

Social Identities in the National Youth Service of Zimbabwe

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Abstract

From a sociological perspective, there is consensus on the idea that identities are constructed. This consensus forms the basis of this research on the social construction of identities in the National Youth Service of Zimbabwe (NYSZ). Other aspects of identity - its multiplicity and negotiable nature - are used as key terms of reference in the investigation of identity construction in the NYSZ. Institutions may be used by the state to produce a certain kind of identity, and power relations are always at play in the manufacturing of identity. This study investigates how social identity is constructed in the NYSZ, by whom and for what is it being constructed, and, significantly, with what success the NYSZ is creating the identities, and how its success can be explained. The NYSZ was established in 2001. It was not the first of such programmes to be established but could in fact possibly be the last to be instituted worldwide. Findings reveal that the NYSZ is successfully achieving its goals, and in particular, its goal of influencing the process of identity construction in the youth. A number of reasons account for this success: Its quasi-military nature, the socioeconomic background of trainees, and power relations in the training camps combined with the age of the trainees, all contribute to the success of the programme. The teaching of history from an afro-centric perspective also plays a significant role and contributes to the success of the NYSZ in creating a new identity in the participants. In this study, it is asserted that the NYSZ is not an ordinary kind of NYS. It is quite exceptional in terms of its structure, aims and operation. With regard to sociological theories, of NYSs I propose the addition of a fourth perspective to the three presented by Sherraden and Eberly: *construction of social and political identity*.

Opsomming

Vanaf 'n sosiologiese perspektief is daar 'n konsensus oor die idee dat identiteite gekonstrueer is. Die konsensus vorm die basis vir hierdie navorsing oor die sosiale konstruksie van identiteite in die Nasionale Jeug Diens van Zimbabwe (NJDZ). Ander aspekte van identiteit – soos die veelvuldige en onderhandelbare aard – word gebruik as sleutel terme van verwysing in die ondersoek na identiteit konstruksie in die NJDZ. Instutusias kan gebruik word deur die staat om 'n spesifieke tipe identiteit te produseer en magsverhoudinge is altyd teenwoordig in die vervaardiging van 'n identiteit. Die studie ondersoek hoe jeug identiteit gestruktureer is in die NJDZ, deur wie en vir wat dit gestruktureer voor is, en belangwekkend, met watter sukses en hoe die sukses verduidelik kan word. Die NJDZ is gevestig in 2001. Dit was nie die eerste program van sy soort om gevestig te word nie, maar dit kan moontlik die laaste een wees wat opgerig is in die wêreld. Bevindinge openbaar dat die NJDZ suksesvol is in die bereiking van hulle doelwitte, en spesifiek in hulle doelwit om die proses van identiteit konstruksie onder die jeug te beïnvloed. 'n Aantal redes kan verskaf word vir hierdie sukses. Die kwasi-militêre aard, die sosio-ekonomiese agtergrond van die leerlinge, die magsverhoudings in die opleidingskampe gekombineer met die ouderdom van die leerlinge dra alles by tot die sukses van die program. Die onderrig van geskiedenis vanaf 'n afro-sentriese perspektief speel ook 'n belangrike rol en dra by tot die sukses van die NJDZ om 'n nuwe identiteit onder die deelnemers te skep. In hierdie studie word daar beweer dat die NJDZ nie die gewone tipe NJD is nie. Dit is absoluut uitsonderlik in terme van die struktuur, doelwitte en handeling. Met betrekking tot sosiologiese teorieë van NJDe, stel ek 'n addisionele vierde perspektief voor as wat voorgestel is deur Sherraden en Ederly: *Die bou en skepping van sosiale identiteite*.

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I hereby declare that the dissertation, submitted to the Arts Faculty of the University of Johannesburg, in partial fulfilment of the degree of Master of Arts, apart from the assistance recognised, is my own work, and has not been submitted to another university for any other degree.

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Chapter One

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Orientation and problem statement

The year 2006 marked the fifth anniversary of the National Youth Service of Zimbabwe (NYSZ). There is a training centre in all of the eight regions of Zimbabwe, with each of these taking about 1,000 youths for four-month programmes. So far, a total of more than 50,000 youths have completed training. Although a number of centres have recently been temporarily closed due to financial constraints, the open centres continue to enrol students every quarter and have upheld their intakes.

Zimbabwe's youths have often been accused of adopting western values and 'shunning their culture'. Chikova (1998) commented that 'cultural purists have long condemned youths in slacks, patched and baggy trousers, overhanging shirts, militia style outfits and outrageous haircuts, for glorifying anything foreign.' The former vice-president of Zimbabwe, Simon Muzenda, was quoted as saying: 'It is a terrible shame that some of our young people seem to be bent on throwing away anything that is African, including our language, preferring to imitate western values which can never be ours even in a million years.' The aim of the NYSZ is to challenge such trends. Its vision is to create young people who are, as the Zimbabwean government (2001: 1) puts it, 'patriotic, self confident, disciplined, healthy, proactive and responsive to national need; youth who uphold national identity and cultural pride.'

The NYSZ consciously aims to manufacture an identity in the youth. Indeed sociologists, such as Jonathan Mafukidze and other sociologists from the University of Zimbabwe, who are familiar with the literature on identity creation, were involved in its development. In an interview I conducted with Mafukidze, we discussed, in particular, some of the key ideas of Manuel Castells. Drawing on Castells, the intention of the NYSZ was to *construct* a Zimbabwean national identity among the youth. Castells (1997: 7) argues: 'It is easy to agree on the fact that, from a sociological perspective, all identities are constructed. The real issue is how, from what, by whom, and for what?' I decided to provide an answer to these questions in relation to the NYSZ. Rather than limiting myself to the work of Castells, other

questions such as the multiplicity and negotiable nature of identities were also considered.

Mulaudzi (2000: 131), a South African scholar, provides an apt definition of National Youth Services (NYS) when she conceptualises it as:

a special government initiative that engages the youth in prioritised national development programmes. It seeks to involve young people in activities that benefit communities whilst developing their abilities through service and learning, and aims to inculcate a sense of patriotism and nationhood.

Various countries in the world - notably the United States of America, Canada and Germany in the developed world and Botswana, Zambia, Kenya and Nigeria in Africa - have instituted NYS programmes. The Zimbabwean programme is the most recent NYS programme to be established in Africa, and possibly globally as well. Doubtlessly, because of its novelty, it has hitherto attracted almost no academic attention. Moreover, it was instituted amidst a turbulent political situation, arguably to enable the government of Zimbabwe to maintain a strong grip on the youth by orientating them towards the perspective of the government. This is, therefore, a politically significant research project. Finally, given that the questions posed are about identity, and that the NYSZ was consciously concerned with identity construction, it is hoped that this research makes a small theoretical contribution to this subject.

While there is a body of literature on youth identity, including literature by Ansell (2005), Halve (2006), Andres and Adamuti-Trache (2006), and Dieleman (2006) to the best of my knowledge, none of these has made reference to NYSs. Although there have been a number of papers presented at NYS conferences by Watt (1996), Hamilton (1996), Basilico (2000) and Sorensen (2002), none of these alluded to the link between NYS and social identity, despite the fact that the NYS is clearly an institution in which the social construction of identities takes place. This research thus makes a contribution to filling a significant gap in the literature

1.2 Context and grounding

The setting up of the youth service in Zimbabwe has been closely linked to the idea of creating a particular kind of identity among the recipients of the training. The preamble of the NYSZ states that it 'seeks to create a symbolic identity for the Zimbabwean youth ... with respect to national philosophy, cultural identity . . . It aims to create a united people who still identify with each other over and above party politics, perceptions and affiliations' (Zimbabwe, Government of, 2001: 2).

The NYSZ has six core values which all seek to influence the identity of the youth. These are: national identity, unity and oneness, patriotism, self reliance and discipline. The government of Zimbabwe has realised that identity can be shaped and influenced in a particular way and has made use of this by creating the institution of the national service through which they can influence the identity of the youth. The word 'identity' features a great deal in the core values and objectives of the NYSZ programme. From the values, objectives and vision statement, it is clear that the main aim of the NYSZ is to influence the youth in a particular way, and as commented by the vice president of Zimbabwe, Joseph Msika, 'National service is shaping youth in a truly Zimbabwean manner' (The Herald: 2002).

The NYSZ has fallen under heavy criticism, especially from the independent media in Zimbabwe and from the opposition party, the Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). The main objection is that it is a strategy employed by the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), to maintain a strong hold over the country's youth. The *Sunday Mirror's* features editor (2004:1) noted that this criticism is mostly because:

it was started in 2001, at the height of political tensions in the country. The opposition, the MDC, suspected that the programme was producing a ZANU - PF paramilitary force that would be used to harass its supporters. A lot of people believe that it is a ZANU-PF programme, not a government programme.

Because of the economic crisis, Zimbabwean youth are faced with limited opportunities for advancement. The NYSZ offers them a passageway through which they can access tertiary education, such as teacher training, nurse training or can get

employment in government departments. This is because NYSZ graduates are given first preference in these areas. Youth are, therefore, often left with no option but to join the NYSZ if they want to get employment.

1.3 Concepts and sub questions

Castells makes a strong argument for the *construction* of identities and points out that what is important is not the debate on whether identities are constructed, but, rather, how they are constructed, what they are constructed from, whom they are constructed by, and what they are constructed for. I attempt to provide an answer to the questions raised by Castells in relation to the NYSZ. Because Castells's questions are rather limiting; in addition, other questions were also considered. These were: what kind of identity is being created? With what success is it being created? And how can its success be explained?

For Castells (1997: 6), the construction of identity is the process whereby social actors give meaning to their actions, and for him, meaning stems from shared experience. MacDonald (2005: 4) argues that 'besides explaining what he believes identities to be a construction of and then detailing the real issue about the construction process, Castells never qualifies his use of construction. He takes it for granted that this is the best terminology.'

Importantly, Castells (1997: 7) notes that this construction of meaning occurs amidst power relations, which inevitably affect the construction of that identity. Meaning is based on shared experience and people may manipulate the shared experience in order to construct identities. MacDonald (2006) extends Castells' insight to develop one of her own. Through an analysis of Tabligh Jama'at Muslims in Johannesburg, she illustrates how, through the process of manipulating the shared experience, a particular social identity was consciously created and maintained

Another valuable idea is the notion that identities are multiple. The multiplicity of identities refers to the fact that a person may have various identities, which they exhibit as and when the situation demands. Smith (2003: 18) articulated that 'we identify with a variety of collective affiliations, families, gender categories, regions, occupational groups, parties, confessions and ethnies, and we can move from one to another often quite easily as circumstances require.' This suggests that one's identity is dynamic and can be changed, as the situation requires. Moreover, at any

one time, an individual may encompass a number of identities. Smith (2003: 18) continues: ‘we can, at one and the same time, be wives or husbands, Christians or Muslims, professions or manual workers as well as members of particular regions and ethnic communities.’

A third helpful proposition is that identity is negotiable. If the thrust of Castells’ position is that social actors have agency, and that of McDonald (2006) is that identities are determined by those who manipulate the shared experience, negotiability implies that there is a constant tussle between individual desires and limited possibilities. Beetham (1991: 105) articulates that ‘people are never merely passive recipients of ideas or messages to which they are exposed. They are more like a sieve than a sponge, that is, they tend to be selective, assessing ideas and information in the light of their existing assumptions and against their lived experiences.’ This implies that in the process of identity construction, people do not just accept the information as it is, they compare it to their own lived experiences and then make a judgement as to whether they can accept it or not. This judgement is, however, affected by power relations, or lack of power, to influence their surroundings. Power is, however not static. It varies from one context to another, affecting which one of a person’s many identities is foremost in any given setting. Ideas about the construction, multiplicity and negotiability of identities are expanded on, in the following chapter.

1.4 Chapter outline

Identity cannot be understood in a vacuum. It has to be placed in some theoretical context. Chapter two provides a conceptual basis from which the research question can be answered. The chapter examines some aspects of identity theory that are fundamental in explaining the complex concept of identity and prove invaluable in understanding identity construction in the NYSZ.

Chapter three is a continuation of the review of existing literature, particularly focusing on an important aspect of this research project, that is, NYSs. It sheds some light on what they are, their importance and reasons for their implementation by governments. Further, this chapter examines three perspectives to NYSs. These are: the human development perspective, a perspective that sees young people as a national resource, and a perspective that sees national service as addressing social

problems. These perspectives provide an understanding of national service and account for its importance. A link between national service and aspects of identity is also made.

Chapter four focuses on the research methods that were used in carrying out this research. The research design included three methods of data collection: semi-structured interviews, observation of the training process and the analysis of NYSZ literature. The director of the NYSZ and his deputy were interviewed at length to provide an understanding of the NYSZ. Other NYSZ officials, and the instructors that are responsible for teaching the trainees, were also interviewed. Further, discussions were held with youth that had gone through the NYSZ training and with youth that were at the Border Gezi training centre. Finally, community members living close to Border Gezi were interviewed in order to gain an understanding of how they perceive the identity that has been created in the NYSZ.

Observation of the training process at the Border Gezi training centre in Mount Darwin, Zimbabwe, was undertaken. I stayed at the training centre, interacted with the students and observed the training from sunrise to sunset. Among other activities, the researcher observed the road run, the drills, the lessons and meal times.

Analysis of literature mainly focused on the pamphlets that the Zimbabwean government has produced so that the general public could understand the NYSZ. Some of the reading materials that are used at the centres were also studied so as to gain an insight into what the youth are being taught at the training centres.

The presentation and analysis of findings is covered in three chapters: five, six and seven. Chapter five answers two of the questions that were generated in this study, that is, By whom are the identities constructed? What they are constructed for? Answers to these questions were combined together because they place the NYSZ into context and explain the rationale for its establishment.

Chapter six addresses two more questions: How is the identity being formed? And what is the resulting identity? Chapter seven focuses on evaluating the success of the NYSZ. Chapter eight concludes the report by summarising the main findings and providing answers to the critical questions that were raised by Castells and the additional questions that were generated in the study. The findings show that what is being constructed is a Zimbabwean identity that encompasses four aspects: patriotism, discipline, entrepreneurship and voluntarism. The researcher further realised that the NYSZ was instituted for a number of reasons: some political, some economic, and

some social. Irrespective of the reasons for its establishment, the NYSZ has changed the lives of the youth who participate and their identity.

