family in Durban as an average white South African household that was oblivious to politics. He cites his involvement in the anti-fascist movement raising funds for medical aid for the Spanish republic as a time of initial political awakening. He joined the Labour League of Youth and he later became an active member of the South African Communist Party. Rusty became deeply involved in the liberation movement and his political activities include the formation of the Congress of the People and making a contribution towards the writing of the Freedom Charter. In 1960 he was detained under the Emergency and in 1963 he was arrested and tried for sabotage at the Rivonia Trial. Following his acquittal in June 1964, he was immediately re-arrested. When he was released on bail he fled into exile with Hilda, followed by their children. Although Rusty has remained in exile for over thirty years, he describes it as a permanent state and claims that he does not feel any attachment to England. Since 1994 Rusty and Hilda have visited South Africa regularly. Rusty tempers his optimism with regard to political change in the country with a concern for the overall shape of the economy. Rusty passed away in June 2002.

Esme Goldberg

Although Esme Goldberg grew up in a politically aware household, she describes her childhood and adolescence as typical of a Jewish, white South African family. She studied physiotherapy in London and it was only when she returned to South Africa and settled in Cape Town that she became politically active. Her involvement intensified through her marriage however the total priority that her spouse placed on the movement meant that he was hardly ever home. As a result, Esme found that she was constantly

choosing between her responsibilities to her children and her political commitment. Her arrest in front of the children and her subsequent detention helped to settle the dilemma and thereafter she took a more back-seat role, focusing on the children and earning an income to support the family. She went into exile with the children on the instruction of her husband. He had been in prison for eight years and had received an order from the movement to try and escape but felt that he would only attempt it if they were abroad. Unfortunately he only joined them fourteen years later when he was finally released from prison. Apart from a few close friends Esme did not find the exile community in England particularly welcoming. She remained connected to the anti-apartheid movement but long working hours limited the extent of her involvement. She feels that England "has been very good" to her and has no intention of returning to South Africa post-liberation. She still feels very connected to South Africa and feels very optimistic about the future. Esme passed away in 2000.

Iris Fesenstein

Iris was born into in a working class Catholic home in Durban. Her father died when she was an infant and her mother supported the family by running a boarding house. Her mother was very politically aware and Iris recalls meeting many people who were active in the labour movement during her childhood. During the war her mother was involved in raising money for medical aid for Russia and Iris sang and performed at fund-raising events. Iris studied nursing and met her husband in a political student group called the Modern Youth Society. They relocated to Cape Town and became very active in the liberation movement. Iris was regional secretary of the Women's Federation and medical secretary of the Food and Canning Workers Union. Iris and her husband were also active in the Communist Party and when they moved to Johannesburg they became involved in underground work. The birth of their first child caused Iris to reflect on the extent of her involvement as the constant police harassment, raids on their home and threat of imprisonment impacted negatively on family life. Shortly after her husband's imprisonment Iris received an instruction to leave the country. She fled to England with her two children. They lived with friends and Iris worked in a factory until her husband

was released from prison, after serving a one-year sentence. Iris remained involved in the anti-apartheid movement and always intended to return to South Africa post-liberation. However the loss of her husband in 1989 and the presence of her children and grandchildren in London has led to her decision to remain in exile. She is currently exploring her musical talent as a jazz singer. Iris still talks about South Africa as home and visits regularly.

Krishna Moodaley

Krishna was raised in a Hindu household in Port Elizabeth. Although he was aware of political activity in his community it was only during his medical studies at the University of the Witwatersrand that he joined the Communist Party and became involved in politics. In 1952 he contributed towards starting the Defiance Campaign in Port Elizabeth and towards the end of that year he was arrested under the Suppression of Communism Act. In 1953 he relocated to Cape Town where he was involved in establishing the South African Peoples Organisation and worked underground in the CP. In 1960 he was arrested again, and on his release from prison applied for an exit permit. As Krishna and his family had boarded the Union Castle Liner for England without consulting the movement, he was initially met with hostility by fellow exiles. However the resentment faded in time. Krishna is disappointed with the extent to which liberation has been achieved in South Africa. Although he remains very invested in the political situation in South Africa, he feels little emotional attachment to the country. Krishna visits South Africa with his wife Navi every year but they have no intention to return on a permanent basis.

Philippa Murrell

Philippa Murrell describes her upbringing in Grahamstown, South Africa as privileged and cosseted. The expression of her political consciousness involved an outward disillusionment with Christianity and annoying teachers by stating that she was a communist and that blacks should have equal rights. She attributed what she describes as

a rudimentary political awareness to the influence of her father who raised contemporary issues in the home as well as her older sister who was a member of the Springbok Legion. Despite her father's desire for her to attend university on completion of her schooling, Philippa moved to Port Elizabeth where she started working and by 21 years of age she had been married and divorced with a small child. It was in Port Elizabeth that she met people who were involved in the trade union movement and shortly thereafter she moved to Cape Town where she secured a job in the Food and Canning Workers Union. Philippa connects the onset of her immersion in the politics of the liberation movement with her relocation to Cape Town. She became an active member of the Communist Party and eventually married a politically active man who served one year in solitary confinement, followed by a three-year prison sentence. During this time Philippa was responsible for earning a living and caring for their three children. She was also arrested and shortly after her release she received an instruction from the movement that she should go into exile. She spent three months in Swaziland and then traveled to England. Despite her involvement in the anti-apartheid movement and the exile community, Philippa describes the first few years of exile as extremely painful. She subsequently settled down to the extent that she now feels unable to return to South Africa. Her children and grandchildren live in England and she enjoys her freedom of movement and exposure to international ideas and cultural events. Regardless of her decision to remain in England, she has maintained her identity as a South African and she visits her home country as often as she can. She describes herself as a socialist and a feminist and as a writer who incorporates her experiences of the liberation struggle in her work. She concludes her narrative with the strong assertion that she is always an activist!

Denis Goldberg

Denis was born into a working class Jewish family in Woodstock, Cape Town. Both his parents were politically active and as a result politics was part of everyday life in the family. Denis enrolled at university to study engineering in 1950, the same year that the Communist Party was banned. He became active in the student movement and later joined the Congress of Democrats. Denis became well known in the movement for his

screen printing and electrical knowledge. He joined Mkhonto We Sizwe when it was formed and went underground spending very little time with his wife and two children. Denis was arrested at Rivonia in 1963 and served twenty-two years in prison. In 1985 he was released and joined his family in England. He immediately resumed his political work. After only ten days in England, he flew to Zambia and Tanzania to re-connect with his comrades and thereafter he traveled around Europe addressing meetings as a representative of the ANC. He set up an NGO to raise funds to purchase educational books for children in disadvantaged South African schools. Denis remained in England post-liberation until July 2002 when he returned to South Africa to take a post in the Ministry of Water Affairs and Forestry.

Wolfie Kodesh

Wolfie was born into a Jewish working class family in Benoni. As a result of the fighting during the 1922 Miners Strike the family became destitute and took refuge on the farm of friends. Eventually Wolfie and his twin sister relocated to Cape Town with their mother. They settled in Woodstock where they lived in poor conditions with people from different races. Wolfie identified this early experience of poverty, the involvement of his sister in the Communist Party, serving in the army during the war and membership to the Springbok Legion as factors that contributed towards his politicisation. After completing his military service, he joined the Communist Party and the ANC. He had inherited a brickwork plant from his father but soon decided that he was not suited to the life-style. He subsequently left to work full-time in the movement. He was arrested and detained under the 90 Days Act and on consultation with the movement decided to take an exit visa out of the country. Wolfie arrived in England and was immediately employed in the ranks of the movement. His role as head of ANC Logistics involved living in the ANC headquarters in Zambia for almost ten years. In this capacity he was responsible for providing food and clothing for ANC cadres in the training camps and staff and students at the Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College in Tanzania. He returned to South Africa in 1990, having lived in exile for twenty-eight years. He currently resides in Cape Town.

Rica Hodgson

Rica Hodgson was raised in a politically conservative, Jewish household in Durban, South Africa. She was one of eleven children and she was first introduced to socialist ideas via a schoolmate who had migrated from the Soviet Union with his Bolshevik parents. When the war broke out she enrolled in the Air Force and subsequently joined the Springbok Legion. She later became a member of the South African Communist Party (in 1946) but it was in the Legion that she first met coloured people on an equal footing and became fully aware of the racial issue in South Africa. She describes her marriage to the national secretary of the Legion as "the start of her serious political work" and she worked as a full-time fundraiser for the Legion until it dissolved in 1952. Thereafter she occupied numerous formal positions in the growing liberation movement and continued her political work despite the banning, house arrest and detention of both herself and her husband. When the movement decided that her husband should continue training ANC cadres in Bechuanaland (Botswana). They defied their house arrest orders and sneaked out of the country while their son remained to complete his secondary education. The Hodgsons ostensibly set up a chicken farm outside a town called Lobatsi on the border between South Africa and Botswana and they lived and worked there until local British authorities became unsettled by their presence. They subsequently re-settled in England where Rica worked for International Defence and Aid and her husband continued to train MK people in Britain, East Germany and Russia until he died. At sixty years of age Rica relocated to Tanzania, East Africa where she worked as secretary to the director of SOMAFCO for five-and-a-half years until skin cancer problems caused by the harsh climate resulted in her return to England. In 1990 her exile came to an end and she returned to South Africa to work as Walter Sisulu's personal assistant for six years. Rica is currently still living in her apartment in Hillbrow, Johannesburg.

Amina Cachalia:

Amina grew up in a working class Muslim family on the outskirts of Johannesburg. Her father had arrived in South Africa from India in 1886 and his political involvement made

Amina aware of racial injustice from an early age. While she was at high school the 1946 Passive Resistance Campaign in Durban had begun and she decided to relocate to Durban so that she could participate in the campaign. At the end of the campaign she returned to Johannesburg, completed her schooling privately and took a course in shorthand and typing so that she could earn a living. The autonomy that came with working enabled her to become very involved in the movement and she immersed herself in a range of activities. She joined a group of women to build an organisation called the Womens' Progressive Union that aimed to uplift the quality of life amongst Indian women. She became a member of the Indian Youth Congress and went to prison as part of the 1952 Defiance Campaign. She held the position of national treasurer of the Federation of South African Women and joined a Communist Party underground cell. In 1954 Amina took a full-time position with the Peace Council. It was around the time of the Congress of the People that Amina met her husband who was also politically active. In 1963 Amina was banned and her husband was house-arrested. They lived through ten years of house arrest and sent their two children to boarding school so as to reduce the impact on their lives. The release of Mandela and unbanning of political organisations in 1990 opened the way for a re-engagement with the political sphere and Amina immersed herself in work relating to the pre-1994 General Election. She stood as an ANC candidate but when her seat became available one year later her husband had just passed away and she didn't feel up to taking the position. Amina lives in Johannesburg and remains active in community projects.

Shantie Naidoo:

Shantie was born into a Hindu family of politically involved individuals. As a child she attended political gatherings and distributed literature. As a result of their political activism, the family was not financially secure and Shantie left school at sixteen to seek employment. Her working life coincided with her political commitment as she initially worked for the Congress of Democrats and later on for the South African Congress of Trade Unions. In 1963 she was banned for five years and thereafter she worked for the Vanguard Bookshop. Shantie was detained under the Terrorism Act in 1969 and she

spent one year in solitary confinement. She left South Africa in 1972 after receiving a nine-year banning order. She settled in England where she worked for IDAF (International Defence and Aid Fund), an organisation that sought peaceful solutions against racism. Her work included launching fundraising campaigns to help the families of political prisoners and to give exiles a new start, and the publication of literature and documentaries that informed the public of the South African situation. After 28 years in exile, Shantie returned to South Africa and settled in Johannesburg. She currently works in the ANC archives.