I argue that the NYSZ, as an institution, is involved in consciously constructing an identity in the youth who participate by manipulating their shared experience. Staying in the same camp and being involved in the same intensive activities for a prolonged time and, most importantly receiving the same teachings, makes the youth view the world in a similar way, thus they begin to identify with one another and share a common identity. Consciously constructing an identity directly involves manipulation and takes place in the context of particular power relations. One who has more power can manipulate others and influence the process of creating the identity they want among others.

The process of identity construction could be affected by negotiation. People question things and some values may be rejected while others will be accepted. However, I argue that there is very little negotiation of identities in the NYSZ. The nature of the training leaves little room for negotiation. The youth are not critical of the lessons that they receive; they accept what they are told. This lack of negotiation contributes to the profound success of the NYSZ. Moreover, I propose that even though a person may have multiple identities, which they exhibit as and when it suits them, the NYSZ identity becomes the dominant identity: It overshadows all the other existing identities, and influences any other identities that the youth may have.

Of interest to the researcher was how one could explain the success of the NYSZ in creating a new identity in the NYSZ trainees. I argue that various factors account for this success. Most important is the age of the graduates. Youth is an impressionable stage in life when individuals are easily influenced. The quasi-military set up at the camps and the way history lessons are taught also contributes to the success in creating identities.

The NYSZ has a very strong and rather effective emphasis on constructing a strong identity, in this case a particular kind of Zimbabwean youth identity. Given what is known of NYS programmes worldwide, this emphasis, combined with the length and quasi-militaristic nature of the training, means that it would be reasonable to characterise the NYSZ as an NYS of a special kind.

Chapter Two

ASPECTS OF SOCIAL IDENTITY THEORY

2.1 Introduction

While the preceding chapter presented the problem statement and the background to the issues that the researcher investigated, this section gives a review of the literature closely related to the study. It seeks to show the path of prior research and explores how the current project is linked to it. Authors theorising about the notion of identity have brought into play several aspects of identity which have been vigorously debated and argued about. Among these aspects, a few have been selected, because they are of particular relevance to the understanding of NYSs. These aspects are that identity is based on shared experience, that it is constructed, that it is negotiable and that an individual may have multiple identities. These aspects are the focus of the following discussion, but prior to this, it is important to establish what identity is. The literature review on identity is informed by Castells, whose reflections on the construction of identity have been used extensively to form the theoretical basis for the research.

2.2 Conceptualising identity

For Lewellen (2002: 90) identity is a ‘matter of imaginative and creative rediscovery in which contemporary interpretation and needs fill in the gaps, recreate the past and bridge the discontinuities with new mythologies.’ This definition emphasises identity as something, which is never quite completed. Lewellen (2002: 90) sums this up by saying that ‘identity is not an accomplished end point, of a people’s history, but a constant process of becoming ... but always temporarily positioned within a particular context that needs to be imaginatively interpreted.’ Jenkins (2004: 4), makes a similar point when he notes that identity is ‘a process or practice... it is not something that is fixed or inevitable.’ An identity is not simply out there waiting to be experienced. It develops in the experience and it will not always exist in the form that it was given at a particular moment (See also Scott, 1991: 792).

Kidd (2002: 7) explains it as:

a matter of knowing who is who (without which we can't know what's what). It is the systematic establishment and signification between individuals, between collectivities, and between individual and collectivities, of relationships of similarity and difference. It is the characteristics of thinking, of reflection and self perception that are held by people in a society.

From this definition, it is clear that similarity as well as difference is important in identity. According to Jenkins (2004: 4), similarity and difference are the two criteria of comparison, which are implicated in the meaning of identity. That is, in establishing who oneself or someone else is, the individual will take note of who they are similar to and how these similarities make them different to others. This does not always result in the process of 'othering' but the concept of the other is helpful in explaining the notion of identity.

Jenkins (2004: 4) also makes a valuable distinction between nominal identity and virtual identity. By nominal identity, he refers to a name or label that may or may not acquire meaning over time. A virtual identity is the experience of that label. The labelling on its own is not enough to make an identity. Being labelled gay or deviant alone is not enough to give one that identity. It does not mean that a person will begin to refer to him or herself as such. Jenkins says that what is required is a 'cumulative labelling process over time in which the label will have consequences for the individual. The virtual identification is what a nominal identification means experientially and practically over time to its bearer' (Jenkins 2004: 77).

With regards to this issue of identities developing over time, Castells (2000: 7) claims that '[identity] only becomes a material force and a material source of meaning, when it has been enforced enough over time and in the depth of people's bodies and souls. Then it becomes an experience' While this may hold true for the formation of certain identities, such as national identities, Castells does not seem to account for the fact that time is relative. So as Dawson (2003: 152) argues, 'while *some* identities must be enforced enough over time, in order to become a material source of meaning, other meaningful identities can develop through short-lived, shared experiences' This criticism of Castells is significant here, as with this study, Dawson (2003) was interested in young people, particularly, high school students in

Johannesburg. From her research, she discovered that that other meaningful identities develop through short-lived shared experiences.

From the basic conceptualisation of identity, some aspects stand out, these are particularly relevant in trying to understand the issue of NYSSs. These are, that identity is constructed, that it is based on shared experience that people have multiple identities and that identity is in some measure, negotiated.

2.3 The construction of identity

Calhoun (1994: 9-10) notes:

We know of no people without names, no languages or cultures in which some manner of distinctions between self and other, we and they, are not made. . . self-knowledge - always a construction no matter how much it feels like a discovery - is never altogether separable from claims to be known in specific ways by others.

Calhoun makes it clear that identity is a construction and not a discovery as is commonly thought. As a construction, one may view it as a building, where one can clearly see what came first and what was added. This also implies that its pattern may be changed and it can be manipulated to bring out something that is in the mind of the constructor on the basis of cultural attributes.

When explaining about identity construction, Hall (1990) prefers the word *production*. He explains that unlike other productions, which clearly show the end result, the process of identity formation is never finished. MacDonald (2005: 7) concludes by noting that 'identities are constructed, they do not just exist of and by themselves.' What has to be demonstrated now, is how these identities are shaped, or as Castells writes, the real issue is how, from what, by whom, and for what?

Thus far it has been established that identity is a construction. Besides being a construction, identity stems from the experiences we share with others. This aspect of identity forms the focus of the next section.

2.4 Shared experience

Castells (2001: 116) notes that ‘people, from the very moment they exist, have meaning and this meaning comes from something and that something is shared experience...identity is meaning and meaning is what makes you live, everything else makes you survive.’ This alludes to the importance of meaning; it is what explains identity. Without attaching meaning to experiences, one does not have an identity. For Castells (1997:6), identity is the construction of meaning by social actors on the basis of cultural attributes. He also emphasises that identity is not based on words, feelings or moods, the only thing that materialises identity is experience. Therefore, without experience, there is no identity. Castells (2001: 114) asserts that ‘we can discuss how this experience is perceived, transformed and rearranged but the point is, identity which is not rooted in experience is fantasy not identity.’ Here, Castells underlines the importance of experience as the foundation of identity.

The state may be instrumental in the construction of identities. It may employ its coercive powers and may also introduce programmes, which increase the shared experience of members of a particular country. It is the argument of this paper that the NYSs may be programmes in which the social construction of identity takes place. National states have tended to eliminate all prior identities, to impose an identity based on a particular political definition of identity. Castells gives the example of the French Revolution, which sought to exterminate all the other existing identities except for the French identity. Before the French Revolution, there were many identities in France, but these were eradicated by the state to create a ‘new universal, good French citizen’ (Castells 2001:116). Castells goes on to say that the French Revolution did not fully manage to exterminate all the identities; in fact it was an unfinished task, which was only completed by the Third Republic school system. This system was more successful, because it realised the importance of education in constructing identities. Every student had to go to a state owned school, and students across the whole country would learn the same things. In this way, everybody was inculcated with exactly the same ideology.

If identity is based on shared experiences, is it possible to create mechanisms that would enhance the shared experiences, and therefore strengthen or create an identity. Castells (2001: 123) suggests that there is a possibility of accomplishing this. Some of the mechanisms which may be used to enhance the shared experience are,

amongst others, shared education, the media and shared foreign and defence policy. Shared education, as was demonstrated in the case of France, is an important mechanism that may be used to enhance the shared experience. Castells (2001: 123) emphasises that history teaching is important so that children can learn the history of their country; this in turn will increase identification with the nation or the state. The emphasis on education and history has special significance for the NYSZ because it focuses particularly on the teaching of the history of the country from an afro-centric perspective.

2.5 The multiplicity of identities

Some authors (Massey, 1999; Castells, 1997; and Lewellen, 2002) have emphasised that identities are multiple. A person may be said to have many identities, the significance of which varies from context to context. Lewellen (2002: 90) asserts that the conception of identity is complex because the way that a person identifies himself at any given time depends on the context. An individual can be, at one time, a sister, or a daughter, at another time a wife, and at yet another, a church member. In herself, the person carries the identity of a sister, a mother, a wife and so on. These are examples of the multiple identities that people have. When the context does not demand it, her identity as a mother is not exhibited, but when the context demands, she takes up that identity.

Having multiple identities may be a source of conflict and contradiction for the individual. Woodward (2000: 7) notes that a sense of conflicting identities may result from the tensions between having to be a student, a parent and an employee at the same time. Massey (1991: 65) is also of the view that people have multiple identities. She asserts that multiple identities can be a source of richness or a source of conflict. When people are faced with many identities, they may be confused as to who they really are. The confusion stems from the fact that they are expected to be a lot of things at the same time. Castells (1997) adds a valuable point when he strongly argues that identity should be distinguished from roles and role sets. He asserts that ‘without such a distinction, there would be a plurality of identities belonging to one person.’ This of course is a ‘source of stress and contradiction in both self representation and social action.’ To be a worker, a mother, a churchgoer, a basketball player or a

smoker is not one's identity but rather, one's role or role set. To Castells, identities are a stronger source of meaning than roles because of the 'process of construction and individuation that they involve.' Identities 'emanate from the self while the role or role set is defined by norms structured by the institutions and organisations of society.' Castells (1998: 6-7) further points out that a role is 'defined by the norms structured by the institutions and organisations of society.' In contrast, 'identity is people's source of meaning and experience.' This is what differentiates a role from an identity. However, the notion of the multiplicity of identities cannot be discarded altogether. Even though being a mother may be considered as an individual's role, it also becomes a nominal identity, and while playing the role of a mother, an individual is identified as such. It is plausible then to argue, as Massey has done convincingly, that no one person has a single identity but a multiple of identities and that one exhibits a particular identity in a particular context.

2.6 Identity formation as negotiable

The process of identity formation may be regarded as a process of negotiation. People do not just accept things as they are told. They have their own knowledge and experiences. Castells (1997: 7) notes that 'the relative weight in influencing people's behaviour depends upon negotiations and arrangements and organisations.' Jenkins (2004:5) asserts that our understanding of who we are and of who other people are, is, a product of agreement and disagreement, it too is negotiable.' According to Kidd (2002: 26), this perspective of identity allows us to see human beings as 'active, thinking beings, rather than the passive victims or robots of the culture that controls them.' Some sociologists have rejected this emphasis, arguing instead that human beings cannot act as they wish and that they do not have free will. If identity is negotiable and if people have free will, it means that we do not accept anything and everything as it is. There is a process of negotiating. Some of the values may be rejected and some of them may be accepted. However, further analysis shows that although human beings have free will, their freedom is limited to a large extent, by power relations and circumstances that dictate to them how they are supposed to respond. It follows logically that the ones that have more power are able to manipulate this process to their advantage.

2.7 Conclusion

This chapter has examined some aspects of identity, which may be useful in understanding NYS programmes. This chapter has examined aspects of identity that are crucial in explaining the notion of identity. It has demonstrated that identities are based on shared experience and these experiences give meaning to social actors. Techniques such as shared education may be used to influence the shared experiences. The construction of identities occurs amidst power relations, which affects the construction process. Identities are also negotiated, which implies that people are selective; they accept some things and reject some of the things dictated to them. These aspects of identity are useful in understanding identity formation in NYSZ



Chapter Three

NATIONAL YOUTH SERVICE

3.1 Introduction

The previous chapter placed this research into a theoretical context. It is also important to discuss the various NYSs so that one has an idea of what they are, in terms of their definition, how they operate and their major role in influencing youth identities. This chapter is an attempt to understand NYSs as institutions that make a lasting impact on the youth who participate. The first section focuses on NYS in general followed by an analysis of NYS as an institution for nation building and for legitimising the state. Finally, a link will be established between identity formation and the NYS.

Before analysing the literature that was gathered on NYS, it is important to mention that an extensive literature search on NYS was carried out. Firstly an electronic data base search was carried out; the A-Z data base was thoroughly searched using word combinations such as 'youth and service', 'youth and identity', 'national youth service' and 'national and service.' The Africa-wide database, which consists of thesis and dissertations from in and around South Africa, was also used. Ebscohost, which has full text articles, was searched. The literature search proved quite futile, as there was very little available on youth services, especially in the African context. The major source of information on NYS programmes was the NYS website, but even on the website, there were only a few articles (including Gowan (1994) Sofoluwe (1994), Allison (1996), Christopher and Christopher (1998) and Basilico (2000) that made a slight reference to identity. Most of the articles were written by country representatives, national directors of NYS or advocates of NYS who were promoting the idea of NYS programmes hence they were not at all critical of the programmes. One Honours dissertation¹ on the NYSZ was discovered in Zimbabwe, but its main focus was to determine why the NYSZ was receiving bad

¹ Lubombo Musa did an Honours dissertation with a focus on discourse analysis on the NYSZ. His particular focus was on why the NYSZ was receiving negative media publicity. His dissertation was written in partial fulfilment of an English degree. His dissertation was submitted to the Midlands State University in Zimbabwe in 2004.

publicity in the media, so its focus was quite different from the focus of this study. The researcher, however, made use of the available information on NYSs and especially used papers from the six global conferences. Interestingly, one article from a South African author, Mulaudzi (2000) was found. The article was also promoting the idea of establishing an NYS programme in South Africa and explored the pros and cons of such an initiative.

3.2 National youth service programmes

Mulaudzi (2000: 131) provided an apt definition of NYSs when she conceptualises them as a

special government initiative that engages the youth in prioritised national development programmes. It seeks to involve young people in activities that benefit communities whilst developing their abilities through service and learning, and aims to inculcate a sense of patriotism and nationhood.

This definition catches the essence of NYS programmes not only in South Africa but worldwide. Their main aim is to influence the youth to such an extent that they will identify more with the nation (Sherraden and Eberly 1990: 1). It is an idea that recognises that individuals should contribute to the larger society and that the society should also encourage national service as a platform where people, especially the youth, can make a significant contribution to the development to their country. Chibber (1994: 52) notes that the national service is based on the 'lofty democratic principle that every citizen renders some service to the nation for the many benefits he receives, both from the society and from the state.' The aim of NYS is to 'develop, instil and maintain a sense of nationalism, responsibility, discipline and voluntarism amongst the youth populace through appropriate training and meaningful participation in the development process of the nation' (Gowon 1994: 5).

Gowon (1994: 4) notes that the focus of national services differs between the developed and the developing countries. For example, in developing societies the focus is on the issues of survival, nation-building and basic rural development. For the more established and developed societies, the focus is on the improvement of the

quality of life, the environment and on the containment of other harmful by-products of modern life.

The stage of youth is a time when young people are easily influenced and national leaders have taken advantage of this in order to influence the youth. Gowan (1994: 52) notes that:

implicit in the attention countries give to positive programmes of youth development is the perception that 'youth' is an impressionable stage, a time of emotional development, rapid change, idealism, adventure and even rebellion which if not well managed, may be channelled into the harmful, unproductive and destructive occupations and pastimes. Our world, with its well-known intricacies, is in dire need of those mechanisms for the induction of young people during this transition into the practices which build character, promote the values of good citizenship and leadership, and enhance their capacity and commitment to contribute to community service and nation-building (Gowan 1994: 52).



Policy makers and government officials have long realised the significance of national service and its usefulness. Interest in NYSs has sparked a series of global conferences, the first of which was held in the United States, from the 18 to the 21 June 1992. The following countries were represented at the conference: the United States, Canada, Papua New Guinea, France, the United Kingdom, Germany, Nigeria, Zimbabwe, India, Guyana, Botswana, Costa Rica, Trinidad and Tobago, and the Netherlands (Okafor and Essien 1994: 4). Although previous conferences on national service had been held, this was the first conference to look at the issue from 'a global perspective' The first global conference sparked a number of other global conferences which have been held all over the world. The second conference was held in the USA in 1992 followed by another one in Nigeria in 1994, thereafter a conference has been held every two years. A conference was scheduled for 2006 but was postponed due to a lack of financial resources.

Many countries in the world are implementing some form of NYS. Germany has risen has the most exemplary model of national service as observed by Chibber (1994: 52) when he said:

Of all the nations in the world, it is perhaps the Germans who are developing a system of national service, which may well become the model of the world. So far national service for all youth is compulsory...

As Kulman (1992) explained, more than 100,000 young men were engaged in civilian activities in national service. These activities fall under three major headings: Civil defence - which protects the civilian population in case of war and provides disaster relief - development aid, which is carried on overseas missions, and *Zivildienst*, an obligatory alternative civilian service for those who object to compulsory military service.

3.3 Perspectives on national youth services

There are three perspectives to the issue of national service. These are: the human development perspective, a perspective that sees young people as a national resource, and a perspective that sees national service as addressing social problems. It is important to note that these perspectives are in the US context and have been advanced by two US advocates for NYSs, namely, Sherraden and Eberly. However, even though they have been written in the American context, they have particular relevance for NYSs in Africa.

The human development perspective views youth service as an institution in which young people can participate in their years of young adulthood. In this view national service is seen as an institution for cultivating human behaviour, which may not be adequately enhanced, by schooling or a conventional job. The argument made is that altruism or a sense of responsibility for others will be enhanced by the experience of national service. This perspective focuses on the growth of the individual. NYS is a platform where the identity of the youth would be influenced as they are taught basic values of the nation and are influenced to develop as individuals (Sherraden and Eberly 1982: 23).

The second perspective views national service as a policy option for solving social problems that are recurrent among young people, such as high rates of youth unemployment, high crime rates among the youth, the high percentage of school dropouts, drug and alcohol use among teenagers and so on. These social problems

may be addressed by NYS as it keeps young people occupied and gives them something worthwhile to do. It has been argued that NYS as an option for solving these problems has more benefits and less costs (Sherraden and Eberly, 1982: 28).

The third perspective is that of young people as a national resource. Particularly in third world countries that are implementing development projects at very minimal budget, young people with their energy and flexibility are seen, as an important resource for meeting social and economic needs in a cost effective way. Youth may be used by the government to construct bridges, roads and other development work at very little cost to the nation. They may also be used in conservation efforts by the government where they may acquire important skills that they may use in later life to conserve energy and other natural resources. Sherraden & Eberly (1982: 27) note that the youth participation efforts of Cuba, China, Israel and other nations, although occurring in different political and social contexts, are models of NYS programmes which represent examples in which young people are a valuable resource to the nation. In these countries, the youth have been used by the government at very little cost to the nation.

These three perspectives on national service are mostly concerned with social problems and are obviously not mutually exclusive. Each of the perspectives exemplifies one of the possibilities that lies in the NYS and each may exclude or distort one or the other aspects of the service (Sherraden and Eberly 1982: 27). A point to note, however, is that NYS perspectives read like a persuasive advertisement of NYS programmes. This is because they were advanced by advocates of national services who were persuading government authorities to implement some form of national services in their countries and were also lobbying for the continuation of NYS programmes in the countries where they had already been implemented. However, the NYS in practice is not as ideal as portrayed by the perspectives. The major beneficiaries of the programme are not always the participants, as the perspectives propose. Governments sometimes implement the programmes for their own benefits and to achieve a particular aim which benefits the government in the long run. In some instances, the youth are trained to be a reserve army. Thus, these programmes may be used by governments to garner support from the youthful members of the population. The following section explains how the NYSs may be used by the ruling parties for their own benefits.

3.4 Legitimising identities

All authorities struggle to maintain legitimacy and may use various ways to do so. The NYS may be one of the tactics that may be employed by governments as a way of sustaining their legitimacy in the face of policy failure. Beetham (1991: 118) claims that:

the contemporary state is a form of power structure that requires legitimation, not so much to function or even to survive over a period of time, but to achieve those purposes that depend upon the support of the population, and to maintain its political system intact in the face of serious policy failure or challenge to it.

Thus Beetham makes it clear that legitimacy is not important for sustaining the government in power over a period of time but that it is of importance when a government has some purposes that depend upon the population. Arguably, such purposes may be elections whereby it is the populace that has the political muscle to maintain or remove a government from power. Moreover, legitimacy may be used by governments to maintain the political system when it is threatened by opposition or when there are policy failures. Thus a government uses tactics to legitimise itself, so that people will continue believing in it and supporting it even when it has failed. But what kind of situation arises when a government loses legitimacy? Rotberg (2003: 9) explains a situation where a government has lost legitimacy.

The rulers are perceived to be working for themselves and their kin and not the state... The state increasingly is conceived as being owned by an exclusive class or group, with all other pushed aside... various sets of citizens cease trusting the state. Citizens then naturally turn more and more to the kinds of sectional and community loyalties that are their main recourse in time of insecurity...

The government of Zimbabwe is battling to maintain legitimacy in the face of serious policy failure and political opposition from the MDC, other minor opposition parties and civil society movements. This battle began before the institutionalisation

of the NYSZ in 2001. The period of interest in this instance is, however, the year preceding the establishment of the NYSZ as well as the subsequent years. In order to understand the crisis of legitimacy faced by the government of Zimbabwe, one has to understand the political, economic and social context of Zimbabwe in the years surrounding the establishment of the NYSZ. Rotberg (2003: 15-16) provides some statistics relevant to the period from 2000-2002. In all instances, the situation has gone from bad to worse in 2006.²

In 2000 and 2001, GDP per capita slid back by 10% a year. Inflation galloped from 30% to 116%. The Local currency fell against the US dollar from 38 – 1 in 2001 to 400 – 1 in the first half of 2002 and to 1700 – 1 in the second half. Foreign and domestic investment ceased. Unemployment rose to 80% in a country of 12 million people. HIV infection rates climbed to 30% ... Agents of the state preyed on its real and supposed opponents. The government's legitimacy vanished.

The government of Zimbabwe thus found itself in a situation of illegitimacy and in order to deal with such a situation, diverse measures were introduced by the ruling party, among them repressive laws, control of the media and the introduction of the NYSZ. This is an institution whereby the thought processes and beliefs of young people can be shaped and aligned to the purposes of the government. Zeilig (2005: 1) views the NYSZ as a way of mobilising the youth politically in support of the ruling party. He notes that:

the government returned to the dormant³ concept of national youth service...an attempt to politicise sections of unemployed and rural youths and should be seen as part of the attempt by the regime to construct a social base to confront the emergent opposition movement. The war veterans and the peasantry- politicised around the question of land- were the praetorian guards of this policy, but youth became a crucial element of ZANU's social base.

² By November 2006, inflation had rocketed to 1000% making it the highest in the world.

³ Just after the independence of Zimbabwe, in 1980, the government toyed with the idea of instituting the NYS, but this never came into fruition until 20 years after independence.

Beetham (1991: 105) argues that ‘dominant groups are able to secure their own legitimacy through their influence or control over the processes whereby the beliefs of the subordinate are shaped and reproduced.’ The main component of the NYSZ is the national orientation course where the students are taught the history of the country from the point of view of the government. The youth come to identify with the government and believe that it has their best interests at heart.

3.5 National youth service and identity

NYS programmes are instrumental in the creation of identities in that the person who comes out of the service is not the same as the one who went in. They would have been exposed to many different challenges, which they never faced when they were in school and, for most of them, it is their first time away from their families and the familiar environment of home. Sherraden and Eberly, (1982: 26) note that:

The national youth service programme is a vital life experience that heightens the receptivity of the persons. This is important for formal education because the volunteer is not the same person in the system after he returns. He has been up against situations and dilemmas for which he doesn't have solutions, he is hungrier for answers. He has a much deeper sense of challenge in the world than when he was reading books and talking in the unreal world of the campus.

This clearly shows that the national service plays a vital role in shaping the identities of youth. They come out of the service different from the way they went in. They are now able to work as a group and to look for answers from within themselves and not from the schoolteacher. Thus NYS may be regarded as a rite of passage. According to Smith (2002: 2) a rite of passage is:

an experience recognised by a culture as significant enough to transform an individual and move him or her from one life stage to the next (usually adolescence to adulthood), changing their attitude, behaviour and identity, and

making them givers instead of takers, 'we'-centred instead of 'I'-centred, and adults instead of children.'

Most exponents of NYS regard effective programmes as a very important rite of passage.

The way in which national services shape identities may be seen in their objectives Pinkau (1982: 54) notes that the Nigerian NYS 'seeks to develop in them attitudes of mind, acquired through *shared experience* and suitable training, which will make them more amenable to mobilisation in national interest.' In this way the youth are imparted important moral and nationalistic values, which they were not in possession of prior to their joining the youth service. After their training, it is hoped that they will come out of the service different from the way they went in.

NYS may also be instrumental in shaping identities in that they bring together youth from different ethnic groups. In this way, the youth learn about the other ethnic groups that are part of their nation. By coming together in this way and spending sometime together while serving in the NYS, stereotypes may be dissolved as the youth have a one on one experiences with each other. Pinkau (1982: 54) notes that NYSs may be sparked by a need to bridge the division among ethnic groups and converge their different cultural backgrounds into a sense of national community. Youth from different backgrounds and ethnic groups are brought together to give them a sense of belonging to the same nation. Commenting on the achievements of the Kenyan national service, Pinkau (1982: 56) noted:

that the continued convergence of Kenya's different cultures in joint work and learning, under equal conditions, must be stressed as a major achievement. This is especially so when the youth are compared to other sectors of the society, who have not been in the service, and who have remained highly tribalist despite the efforts of nationalism by the government.

The NYS is thus instrumental in the construction of national identities and cementing the efforts of the various governments to strengthen national identities. The NYS is an institutions that 'contains' the shared experience. The programmes bring young people together, and for the duration of the training, their shared experience is limited to the training camp. Shared experience gives meaning to the actions of social actors.

The youth undergoing the NYS training usually stay together (sometimes up to two years) at the training centres. This is a platform for shared experiences. The meaning that they will attach to their experiences and actions becomes similar and they begin to identify with one another as well as with those who are training them.

Linked the shared experience is the process of ideology inculcation. In order to establish an ideology in the youth, the individual needs to belong to a social group, which will instil the ideology in the minds of the youth. According to Toddes (1993: 37) 'all identities ask for an uncompromising commitment to some absolute hierarchy of values and rigid principles of conduct.' The NYS may be used by governments to create young people who identify with the ideology of the ruling party, and that way, the youth may be used by the government in national emergencies and civilian unrest. They do this in collaboration with the army and the government police. The young people who would have been trained in the national service will now have a sense of belonging to the nation and they will adopt the values of the ruling party. According to Pinkau (1982: 53) this has been the case in the Kenya NYS and the former Zambian youth service.

Although identity is a construction, which can be manipulated to bring out what is in the mind of the constructor, and the shared experience can be manipulated to enhance the shared experience, it is also a negotiation. The youth do not just accept things as they are told, because they are human beings who can make choices.

The negotiation of identities is present in NYS programmes. Even though the youth in the national service may be influenced to adopt certain values, there may be some kind of negotiation. They do not just accept things as they are. This is because they are 'active thinking beings.' The negotiation of identities is clearly illustrated by the example of the youth service in Canada. Sheraden and Eberly (1990: 11) report that they talked with one leader who had sent two participants home for having sexual relations and, in sympathy, seven more participants showed their solidarity with their group members by quitting the programme leaving the programme with only three members. This shows that the youth are not robots that just accept things as they are told. They have the ability to scrutinise what they are told and they can also make decisions that go against what is expected of them.