Ramney Naidoo:

Ramney Naidoo recalls a childhood in a Hindu family that was shaped by the political involvement of its members. Her father worked in a laundry and earned very little money. At nine years of age she was arrested for distributing pamphlets in her neighborhood. Along with her siblings, she sold the New Age and Guardian newspapers. Ramney met her husband in the Indian Youth Congress. He was detained many times and after his release from prison in 1965, he fled to Botswana and on to England, where Ramney and their two children joined him eight months later. Police harassment did not come to an end in England as their telephone was tapped and their home was raided. They both remained active in the anti-apartheid movement and were members of their local ANC branch. Ramney also recalls how exile made her aware of other international struggles for human rights, for example Chile, Vietnam and Sudan. She worked for Defence and Aid until she returned to South Africa twenty-eight years later. Ramney initially took a job with an education policy NGO at the University of Witwatersrand and was subsequently employed in the Johannesburg City Council - in the human rights information department.

Alan Lipman

Alan Lipman grew up in a Jewish family in Johannesburg, South Africa. He was introduced to socialist thinking by his uncle who was a member of the Labour Party and

who also served in parliament. His university studies in architecture were interrupted by the war and he served in the Air Force in Italy. It was during this time, as well as his subsequent involvement in the Palmach (left-wing Israeli army), that he learned more about socialism. Although he regrets fighting for Jewish rights, he feels that his exposure to prominent individuals in the army was particularly influential in shaping his own development as a socialist. On his return to South Africa he joined the Communist Party and also became involved in the Congress of Democrats and ARM (African Resistance Movement). In 1963 he went into exile, along with his spouse and children, where he pursued an academic vocation in England and became active in the anti-apartheid movement. He returned to South Africa in 1990 where he settled in Johannesburg and stood for the ANC in the 1994 local elections. In general terms he feels very positive about being back in South Africa but he does feel a degree of ambivalence in relation to the limited extent to which the movement has transformed itself into a democratic governing party.

Beate Lipman

Beate Lipman arrived in South Africa with her family at the age of three to escape the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Germany. She traces her self-description as someone who lives on the edge of society to this early period when she felt dislocated and unwelcome in a foreign culture. Despite her sensitivity to racial injustices in South Africa, it was only when she met her spouse that she became actively involved in politics. She was active in the Communist Party, the Congress of Democrats and ARM (African Resistance Movement) and she worked as a journalist for New Age. Her formal employment involved a lectureship at the Teachers Training College. Beate frames her decision to go into exile in terms of having to make a choice between prison and her children. She describes exile in England as relatively accessible in that there was a strong exile community to welcome them and the culture and language were familiar. She worked in the film industry and was primarily involved in producing documentaries about South Africa. Returning to South Africa in 1990 provided the opportunity to create a new life as Beate and her spouse were approaching their retirement in England. They

became immediately involved in the ANC and a range of other political activities and Beate took up a position with a progressive film organisation. She pursues a creative and active life and lives with her spouse in Sandton, Johannesburg.

Leon Levy

Leon Levy was raised in a politically active family in Cape Town, South Africa. His parents were Jewish immigrants from Lithuania and he attributes his early sensitivity to social injustice to the many stories they shared about their own experience of police repression. By the time he reached adolescence he was attending regular political meetings (Young Communist League; African National Congress) and running evening adult literacy classes for Africans. He recalls feeling very conscious of his Jewish identity and he attributes this consciousness to the Holocaust. Leon describes himself as a “fully committed activist and trade unionist.” At eighteen years of age he became a member of the Communist Party and at twenty-one years he was secretary of the South African Peace Council. He was primarily employed in the burgeoning trade union movement and held various positions, including national organiser of the Laundry Workers Union; national secretary of the National Union of Laundry, Cleaning and Dye Workers and president of the South African Congress of Trade Unions. In 1956 he was arrested in the Treason Trial and in 1963 he was imprisoned under the '90 Day' detention law. In consultation with the movement he took an exit visa and went into exile where he became active in the anti-apartheid movement in England. It was in exile that he pursued a tertiary education. He received a scholarship to Oxford and thereafter he worked in the field of industrial relations in England. In 1994, having spent thirty years in exile, Leon returned to South Africa where he lives with his spouse in an apartment in Sea Point, Cape Town.

Lorna Levy

Although Lorna Levy describes her upbringing in a South African Jewish household as apolitical, she recalls being very conscious of racism as a child and having a strong social

conscience as far back as she can remember. She feels that she has expressed this conscience through her political work, initially as a student at the University of the Witwatersrand where she became deeply involved in student protest activity and thereafter as an active member of the liberation movement in exile. She is delighted to be back in South Africa after thirty years abroad and has immersed herself in political work, including working on the Truth and Reconciliation Report and writing the biographies of activists.

APPENDIX 3: TRANSCRIPTION

University of Cape Town

Linda Price interviewing Wolfie Kodesh in his home (23 August 1998)

W: Are you going to question me?

L: Well I do have some questions in mind. But as the emphasis of the interview is on you talking about your experiences, I would prefer to take the lead from you. Perhaps you could begin talking about your experiences growing up here in South Africa and I could ask questions as they arise - provided you are happy with this of course.

W: Yes. That's fine with me. Well, I'm one of a twin. I have a sister, Celia, who died a few years ago. She was the secretary to Moses Kotane at one time. Kotane was the General Secretary of the South African Communist Party for many years. Celia and I were born in Benoni which is on the East Rand. I remember the Miner's Strike in 1922. I couldn't have been more than 4 or 5. You know the famous slogan 'Workers of the World Unite for a White South Africa!'

L: Yes I do.

W: They just disregarded its' meaning - both sides - the blacks entirely as well! Well I was a child during this conflict between miners and bosses and I always remember the hole in the outside wall of our house, from the shots that were fired during the fighting. And I was always intrigued by this conflict and I always wanted my folks to explain what the rebellion was all about. My father was on the white workers side.

L: Did he explain his position to you?

W: He was a real racist like everyone else. And he wouldn't ever patch that hole in the wall up! He was so proud of it. But as a result of the fighting we had to leave Benoni. We must have been amongst the first people who were refugees and we went to friends of ours - the Segals. They owned a farm. It was too dangerous to stay in Benoni. So we went to live on this farm and you know the picture that I have of that farm is so clear. I just loved it there and I can remember it vividly to this day. I remember there was a stream that ran through the farm. And I can still see the stream with a duck and it's ducklings floating along and the sun shining between the trees and so on. That picture has stuck in my mind until now. It was so beautiful and that's why I suppose I cannot forget the Segals' farm and its also one of the reasons why I love scenery so much as an adult. And I almost feel proud to claim that we were the first refugees from the action in South Africa in 1922. Later on we came to Cape Town.

L: How old were you when you moved to Cape Town?

W: I was round about 6 ½ by then. Wall Street had crashed and people had lost their businesses all over the world. People were jumping out of windows in New York and everywhere. I remember Danie du Plessis, an Afrikaans chap who was the secretary of the Community Party in the Transvaal, saying that he had been around the whole of South Africa looking for a job and couldn't find one. And you know some people were so hungry that when people threw out their orange peels and dry rusks they'd eat them. That's how bad it was. It was a time when

they called these people who couldn't find jobs 'the poor whites'. That was quite a heavy period in South Africa's history.

L: And how did this recession impact on your own life?

W: Now the impact on me was that I was separated from my dad who wanted to stay in Johannesburg and recoup his losses. My mom came down to Cape Town with my grandmother and we stayed in Muizenberg with relatives. And that became a permanent issue in the life of my family because they never came together again. But my mom was a good seamstress, or dressmaker, as we called it, and we had relations who employed her so that we could have bread to eat. But she was also a very proud person and that sort of thing couldn't go on forever. So eventually we moved from Muizenberg to Woodstock. And we really landed up in the slums of Woodstock. Now I know many people who live in such conditions all their lives. They're usually black or coloured. We landed up having a little shop on the main road, near Gympie Street, the most notorious street at the time. It was even worse than some of the places in District Six. We lived in two rooms at the back of the little shop and we had no electric lights, we had no bath, there was just a little basin with only cold water. So if we wanted to have a bath we would have to pump up a Primus stove and get into one of those big baths that the African women wash their blankets in. That was the way we lived. The 'loo' was at the back, outside and behind a wall. At the back gate was a stable and our place was overrun with mice. It was a very terrible time. You know Jewish families normally come to your rescue, they give you money to do this and to do that, but my mother didn't want to take largess and we stayed there for a few years.

L: A tough existence...

W: It was but we also got to know some very interesting people. I remember one woman who we knew well as kids. She was a big, plumpish, made up coloured lady. She was a prostitute and we used to see her walking past the front door every evening. There was lots of money to be made over there. She was so warm and nice and always said to my sister Celia and me: "Why does your mommy bring you to these places where we live? It's not good for you. You must tell your mommy to take you away from here." She was so warm and so nice. We simply loved her. As soon as we saw her we would run to greet her, not knowing that this was her beat. We also met what they called at the time 'the Masked Bandits.' There was a small 'Fish and Chips' shop near to our shop - an English chap ran it. And these fellows - the Masked Bandits - used to come there regularly and talk and drink. And sometimes they would come into our place and we even allowed them to put the money in the till. I dare say they took out more money than they put in! My mom used to leave my older brother to take care of the front of the shop - because she was busy doing dressmaking - and these kinds of things used to take place. So eventually when the police caught these masked bandits, we knew exactly who they were.

L: Sounds like the stuff movies are made of.

W: Well, we were brought up in this environment which was very tough. And of course I'm talking about toughness for whites. But what about all the

coloureds and Africans? They never left. I know of many people who live in such conditions all their lives. They are usually black. And when we finally moved out of that place we moved to another place in Gardens. And even that place, I went to look at it recently, was a complete slum as well. Except that the people who lived there were better off than those who lived where we had been. And they were white - bus conductors, civil servants - they all lived in little houses - as well as some coloureds amongst them.

L: So this early period in Cape Town meant a lot to you.

W: Very much so. It had a funny effect on Celia and I particularly, as opposed to my older brother. We used to talk and say: "We're out but all those other people have to live their whole lives like that. There must be something wrong here. Some of them with electricity, some without, and so on." My brother's attitude was very different. He used to say: "So, let them find their own way out!" He never understood that that only whites could afford to talk like that. And that was the difference that carried on.

L: And apart from your own experiences as a child, did you have any contact with adults who were critical of these disparities between white and black people?