3.6 Conclusion

The literature reviewed in the two chapters raised a number of issues concerning the notion of identity. Among other things it revealed that identity is a construction, is based on shared experience and is negotiable. When these findings are linked to the literature on NYSs, a number of questions come to the fore. For example, what kind of identity is being constructed in the NYS? From what is it being constructed? By whom? And for what? The review also revealed a gap in the literature especially on NYSs. The researcher relied on information from the West because there was very little information about African NYS programmes, although they have been established in countries such as Botswana, Nigeria and, lately, Zimbabwe. The more recent research on youth identity, (Nkuna 2006; Basson 2006; Wyn 2006; and Da Silva Barreto 2006) has not explored the link between NYS programmes and identity even though one of the objectives of the NYS is to influence the identity of the youth. The following chapter explains the methodology that was used in conducting the research.



Chapter Four

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

4.1 Introduction

The previous chapter has focused primarily on theories surrounding the notion of identity and expounding on the phenomenon of NYS programmes. The main thrust of the research is to answer the questions raised by Castells in relation to the construction of identities and the further questions that were generated in the study. This section provides an exposition of the research methodology that was employed in the quest to answer the research question, that is, it provides a detailed explanation of the methodology that was used in the research in terms of the sampling method and the method of data collection and analysis. It also provides a justification of the methods used. In addition, possible limitations of the research, problems experienced by the researcher and ethical issues are also detailed.

4.2 Research design

In order to answer the research question and thus arrive at the goal of the research, the qualitative research method was used. The objective was to study how identities are created in the NYSZ. Identity is an abstract notion and cannot be measured. Thus to investigate such a notion, it is important to use the qualitative orientation. Identity entails having an understanding of who one is and what one thinks about their world. The qualitative method of inquiry allows one to understand the respondents in terms of their definition of the world (Henning 2004: 5). This method has been selected because the aim of the research was not to measure variables or to verify an existing theory, which is the main aim of quantitative research, but rather, to gain an in-depth description and understanding of the construction of identities in the NYSZ. Therefore, the researcher used qualitative methods of selecting research subjects, qualitative methods of data collection and qualitative methods of data analysis.

4.3 A brief description of the research site

Out of the eight training centres situated across the country, the Border Gezi training centre was selected as the research site. A number of factors pointed to Border Gezi training centre as the most appropriate site for the research. It was the first NYSZ training centre to be opened in the year 2001, when the NYSZ was introduced in Zimbabwe, and it is also the most well known of all the training centres, in fact, the graduates are popularly called 'maBorder Gezi' (the Border Gezi people) even if they did not train at the Border Gezi training centre. The centre was named after Border Gezi, who initiated the NYSZ. He was the Minister of Youth and Development and, he died before the project came to fruition. The centre provides training in a 120 day programme for 1000 youths at a time. Some of the instructors are ex-freedom fighters popularly known as 'war veterans', some are university graduates who have teaching experience but most are graduates of the NYSZ.

4.4 Informants

The informants of the study consisted of officials from the ministry of youth service, the instructors/trainers at the training centre, the youth who were participating in the programme and those who had already gone through the training as well as the community surrounding the training centre in Mount Darwin. The researcher targeted these four sets of respondents because they were well positioned to provide information that aided the researcher in investigating the kind of identity being created in the NYSZ.

The officials from the department NYSZ were targeted because they are responsible for carrying out the programme, for recruitment and training and, therefore, know why the programme was established and what results should be achieved. The department officials were in a position to provide the researcher with valuable information on the goals of NYSZ and to provide key information as to why the programme was started and how it operates. They also provided their own definition of identity and how they are influencing the process of identity formation in the youth

The second category of participants, that is, the instructors at the training centre, are important because they are the ones who actually execute the programme. They bridge the gap between the officials of the department of youth service and the students who participate in the programme. From them, the researcher sought information on how they perceived the programme, what they were teaching the students and the results that they seeking to achieve after the training period. The researcher also asked them to define identity and to explain how the NYSZ is constructing identity in the youth.

The current participants provided important information on how they themselves perceived the programme, what they had learnt and how they had been influenced by the programme. The same also applies to the students who had already gone through the process. They enabled the researcher to assess to what extent the government is actually achieving its goals

The training centre is situated in Mount Darwin. The community surrounding the training centre in Mount Darwin and other Zimbabweans provided information on how they perceive the programme and the change that they saw in the young people who had participated in the programme.

4.5 Sampling method

The concept of sampling refers to the ‘selection of a particular section of the population upon which you carry out the research’ (Wisker 2001: 138). The researcher made use of a purposive or judgemental sampling method to identify the respondents. According to Neuman (2003: 213) ‘purposive sampling uses the judgement of an expert in selecting cases and it selects cases with a specific purpose in mind.’ It is often used in qualitative research and it is appropriate for this particular research because it allowed the researcher to look for people who fit the criteria for desirable participants. Barbour (2000: 115) applauds this method when he observes that ‘purposive sampling offers researchers a degree of control rather than being at the mercy of any selection bias that may be inherent in pre-existing groups.’ Using this method, the researcher identified some people who were key informants in this research. The NYSZ falls under the Ministry of Youth Gender and Employment, located at the ZANU-PF House in Harare. The researcher identified ministry officials

who are involved in the running of the programme, who provided important information on what they seek to achieve and how they are influencing the young people who participate in the programme. Respondents were chosen due to their ability to provide information that is relevant to this study.

The training centre has a number of instructors who are responsible for training the youth. The instructors who participated in the research were selected using the judgemental sampling method. The researcher selected six training officers of whom two were male and four were female. The commander responsible for training was also interviewed at length. Informal discussions with other employees at the NYSZ were also conducted.

Students were selected from the Border Gezi training centre in Bindura, Zimbabwe. They were chosen using the judgemental method of sampling considering factors as availability and willingness to participate in the research. Gender balance was also sought, so as to acquire information that is representative of both sexes. Males and females were interviewed separately to ensure that females who are more subdued in the presence of males because of cultural background were free to air their views. The respondents from the community surrounding the centre were selected using the judgemental method taking into consideration such factors as proximity to the centre and their degree of interaction with the students at the training centre as well as their willingness to participate. The researcher also took advantage of the opportunity to interview students who came to the NYSZ headquarters. These students trained at different institutions and in different years.

4.6 Methods of data collection

The researcher used interviews to obtain data from the respondents. This was done through the use of an interview guide that touched on the major issues of the research. The interview guide was adapted from one interview to another and the researcher took advantage of what was learnt from one interview when conducting the next interview. Babbie and Mouton (1998: 289) define a qualitative interview as ‘essentially a conversation in which the interviewer establishes a general direction for the conversation and pursues specific topics raised by the respondent.’ Interviews are credible as a method of collecting information because, they not only provide data,

but also contextual information that may be useful especially in this research on identity. Babbie and Mouton (1998: 289) emphasise that an interview ‘allows the object of study to speak for him/ herself rather than to provide our respondent with a battery of our own predetermined hypothesis based questions.’ The researcher used the semi structured, open-ended interviews and a few closed questions. Wisker (2001: 168) gives credence to this method when she observes that semi structured interviews manage to address the need for comparable responses and the need for the interview to be developed by the conversation between the interviewer and the interviewee. Taking into consideration the strengths of semi structured interviews, the researcher realised that they would be most suitable for the research on identity. They allowed the respondents to speak for themselves and allowed the conversation to flow freely. The respondents were thus able to bring up important issues that the researcher was not aware of. The disadvantage of interviews is that they are time consuming and that the vast amount of data collected may make ordering and interpretation difficult. The researcher, however, allocated enough time to data analysis in order to avert this problem.

An exploratory interview was conducted in the early stages of the research with one of the people that were involved in the formulation of the NYSZ curriculum. This interview provided important information on the NYSZ, especially in relation to identity construction and how the NYSZ is constructing identity in the youth. Several interviews were conducted with officials in the NYSZ department, at the ZANU-PF House in Harare including with the director of the programme and one of the deputy directors. Instructors at the Border Gezi training centre, the youth that were in training at the time of the project, NYSZ graduates and community members were also interviewed.

4.7 Other methods used

It is important to note here that although interviewing was the main method of data collection, observation and documents analysis were also used in the research. Henning (2004: 6) notes that ‘in most cases you would make use of at least two methods and preferably three – to ensure that the phenomenon has been investigated by means of different sources of information, thus giving the data variety.’

Observation of the training process was conducted in order to get a deeper understanding of the NYSZ and thereby strengthen the data gathered. The researcher was given permission to stay at the Border Gezi training centre for four days. For the duration of my stay at the Border Gezi training centre, I observed the training process from morning to evening. The training of the NYSZ includes drills whereby the students are taught how to march like soldiers. On average it takes about three hours per session. These drills were observed. The youth were also observed while they had their meals and when they did different chores around the camp and also when they had their classes. A number of manuals are used in the training centre. The manuals cover many topics such as the management of self, the political history of the country and notes on entrepreneurship. These manuals were read and analysed.

4.8 Profile of the respondents

In the first phase of the research, four top officials from the NYSZ as well as four instructors from different camps were interviewed. At the Border Gezi training centre, six instructors and the commander in charge of training were interviewed, and the commander in charge of the training was interviewed.

The second phase of the research included interviewing current trainees and graduates. Six group discussions were conducted with students at the centre and four group discussions were conducted with graduates of the programme. Several interviews with graduates who were trained at different centres throughout the country were conducted. These graduates were trained at different centres throughout the country.

The third phase of the research consisted of interviews and observations of the training process at the Border Gezi training centre and community members. Other interviews were also conducted with Zimbabweans on how they perceive the programme.

4.9 Analysis of data

Neuman (2003: 447) defines data analysis as a ‘search for patterns in data - recurrent behaviours, objects or body of knowledge.’ In analysing the data that was collected,

the researcher coded the data. Coding is important in qualitative research because it enables the researcher to organise the raw data into conceptual categories and create themes or concepts which will then be useful in analysing the data (Neuman 2003: 441). As Lindlof (1995: 42) highlights, analysing qualitative data is best thought of as a process that is continuous throughout the study. Thus analysis of the data started from the first interview. Some of the interviews done were recorded on tape and in some cases; the researcher had to take notes manually as the respondent spoke, because some of them refused to be recorded on tape. Therefore, the data analysis process was based on conversation analysis.

The recorded interview transcripts were converted to Microsoft Word documents by transcribing. Data was then coded according to the themes highlighted in the literature and theoretical discussions. The analysis also involved making connections between responses from the students, the officials from the Ministry, and the instructors and relating them to the reviewed literature. Some of the interviews were conducted in Shona or a mixture of both English and Shona or exclusively English. During the analysis the Shona interviews were translated into English as accurately as possible.⁴

4.10 Ethics and use of pseudonyms

Ethical considerations were of great importance in this research. Several ethical issues were considered by the researcher before, during and after the research. The officials at the NYSZ headquarters, instructors, and commanders at the Border Gezi training centre, have been referred to as ‘the officials’ in order to maintain a degree of anonymity. The researcher took care not to mention the real names of respondents, especially if the information might be perceived to have political innuendo that could be harmful to the respondent. The researcher has made use of pseudonyms in case the dissertation is read by people who might victimise them. The names of officials, trainees, graduates and community members are all pseudonyms.

⁴ See Appendix

4.11 Accessing the NYSZ

Although the issue of access was not difficult, the researcher got the impression that some of the NYSZ officials were not keen to speak to researchers because of past experiences that they had with researchers from overseas. Thus, although I am Zimbabwean, some officials were sceptical because I am registered with a South African university. However, whenever I was introduced by the director of the programme, most opened up to me and were keen to be of assistance whenever they could. They were also quite helpful as to where I could access some more information

The reception that the researcher received at the training centre is worthy of mention in this project. I had heard so many things about the training centre therefore, I had a negative perception, but upon arriving all my worries were dissolved because of the welcome that I received. I was free to speak to whoever I wanted and the commanders were very open about what they do and how they teach the students. Their only cause of worry was the negative media coverage that they have received, and they feared that I might share the same sentiments. They actually wanted me to stay longer so that I could observe the students and interact with them more.

4.12 Strengths and limitations of the study

Before presenting and analysing the results of the study, it is important to note some limitations and strengths inherent in the study. Future research projects on national youth programmes in general and on the NYSZ in particular may benefit from these limitations. The biggest limitation perhaps is the limited nature of the sample. With training centres scattered across Zimbabwe it would have been more insightful to visit all the training centres and interview the students who were undergoing the training across the whole country. One of the centres is an all female centre and the researcher might have benefited from interviewing the students at this centre. The research might also have been theoretically deeper if there had there been some kind comparison an NYS programme that has been in existence for a long time such as the Nigeria Youth Service or the Ghana Youth service. Unfortunately, the limitations of a mini

dissertation meant that I had to limit myself to one training centre. But an in-depth study of that centre was carried out.

Most importantly, however, the study has some strengths which consequently override the limitations. I received permission to carry out the research. This was an important breakthrough for me, because without access, the researcher would not have been able to interview the Director of the programme who became major informant of the research. Needless to say, the researcher would not have managed to get into the training centre and would not have had the opportunity of interviewing the youth who were participating in the programme at the Border Gezi training centre. Thus without access, the researcher would only have been able to scratch the surface of the issue. The researcher also had the advantage of being a Zimbabwean, and could speak the vernacular language with the respondents. The use of an interview guide with open ended questions allowed the respondents to elaborate as much as possible on the questions that were asked. The group discussions with the students ensured that the students could be very open and a lot of issues were debated by the students among themselves.

When conducting the research, I was allowed to be as free as I wanted. I was allowed to be with the students alone without any interference from the commanders at the camp. The interviews that were carried out at the headquarters were allowed to be free without any interference from the Directors or any of the senior officials.

4.13 Conclusion

This research is qualitative in nature and used qualitative methods to gather data and analyse it. Qualitative research gives one a deeper understanding of social issues especially the notion under investigation. Identity is an abstract notion which cannot be measured and that can best be understood from the point of view of the interviewee; it was thus appropriate to use the qualitative method of inquiry. This enabled the researcher to understand the construction of identities in the NYSZ. The findings from the study are presented in three chapters. The following chapter presents the findings that answer two of the questions generated in the study.