W: We did have some English cousins that came out to South Africa. One of them was in the Communist Party of Great Britain and he used to tell me: "These problems are here because this is the way capitalism works, and this is the way profiteering works, and this is the way the workers have to suffer and so on and so forth. You know you should read more about it." So I started looking for books. And by the way, schooling was just neglected. Absolutely neglected. So much so I didn't do Matric when I should have done it. But schooling just didn't seem important. Later on Celia went to live with an aunt in Johannesburg, my brother went to my father in Johannesburg, and I stayed - I don't know why - with my mother in Cape Town. That's how the situation with my parents affected all of us. And funnily enough this very man who put the idea of reading into my mind, things like politics and the economy and all the rest, he turned out to be the secretary of the Claremont Hebrew Congregation and that's where he lived and that's where I think he died. So he turned right over and became, like most of them who come here from overseas, very, very progressive when they arrive and then they change. It didn't take six months before they were also anti-black. And many of them were virulent. It's an acquired disease for them. And their children too. Children would play with black children until their mothers and fathers told them not to. I also had my own adjustments to make. I remember making an arrangement with Celia once. She had fallen in love with her husband who was the treasurer of the Communist Party here in Cape Town and she eventually became the secretary. I remember phoning her at work one day - I had not joined any politics at the time - and saying: "I want to see you, can we have a cup of tea at the Waldorf?" So she said: "Come along to the office." And when I got there I met Moses Kotane for the first time. He lived up in District Six. And he was leaving for the station at the same time and this meant that Celia and I had to walk with Moses down Burg Street, right through what used to be St George's Street and so on, to the station. And this was the first experience I had socially of walking

with a black man in the middle of town, or anywhere for that matter. And I can remember thinking: "My God, I wonder what's going to happen if some of my friends see this, me walking with this black man." This was running through my mind. And I was so pleased when we got down to the bus stop near the Parade. He was going up to District Six and we were going on to the Waldorf. And I can't tell you how relieved I was when he finally said goodbye to us. I was looking all over and around me to see if anyone saw me and I'd made up my mind that if somebody did see me and looked at me, I'd make as if I hadn't seen them. That sort of attitude. Celia had already got used to the idea because she was in the CP then. It was the only organisation of its kind in South Africa at the time that had no racial policies at all. It was the only non-racial organisation that had white, coloured, Indian and African members up to this day.

L: And did you also become a member of the party?

W: I didn't join the Communist Party or the ANC or anything until the war came about. And here you see, I'm trying to suggest to you that there is never one reason why anyone becomes either a communist or an ANC cadre or a member of the Indian Congress, or whatever. There are many reasons. For instance during the war I went to the Abyssinian campaign, as we called it, and then came back. I got in touch with socialist thinking through the influence of two very impressive men in the army. And also finding myself amongst the Italian peasants and realising that it's the very poor that suffer the most during wartime. And it was only then while I was in the Springbok Legion - the progressive soldiers' organisation - that I became a communist. Jock Izikowitz was chairman and Jack Hodgson was the secretary and Cecil Williams was the treasurer - they were all Communist Party people and they were all Congress Alliance people and so on. And they approached me and asked me to join which I did. I joined both the CP and the ANC. But the ANC didn't really take whites at the time. Whites in the Communist Party were regarded as allies so I felt as though I was not only a Communist Party member but also in the whole liberation struggle. And then I had other experiences which made me more dedicated than ever.

L: What kinds of experiences are you referring to?

W: I remember one instance while we were training. There was a fellow by the name of Bezuidenhout. He was a sergeant who was assigned to the blacks. He had to lecture them and I could see how much he hated it. By this time I was a key man in the Legion. I was getting post through the mail uncensored because of the fact that a lot of our information officers were legionnaires as well, so they passed mail on to us. Here we had these non-whites in the desert, training for the invasion of Italy, and they were only allowed to carry spears. The money that went to their dependants was half of what the whites were getting. All the hard work that had to be done like loading ammunition and so on, putting up tents and all the rest of it were all done by non-whites. And the Legion was totally against all of this. And one day I said to Bezuidenhout: "You go and have a sleep, I'll take these fellows for these lectures." And he said: "Ja, ja, natuurlik." He was only too pleased. He hated it. He hated blacks. He may have hated Hitler as well but he certainly hated blacks nevertheless. And there was also a man

by the name of Tuttles, a British Officer. He was on his way to India or somewhere when the war broke out and so he came to Durban and joined the South African forces. He was a real Tory, a right-winger of the first waters. He hated me because of my politics and I knew he hated me. Anyhow, there I'm taking these lectures and I'm telling the black troops all about the Springbok Legion and highlighting their unfair treatment in the army. I took several classes. It must have been the 5th or 6th class that I'd taken and I had planted some of these chaps on the side and told them that if they see any officer coming, or a sergeant major, they must wave or pull their ears to alert me. And I noticed a fellow on the flank staring over my shoulder and looking quite agitated. It was at the time that I was telling them that spears were no good and that they must have guns, and that the allocations to their dependants should be the same as whites, and that they should put down their spears and fight for their rights. And I noticed this fellow had just turned to stone. Then I heard a voice saying, in a typically British accent: "Oh, Corporal Kodesh, this is where we'll find you. Well you just stay where you are." And within five minutes about four blokes arrived and marched me off to my tent to get my kit - left right; left right - and I was marched to a dugout with a tent over it. I was then told by Tuttles and the Sergeant Major that I was being charged under the South African Military Laws code for what would amount to mutiny in other armies. But our situation was different because we were all volunteers.

L: And what happened to you?

W: They kept me in separate quarters while they decided what to do with me. There was also a Professor Wilson, Godfrey Wilson, in my division. He was a marvelous fellow. He was an anthropologist at Wits University. He was a religious man and also a Marxist. And on the second day that I was in the dug-out he came by and said to me: "Listen, each of the coloured, African and Indian men have to appear before a military tribunal tomorrow and they want to know what they should say." So I said: "Tell them just to say exactly what I said and I'll fill in the rest." So the next day we marched into this big tent with the captain and two assessors. And of course the Sergeant Major and Tuttles were there as witnesses. And Tuttles, in giving his evidence, said that I had said that the non-white men mustn't fight. And when it was my turn to give evidence I emphasised the principles that the Springbok Legion stood for - that people should be treated properly, black or white, whether they are in or out of the war, they should be properly treated. So the Tribunal considered my position and said they would deliver their verdict within a day or so. And I was actually found 'not guilty'. And another experience that springs to mind is when I was an ammunition carrier for the infantry in Italy. And being one of the infantrymen meant that we came across these little villages in Italy that had been bombed. And the houses that were bombed were always the little ones. The villagers would come out of the hills to meet us and they were usually very poor folk. Many of the bigger houses - the bigger buildings - were spared from the bombing. It was the smaller, working class houses that took the full blast and I thought: "Hell, just look at it!" It is the working people who suffer. But the big chemical ICI building which had directors

from all countries in it was not touched. So this was another lesson on how society - right into a war zone - acts in a particular way. And I thought that's confirmation of what's happening back home. Here are these poor people, they are not black but they're the same as the coloureds and Africans in South Africa, they are the ones that suffer. And I just thought this is hopeless and it seemed to put the lid on for me. I made up my mind that when I got back I was going to be completely dedicated.

L: And is that what you did on your return from the war?

W: No. What happened was that when we were on the outskirts of Florence, I got a telex that my dad had died. I knew he was ill but the army hadn't given me permission to go home and visit him. We needed soldiers. It was a hell of a thing. And he had died of cancer. My brother and I were left two big Brickworks that he'd got going. He was quite 'well-to-do', my father, and our biggest one was 20 acres. It also had rights for flats, houses and factories. The land is next to that big shopping centre, near Cumberland Road in Johannesburg.

L: You mean Eastgate?

W: Yes, next to it. There's a tree near the centre that my brother pointed out to me three or four years ago, a tree that he had planted on our Brickworks! Cumberland Brickworks was what it was called. Anyway I came back to South Africa - and being in the infantry is a shattering experience, you walked over dead people, you ran over them, and here I was, the owner, partner with my brother of this big Brickworks. And I had about 18 months of this wonderful life. Money was no object. We had our own trucks and petrol stations. I never had to pay for petrol. I had a big Chev car, you know, which was terrific. But that was just my reaction to the war experience. I was a little bit shell-shocked. I was 26 and I had a marvelous time. I even had these Jewish people that come and make matches between young men and women after me. You know, they would try and make a 'shiddach' - try and marry you off. They tried to wheedle me into meeting 'so and so' and I simply told them to go away. I wasn't interested.

L: And did you have any contact with political organisations?

W: Well it was a good life. But I had also become a member of the CP and I was also in the Congress movement. I knew that we were paying very little to our workers so after a few months I managed to persuade my brother to increase their wages. And when the Native Affairs Department came along and looked at our books, the chap saw the wages entry and I honestly thought he was going to faint or something. He said: "You can't pay them so much, it won't be allowed." I always told our workers what their rights were. And because I was the boss they passed what I had to say on to other Africans. They didn't all live in the compound on our Brickworks. Some lived in the townships. And I gave the Congress newspapers and the CP newspapers to various chaps who distributed them amongst our workers. And they also used to sell them in their communities. I remember coming to work quite early one Monday morning to find one of the African men waiting for me. He told me that he thought a certain fellow who worked for me - let's call him Olifant - was with the police. This chap

told me that on the previous day - Sunday - the police, as usual, had come to the compound looking for illicit beer (these guys used to knock it into the ground nearby where they slept). Of course they weren't allowed to drink. Africans weren't allowed to drink. They weren't allowed to brew alcohol except where the government, the council, had given permission to have these sort of pubs, or 'shebeens', that were always under supervision of the council. Many of the men on the compound had been drinking and the police had chucked them into their black vans and arrested them. But the one fellow - this Olifant chap - not his real name - who had come to work at our place about two months prior to that - he had been seen him running with the police. The police had been brutal and they had left some fellows wounded and lying on the ground as they chased after the others. This chap looked round, thought he couldn't see anybody, put his hand under his shirt or his jacket, or whatever he had on, and handcuffed at least two fellows. So I got this chap's holiday pay, his full pay, ready in an envelope and asked for him to come and see me. When he came in I said: "Where were you yesterday? The police raided here." He said: "Yes, they locked us up, they knocked us all about." "And you?" "No - they ran past me." So I asked him directly: "What did you have underneath your shirt? Someone saw you take handcuffs out from under your shirt." And he said: "Not me, I don't know what you're talking about!" I told him what I had heard but he still denied it. Eventually he said: "All right I'll go." And so he got on his bicycle and cycled off. The police station was about one kilometer away from us. And I followed behind in the car and of course he went straight to the police station. Afterwards some Afrikaans people who I knew told me that they had a lot of fun at the police station because the police were talking about the way you had caught this policeman who had been planted to see what you were doing in the Brickworks.

L: Did you fear the police at all?

W: I guess I was becoming known in such circles, if you know what I mean. I also wrote a letter to one of the newspapers after one of the Sunday evening fights we had with these fascists on the City Hall steps. We would hold party meetings and these thugs would come and hackle and beat us up. Many of us were injured or went to hospital. Anyhow one evening it was particularly bad. Gill Marcus's uncle had also been arrested that night and put into Marshall Square. We went round to Marshall Square to demand his release and while we were waiting prisoners were being brought in from all over the show. Every second one got a cuff at the back of his head like 'that' (gestures with cupped hand against his head) and they had to 'run the gauntlet' into the jail. And I objected to this practice in my letter and it was printed in the newspapers. The next thing I get a call from the Captain in charge of Marshall Square - I must meet him at the local police station at Bedfordview. And I thought: "What's this all about?" My brother came along. My brother wasn't sympathetic to what I was doing, but I said to him: "Just come along." And here was this chap saying: "What do you mean by saying that we cuff them man. None of them were cuffed." So I said: "I saw them being cuffed - don't say they weren't." And we continued arguing like this and getting nowhere. Eventually I turned round to where my brother was standing in the doorway and I

went like that (gestures cuffing action on brother) and the captain suddenly understood what I was talking about: "Nie 'handcuff' nie, maar slaan op sy kop." And he said: "Oh ja, slaan op sy kop, ja" (*No, not handcuffed, they hit them on the head*).

L: Did you feel a degree of tension between your role at the Brickworks and your growing political involvement?

W: Well eventually I started to get restless. One day I was bringing money from the bank to pay the workers, and as I was driving along, I could see that all the Special Branch people were waiting for me. I knew them very well by now. So I popped up to Issy Heyman's shop in Primrose and phoned through to the Brickworks. And they said: "Yes, the detectives are here and they have told us that our bosses are secret communists and that you are causing a lot of trouble here." What do you know! And after that I said to my brother: "Look, I've been here nearly two years and this is not my life. You can have my share of the business. I'm going to Cape Town." So I left my brother my share and I just took off and went to Cape Town and that's more or less when I became fully involved in the movement - for about 50 years. And I ended up being exiled for 28 years. I was the first one to be arrested under the 90 Days Act. I managed to get out of the country because Special Branch said that they would grant me an exit visa.

L: Could we talk a little about the events that led to your arrest?

W: Well I was arrested for about 60 days. I was actually looking after two children at the time that I was arrested. Both their parents, Mary and Ben Turok, were in jail. They had gone to jail just prior to the 90 Days and I was looking after them, with Ann Nicholson. On that particular evening we were listening to music in the Turok's lounge when Special branch arrived. There was a knock at the door and in came Coetzee and he said to me: "Mr. Kodesh, I'm arresting you under what is known as the 90 Days Law and anything you say can be held against you etc." As he was saying that he sort of looked up at the windows of the room and I saw somebody moving outside - what he was trying to tell me was that: "The house is surrounded so don't try any funny stuff." Well at the time it was a shock. But one composes oneself. And he said: "Come on, let's go to your house." I of course had my own little house. I was only staying at the Turoks to take care of their children. I had a van that was bought for me by the movement because I couldn't get a job after our newspaper - New Age - was banned. I had worked on our newspaper as the director. Anyhow I got into the van and a couple of them came with me while the others followed. I remember Flo Duncan, who was living in my house while I was at the Turoks, was sitting in the lounge knitting when we arrived. I remember her sitting there with a lamp on behind her. I came in first, with the Special Branch after me - there were about six of them - six or seven. So she said 'hello' to me and then the voice of Johan Coetzee came from behind me saying: "Don't talk to my prisoner." So she just went on knitting. And I had to get my things together. I was moving around the house. I had to shift to the bathroom. I then had to shift to the 'loo' which was outside in the yard of the house. And each time I went past her she would stop knitting and then as I walked off she would start to knit again. I had to come back and forth -

this went on for about three journeys past her. And I remember her knitting needles starting and stopping. And you know when we were driving down to Special Branch - Gestapo Headquarters as we called it - I started giggling because she reminded me of that woman in France who used to knit when they guillotined people. And every time the guillotine came down she would stop her knitting. And I thought of this and of Flo and I just couldn't stop giggling.

L: So you were giggling on your way to the police station.

W: Yes. They thought I was going cuckoo or something. Then I started talking about rugby. You see it was a trick I'd learned here in Cape Town - when you are in shock and your mind is not yet settled, just talk rugby and they'll all come in on the rugby and it gives you time to recover. And so I started speaking about rugby and giggling like a little, what can I say? I want to say that I was giggling like a little girl, but I won't! And then Johan Coetzee says: "Man, stop talking 'voetbal' (*rugby*) to our prisoner. I've got a lot of questions that I'd like to ask him". So the others, Kleinveld and the others like him, I knew them all so well, you know, says: "Ag, nee man, why can't we talk? You can do your business with him later." And later, after they had taken all my money, my watch, everything - they just leave you with your little case and your pajamas and toothpaste - Coetzee opens my cell door and says: "You can tell your grandchildren Mr Kodesh, that you were the first one to be arrested under the 90 Day Act. And I said to him: "Thank you very much" as he closed the door. Then I felt really grim. You feel pretty grim, you know, once you're all alone.

L: Did you feel in any way prepared to deal with being imprisoned?

W: I had some idea of what I should do because I'd learnt from other peoples' experiences of being cooped up. I'd once had Nelson Mandela living with me for two months and he had insisted that we do exercises every day. He couldn't leave the flat for two months. And I was so pleased that I had exercised with him because when I got into the cell I knew what to do. You have no idea of the psychological effect of just being locked up like that. You know I hate rodents but I was even hoping that a bloody rat would come in. And you couldn't tell the time either. You had to tell the time from the sound of the traffic and the darkness from a little window right up in the corner of the cell. I knew breakfast was always at about five. They would just open the door and slide the plate along and ugh, the food - they poisoned us! After about ten days all of us were sick and our stomachs were running. It was so bad that I just lay in my cell with a blanket over my head. I was shivering all the time and I thought to myself: "This bastard Coetzee, he's poisoned me." But then I heard noises all over the jail. People were banging on their doors and shouting to be let out. Not all of them had buckets. Ours were the only cells that were locked. All the other prisoners could go to the lavatory themselves. And some of us had buckets and some didn't. And that's when I first realised that Leon Levy was in prison too. Both of us were let out of our cells at the same time. Then we realised that everyone had been poisoned, even the warders. So that made me feel a bit better.

L: And do you think your experiences in the army helped you to cope with being a

prisoner in any way?

W: Well not for that sort of thing. The military experience did come in hand when they offered this exit visa. Because when you are at war you have this thing around your neck - this little bulletproof disk - it's got your number on it. Mine was C4408B WK and if the Germans or Italians take you in, they take down your number. You are also told - and I was certainly told this when I was in the infantry - that if you get caught and you go to a POW camp in Germany or Italy, your first task is to get hold of the escape committee. There will be an escape committee in every big POW camp. And it's your duty to escape no matter how you do it. You were expected to escape because you're better outside of the prisoner camp than you are within. So I had that in mind while I was in prison. But we didn't get that sort of instruction. I had helped people, predominantly African people, to escape in the past and so I knew how it could be done. But then they offered me an exit visa. And initially I thought it was one of their dirty tricks. And it was in a way because they said that Leon and I had given them information, in exchange for our visas, which was a lot of rubbish. But I tell you what did stand me in good stead as a soldier, was my commitment to following my command and participating fully.

L: Your total commitment to the movement at all times.

W: Yes. We didn't just decide individually to take the visas. These little kids were in the jail while I was there and I used to watch them polishing the floor through the holes in my door. They weren't allowed to have any contact with us. One day when there were no policemen around I whistled to them. They were polishing the floor while standing, you know how you stand up and polish with rags, even to this day that's how I do it. I tie a rag around my feet and I polish by walking up and down. Anyway, I whistled to these kids and they came over. I asked them what they were doing there. They said they were going to a reformatory and that they waiting to be transferred. Little African kids - 14, 15 years old. And they said: "Who are you?" I said: "Never mind who I am." So they said: "Are you politics?" And when I said: "Yes", one kid immediately asked: "What can we do for you?" So I said: "Try the handle." And I managed to get out of my cell and talk to my comrades who were also detained while these kids kept a watch for us. You were never allowed to go out of your cell. We managed to have a brief meeting to discuss this offer of the exit visa. Only the white men had been offered it and we wanted to talk it through with our black comrades. They said: "Take it and go - why stay here?" So that's what we did. I think I regret it in many ways but on the other hand I've also got very good reasons for having taken it because I was the first one, certainly in Cape Town, who was arrested under that 90 Day Act. And I really had no idea what I was in for. In the back of my mind I was anxious that they would make an example of me and hang me because at that time the Act allowed them to hang us. And I wasn't high up in the leadership either. So that would certainly frighten off any other whites.

L: You must have been extremely anxious.

W: Yes, it was a shock at first, there's no question about it, you know. They had

arrested people prior to the Act coming in. I was in MK. I was one of the founders of MK and very involved in MK. But I didn't hold a formal position. And that wasn't all I did. One of the units that I controlled had been infiltrated by an Indian who was working for the government and he gave it away. They had caught Indres Naidoo, amongst others, who is now a member of parliament. They were all beaten up and tortured so you can imagine what they had been through. Our command, a top command, said I mustn't go to court to hear their case because they may put 2 and 2 together and make 4 and not 5, so I didn't go. But I heard all about it. As a matter of fact Indres had been very badly beaten - had his ribs broken with the butt of a rifle amongst other niceties. And he was in such pain - they were questioning him and saying: "We're going to break your other ribs, you know, we'll kill you." They did terrible things to them all. They asked him if so and so belonged to the unit, and did he know 'so and so' and two of the names were myself and Paul Joseph. And when our doctor went to see him - we managed legally to get our own doctor to go in - she had asked the fellow who was standing over Indres to get her some water, hot water, and in that moment that he went to get the hot water, Indres told her: "Tell Wolfie and Paul to get out of the country because I think when I was half unconscious, I think I mentioned their names. I think I said 'yes' when they called out their names." It shows you how they operated.

L: And also how you operated amongst yourselves - such a strong sense of loyalty.

W: Yes. Absolutely! And we took a movement decision about our exit visas too. After about sixty-something days I accepted the offer of the exit permit and went to London by sea. And when I finally arrived there was some confusion with the administration and I had to wait on the ship, 'the Transvaaler', for the whole day. I didn't have a passport, only an exit-visa, so the authorities wouldn't let me off the ship. Eventually two men arrived - one was an advocate from the anti-apartheid movement and the other from Amnesty International - and the whole matter was cleared up. In the meantime Special Branch had claimed that they had granted me permission to leave because I had informed on my comrades. It was all in the papers in England and South Africa and I was very upset by it all. Our Chief Representative said: "Don't take notice of what the papers are saying. They are just trying to split us." But I was very upset by it all.

L: Difficult enough that you had to leave - without all that hanging over your head.

W: But everyone knew how Special Branch operated.

L: Were there any times, particularly during your imprisonment and all the uncertainty with regard to your future, when you experienced self-doubt regarding the extent of your involvement in the movement?

W: I had no self-doubt about the cause. I never questioned my job and whether my participation in the liberation struggle was correct. Never, ever! Not once did I ever think that it was wrong. Because how could it be wrong? I think one of the things that made me join the war effort was that I was born a Jew. I had either read excerpts or even read 'Mein Kampf' itself - in which Hitler said very, very clearly that when his troops reach the other parts of the world, all the Jews and all the

black people and non-Aryans would be annihilated. Well I wasn't going to wait to be annihilated! And as a matter of fact I couldn't understand to a large extent why so many Jewish people went to the concentration camps, knowing by then that they were going to be gassed and tortured and killed and so on. Why they didn't just do something else? Run or go underground. Okay if you're shot, you're shot. But you're going to be killed anyway, you know. I couldn't understand that. But one thing I made sure of in my own mind was that it wasn't going to happen to me. I wasn't going to wait for Hitler and his hireling friends here - like Vorster and company - to be annihilated by the local Gestapo types. So there was no hesitation. Not that I wasn't scared. Far from it! And also during the war when they were shooting at us, I could never say that I wasn't frightened. I was. I don't think that there's a human being who can say that he wasn't frightened of that. And it was the same thing here. When you heard of the torture that went on in the prisons, as I had before I went in, you felt frightened. But you see, once you've made up your mind your dedication reaches down to such a fundamental point that you simply forge ahead.