Chapter Five

RATIONALE FOR THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE NYSZ

5.1 Introduction

While chapter four focused on the methods that were used in the data gathering process and challenges experienced during the research, this chapter proceeds to present the findings obtained in the fieldwork in order to answer the research question: By whom is the identity being created? And for what is the identity being created? The question, By whom is the identity being created, is quite obvious and clear. The government of Zimbabwe through the NYSZ is creating the identity. The question, 'For what?' needs more clarity hence this section focuses on providing an answer to this question. In order to establish the conceptual platform for the topic under research, that is, identity, the chapter starts off by providing an understanding of how the NYS officials view identity. From there, the reasons for the establishment of the programme are explored in order to answer the question, 'for what?' Moreover, the researcher also examines a bone of contention that has existed since the establishment of the programme, that is, is the NYSZ a national programme or a party programme?

5.2 Conceptualisation of national identity

The NYSZ aims to construct and uphold national identity among the youth of Zimbabwe. The officials conceptualise identity as a notion that is linked to the knowledge of history, to them, one can not claim to have an identity if one does not know their history. History is what gives people an identity. That is one of the most important reasons why history is taught in the NYSZ. The issue of colonialism was inevitably brought up in the discussion on defining identity. The respondents pointed out that colonialism has had a great impact on the history of the Zimbabwean people and ultimately on their identity.

When asked about the definition of identity, Goto (NYSZ official) defines it as:

That which makes you different from another person. The 'I' is emphasised and the other is significant. It is what differentiates me from someone and what makes me similar to someone else. That is what gives one an identity. The moulding of identity occurs through socialisation which creates an identity. Primary socialisation occurs at home whereas secondary socialisation occurs in institutions and the two complement each other.

Several interviewees especially those in top positions in the department of NYSZ linked identity to the knowledge of history. The interviewees emphasised the importance of history in defining one's identity. Kaonde (an NYSZ official) mentions that:

For us to identify as one, we should know the history of our country. Our identity as a people is embedded in our history. Our history tells us who we are. It gives us our roots. For us to know who we are and where we are going, we should know where we are coming from as a people.

Jokoto also reiterates the importance of history in identity when he mentions that:

Heritage, history and tradition, these things should give us an identity. For us to be where we are today, we must have come from somewhere. You cannot claim to know who you are as a people if you do not know your history.

Apart from identity being embedded in history, the interviewees mentioned that one cannot talk about the Zimbabwean identity without mentioning colonialism. To them, the identity of the Zimbabwean people has been affected by colonialism, like that of many African countries. Kaonde points that:

Colonialism deprived us of our identity. Somewhere along the line, we forgot who we are as a people. The coloniser gave us a definition of who we were supposed to be and we accepted it. We began to define ourselves as the

colonised, the subjects, and the ruled. We never saw ourselves as the rulers, as owners of property...

Jokoto also shared the same sentiments, he said:

Our identity was affected to a large extent by the encroachment of white people and as such, we adopted foreign values, we appreciate foreign tendencies to the detriment of our culture and values.

The definition of identity that was given by officials and instructors was to some extent similar to the academic definition of the term. The officials brought to the fore aspects of identity such as knowledge of who one is, and the significance of the other when ascertaining one's identity and people's ways of interpreting the world around them. The definition in the literature also brought out these factors. When discussing identity, the officials and instructors seemed to suggest that there is a strong link between one's identity and one's knowledge of the history of one's country. According to them, one can not have a Zimbabwean identity if one does not know the history of the country. History teaching is the basic component of the NYSZ training. It is approached from the Afro-centric rather than the Euro-centric perspective. The history of Zimbabwe is inevitably linked to colonialism which had an adverse impact on Africa as a whole and on Zimbabwe in particular. The respondents suggested that the identity of Zimbabweans was affected by colonialism. In their view, in order for a person to have a Zimbabwean identity, their minds have to be 'decolonised' so that they stop thinking and seeing themselves as the colonised, the servants and as subjects of western countries particularly Britain which was the coloniser.

The question, from what is the identity being constructed needs consideration at this juncture. Castells (1997: 7) explains that 'the construction of identities uses building materials from history, from geography, from biology, from productive and reproductive institutions, from collective memory and from personal fantasies, from power apparatuses and from religious revelations.' Two factors are implicated as the building materials from which the identities in the NYSZ emanate. These factors are: history and power apparatuses. The findings demonstrate the significance of history in the NYSZ. History teaching is a major component of the training and from the

discussions with the officials, one realises that they make a strong connection between history and identity.

As explained before, power relations are always at play in the construction of identities. This is particularly true in the NYSZ where power is unequally distributed and is skewed to the side of the constructors of the identities. The NYS is thus a power apparatus from which identities emanate.

In order to answer one of the most important questions generated; why they are creating the identity, the researcher investigated the reasons for the inception of the NYSZ. These reasons also point to the importance of the programme as an institution for creating national identity.

5.3 Reasons for the establishment of the NYSZ

The findings reveal that there were a number of reasons for the establishment of the NYS in Zimbabwe. The reasons were divided into four sections. These are: for unifying purposes, to countering foreign influences, for maintaining societal values and norms and for developmental purposes. These reasons are explored in the following sections.

Creating a national identity and unity

The respondents cited the creation of a unifying programme which creates a uniform identity for all Zimbabwean youths as a major reason for the establishment of the programme

Mafukidze (a sociologist involved in the development of the NYSZ curriculum) pointed out this role when he said that:

Its focus is to create awareness among the youth, to pass on the legacy of the revolution, national consciousness, national and cultural awareness and the desire to unite as a people, as a nation, to bridge the gaps between tribal, ethnic and racial groupings and form one national identity, so that's what I think it is. It is also there to give skills and to instil a sense of belonging and a desire to participate in the construction of the country and that's what the preamble says.

Kaonde (NYSZ official) reiterated the same sentiments when he said:

Our people, especially the youth, do not know their identity as Zimbabweans. They identify more with the colonisers than with our own country and traditions, hence the need for the youth service.

Muendi (NYS official) also pointed out that:

The NYSZ was and is still motivated by the agenda to create a uniform identity among the young people of Zimbabwe. Whether one is from Matabeleland, Mashonaland, they are all Zimbabweans and should have a uniform identity. Uniformity will ensure that there is unity in the country.

Thus, from the interviewees, it can be gathered that an important reason that called for the establishment of NYSZ was the need to create a uniform identity for Zimbabwean youth. Youth that have the same identity view the world in the same way and the way they interpret the world is similar.

The need to unite the people of Zimbabwe in the face of a very difficult economic and political situation was cited as another reason for the creation of the NYSZ. Of late, Zimbabwe has been facing difficult problems such as the rising cost of living, high inflation and general economic challenges. In the officials⁵ viewpoint, these problems are caused by the opposition party, the MDC. Therefore, there was a need to reconnect the youth into the mainstream of the ruling party. In order to maintain stability and cohesion in the country, the government felt it was important to introduce the NYSZ so that it could inculcate values of oneness and unity into its youth who make up a big proportion of the population. Badza (NYSZ official) explained this when he said that:

We needed to foster unity and oneness at a time when the unity of the country was at stake because of the political situation in the country. The MDC at that time had become a major threat for ZANU-PF and we needed to ensure that

⁵ The phrase: 'the officials' refers to NYS officers and the training centre instructors.

we as a country and as supporters of ZANU-PF remained united against our adversaries and not let our youth be corrupted by MDC.

The MDC is made up of young people, who are highly educated, and this has made ZANU-PF realise that for a long time it had neglected the younger generation. The NYSZ was thus used as a counter measure against the MDC's control over young people who had become its major supporters while ZANU-PF was made up of the older people who had witnessed colonisation and the struggle for independence. In a way, it bridged the gap between two different generations who were born in two different eras and had very dissimilar and sometimes opposing perspectives. Mafukidze also pointed this out when he said:

In the 1980s, it was easy because the youth had come out of the war so the level of consciousness that the party sought and the leadership that they wanted was still in the minds of the youth then but as time went on there was that gap because the so called 'born frees' were maturing and they understood very little about where the country was coming from, and where the country was then, and where the country was heading to. There was also an argument that there was a lot of imperialist and western thinking that was being transmitted into the youth via different media forms that needed correction, there was need for a parallel school of thought or views to be imparted in the youth so that really necessitated the implementation of the programme.

The NYSZ encourages the mixing of tribes in order to eradicate any differences and prejudices that may exist between the different tribes of the country. It seeks to create a Zimbabwean identity that erases all tribal identities and makes them insignificant. This makes youth identify more with the country and less with their different tribes. According to the respondents, erasing tribal identities increases unity and cohesion in the country. The youth will begin to identify with the country as a whole and not the provinces that they individually come from.

Zimbabwe is composed of people from different tribes and ethnic backgrounds. These tribes include the Shona, Ndebele, Kalanga, Tonga and Venda. The respondents pointed out that in order for unity to prevail in the country, the different tribes have to know, understand and even appreciate one another. The NYSZ

promotes tribal mixing. Youth are selected from the different provinces of the country. Each province brings an equal quota. When the youth from different provinces are brought into a camp, they do not stay grouped according to the province from which they came. Pasi (NYSZ officials) explained the process of tribal mixing in the following way:

When we started the programme, then I was a training officer. When we received these young people into the camps, they wanted to remain in their groups of origin. Those from Matabeleland wanted to stay together and play together and those from Mashonaland wanted to do the same. You know what I did, I had to break those divisions by way of sleeping and living arrangements. Each barrack accommodates youth in groups of twenty and we have ten provinces in the country so I ensured that only two people from each province stay together in a barrack. I also ensured that even if they were from the same province, they should not be from the same district in the province. For example, if they are from the same province, say, Midlands, I would then take one from Mberengwa and another from Gokwe and put them in the same barrack, thus although they are from the same province, they are from different districts. The sleeping arrangements also ensured that one did not sleep next to a person from the same province.

Jokoto (an NYSZ official) also highlighted this point when he said:

The NYSZ also serves to unite the different tribes in the country. In the camp you find people from every part of the country and speaking all the different languages found in the country thus it serves as a unifying programme. For a long time, the country did not have a programme that actually united the youth of the country. A person could grow up without ever interacting with people from other provinces who speak a different language than them. This programme serves that purpose.

The NYSZ is a detribalising programme. It seeks to eradicate all the existing identities and to superimpose an identity on the youth. The NYSZ officials and the youth view and define identity in terms of the collective rather than the individual.

Before anything else, an individual is Zimbabwean; the youth are being trained and raised as Zimbabweans and then from being Zimbabwean, other secondary identities develop. The NYSZ is thus making an attempt to eradicate all other existing identities and replace them with a Zimbabwean identity. Thus the Ndebele, Shona, Kalanga, Venda, Shangani and Tonga identities are being exterminated so that people know that before anything else they are Zimbabwean. Castells (2001:116) explains how France managed to exterminate all the other existing identities in France and imposed a French identity on all citizens. Thus, the state can eradicate existing identities and impose a national identity which defines the individual.

Countering foreign influences

The NYSZ was also designed to instil a sense of loyalty and belonging to the country to end the brain drain that has been affecting Zimbabwe over the past few years. Highly educated people are leaving third world countries for greener pastures in western countries. The officials felt that people use their home country's resources to acquire a good education but they do not sow back into the economy; after graduation they rather go overseas, where they have a chance of living a better life. Kaonde pointed this out when he said:

Zimbabwe has become a training ground for European countries. After using the taxpayer's money to receive a good education, people go and work abroad and contribute to the development of the developed countries. To curb this problem, youth should be oriented so that they love and appreciate their country, because no matter how difficult things are, patriotic people stand with their country.

The officials felt that the Zimbabwean youth, although they did not experience the 'physical colonisation,' experienced 'mental colonisation', which continued even after the country, gained its independence in 1980. The youth are said to see things in a Eurocentric way. Thus, the BNYS is a process of mental decolonisation, which makes Zimbabwean youth appreciate who they are. Badza (NYSZ official) mentioned this when he said:

It [NYSZ] helps the youth to identify themselves in the global village and to understand global issues such as democracy, human rights, press freedom in our own realistic context. That is the context of decolonising our minds, understanding the underlying factors of issues. For that alone, the youth service should be applauded, because it marks a turning point in the process of mental decolonisation of the youth.

According to programme officials, one of the main reasons for the establishment of the NYSZ is to create an institution that approaches history from an Afrocentric perspective rather than a Eurocentric perspective which seems to be the case in regular schools, colleges and universities. Kaonde (NYSZ official) brought out this point when he said that:

Books originate from America and Britain. These are the texts that are used in schools and they are very much Eurocentric. Our children thus become Eurocentric and follow after Eurocentric teachings. The NYSZ instils Afrocentrism in our youth so that they see things not from the point of view of the oppressor but from the point of view of those who brought independence to this country.

Maintaining societal norms and values

The officials also feel that the NYSZ provides an opportunity where the elders can pass on to the youth the values that they are supposed to have as members of the country of Zimbabwe. Goto (NYSZ official) pointed out that:

Every system wants to continue, it wants to live forever. Every nation, community, wants to continue forever. We as the Zimbabwean nation want to continue forever. To do so we need the NYSZ to ensure that we pass onto the youth our national values they will in turn pass it onto the next generation.

The NYSZ is also being used as a tool for nation building. It teaches the values that the Zimbabwean leaders want every Zimbabwean to have. According to the interviewees, without such values, the country would not be able to stand and overcome its challenges. In their views, the NYSZ thus imparts these values to the youth so that they can be maintained into the coming generations. Shava (NYSZ official) explains this at length when he says:

Youth are any country's future. It will be foolish for a father to accumulate a lot of wealth but not considering teaching his sons and daughters the proper attitudes and behaviour he expects and desires out of his children. What it will mean is that as soon as the parents die, there might not be any family at all if the children do not know what their proper legacy should be and how to safeguard their heritage. Therefore the NYSZ is like an aunt or a grandfather of a family who teaches the proper legacy to the young ones. The youth of Zimbabwe are being empowered with the knowledge of how to safeguard their heritage and what their true legacy should be. It is thus nation building through preparing future generations for the challenges that they are likely to encounter since our country has a painful history of colonisation and a revolutionary struggle that set the present youth free.

To achieve the ends articulated by Shava, the government has placed former liberation war fighters in commanding positions in the NYSZ structures. The war veterans are said to be the custodians of the legacy of independence so they are purported to be the most appropriate people to pass this legacy on to the next generation.