L: And you also become deeply committed to your comrades.

W: Oh yes. Not that this commitment precluded what you would call affairs taking place. But it was very hard, especially for whites in South Africa with the Immorality Act, to have any chance of marrying out of your colour. And the white women whom I took out, and I often had long affairs with, when it came to marrying, I don't know. It just didn't seem like the right thing.

L: Because your commitment was elsewhere?

W: No. They were afraid that they wouldn't be able to stand my life-style. I would have to change. And I said: "No way. No way." There was a woman that I was very close to who lived in Camps Bay. And one early morning in my flat in Sea Point, I was about to drive her home, when she asked me: "Why don't you ever mention marriage?" So we got in the car and I told her that instead of taking her home Clifton way, I'd go the long way, over the Neck to Camps Bay, so that she could have time to answer. And I explained to her: "If I marry you and I'm with Kotane and Naidoo etc at a party and I want to invite them home afterwards, or if we're at home having supper with them and your folks want to come over. Do you think I'm going to ask them to leave? And what would you do? And if you can tell me that you can become friends properly. Not in some white upper-class way. Then tomorrow I'll take you, we'll go to a magistrate and we'll get married. But you have to tell the truth because it's going to mean something to you." And I expanded on what it would mean for her. And when we got to Camps Bay she said: "Well I'm not sure but can't we continue as it is?" And when I told this to Nelson Mandela one day while I was hiding him, he said: "That's an angle with white comrades that has never entered my mind before." It doesn't apply to them. They don't have to marry women in the movement. You've got your politics but you don't have to fall in love with women in the movement. Unfortunately for me I didn't find somebody in the movement who I could say I wanted to marry. Oh yes, I did have little affairs but not in terms of marriage. So all these things impacted on my life.

L: Are you saying that your involvement alienated you from the white community?

W: Oh yes. White comrades felt very alienated from the white community. I remember Sam Kahn, Brian Bunting and I had been at the Magistrate's Court for being at a gathering. We were found guilty with three months on appeal. And our picture had appeared on the front page of the Cape Times. It was a picture of the three of us walking down Plein Street. And many of our relatives and friends were shocked by the photograph. I also remember walking along with friends of mine when a chap who was at school with me came along. We had played rugby together and all the rest of it. And when he saw me coming he went from one pavement to the other and I watched him to see if he was greeting anybody or going into a shop. But he was simply avoiding me. And so it happened with relations too. Best of friends before joining the movement. But once you became known as a communist or an ANC or a congress person, that was it! My own cousin, Wolfie as well, named after a grandfather in Russia somewhere, put in the Sunday Times for two weeks: "He Wolfie Kodesh, of such and such address, working for such and such a firm in Benoni is not the Wolfie Kodesh who is the Communist!" He put it in a block like this (gestures a square). This chap had the chutzpah to do that!

Tape off: Chatting informally while preparing tea in the kitchen

Tape on: Interview continues over tea

L: Could we talk a little more about the emotional significance of your involvement in the movement?

W: Well, everything was out of the usual here in South Africa. Especially amongst whites you know. Everything was out of the ordinary. And being in the movement had that romantic challenge where you felt that you knew you were justified, at least in terms of the bigger picture, in attempting to liberate people who lived as our Africans did in their tin shanties. And I used to go to tin shanties in Elsies River, regularly you know, even stayed over at times when it was too late to leave. Elsies River used to have a lot of tin shanties. And you know if you didn't have that sort of feeling, that's what I call it, a feeling that things were out of the ordinary in this country. The feeling that normal things were abnormal. Then you couldn't do those kinds of things. It was quite romantic in a way. There was definitely something very romantic about it.

L: About taking on the challenge.

W: Yes. It was a hell of a morale booster and I'm sure for most people too. But they perhaps wouldn't paint the romantic side because romance for them is about a woman and a man. I see this romantic thing as a challenge.

L: You mean connecting with an experience higher or greater than yourself.

W: That's what a challenge is all about. The sort of romance that means you will be able to do it no matter how many times you get a "biff" in your solar plexus that sets you back. You get up again and you do it again. That is the great uplifter. Because you know, your morale goes down like hell at times. Imagine being

stuck in a bloody cell with not a squeak, nothing to see, nothing to do, just time. No-one to talk to except that bloody terrible Coetzee. He was a real murderer swine, that Colonel Coetzee. He used to come into my cell at all hours. And there was this Ossewa Brandwag badge scratched onto the wall. And just one light in an iron net on the whole night through. And he used to come in and stand in front of me while I was sleeping. And I knew who he was. I knew he was the biggest murderer of them all. And he'd just stand and look at me from the middle of my cell. He wasn't so tall. But he was big. He had shoulders out to here (gestures widely with hands) and he had a neck as small as that (gestures size by pressing index fingers together). He had a bull-neck. And he'd just stand and look at me. He did that intermittently for a month - just came in and stared at me.

L: How did you respond?

W: I would be lying on this mat and falling asleep and he'd come in and bang the door hard behind him. People weren't supposed to come into our cells but he was a Colonel you know. He was the head of the interrogators and people were tortured in his hands. And he'd come and stand there and look at me. I'd look at him and he never said a word to me, not a word. He could kick me to death - one big kick from him and you're already a goner. But he never did anything and I never said a word either.

L: I would have been terrified.

W: I was scared that he would attempt something. He was formidable. He looked like a Nazi. He had short, cropped hair and he had huge shoulders. I'm telling you they came out like these Springbok rugby players. I do remember that he did say something to me the last time he came in. He said: "Do you know what that is? Pointing to the Ossewa Brandwag badge on the wall. And I said: "Of course I know - an Ossewa Brandwag badge." And he came down towards the bed and I remember wondering if he would kick me. And he said: "You know who did that?" So I said: "How would I know?" You know he's getting on my bloody nerves now. He was really annoying me. So he said: "Robbie Leybrand did that and you know what sentence he got hey?" And then he just got up and clanged the door as he went out. Now Robbie Leybrand, I've got to tell you, was a South African who fought with the Nazis. They sent him by submarine to South West Africa. But they must have had a wonderful intelligence - I'll give Coetzee his due, he had a wonderful intelligence - because they traced him right from the time he landed in what was then South West Africa. And they traced his movements right back to the headquarters in Voortrekkerhoogte. They even put up a dummy accident at Halfway House to catch him. They had this chap lying on the road with red paint and two cars looking like they had had an accident. And Leybrand stopped his car and that's how they caught him. And he was in the same cell that I was in and he made that Ossewa Brandwag badge. And you know who was in that cell one year before me? I remember very clearly. Benny Turok. And he had scratched his name on that wall underneath that badge. You know these things seem insignificant now but they weren't laughable then. We called our captors '*the boers*'. In fact we called Security Branch and all their supporters '*the boers*'. The blacks in the movement had a wonderful sense of humour.

They would say: "Kaffirs, gaan daar and neem dit!" (*go there and fetch that*) and they'd imitate *'the boers'* in the way they spoke and they'd even make as if they were going to kick each other. And it was hilarious. It was so funny seeing those chaps imitating these *'boers.'* And I used to say to them: "Why do you laugh when the *'boers'* say - you're a bloody bobbejaan?" (*you're a baboon*) - or something like that. And they used to say: "It's so ridiculous and out of this world that you just have to laugh at it. You're laughing at the stupidity of a man who's had an education where we haven't."

L: That's the irony. And I guess the humour created a positive outlet for expelling feelings of frustration and humiliation.

W: Oh yes, certainly. But it was so funny. Where should we go from here?

L: Well perhaps we could trace back to when you arrived in England and speak a little about your life in exile. In England and later in Zambia.

W: Well Zambia is important you know. I spent about 9 ½ years in our headquarters there. I was under the treasurer-general. I was in charge of logistics which meant that I had to ensure that we had enough goods for raids and things like that, and also that we had enough food and general materials. So it meant that I'd also have to go to the school and the camps and I'd have to assess what was needed and report to the committee. I had to make a list of things that were needed and it brought me in touch with quite a few governments and also with a lot of NGO's and anti-apartheid organisations. So when I went on my trip last year - you see that big book there, that big brown book? (points to a large book on the coffee table) That's my trip to Europe that I went on last year - I was able to stay with friends in most of the places, except Prague, because I had befriended so many people during my work as head of logistics. I didn't have to spend money on hotels or food.

L: So the work that you were involved in has opened the way for many diverse experiences and relationships. How did you feel about living outside South Africa?

W: I used to dream about home a lot. Always. Not just in the beginning. And I remember somebody saying to me recently: "Did you ever miss South Africa?" And I said: "You know, when I came back and stepped off the plane, I looked towards Table Mountain and Devils Peak, and as I put my feet on the tarmac, they both bowed towards me!" (laughter) I also remember seeing those everlasting proteas in Harare while I was on a job there. I got such a feeling of nostalgia. I'd never seen them before in all the years that I was away and that must have been well on 20 years by then. And just seeing them in the bucket at the side of the road reminded me of Cape Town, of Adderley Street. I felt such an aching feeling for home- almost like a fellow who's got burnt and he wants to go and chuck himself over the flames again. And I remember once being near the border between Swaziland and South Africa and I could feel there was a magnet drawing me towards it. And I said to this friend: "I can only explain how I feel by saying that life in exile gives you this sort of feeling for your own backyard" And your mind is always on the subject and it draws you towards it, just like a magnet. It tells

you that's where you belong. I never had any doubt that I would come back. I've even got a letter here from Bram Fisher which he wrote to me when he was in jail. I had written to him saying something about the proteas, and missing this and that, and Bram wrote back to me and said: "As long as you feel that way about your own country then I'm sure you will be coming back." So there is this feeling. Some people call it patriotism. What is patriotism? Is it a flower? Is it a hill? It could be a flag. But for me South Africa was like that everlasting protea. And I always knew that's where I was heading.

L: And when you could finally return?

W: I can remember crying when I realised I could finally return. In all my adult life I have never been so emotional. Never mind all that South African machismo 'men don't cry' stuff! I couldn't control my blubbing. When they announced in London that De Klerk had said that the Communist Party and the ANC and PAC were all legal again, I just couldn't control myself. I was so overwhelmed. It meant to me like opening a bottle filled with gas. It was just overwhelming. I felt ashamed of myself that I couldn't control my blubbing.

L: All those years you had been holding so much inside.

W: And you had to. You couldn't go around moaning and groaning all the time. You see there were some people who felt angry and hurt. They felt that way all the time. But I couldn't do that. I felt here I am in England. The sooner I get to know England the better. That's why I walked everywhere to get to know the place. Anyone who visited London from the movement would be sent to me. Because I knew where everything was. And even here now, people come over and I show them around Cape Town. I've got that sort of nature. I show them everything. I love to walk. And I've got to know a lot of friends over the years. I've just received a letter from the wife of the biggest musical shop for trumpets and things - Bill Livingstone - do you know his shop in London?

L: I have spent time in London but I don't know it all that well-is it in the West End?

W: He's right in the middle of the West End and Bill and I were great friends. And he backed us to the hilt. Gave us enormous sums of money. And she just wrote to me now, the other day. I will show you the letter. She wrote to say that Bill had died. He had what you call blood cancer and he fought against it for years.

L: I'm sorry that you received such sad news so recently.

W: Well he gave a good fight. A great man.

L: You certainly forged some very strong bonds with people through your work in the movement. Just thinking about what you were talking about while we were having tea earlier - having a kind of romantic relationship with the struggle. That feeling of sharing such a fundamental commitment to the cause with others. And how that shared commitment brought out the best in people. But were there also times when people let you down in the movement?

W: Well, there were times when people did things that I thought were really just not done. For instance I can think of a situation where some of those kids in the

school smoked dagga or something and they got beaten with a stick. They must have got about 20 cuts each. When I heard about it I went to one of the teachers and said "Now look here, man" - oh this being recorded so I had better not swear - so anyhow I said to him: "You can't just beat those kids like that. It's wrong." And he said: "In our tradition that's what we do." And we had a big argument about it and I couldn't convince him that it was wrong to have done that. And I still feel bloody sore about it because, after all, these were kids on a little romp. And the reason why we built that school in the first place was to create a climate of learning that wasn't repressive. So that it would be the opposite of the experience they'd had in South Africa where they'd had overcrowded schools or no schools at all. Here was a school that was built from international donations from the East and the West. And with very, very high-class buildings. I'm talking about a very comfortable building. And here these kids were receiving corporal punishment. Now it's true they had to be punished because they had been warned about smoking. It's the nature of the punishment that was the problem for me. There were other things as well. And it's not as though it didn't only happen in the ANC. It's just that we've learnt how to control things. And this relates to ethnicity. There was one particular crowd of people in the ANC who were opposed to just about everything. They felt discriminated against. I think they were Zulus. It was an extreme thing and it became nasty. Until everyone got together and discussed it. Then things were better. They spoke openly about it. The frustrating thing, as far as I'm concerned and still am concerned to this day, is the lack of organisation. Not through their own fault, and I'm not making excuses for them. But you know when people haven't had the training - haven't been brought up with the idea of management. And they are organising things structurally, with issues like accountability and all the rest of it coming up, when you haven't had that experience, you don't know what to do. Its the impact of the mind of a person who's never had a chance to handle a lot of money, to organise when he doesn't know where to even start. It's going to have repercussions, even on government. And therefore we're still in the stage of learning. And they're learning quickly, and most of them very successfully too. They are learning how to govern the country. And governing a country, as opposed to the ANC, is another ball-game altogether. Once 1994 came about, we had another ball-game altogether. And that's about knowing how to manage effectively and knowing how to divide tasks and find ways and means to overcome difficulties. I remember this chap called Drom. He was a member of the Kenneth Kaunda Party and I used to meet up with him every now and then in Zambia. I remember driving with Drom one day and him saying to me: "Listen comrade," you see, every African used to think that if a white person joined Congress, ANC or the alliance, that they were necessarily communists and mostly Jewish. So he said to me as we were driving along: "Listen Wolfie, when you take power" - I suppose because I was at headquarters I could be considered a bit of a leader - and he said: "When you take power - give us about five years so that we can also become rich like these bloody whites who are oppressing us now. Then you can go on and bring about proper democracy." To him, and also to a lot of Africans who don't really don't know what the political situation is all about,

the Oppenheimers of this world and all the others who are at the top - the big businessmen - simply got there according to their own efforts. They don't quibble about the fact that they are at the top. But they reckon: "Well, he got to the top, why can't I?" Many of them went to jail for cheating. But Oppenheimer, well he is a better cheater than the others, so he's on top, you see! So now, how else do we find our way there? I mean - I'm being simplistic - but it's true. It does go through their minds though. Okay, if this means you must never be caught, okay, then we won't be caught. But of course they will be caught. But they think they won't be caught and they'll get away with it. And this is the thing of the upbringing of a people who've been oppressed for not 10, 20 years, but 300 years.

L: Do you mean that in peoples' minds it's a case of ends justifying means.

W: Yes. And when you think about it, it's logical.

L: And do you see this balancing of the scales as an inevitable outcome of years of oppression?

W: Yes. But we must punish those who do it. And especially if they're in leading roles. And they have also been told that it is wrong. But if the playing field becomes more level - okay - that will be fine when it's level, but before it's level, we will have these situations. I sit here often thinking of some of the people I worked with at headquarters - most of the cabinet in fact. I worked in the same building with them so that's why I know them all. Don't forget these people who were in the ANC outside of South Africa didn't have the same experiences as those people who remained in the ANC inside the country. This crowd here had Vorster and all the other types saying things like: "The African, he hasn't got a brain like us, he's like a 'bobbejaan' sort of thing." You know those fellows who went for training in the various Eastern blocs - you should have seen the way they played chess and how bloody well they played. Because some of our blokes are very good. I remember one bloke who beat everyone else. A South African. So the brain is there and the brain has to be forced to leap the 300 years in 10 years or 20 years. Your every movement is organised in a society. And here it's the whites who have had that privilege of movement. The blacks never had that privilege and it takes time to really take that on. They don't know that before you take step two you have to take step one, and so on, and do this and do that. So it's a difficult thing. And as I say, I sit here sometimes and think of some of the people who I know aren't able to make these necessary shifts. And I wonder if they are going to be the next ones to be found out. But of course the press exaggerate and lie about the corruption as well.

L: And thinking a little more about these kinds of personal challenges. What kinds of personal issues did you encounter in forging your own relationships with people who came from very different circumstances to your own? You spoke at the beginning of our interview of the discomfort that you felt walking down Burg street with Moses Kotane and your sister in those early days. I'm thinking more in terms of your life in Zambia.

W: Well I lived in a suburb in Zambia at one time. We had a sort of compound, with proper houses. There were three big houses in this compound and each

one had one room that slept 14 people with beds all in rows, and one small room by itself. And the people that I was living with said to me: "You must have the little room on your own." And I said: "No, Christ, we must have a vote on it." And they said: "You want to vote, let's vote". And they just stuck up their hands and said that I should sleep in the separate room. Why? Not because I was white. They said: "Wolfie don't worry about it. You're not white with us - you're one of us and you're going to be the leader of this house. If you don't you're going against us." And that's what they said to me to convince me that I could have that place. That's one instance. I never came across racism. After all I stayed there with 14 other people - black men and women and to say that there weren't some differences at times and that Africans never got a little suspicious where there should be no suspicion is not true either. Because sometimes they were. If they didn't know you, especially if they weren't living with you. But on the whole there were few ethnic difficulties.

L: And was discipline very pervasive in how life was organised in the movement?

W: Yes it was strong. It was strong to a point. Especially when we were building things, like the school. There was an English chap who was in charge of woodwork. He was born in England but he came over to the ANC. He was in charge of the furniture factory we had there. He was kicked out after a while because he thought he could just do what he liked. He knew he was accountable but he didn't like the idea of being out-voted. And then he would go back and do whatever he wanted. And then the Africans came along and said: "Look here, this is nonsense with this chap - he's told to do this and he doesn't do it. He does what he wants to do." And so it was discussed at one of the committee meetings and he was kicked out. And unfortunately the woman who he was having a relationship with had to go back with him. And she had never set foot in England. That sort of thing. You'll always have that sort of thing. But the trust that we placed in one another was everything to us. There was no question about that. Nobody could question that and we always had that link with one another. Look, it's not as if everything was perfect. There were school kids smoking dagga and others drinking themselves to death but we never mistrusted one another. And you needed discipline. You couldn't just let people do what they wanted. Another thing that really annoyed them like hell - but it wasn't my fault, it wasn't anyone's fault - was that at times they would just eat tinned foods and nothing else. As head of logistics that was all I could lay my hands on sometimes. But fortunately we always managed to persuade several countries who were shipping along the coast, and fishing too, to give us a quantity of fish and also meat. We managed to get meat from some of those ships that came over. And then we would go and buy the food and hire these refrigerated lorries to take it up to the camps. But there were also times during that period when it was touch and go whether they'd even get tinned food. Because countries didn't just give it to us like this all the time.

L: So you carried a huge responsibility as head of logistics.

W: Yes. I was head of logistics of the ANC. I wasn't head of logistics of MK but what would happen sometimes is that the MK logistics bloke would go to various countries and not receive something or other. I was going at a later stage, let's say to

Holland or to Sweden or wherever, and then of course they would pass his task over to me and I would ask on his behalf. My task, as head of logistics, was to provide clothes, food, everything like that.

L: And taking our minds back again to the time when the movement initially took the decision to set up MK - did it take you some time to get your head around the armed struggle or did you feel that it was the correct direction to take?

W: Yes. I was always sure it was the right thing. I've been criticised for it, as have others. Especially chaps who had had military training and had been through the war as I had been. The fact that many of the Africans hadn't been through the war did cause them to hesitate. But they couldn't come up with any alternatives. So they were only too pleased to have people who'd had the experience of war around to show them what could be done - what should be done.

L: Were there any similarities between your involvement in MK and your previous experience of being part of a military operation during the war?

W: Well I had read a great deal about war operations. They had numerous books in the Left Book Clubs - the 'Shakespeare' of literature on the science of war! And then there was Max Werner, who even before the war, spoke about the war that was coming and he was dead on. He was the only one who foresaw that the Germans could envelope Holland and France and all the rest of it. And that when they struck at Russia they would be get into the mud sort of thing. I'd read all of that. And when I read Klausevich who himself said that warfare is the extension of politics and so on, the philosophy seemed to me to be very logical. The way in which the military unit operated was also quite something to get used to. At one time Nelson hid in my place for a while. Well even though I knew that he was my commander in chief, we were never able to acknowledge one another or our rank in MK. So when I had taken him to my place to hide for a couple of months, we never openly acknowledged that he was my commander-in-chief. It often felt like playing a charade really.

L: Because that was the code of conduct.

W: Because nobody in MK was meant to know too much about who else was in the organisation and what their rank was. You had cells, you know, and nobody was supposed to know what the others were doing. Now I'm not supposed to know that Nelson is the commander in chief - you know to all of us - and some groups didn't know other groups and so on. But the commanders met and orders were discussed at the high command and they were passed down to the troops. And there were mostly Africans in higher commands. And that was in a way very good, because although I'd been through the war, it was good that the Africans were put into highest positions except for one or two whites in this high command. And when Nelson came to stay with me I asked him: "Have you read or heard much about war?" He said: "Not very much." So I said: "Have you read Klausevich?" And he said: "Who's Klausevich?" And I told him. So he said: "Oh, have you got the book?" and I said: "Yes." Now I had a table at the window in the lounge of my flat. Do you know Isipingo Road in Jo'burg? In Yeoville?

L: Yes I do.

W: Well, Isipingo Road goes straight through into Web Street. I lived at number 52 Web Street and this is where I was hiding him. I had a table right at the window and I had lace curtains and then proper curtains. And Nelson had put his milk on the window-sill. And this milk on the window-sill of my flat attracted attention. No one in the white community put milk in the sun to go sour. We had made a mistake and it was time for him to move on. But before this happened Nelson spent days, weeks, sitting at this table and working through this book. Making copious notes, reading them, scratching them out, starting all over again. What he was doing was adapting Klausevich's philosophy to his own philosophy. And he would discuss things with me. He agreed with Klausevich's idea that war is the extension of ordinary politics. And if it's necessary, what else could be done? There were big arguments as to whether we should take up arms. Most of the Indian Congress were against it because they followed the beliefs of Ghandi. Luthuli was also against it at first. But when Nelson explained to him that we wouldn't be killing people, that we were just going to go for symbols of apartheid, he said: "Go head."