Development purposes

The NYSZ was also motivated by the need to incorporate young people into developmental programmes and to make them more involved in the social, economic and developmental issues of the country. This was pointed out by Jokoto (NYSZ official) when he says that:

The national development of a country depends on rich historical background and ideology, hence the introduction of the NYSZ. Young people constitute a large chunk of the population, hence they are a key stakeholder in the development of the country. Leaving them out of national decision making is tantamount to national suicide. As such it is important to mobilise young people socially, politically and culturally in the development of the nation.

According to the respondents, the economic and political situation in Zimbabwe has made the youth lose confidence in themselves and in their future. They see a bleak future ahead of them. The NYSZ thus seeks to rectify this problem and restore confidence in the youth of Zimbabwe. Jokoto points this out when he says:

The programme makes a youth rediscover, love and appreciate the Zimbabwean identity and know that it is second to none. Importantly, it is a confidence building programme so that our youth can to overcome any challenges that they may face in life. We must also be identified in any parts of the world as Zimbabweans and we should be proud of being Zimbabweans. If you go to America, Europe etc, you identify a black man by their suffering that is the identity of the African man in the diaspora. Our pride as Africans must be restored; hence the NYSZ. We should have youth who are full of pride and who are not timid in the presence of youth from other countries.

The research highlighted that there are many other reasons that explain the institution of the NYSZ other than political reasons. In a nutshell, according to the respondents, the establishment of the NYSZ was sparked off by the need to ensure that Zimbabwean values are transmitted to the next generation, to enlighten the youth about the liberation war, A further reason for its establishment was the need to unite the Zimbabwean youth and a way of reintegrating them into the politics of the country. To some extent, it is also a tool for nation building and a way to curb the problem of the brain drain by imparting patriotic notions onto the youth.

On closer analysis of the NYSZ, one realises that a significant reason for the formation of the NYSZ is to impart the youth with a ZANU-PF ideology so that they perceive issues in the same way as the ZANU-PF leadership. Imparting the ideology is done through the teachings that the youth receive at the training centres. The

orientation classes impart on to the youth the values of the party, which is the government and ultimately the state. The youth who go to the training, irrespective of the camp that they go to, all have the same lessons and are thus inculcated with the same ideology. The instructors have the same values as the state and this is what they teach the trainees. Even in the case of France, 'school had no other values than the values of the state and the values of society are going to be the values that the state decides' (Castells, 2000: 60). Thus, the state is powerful enough to decide for the people the right values and ultimately the identity that its people are supposed to have. The research thus reaffirms the role of the state in the formation of identities.

The issue of colonisation came up a number of times in the discussions with the students, instructors and officials. They all alluded to the adverse effects that colonisation had on identity. They blame colonisation for weakening the Zimbabwean identity and for imposing a new, undesirable identity on them. The change in the name of the country did very little to bring back the Zimbabwean identity. Although the country changed from Rhodesia to Zimbabwe, there was no corresponding change in how people viewed themselves. They still had the colonial mindset. They saw themselves as the ruled, as the slaves and as the colonised. They still had to receive mental decolonisation. Castells alludes to the effect of colonialism when he says that states were decomposed due to colonialism, which made people of different cultures into one state creating 'artificial provinces.' He mentions the Berlin treaty, which divided Africa into different countries irrespective of existing state boundaries. He concludes by saying that this created loose collective identities. Thus the NYSZ is an attempt to strengthen the country by building a strong collective identity to correct the adverse effects of colonialism.

In comparison to reasons for other NYS programmes, the NYSZ seems to be similar to other programme. The major reason for establishment of NYSZ programmes fall in three categories, that is, the human development perspective, a perspective that views young people as a national resource and thirdly a perspective that sees national service as addressing social problems (Sherraden and Eberly 1982: 23). Above and beyond these three perspectives, I suggest a fourth perspective, the building and shaping of social identities. The NYS plays an important role in the construction of identities. It is an institution that contains the shared experience from which meaning will emanate. And as Castells (2001: 116) explains, meaning is what shapes the identities.

The Zimbabwean model is loosely aligned to these three perspectives, but it was more political in nature at its inception. It is unclear whether ruling parties in other countries also use NYSs to consolidate their power as is the case in the Zimbabwean programme. In Germany, the NYS is compulsory for all males (Chibber, 1994: 52). This is, however, not really the case with the NYSZ, where youth have a choice to join or not to. Although it is not compulsory, the youth are compelled to join the NYSZ especially if they are not employed because it increases their chances of getting employment.

There is a lot of ongoing debate on whether the NYSZ is a party programme or a national programme. The researcher sought to get the officials' point of view in this debate and to find out how they justified it as being a national programme. Such a discussion, on whether the NYSZ is a national programme or a party programme, is important because a national programme produces a national identity whereas a party programme produces a party identity and benefits the party more than the nation.

5.4 Is the NYSZ a party programme?

Having articulated the rationale for the NYSZ and relating it to other national programmes and the literature, the researcher went on to examine a bone of contention that has existed between the ruling party and opposition parties on whether the NYSZ is in the interest of the nation or if it serves the best interests of the party only. The major opposition party, the MDC, has accused ZANU-PF of creating a paramilitary army of youth whom they can use in their campaigns. When asked to explain the difference between a party programme and a national programme, Muendi (NYS official) said:

Detractors wanted people to believe that it is a party programme. But this is not a party programme. It is a national programme. It is not a ZANU-PF programme but rather a national programme.

Goto (NYSZ official) gave a more vivid explanation when he said:

Well, we can not distinguish a party programme from a national programme. Let me start by saying that many countries have national service programmes. Is it a national programme or a party programme in those countries? To answer you let me say that every government works with a particular system. Members of parliament make up the government. After elections the party that wins enacts its manifesto. When ZANU-PF won the elections, it enacted its manifesto which had NYSZ on its agenda. However, in as much as it was a ZANU-PF idea, the programme itself is not a party programme. It is not funded by the party. It is a government programme. Its budget comes from the government under public service and it is not only for ZANU-PF supporters. It is a national programme and it takes people from all over the country.

Kaonde (NYSZ official) handled the question in the same manner when he said:

The ZANU-PF manifesto proposed the national service, that is why it was introduced, but this does not necessarily mean that it is sponsored by ZANU-PF. It was started by the government which is made up of ZANU-PF parliamentarians, thus it is not easy to distinguish between a government programme and a party programme. It depends on the angle from which you want look at it and what you want to achieve from your analysis.

The respondents strongly felt that even though the programme may be a national programme, it cannot portray the work of the MDC in good light; it cannot be seen to be supporting the MDC or other political parties that oppose the ruling party. The youth are taught the achievements, values and goals of ZANU-PF. Jokoto (NYS official) pointed out that:

Although the camps are national in character, the achievements of the party and particularly of the president are taught. Mugabe is the epitome of Africa, of resistance, suffering, struggles, endeavours, aspirations of the Zimbabwean people and ZANU-PF carries the burden of history that is taught in the national service. But this is not being partisan. We cannot have a programme of ululating puppets. We are thus training our youth to be van guards of our country.

Concluding whether the NYSZ is a party programme or a national programme is not as easy as it seems at first glance. The explanations provided by the respondents suggest that it is a national programme that was started by the party. Other countries also have NYS programmes and in those countries, is the programme considered a party programme or a national programme? The NYSZ funding does not come from the party but from the government coffers. If the ruling party is toppled by another party does it mean that the NYSZ will not continue? The NYSZ department is housed at the ZANU-PF headquarters in Harare. Whether this was deliberate or as a result of lack of space to house the new department remains unclear. Judging whether it is a national programme or a party programme depends on the angle from which one chooses to view the matter. Whether it is a party programme or national programme nevertheless does have impact on the identity that is being created in the NYSZ. ZANU-PF maintains that it is a national programme while the MDC says that it is a ZANU programme. On one level it is a national programme; however, on some levels, there are pointers that it is being used to advance party ideals. In the final analysis, NYSZ programmes are useful not only in Zimbabwe but in other parts of the world, but their usefulness will be limited if the programme is being hijacked by politics.

5.5 The changing nature of the NYSZ

The NYSZ seems to be undergoing a lot of reformation and redressing. From the curriculum to the rules and regulation guiding the programme, a number of changes are being made. In 2001, at its inception, the NYSZ had a stronger political flair but now its focus is being shifted from politics to the socio economic challenges that are affecting the youth of the country. The rules are also changing. In 2001 when the programme was started, they were a lot stricter. For instance, no visitors were allowed in the camps and the trainees could not receive anything from home. The rules have since been relaxed. Relatives are now allowed into the centres and they can bring food and clothes for their children. If there is a family emergency such as a death in the family, the trainees are allowed to go home. The visitors are however not allowed to be alone with the students without an instructor or a guard.

5.6 Conclusion

This section has served to answer two of the research questions of the study, by whom is the identity being created and why is it being created? I argue that the government of Zimbabwe through the institution of the NYSZ is creating a Zimbabwean youth identity. The reasons for the establishment of the NYSZ have been used to account for why they want to create this identity. Further, given the political and economic situation of Zimbabwe before the inception of the NYSZ in 2001, and latter years, and the government's crisis of legitimation, the NYSZ is part of the regime's survival tactics and it is receiving considerable success as a way of garnering the support of the younger generation of Zimbabwe. The following chapter proceeds to provide an answer to two more questions; how is the identity being created by the NYSZ and what kind of identity is being created?



Chapter Six

THE PROCESS OF CREATING AN IDENTITY AND THE RESULTANT IDENTITY

6.1 Introduction

While the previous chapter focused on answering the questions by whom is the identity being created and for what is it being created, in this chapter, an attempt is made to answer the questions; how is the identity being created by the NYSZ and what kind of identity is being created? To achieve this end, an overview of the NYSZ is provided, which gives a picture of the NYSZ. The recruitment process is also outlined. Further, a section on the resultant identity will be provided in which the four pillars of the NYSZ will be examined.

6.2 An overview of the NYSZ

The NYSZ aims to instil in the youth four main values, these are, patriotism, voluntarism, discipline and entrepreneurship. According to the government of Zimbabwe (2002: 1) the NYSZ ‘promotes young people’s direct participation, integration and involvement in all issues and at all levels of national governance and decision making as well as foster national peace and unity.’

The preamble of the NYSZ states that it prepares young people ideologically, physically and mentally to safeguard the revolutionary legacy and that the NYSZ does not protect or promote any partisan ideology or orientation. This statement is however contradicted by what actually happens in the NYSZ; the ideology that is promoted is that of ZANU-PF. The work of the ruling party is glorified and its leaders are celebrated. The youth are encouraged to support the ruling party, as the party for the people. In a way, the NYSZ is being used by the ruling party as a way to consolidate its power among young people of Zimbabwe and to garner support for the party from the youth of the country.

Youth that have undergone the training programme are given first preference when enrolling in government colleges to train as teachers or nurses. Being a graduate

gives them an advantage as they are then able to get assistance with placements in government departments. With the closing of many private companies, the government has become the biggest employer in the country. Unemployment is high and there is stiff competition for the few government jobs. Being an NYSZ graduate increases one's chances of getting employment and is one of the major incentives for joining the programme. NYSZ graduates are also given first preference when they apply for financial assistance from the government to start income generating projects.

One of the aims of the NYSZ is to produce leaders that are patriotic. It is hoped that some of the graduates of the NYSZ will rise up to be the leaders of tomorrow and will uphold the values and lessons that they received during their tenure in the national service. Deploying the youth into different sectors of the government also ensures that the message and values of the NYSZ are spread to the greater population of Zimbabwe.

In Zimbabwe, the NYS graduates are popularly called 'green bombers' a derogatory name that typifies the irritating and troublesome green bomber toilet fly, because of the green uniforms that they wear. In the early days it was not admirable to be an NYSZ graduate and thus a 'Green Bomber'. Some of the youth were shunned by friends and their community after graduating, because they were regarded as a militia for the ruling party. This perception is changing gradually as the NYSZ is dissociating itself from political issues and focusing more on social and economic issues. In December 2005, a three day workshop on the curriculum was held at the Border Gezi training centre. Its main aim was to revise the curriculum which was entering its fifth year of use. The workshop was necessitated by the need to revise the curriculum so that it addresses the more recent issues of the day.

The point of departure in my analysis is that the NYSZ is a youth service of a special kind. It differs considerably from other NYSs. The period of service in Zimbabwe is only four months long. Three of which are spent in the camp and only one quarter of the period is spent in service to the nation. This is in sharp contrast to other NYS programmes in Africa and worldwide, where only one month is spent at a camp and eleven months are spent volunteering.⁶ This raises a question about the

⁶ A young Nigerian woman, Fisayo, currently doing her Honours Degree in Sociology at the University of Johannesburg, who participated in the NYS in Nigeria, was interviewed informally so that I could gain an understanding of the NYS in her country. From the discussion, I discovered how vastly

NYSZ model. It is called a national service but only one month is spent volunteering. The bulk of the time is spent in the NYS training camp where the youth are inculcated with lessons on national history and national values.

A major difference between the NYSZ and other NYS programmes is that it does not cater for the elite and highly educated youth of the country. Perhaps this weakness is caused by the way the programme was introduced to the Zimbabwean community. Very few youth from elite families go for national service, and even those from middle class families who go, are said to be desperate and would have failed to secure employment or a place in universities or colleges. The Herald (2004: 8) reported that 'the NYS is indeed laudable in both policy and purpose. However, this programme falls short of attracting the cream graduate and undergraduate youthful minds across the country to issues of national development.' This is in sharp contrast to the Botswana NYS known as the Tirelo Setshaba⁷ programme whereby the youth who were allowed to participate were those who had excelled in their O levels (Maake: 2000). Thus, only the most intelligent youth were eligible to participate, whereas in Zimbabwe, it is those that have not managed to get into university or college that go for the national service, most often.

In a number of countries including - Nigeria, Botswana, Kenya, and Germany - the NYS is compulsory. The youth have no choice but to serve their country for a year. Those who do not attend the NYS have to get an exemption certificate. In Zimbabwe, there have been many debates on whether the NYSZ should be made compulsory. Making the programme compulsory could, however, be unsustainable, because even with the small number of youth that they enrol for a period of only three months, the government is battling with a lack of financial resources.

different the NYSZ is from other NYS programmes. The young woman said she had the time of her life in the NYS. She spent three to four weeks at the camp and it was more like a fun camp where they played games, met new people, were taught about what they were expected to do in the eleven months and interestingly, companies used the opportunity to speak to the youth and have a kind of career expo and encouraged the youth to think about the career path that they would like to follow after their period of service. Significantly, in Nigeria, one enters the national service after one has completed one's degree. One cannot proceed to post graduate studies or seek employment until they have served their country for a year.