L: So many people in the movement didn't agree with the decision to take up arms.

W: Yes, that's right. These arguments weren't only brought up at the top but right down the line. And many, especially the youth, were all in favour of fighting. Now if the top echelon had not taken cognisance of the fact that the younger people, who were not as placid and docile as their parents were, because their parents had had this thing heaped on them for years, if they'd not taken notice of what the younger people wanted, those chaps would have gone out and killed aimlessly.

L: And MK provided them with a formal route to leave the country and be trained. Many young people left the country for training after the Soweto riots in the late 1970s, not so?

W: Yes, that's right, and where did they come? To us. Some of them went to the PAC. But most of them came to us. And what's more, they arrived and said that they had come to learn how to go back and fight the 'boers.' We all said that. And, although conditions were harsh in some of the camps, a lot of what has been reported is bloody rubbish. There were people who infiltrated our lines and we did catch some of them. I myself caught one of them once and I had to take him over to Luanda. He wasn't killed or anything. I once had to go into one of those camps that they speak so horribly about. I had to go there because their power had been interrupted. And I went together with two of our top officials. Look it wasn't good but it wasn't as bad as they make out. There was a jail there and although there were strict rules I think some of our people did overdo things. I'm not saying that these incidents didn't take place but they were exaggerated. There were cells that people were put into. And I do remember one chap - I think his name was David - who was mistakenly arrested. And he is now married to a Norwegian woman. He's an African. So such things did happen and we don't deny it. We did make some mistakes. Not everyone's an angel, you know. And

things need to be taken in context as well. If they are taken out of context, which the Nats are trying to do, they take on a different meaning. And the Nats by the way, never go to hear what their blokes have done at the TRC. You won't find one of them there. And just let anyone say something about the ANC, you'll find headlines and God alone knows what, informing the public.

L: And Wolfie, what are your own thoughts on the TRC?

W: I think it was necessary but I've got my doubts about it. I haven't got my doubts about the fact that it has done some wonderful work. I've got my doubts about their philosophy as opposed to mine.

L: The philosophy of healing the nation through forgiveness?

W: Right. You must heal the nation, sure. But to think that politics doesn't come into it is nonsense. Politics comes into everything. And you have Tutu there - he did some wonderful work and has done wonderful work - but to have to accept his philosophy is another story. And I don't always accept his philosophy you know, talking for myself. I don't always accept his philosophy. Here I'm sitting at a TRC conference - in front of me, just one row in front of me are these four men who've killed people, shot them, drunk beer, while the body of a bloke is burning right there where they are having their 'braai'. And when they turn around and you look into their faces and you say to yourself: "They're going to get amnesty?" Then I feel bloody sorry not only for the people who have suffered but I feel sorry for these blokes' own families. I feel sorry for their wives. These murderous swines. But that's the poison of racism. It gets into your skin. It's taken people like me years to get rid of racism. And it will take years before this racism goes away. Some will manage to do it almost immediately. Some will take five years, ten years. I personally believe that it's going to take at least three generations to obliterate that sort of white/black thing and in the meantime the whites who have the money will remain racist. After all when we got into power - the ANC - we didn't get into power having the army and the money on our side, we had the politics on our side. They now, I think, know that they can't bring about a coup, because the army will support us. They may try. But I think the army's under control. The money is not so easy. You just say to Anglo-American: "Look here, we want to build a beautiful row of flats up there." Costing billions. They'll find the money quickly. But when we say that we want to build houses for the people who live in shacks. They see that there's not enough profit. They haven't got the assurance that the money will be paid back and they offer all sorts of excuses not to give money. But for the beautiful millionaire projects, the money is there and somehow it is always available. And this is our difficulty. It's not an excuse. Where do you get the money from? You could always start taxing them heavily - they haven't been taxed heavily before. But when you start taxing them they start moaning: "Look how they're taxing us!" And either they're going to be heavily taxed in my view or we'll have to ask for overseas investors to do these things for us. They won't just give money for projects that we want to build.

L: We hear voices that still predict a socialist revolution for the future in South Africa. What do you think about that?

- W: Yes. I agree with that. I think a socialist revolution is on its way but that isn't necessarily the immediate objective now. You have to get democracy, ordinary democracy, first and then you can get going. But you have to get the democracy going first. The foundations have been laid but we have a long way to go before true democracy.
- L: And do you feel confident that the foundations for the creation of democracy are being laid?
- W: I feel positive that the foundations will be laid provided 'the big seven' here in South Africa loosen up - unbundle - to make money more easier to get hold of and that the international capitalist countries don't try on us what they tried in Angola and other places. Ja, you know it depends on a lot of things. But what is necessary at the moment, as far as I'm concerned, and this is where the communists can play a big part, is to see that mistakes are rectified. Because they're probably the deepest political analysts.
- L: Thinkers.
- W: Ja. But that doesn't mean to say that they don't make mistakes either. But they can devise new ways and means of tackling the situation here to bring about democracy. That's a revolution in itself. Now others will say: "No, that's not a revolution. A revolution is to go straight for the jugular and get rid of bloody white supremacy. Completely. Then we can get all the people out of the townships." Now this is a bloody big job. To get rid of all those tin shanties. And the tin shanty people are up in arms. They are grousing like hell against the ANC for not keeping their promises. Now you see on the one hand you can you go and say to them: "The whites are withholding the money." Then you get the response: "Not only the whites here, but all over the world." I mean look at this, here at this (picks up newspaper from coffee table) I just noticed this the other day. This is what Thabo says: "There are some partners who treat the National Partnership as though it were entirely a vehicle for their own promotion without regard to reconciliation." These are our captains of industry and that's absolutely right down the line. And how do you do it without antagonising them? This is the problem, man, its a hell of a problem. But that doesn't mean to say that I've lost faith in a socialist country and I'll tell you why. When I went on that trip I spoke to a lot of people - not only those who support us or had supported us, ordinary people like gardeners, people on the trains, people walking in the street who could speak English. And to summarise what they said about the old East, the communist countries, they said: "We know that capitalism is here now. It brings about drugs, mafia, prostitution, everything that you can think of they brought in that we never had before. So we know that capitalism is not the answer. But what we don't want is what we just had from the communist parties. We don't want it either. We want an improvement but the capitalists are not the ones who should direct it. But we don't want the old communist style of doing things either." That's what you get when you go and speak to ordinary people. So I haven't lost any faith in socialism. Not at all. As a matter of fact I think it's got a better chance of succeeding than ever before. But here in South Africa we have to get democracy first. I remember Kotane and all those people used to say that in South

Africa, as opposed to most other countries, and history has proved him correct, you're having twin oppression. You have a colour oppression that is purely nationalist and then you have a class oppression. Which comes first? There are many people who say that the class thing comes first because it envelopes the other thing. But Kotane and others like him said: "No, you have to solve the colour thing first and then you can go on to your socialism." And I think that's correct. But the thing that really worries me is the next election results. I don't fear that our government will be complacent but I hope its going to move fast and hard and do a hell of a lot of work before the next election. Because you know what happened to people like Churchill and Smuts, and others too. They were great heroes after the war. But in 1948, only three years after the war, Smuts was beaten. We, the Springbok Legion, were the only ones, together with some of the Communist Party people, who said that if Smuts's party doesn't organise properly and really go to town, they are going to lose the election. And they did. Now it's not because the Springbok Legion said so. But because we were at the grass roots of South African life. In Britain did anyone think that in '51 or whenever it was when Atlee came in, that Labour would win and that Winston Churchill would go out? What worries me now is because of the attitude of the whites, especially of the moneyed whites, I mean the Anglo-American whites and so on, if they withhold the money that they know they should be investing here in South Africa, and slow up our processes of medicine and houses and so on, and deliberately create this atmosphere of grumbling, of saying the ANC are a hopeless government, I worry that the same thing will happen that has happened in those other countries. And its true that while Mandela is still around all is well. He's a mighty figure. They all believe in him. But they all believed in Smuts. So I think that as soon as this session of parliament ends the ANC are really going to go to town and really work very hard and very successfully. Otherwise anything can happen if they don't look after things. And they're all getting together, the opposition I mean. But they can't agree on much and they oppose one another. They won't fuse into one party. But on certain issues they'll get together against the ANC. But you see it can also have a boomerang effect. Because that splitting up -

L: Dilutes their power...

W: Yes. But only if we work properly. I think we'll certainly get the majority vote. You know we had more opposition, arguments in the ANC, than you have coming from this crowd in opposition to us in Parliament. We had better debates. We had people who opposed the position of the leadership and said so. But it was never destructive. It was always constructive. I doubt whether these blokes will ever be constructive. They're always being destructive. And that can boomerang. We have to know and accept that the Communist Party are probably the best analysers of the situation and in many ways even the implementers. If I were to describe myself in the context of what's happened over the past 40 years - I would say that I've been an implementer of decisions that were taken. Not that I didn't also participate in decision-making. But I essentially carried out orders. I was much more involved in implementing what our leaders, our top leaders, had

decided. And I experienced so much of South African life by following through those orders. I used to be in Elsie's River, in the townships, on orders. I slept over in peoples' houses sometimes and I know about the human suffering and the human indignity. And the embarrassment that parents feel when their children are sleeping divided from them by a sheet hung from the ceiling. And I know what that means for human beings, normal sexually active people, and so on and so forth. But I'm deviating. I would also like to discuss the influence of the Soviet Union and whether or not we were correct in supporting them. In retrospect you could say we weren't. But at the time what was the issue? Who was opposed to who and what did they each stand for? It was a very different thing at the time from talking about it now. At the time, in my view, it was absolutely necessary that we supported them. There was this crowd in England who called us bandits. Mrs Thatcher called Nelson a terrorist! Now what do you do? Does Nelson say: "Because Arafat, Castro or 'so and so' are regarded by the Americans and other Western countries as an offbeat type of leader we should ignore them." They gave us help when we needed it most. Although it's a different ball game now you still can't just put these issues aside because the West says so. And Clinton's speech in parliament is another example. He delivers well, he speaks well, he's got a personality. But just look at our foreign policy in the rest of Africa and hear what he says about their policies towards Africa. It's the old, old American thing. They're not really going to do it - they're going to do it with money. So I haven't seen or heard anything different. And now it remains for Congress to pass it. Whether they have or not, I don't know. If it's a bill anywhere near to what he was talking about then we're in trouble in the future here in Africa with the Americans still thinking that their money can buy anything. What else can I say!

- L: We've been talking for quite some time. Perhaps we should call it a day for now. Except of course if anything else springs to mind?
- W: No. I think I've covered everything.
- L: Thank you for such thorough input Wolfie. I have really enjoyed the interview. I will transcribe it within the next few weeks and return it to you for comment. Then we can take up any further issues that may arise, if that's still ok with you.
- W: Fine with me.

APPENDIX 4: TIME-LINE

University of Cape Town

TIME LINE: CHRONOLOGY OF MAJOR HISTORICAL EVENTS DERIVED FROM THE NARRATIVES OF PARTICIPANTS

1900	1910	1920	1930	1940
1902: End of Anglo-Boer War/ victorious British annex the Republics Formation of African People's Organisation (Coloured political org.) 1906: Julius Baker born 1908: Francis Losman born	1912: Founding of ANC SADF (Founding of white citizen force) 1913: Native Land Act (prevents Africans from acquiring land outside of 'reserves') Women successfully resist carrying passes 1914: Formation of National Party WW1 (-1918) 1915: Founding of International Socialist League Hilda Bernstein born 1917: Russian Revolution/ Tsars replaced by communist government 1918: Wolfie Kodesh born Russian Civil War (-1920/ Bolsheviks versus 'White' Army) 1919: Industrial & Commercial Workers Union of SA (beginnings of mass movement protest against white rule) JC Smuts prime minister Afrikaner Broederbond established (a white supremacist group) Formation South African Indian Congress	1920: Rica Hodgson & Rusty Bernstein born 1921: Formation of Communist Party of South Africa 1922: Krishna Moodaley born Miners Strike (White workers protest under slogan 'Workers of the World, Fight and Unite for a white South Africa') USSR declared Mussolini/ Facism (- 1943) 1923: Urban Areas Act 1924: Formation of National Union of South African Students CP non-racial membership 1926: South African Trade Union Congress Alan Lipman born 1927: Blanche La Guma born Native Administration Act Stalin (-1953) 1928: Iris Fesenstein born 1929: Wall Street crash Beate Lipman & Leon Levy born	1930: Amina Cachalla born 1931: Esme Goldberg born 1932: Philippa Murrell born Passive Resistance Campaign (African Women protest against curfew regulations in Transvaal) 1933: Denis Goldberg born Nazi rule (-1945/ Holocaust) 1935: Shaantle Naldoo born 1936: Representation of Natives Act (increases African 'reserves'/elimination of African parliamentary rights) 1937: Johnny Sachs born WW2 (-1945) SA goes to war on the side of Britain/ opposition of Nationalist Party as sympathetic to Nazi Germany) 1939: Lorna Levy born	1941: Formation of Springbok legion (originally started as a soldiers' trade union in SA army/ created a home front for dependents & ex-servicemen; non-racial membership/ socialist ideas) African mineworkers union (campaigned against migrant labour system & harsh working conditions) 1942: Ramney Naldoo born 1943: Formation of ANC Women's League Formation Non-European unity movement in Cape Town 1944: Formation of ANC Youth League 1945: Nuremberg trials (-1946) Cold War (- late 80s/ USA- Soviet Union feud) 1946: Passive Resistance Campaign (SAIC led protest against curtailment of Indian property rights) Communists J.J. Marks & Moses Kotane join ANC National Executive 1947: Independence of India (Ghandi) 1948: Apartheid government 1949: Immorality Act (prevention of sexual relations btw whites & blacks)

1950-1	1960-1	1970-1	1980-1	1990-1
1950: Freedom Day Strikes Population Registration, Suppression of Communism, and Group Areas Acts Forced removals begin American Civil Rights movement 1952: Congress of Democrats Defiance Campaign (ANC protest against unjust laws) Congress Alliance (CPC/ COD. SACTU/ SAIC/ANC) 1953: Public Safety Act Bantu Education Act (education for Africans to be only servants & labourers) South African Coloured People's Organisation SACP established in modern form 1954: Federation of SA Women 1955 Congress of the People Freedom Charter (calling for a govt. of the people under which all would be equal) Formation of COSATU 1956: Federation of SA Women anti-pass protest march 1956 Treason trial (-61) 156 leaders charged & acquitted 1957: Alexander bus boycott Black Sash, Mothers Union, Women's Federation protest Nursing Amendment Act 1959: Extension of University Education Act (racial quotas) Bantu Self-Government Act (ethnic homelands) Cuban Revolution Formation of PAC PAC Anti-Pass Campaign begins	1960: Sharpeville massacre (21 March/ 69 protestors killed & hundreds injured/ established by new democratic government as Human Rights Day Langa march (PAC) British PM MacMillan "Winds of Change" speech in parliament ANC & PAC banned First State of Emergency Albert Luthuli (ANC president) awarded Nobel Peace Prize Leadership of resistance start going into exile Vietnam war (-75) 1961: Establishment of ARM (sabotage group/ members of liberal Party) 1961: Birth of Umkhunto We Sizwe SA becomes a republic U.N General Assembly votes for sanctions against SA Cuban missile crisis 1962: Sabotage Act becomes law 1963: Rivonia Trial (-64/Nelson Mandela + seven comrades sentenced to life imprisonment) 90 day Detention Law 1966: 156 people arrested for alleged Communism & High Treason 1967: Terrorism Act (indefinite detention without trial) SASO established (Steve Biko/ BC movement) 1969: Bureau for State Security (BOSS) set up	1972: Black Peoples Convention Black Allied Workers Union National Youth Organisation 1975: Formation of Black Women's Federation 1976: Soweto revolt begins on 16 June (- 77) Uprising spreads/ over 700 deaths, detentions, stayaways, school boycotts 1977: United Nations Arms embargo Steve Biko dies in detention 18 orgs/ 2 newspapers banned 1978: National Intelligence Service 1979: Congress of South African Students Azanian Students Organisation Qualified legalisation of some African trade unions	1980: Zimbabwe independence Strikes across SA schools Release Mandela campaign 1981: United Women's Organisation 1982: SADF raid on Maseru, Lesotho, Kills 41 people; Neil Aggett first white to die in detention 1983: Formation of UDF Formation of NOW Whites give 66 % approval to new constitution with limited power sharing for Coloureds & Indians/ Tricameral Parliament 1984 Township revolt (-96) Nkomati Accords, restricting ANC activity in Mozambique Bishop Desmond Tutu awarded Nobel peace prize 1985: State of Emergency (20 July) Mass detentions/ Mixed Marriages Act repealed: Immorality Act amended U.S sanctions imposed on SA 1986: State of Emergency lifted in March & more severe nation- wide SOE on 12 June/ virtually unlimited power to security forces/ mass detentions/ severe restrictions on media coverage Formation of UWCO 1987: General Elections for Whites, Coloureds & Indian 1988: New York Accords / SADF withdraw from Angola / Nam. 1989: Mass Democratic Movement Fall of Berlin wall/ ANC no longer has USSR as a powerful support/ Harare Declaration adopted by General Assembly: what is required for sanctions to end & restoration of SA to "the community of nations."	1990: ANC & CP unbanned Mandela and Sisulu released from prison Leadership returns from exile Violent conflict btw ANC & IFP (a largely Zulu group that received military & financial support from apartheid regime/ 1990-94 over 15,000 people die in political violence Perestroika / Glasnost (Gorbachev initiated reforms to bring USSR closer to the west) 1991: CODESA1/ multiparty negotiation forum to draw up constitution for post-apartheid South Africa Repeal of Land Acts of 1913 & 1936/ Group Areas Act of 1966/ Population Registration Act of 1950 Widespread violence National Peace Accord 1992: CODESA2 1993: Interim constitution established 1994: First democratic, non-racial elections (ANC wins 63% of the vote/ NP gets 20% of the vote/ Nelson Mandela sworn in as president/ Government of National Unity 1995 TRC investigations (-98) 1996 NP withdraws from GNU Present-day constitution is adopted with Bill of Rights & RDP (later replaced by GEAR) 1998: Thesis fieldwork (-99) 1999: Second Democratic Elections Thabo Mbeki as president

Adapted from:

Russell, D.E.H. (1989). *Lives of courage: Women for a new South Africa*. New York: Basic Books.

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APPENDIX 5: GLOSSARY & ACRONYMS

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GLOSSARY & ACRONYMS

Afrikaans	Language, evolved mainly from Dutch, spoken by Afrikaners and majority of coloureds
Amandla	"Power to the people" exhortation
Apartheid	Government's policy of compulsory & systematic racial s segregation, including the creation of independent "homelands."
ANC	African National Congress
ARM	African Resistance Movement
AWB	Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging (Afrikaner Resistance Movement)
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
Banning	The imposition of many severe restrictions on freedom of movement, speech, work, social and political activities without charge, trial, or recourse to a court of law, to punish and immobilise political radicals
Bantu Education	Legally imposed inferior education for Africans (1953)
BCM	Black Consciousness Movement
Boer	Afrikaner; sometimes any white with a reactionary, racist mentality; also farmer, police, or prison official; boer is the Afrikaans word for farmer
BPC	Black People's Convention
COD	Congress of Democrats
CODESA	Convention for a Democratic South Africa
COSAS	Congress of South African Students
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CPC	Coloured People's Organisation

ECC	End Conscription Campaign
FBWU	Food and Beverage Workers Union
FCWU	Food and Canning Workers Union
FEDSAW	Federation of South African Women
Forced removals	The involuntary resettlement of people (mostly black) in areas not of their choosing
FRELIMO	Frente de Libertação de Moçambique
Group Areas Act	Legislation that set up segregated zones in towns and cities to enforce residential separation of the races
GAWU	General and Allied Workers Union
GEAR	Growth Employment and Redistribution Strategy
GNU	Government of National Unity
House arrest	The most severe form of banning; includes being forbidden to leave one's house for twelve or twenty-four hours a day usually for five years
ICU	Industrial and Commercial Workers Union
IDAF	International Defence and Aid Fund
Immorality Act	Apartheid law prohibiting sex and marriage across the colour line
ISL	International Socialist League
LLY	Labour League of Youth
Listed person	A person subject to certain restrictions without charge, trial, or judicial review, because of his/her political opposition to the government; less serious than banning or house arrest
Matric	Short for matriculation; final examinations taken at the end of high school
MDM	Mass Democratic Movement

MK	Umkhonto we Sizwe, 'The Spear of the Nation'; the military arm of the ANC
NEUM	Non-European Unity Movement
NGO	Non-government organisation
NIC	Natal Indian Congress
NOW	Natal Organisation of Women
NP	Nationalist Party, supported largely by Afrikaners, members are sometimes nicknamed 'Nats'
NUMSA	National Union of Metalworkers
NUSAS	National Union of South African Students
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress; broke away from ANC in 1959
Pass/ passbook	Identity document required for Africans over sixteen (officially called a 'reference book') to restrict their movement; abolished 1986 and replaced by other means of control.
RDP	Reconstruction and Development Programme
SAAWU	South African Allied Workers Union
SACOD	South African Congress of Democrats
SACPO	South African Coloured People's Organisation
SACP	South African Communist Party
SACTU	South African Congress of Trade Unions
SACTWU	South African Clothing and Textile Workers Union
SADF	South African Defence Force
SAIC	South African Indian Council
SALP	South African Labour Party
SASO	South African Students Organisation

Shebeen	An illegal drinking place, often with live music, a juke box or record player to listen or dance to. Flourished under the prohibition conditions of the time, usually in the townships, or tucked away in back alleys of the business districts of major cities.
Sjambok	Animal-hide whip used by police
SOE	State of Emergency
Standard	Grade in school: standard six is the equivalent of the eighth grade; standard eight, of the tenth grade etc.
Townships	Black residential ghettos located near white cities
SOMAFCO	Solomon Mahlangu Freedom College
SWAPO	South West African People's Organisation
TIC	Transvaal Indian Congress
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Committee
UCT	University of Cape Town
UDF	United Democratic Front
UP	United Party
UWO	United Women's Organisation
UWUSA	United Workers Union of South Africa
Wits	University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg

Adapted from:

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