⁷ The Tirelo Setsaba programme was terminated by the Botswana government due to its costly nature. Besides its costly nature, the programme was stopped because it was criticised for catering for only a small group of people, that is, those who excelled on their O levels, this effectively eliminated all the youth who did not perform well.

6.3 Recruitment

The recruitment process is such that interested students make an application through their district offices and their names are then passed on to the selection committee. The candidates' names are then sent to the NYSZ headquarters where they are placed randomly into different training centres. Recruitment of the youth is not carried out at the training centres. In fact, the training centres are not involved at all in the recruitment process. They only receive candidates that would have been selected by each provincial office.

The candidates have to be older than 15 years and younger than 30 years. The programme caters for youth that are not in school. School going youth are not accepted into the training programme as this would disrupt their studies. Candidates that are married are also accepted into the programme, but if they are training at the same centre as their spouse they are not be allowed to live together as a couple and to be involved sexually at the centre. The trainees are not allowed to develop romantic relationships with their fellow trainees or with instructors. There have been cases in which some male instructors have developed relationships with their trainees. However, as soon as this was discovered, the instructors were dismissed, after a single hearing; they were not given a chance to defend themselves as they had broken an integral rule of the NYSZ. Nothing can stop instructors from pursuing relationships with the female trainees after they have graduated. The graduates feel more comfortable with each other and hence they often prefer to marry other graduates. This emphasises the assertion that an identity is created in the NYSZ. Because of the new identity, the youth see themselves as being similar to each other and different from the 'other'. Jenkins (2004: 4) explains this when he notes that in establishing who he is, the individual will take note of they are similar to and how these similarities make them different to other.

The welfare of the girl child at the training centre has been a cause for concern for many parents whose children go for the NYSZ training, especially after reports of sexual abuse of young girls at the centre. To address such problems, the females' dormitories are fenced off. No males are allowed within the fenced area, not even instructors or commanders. The gates to the fenced area are closed at six o'clock or just after the evening meal. Visitors are not allowed into the dormitories. The girls also have a matron to whom they can report any grievances that they may have.

The NYSZ is now screening all the female trainees for pregnancy and sexually transmitted diseases (STDs) before they start their training. This development was a result of a number of reported cases of unwanted pregnancies and STDs among trainees. The NYSZ officials maintained that the infected youths came to the centres while already infected and that the symptoms started showing because of the intensive training that takes place at the centres, such as running as early as five in the morning. With reference to the pregnancies, the officials argued that the girls were pregnant before they came to the centre, and that the pregnancies were only discovered in the course of the training and the instructors were then blamed for the pregnancy. In order to avoid such cases, the NYSZ leadership has decided that all the youth should be screened thoroughly before they start training.

The diet of the trainees is reflective of the economic hardships that the country is going through. The NYSZ cannot afford to feed the trainees with 'luxuries' such as chicken and rice, and beef etc, on a regular basis. In the morning, the trainees eat mealie-meal porridge, or tea and bread, or samp and beans. For lunch and supper the usual meal is sadza (stiff porridge) and cabbage. Sometimes, they get beans and some green vegetables. Meat is rarely served unless there is a contribution from the surrounding community.

The trainees are supposed to have a training kit and uniforms, but because of the tight budget of the NYSZ, they do not get a full uniform. The government however, tries to get some t-shirts and shorts for them. Those who can afford it, are allowed to bring tracksuits and training shoes from home. However, since most of the youth are from poor backgrounds, they cannot afford them. Such youth thus have to be content with the shorts and t-shirts provided at the training centre.

6.4 A day at the national youth service

The trainees start their day with a ten-kilometre road run at 5 am. The commander in charge of training explained that, some of the youth complained of minor diseases, aches and pains when they first came into the camp, but which, according to him, can be easily alleviated through vigorous exercise. The road run is thus designed to make the youth physically fit. It is supposed to end at six o'clock but the faster runners go and come back early. The slower ones and those that are overweight sometimes come

back into the camp as late as seven o'clock. This part of the training is liked by youth that have always had a problem with their weight. By the time they graduate, they would have lost a lot of excess weight. After the road run, the youth then go for a shower after which they have breakfast.

From precisely 8 o'clock the students are involved in foot drills. For most of the students, both males and females, this is the most enjoyable part of the course. They are taught how to march like soldiers. In the first week, they are taught basics such as how to stand at ease, stand easy and the position of attention. Later on, they are taught how to march and halt in quick time, how to dismiss and fallout. Observing the trainees marching can be very interesting. The orders are given by an instructor. Some of the trainees make mistakes and do not follow the orders. Such students are shouted at using military language and sometimes may be punished. The drills continue until ten o'clock after which the trainees will go for national orientation (NO) lectures until 12:30. Lunch is served from 12:30 to 14: 00. From 14:00 to 16:30 the students may continue with the NO lessons or do drills, depending on the day of the week. From 16: 30 to 18: 00 the trainees are involved in general cleaning of their dormitories and the camp. After supper, they have free time. This is when trainees get to know each other and develop friendships but not with peers of the opposite sex.

Weekends are generally more relaxed because trainees do not have to do drills nor take NO lessons. They are encouraged to do their laundry and general camp cleaning. They also do various sporting activities on Saturday and Sunday afternoons. The popular sport at Border Gezi training centre is soccer while the females prefer netball. The instructors are encouraged to identify any talent among the trainees so that they can be assisted to get in touch with the relevant authorities that will help them to develop their talent.

6.5 The role of history in identity construction

National Orientation lessons are the classes that they attend in which they are taught, among other things the history of the country. National orientation topics include the management of the self, leadership, health education, entrepreneurship, sport and the political history of the country, which is the highlight of the programme.

The teaching of history plays an important role in the construction of a youth identity. Jokoto (NYSZ official) expressed this when he says that:

When one comes into the camp, we teach them history. History teaching is important so that our youth can take lessons from the past and plan for the future, the past is full of lessons and pointers for the future. We teach them to objectively assess today's situation using facts from what happened in the past. They need to know how the country ended up where it is today. We have to teach them the history of the country, particularly the effects of colonialism and neo-colonialism.

Pasi (NYSZ official) also alludes to the importance of history teaching when he says:

In order for one to have and know their identity, they have to know where they came from. We as Zimbabwean people have to know where we came from and where we are going as a nation. Our children thus have to know the history of the country if they are to know who we are as Zimbabwean people.

History is taught from an Afro centric perspective. The wrongs that were perpetrated by colonial masters are emphasised, so that the youth appreciate the independence of the country and the work that was done by liberation war heroes. The teachings, lack criticism, even though they sound convincing, and there is little room for argument when they are being taught to the youth. The aim of the instructors is to impart a certain way of interpreting events on to the students and the only way they do so is through the one sided teaching of history which glorifies the work of war veterans, Zimbabwean heroes and ZANU-PF.

6.6 Aspects of a Zimbabwean identity: the four pillars of the NYSZ

The teachings of the NYSZ cover four important modules that are popularly known as the four pillars of the NYSZ. These are patriotism, entrepreneurship, voluntarism and discipline. All the lessons of the NYSZ are based on these four pillars. They depict the kind of identity that is being created in the NYSZ. These four pillars will each be

discussed in the following sections. The respondents were asked to discuss each of the four pillars, to bring out their importance and to explain how each one is achieved. The following sub-section outlines the findings from discussions on the four pillars of the NYSZ.

Patriotism

Patriotism is emphasised in the NYSZ. Patriotism to one's country is highlighted as being of the utmost importance if a country is to develop and overcome any challenges. Jokoto (NYSZ official) defined patriotism as:

The love for one's country, to love it, protect it and die for it. Sovereignty, heritage and independence have to be protected. This is not one man's job. Every member of the nation has to be patriotic.

Makota (NYSZ official) defined patriotism in much the same way when she said that patriotism is:

Loving your country no matter how difficult things become, we should fight for the country. It may not be a war of guns and bombs but we should fight for our sovereignty. We should not allow ourselves to be divided as Shonas or Ndebeles. We should all feel that this is our country and we should love being Zimbabweans.

Patriotism is also important to Zimbabwe especially because of the difficult economic situation that the country is going through. The respondents mentioned that some people have taken advantage of the situation to loot the country's resources for personal gain. According to the respondents, the hoarding of basic commodities such as sugar, mealie-meal and cooking oil so that certain individuals can sell them at exorbitant prices, is a clear indication that some people are more interested in personal gains rather than the good of the country.

The number of people that are leaving the country to go and live and work abroad is said to show a lack of patriotism. People are escaping the difficult political

and economic situation and are migrating to other countries. The respondents argued that such people have been educated in Zimbabwe and are going to other countries to develop them. Kaonde (NYSZ official) commented on this:

After using taxpayers' money to get an education of world standards, one migrates to western countries instead of working in one's country to develop it. The youth must be oriented so that they do not become like such people.

The youth who participate in the programme are taught the importance of patriotism. They are taught to love and appreciate their country. The value of patriotism is impressed upon them from the time that they enter the NYSZ camp to the time they graduate. The lessons that they receive are meant to impress upon them the importance of patriotism. After the training programme, they demonstrate their patriotism by uncritically supporting the government and the ruling party. To them, supporting the opposition party expresses a lack of patriotism.

The NYSZ graduates develop patriotic notions to the extent that in their places of work, they have become the eyes of the government. They report illegal operations to the police. They feel that it is their duty to alert the police and the government of any corrupt practices in government institutions. Mangope (NYSZ official) pointed out that:

The NYSZ graduates do not get involved in strikes even when others that they work with strike. They do not join because they know the effects of strikes and they realise that they are not good for the country.

Civil servants embark on strikes because the cost of living is far above their monthly incomes. Even though the NYSZ graduates cannot make ends meet; just like everyone else, they will not follow suit when their colleagues strike. They will even report any plans of a strike to higher government official. They consider themselves as the eyes of the government.

Discipline

Discipline is one of the most important pillars of the NYSZ. The programme seeks to create Zimbabwean youth that are disciplined. A disciplined youth is a good citizen. When asked to explain the pillar of discipline, Shava (NYSZ official) said:

It is the willingness and ability to abide with all regulations, instructions, orders, commands and directions as they come. Any deviation from the laid down rules and standing orders is tantamount to indiscipline. Discipline can be self managed through being loyal and obedient to the said orders. It can be externally instilled through corrective measures.

Jokoto explained the value of discipline along the same lines when he explained that:

Discipline is following the code of conduct where one is expected to be in line and if the full objectives of the organisation are to be achieved. Without discipline, a youth is like a loaded truck without a driver descending from a mountain- an accident is sure to happen.

Discipline covers many aspects and all the different aspects are covered in the NYSZ. Pasi explained that:

We are trying to come up with those acceptable and progressive practices and expose them to the young people, mould them so that they bring a Zimbabwean identity. Our curriculum covers many different aspects. When it comes to discipline, we consider the question of respect. We teach them how to dress properly and how to speak well. We are trying to come up with a person who can be admired and who can be identified as a Zimbabwean.

According to the respondents, discipline among the Zimbabwean youth has never been more crucial. Zimbabwe has one of the highest prevalence of HIV/AIDS. Like everywhere else in the world, the youth are most affected and more prone to the disease because they have multiple sexual partners.

The pillar of discipline also extends to political teachings. One of the respondents felt that a disciplined youth is politically conscious. He explained this when he said:

Political challenges that are being faced by the country call for discipline of the youth. A politically undisciplined youth is easily manipulated by foreigners to work against his country. An undisciplined youth has no identity, no history and is a danger to society.

Thus discipline is one of the main pillars of the NYSZ and every youth is encouraged to be disciplined in all areas of their life. It is interesting to note that the officials said that discipline extends to the political arena. Supporting the opposition is regarded as indiscipline, thus to put it bluntly, a disciplined Zimbabwean youth is one that supports the ruling party, ZANU-PF. The following section addresses another pillar of the NYSZ- entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship



Without doubt, the economy of Zimbabwe is currently at its worst point since the attainment of independence in 1980. There is no growth in the economy. People are being retrenched from jobs every year. The government, which is the biggest employer, is not absorbing all the university and college graduates. Young people suffer the most in such an economy because of their lack of experience. It is important therefore that young people start their own income generating projects. To some extent, the NYSZ is addressing one of the biggest problems that is faced by Zimbabwe, that of high unemployment especially among the school leavers and recent graduates. However, in my view, the youth are only taught the values of entrepreneurship. My impression was that very little practical teaching is done. They are given ideas of projects that they could start but there are no practical lessons. For instance, youth are taught that they could start carpentry projects but no practical lessons in carpentry are given, so then, it just remains as an idea. Shava (NYSZ official) explained the pillar of entrepreneurship when he said:

Entrepreneurship is to adopt an industrial mind that is aimed at engaging oneself in self help projects or any work that earns the youth some decent living. Innovativeness, creativity, and modification are qualities encouraged for youth to possess so that their lives are not dependent on formal employment but self created jobs. Even if a youth is in formal employment, they are encouraged to be entrepreneurs so that they can supplement their incomes.

When asked to explain entrepreneurship as one of the pillars of the NYSZ, Jokoto (NYSZ official) said:

Zimbabwe is a country with a lot of riches for exploitation by those who have an entrepreneurial spirit. The youth should be taught how to identify what they have in their environment and exploit it for their benefit. They should not look to heaven for manna. We teach them to use what they have, what is easily available to them. They should use the natural resources in their environment to generate income.

Shava alluded to entrepreneurship as a way of reducing unemployment when he said:

Entrepreneurship through small scale projects is the only way to end the problem of unemployment. The industries that used to employ people in the past are shrinking due to a number of reasons, sanctions against the country being one of them. Entrepreneurship is the answer to unemployment and the NYSZ youth are equipped with skills so that they can manipulate their environment for their benefit.

Jokoto also emphasised the importance of entrepreneurship when he said that:

It is an important tenet of the programme. The principle is for self emancipation and economic empowerment. It makes the youth enjoy the fulfilment of independence and sovereignty. Youth must be taught to appreciate and enjoy the fruits of labour. The colonist taught us that the only decent work is in the office. The education system detached the youth from physical labour. The youth do not know that it has a lot of benefits. They

become self sufficient and they do not cry for donors. The youth gain confidence with the enjoyment of entrepreneurship and become proud citizens of their country.

Although it imparts on to the youth the importance of entrepreneurship, its major weakness is that it does not impart on to them, practical skills. The youth come from the national service with the theory about entrepreneurship but no practical skills. They then have to enrol into another college in order to acquire the skills. This further emphasizes the argument that the NYSZ is mainly aimed at the inculcation of an ideology and reinterpreting the world, because nothing is done to empower the youth with practical skills.

Voluntarism

The NYSZ seeks to create a youth who contributes to the Society on a voluntary basis. Voluntarism is one of the main core values of the NYSZ. The officials mentioned that the teachings of the programme emphasise the value of working voluntarily and contributing to the development of one's country. There are some jobs that need to be done that do not necessarily require that one be educated. The NYSZ graduates have to undergo a month long voluntary service in their respective provinces. They may be sent to a local clinic, hospital, municipality or any other government department, where they work without any remuneration. After the training, most of the students look forward to the voluntary work and do not complain that they will be working without pay because the training period would have impressed upon them the importance of voluntary work. According to the respondents, voluntary service work is important in Zimbabwe especially at a time when service delivery is hampered by shortage of manpower because the government cannot afford to employ more people. Makota pointed this out when he said:

When these youth are involved in voluntary work, they are actually helping the government. It is difficult for the government to fully deliver services at this time because of economic constraints. These youth do not get paid for doing the work so in a way they are helping the government.

According to the respondents, the liberation war heroes are the epitome of voluntarism. They were not paid to go to the bush to fight against the colonial masters. They volunteered to be trained as guerrilla fighters and to liberate the country. They dedicated their lives to the service of the nation even though they realised that they could be killed in the struggle. This is the spirit that the NYSZ wants to instil in the Zimbabwean youth. Mawere (NYSZ official) pointed out that:

The war vets were never paid to go to war. They volunteered to do so. Their voluntary work brought freedom to the country and now everyone is reaping the benefits of an independent Zimbabwe. Thus voluntarism should become part of every society and children should be moulded according to these values.

The Officials also mentioned that voluntarism is important for the development of communities. People can volunteer their services to the community. The more people volunteer, the faster their communities develop. Jokoto pointed this out when he said:

If people do not volunteer, change does not take place and communities do not develop. When youth come into the camp, they are taught the importance of voluntarism- that it leads to development in society.

Voluntarism for the NYSZ does not end after the one-month voluntary service required before the trainees can graduate. Even long after graduation, the NYSZ graduates offer voluntary services to their communities. The NYSZ graduates have been made popular by their voluntary services. They volunteer in different programmes as explained by Pasi (NYSZ instructor) when he said:

During food shortages, people would cheer when things were in commotion but these youth risked their lives, because they have gone through the national service and understood the concept of unity and equal sharing. They therefore made order in the food riots. Even during transport shortages, they would go to the terminus and organise people so that they all stand in a queue. In rural areas, they mould bricks to build houses for the old, and to build clinics and schools for their communities. At the moment, we have young people in the

*Garikayi Tlhalani Kuhle*⁸ programme. They are only given a small allowance but they do the work voluntarily. They have understood the programme that it is a national programme and they have given themselves to it.

The prevalence of unemployment among the youth in Zimbabwe requires that the youth should have something constructive to do so that they do not use their energy unconstructively. The officials mentioned that voluntarism would keep the youth off the streets. It is also fulfilling and the youth would feel that they are contributing meaningfully to society. Gonai (NYSZ official) mentioned this when he said:

Some youth have been unemployed since they left school. They have been idle maybe for three years, five years or even more. Such youth have lost hope for the future. When they begin to volunteer, they find something worthwhile to do and they have somewhere to spend their time. They also begin to feel that they are important.

The time that the youth spend volunteering is actually quite short. Only one month is dedicated to voluntary services. In other countries, the youth spend a protracted time volunteering. One month is very little to actually make any meaningful contribution although it is important as a way of putting into practice what they would have learnt. The four pillars are actually the outcomes of the programme. This is what the programme aims to achieve. The teaching of history, the training and all activities at the camp are geared towards achieving these outcomes, that is, to produce a youth that exhibits all these characteristics. It is hoped that a youth who lacked these principles would have embraced them by the end of the training. Thus by the end of the training, the youth would have gone through some form of transformation and will view the world in a particular way.

6.7 Conclusion

This chapter's main focus has been on answering two of the questions raised by this study, that is, how is the identity created and what is the resultant identity? I argue

⁸ A housing project started by the government of Zimbabwe in 2005

that the NYSZ uses the teaching of history as a way of influencing the youth to think in a particular way, and to view the world in a certain way, thus moulding their identity. Activities at the camps such as drills and the quasi-military way of life at the camps all contribute to the moulding of youth in a particular way. The following chapter will continue to answer the research questions; this time attention will be turned to answering the remaining questions, that is, with what success is the NYSZ achieving its aims and how can the success of the NYSZ be explained. In order to answer this question, the youth who have participated and those that were at the Border Gezi training centre at the time of the training were interviewed in order to understand whether they understand and accept the teachings of the NYSZ. Some community members were interviewed to understand how they viewed the youth that had gone through the NYSZ.



Chapter Seven

MEETING ITS AIMS: CHANGE IN IDENTITY

7.1 Introduction

The focus of the previous chapter was on answering two of the research questions, ‘how is the NYSZ creating the identity?’ and ‘what is the resultant identity?’ In this chapter, attention is turned to answering the remaining question, with what success is the NYSZ achieving its aims? The researcher wanted to understand how the NYSZ trainees and graduates understand identity and whether they understand it in the same light as the officials of the NYSZ. The trainees that were interviewed were nearing the end of their in-camp training and had already completed most of the modules. The views of community members will also be examined in this chapter.

7.2 The youth’s conceptualisation of identity

NYSZ graduates and current students showed a remarkable understanding of identity. Their definition more or less matched that of the officials and instructors. Tariro (a trainee) defined identity as:

Characteristics and features of a person that show his/her background and origins. It gives the person a sense of belonging to a group. It can be reflected in things like the dress code, religion and culture

Ruramai (a graduate) viewed it in much the same way. She said:

Identity is who you are, where you are coming from, where you are going. It should be easy to be identified as a Zimbabwean among many just as it is easy to identify an NYSZ graduates among civilians.⁹

⁹ civilians are people that have not been to the NYS

Tarisai (a trainee) defined identity as:

Knowing who you are as a person and how others see you. As a Zimbabwean, one has to know the history of the country and how the country has ended up where it is today. You cannot be identified as a Zimbabwean if you do not know the history of the country. One has to know who we are as the Zimbabwean people, in order to know that you have to be taught the history of the country.

NYSZ graduates seemed knowledgeable about identity. They all seemed to have an idea of what identity really is. From the way they defined identity, the researcher realised that the graduates were more concerned with a Zimbabwean identity rather than a personal identity. The definitions centred on the origins of the country and the culture of the Zimbabwe people. The NYSZ thus emphasises national identity rather than personal identity. They had been taught the importance of national identity and they overlooked personal identity, because the programme teaches them that national identity is more important than personal identity. Interviewees seemed to suggest that national identity defined the individual and that personal identity thus stemmed from national identity. Those who have gone through the NYSZ see the world in the same way and behave and react in a similar way. Individual identities are therefore overlooked. The researcher thus ascertained that there is a common understanding of the between the NYSZ officials and the students. The following section explores the extent to which the NYSZ has been successful in creating the identity by examining how the youth have received the NYSZ teachings on patriotism, discipline, entrepreneurship and voluntarism.

7.4 NYSZ modules and their teachings

Patriotic Youth

An important aspect of the NYSZ is its emphasis on patriotism. The need to address the lack of patriotism among Zimbabwean nationals is said to have been one of the driving forces for the inception of the programme. Elsewhere, particularly in African

models of NYS, imparting of patriotism into the youth is one of the main aims of NYSs. When asked how she defines patriotism, Tendai (a trainee) said that:

It is loving your country and willingness to die for the country. One should see their country as the best in the world. (Quote 1, Shona)

Farai (a graduate) also pointed out that:

I love my country and I am not going to leave. There is no country better than my own. Some people think that going to U.K is going to end all their problems. What they do not know is that they will never be treated as citizens of that country and they do not have the same identity as those people. (Quote 2, Shona)

Some of the respondents referred to the numerous strikes and demonstrations that have been taking place in the country. They focused, particularly, on the strikes by civil servants. The respondents thought that the strikers were 'inconsiderate and selfish,' that they do not consider what the country is going through and that they keep on making incessant demands on the government. They also alleged that it is the MDC supporters that are responsible for these strikes. Taurai (NYS graduate) referred to this issue when he said:

I would never do that to my country. The government is my employer so I should be loyal to it. If I do not do the work that I am supposed to do then my country suffers at the end of the day. Even if others that I work with strike, I would never join the strike. These strikes are bad for the country and they are started by people who do not love the country; why should I be a follower of someone who does not love the country.

Such words show that the youth's minds have been transformed and that they now view events as the government intended them to. There is very little criticism of the government and analysis of the political economic and social situation of the country. The youth seemed to be of the view that the problems that the country is going

through are temporary so people should be even more patriotic at a time such as this. Nyasha (a trainee) said:

There is no reason for us to sell the country because things are difficult. Some people died for this country. We just have to work very hard so that we get out of this situation. Why leave your own country instead of working in it so that all the problems may be finished. More than ever, we need to love this country and support our leaders. (Quote 3, Shona)

Tafadzwa (a trainee) pointed out that:

I am willing to die for the country. We all have to make sacrifices for this country. Look at all the war veterans and heroes of this country. These people made sacrifices for our country so we have to learn from them. If people were patriotic this country would not be where it is today. (Quote 4, Shona)



In order to instil patriotic notions in the youth, trainees are given examples of people that were or are patriotic to the country and who sacrificed their lives for the country. Examples such as Mbuya Nehanda and Kaguvi¹⁰ are given so that the youth understand that there are some people who laid down their lives for the country. War veterans are primarily the people in top positions in the department of NYSZ and some instructors are liberation war heroes themselves.

Discipline

Discussions with trainees and graduates revealed that the NYSZ youth understand the importance of discipline and some of them strive to be disciplined. Lack of discipline warrants punishment. The punishment may include rolling in mud, isolation or being

¹⁰ Mbuya Nehanda and Kaguvi were heroes of the first war of resistance against colonialists in Zimbabwe.

sprayed water with a hose pipe. The NYSZ discourages physical beating as it may be interpreted as abuse. Tavonga pointed out that:

In the national service we are taught a special way of greeting our instructors and commanders and not doing so makes one get punished. We are also taught that we should be punctual all the time, whether it is going for meals or for classes, we have to be punctual. If one is not disciplined, they will always be late and if one is late, they always get punished.

Drills are particularly important as a way of enforcing discipline. They require immense concentration and alertness. One has to listen carefully to the commands that are issued and has to obey them. Trainees have to think and act quickly. The NYSZ youth consider themselves to be different from other youth that have not gone through the youth service. The teachings that they have received from the NYSZ distinguish them from their peers. Yemurai (a graduate) mentioned that:

Every youth who has gone through the national service does not put on earrings and is not dreadlocked. Why should a man put on earrings? Those who had dreadlocks were made to cut them off because it is not our culture to have them. You will never see someone from the national service having dreadlocks. (Quote 5, Shona)

Kudzai (a graduate) pointed out that:

By going to the NYSZ, I became disciplined. After the training people were commenting that I had changed.

When asked how he had changed he explained that:

Ah. My sister, I was naughty, I was always up to something, I was mixed with the wrong people. My parents were always complaining when I got into trouble with the police. I was what they call notorious in the neighbourhood and when I went away to the training centre, everyone was relieved and when

I came back, they all noticed the difference and started commenting to my mother.

The teachings on sexual discipline also seem to have had an impact on the youth. A number of the youth spoke against having many sexual partners and engaging in premarital sex. Shingirirai (a graduate) explained that:

I was taught that in these days of AIDS we as youth should not put our lives at risk by sleeping around with many girls because you never know who has the disease. I don't want to die of AIDS so I should be careful. (Quote 6, Shona)

The youth thus accepted the teachings on discipline and appear to have been transformed by going through the process of the NYSZ. The researcher observed the level of discipline at the centre. The youth were very respectful of the commanders and instructors, perhaps even fearful. They did not question any orders and did whatever they were told to do. The following section examines another aspect of the identity being analysed, that is entrepreneurship.

Entrepreneurship

The teachings on entrepreneurship are greatly appreciated by NYSZ graduates. Their minds were freed when they realised that they did not have to depend on the labour market to get an income. Even those that were in full time employment were involved in other income generating projects such as raising poultry, knitting jerseys and other part time projects. Chipu (a graduate) mentioned that:

To me the most valuable lesson was entrepreneurship. I learnt that you can never become rich when you are working for someone. As young people, we should not be afraid of starting our own businesses. If the government is willing to assist us, then we should take advantage of that and start projects. Not all of us are going to get jobs but we can start projects. There are some people who are very rich but they do not have degrees. Profits that are made on self-help projects and they can help to develop our communities

Farai (a graduate) commented that:

The teachings helped me a lot because I had not found a job since I left school in 1997. I did not do so well at school. I had become a nuisance to my relative because I was always asking for money. I never knew that I could do other things that could bring me money. After the training, I had a business idea and the government helped me with some capital. Now I am making a lot of money and I have also helped others who have joined me in my project. (Quote 7, Shona)

The students that are in the training seem to appreciate the teachings on entrepreneurship more because they seen as empowering and practical teachings which they can put to use as soon as they leave the training. Tendai (a trainee) mentioned that:

I like the teachings on entrepreneurship. When I graduate, I am not going to look for a job because I have been looking for a job since I finished school. Now I am going to start a project so that I can make money. (Quote 8, Shona)

Voluntarism

The teachings on voluntarism are reinforced in the students when they do a month long voluntary service in their provinces. The students at the training centre (at the time of my fieldwork) had not started their month long voluntary service: it only takes place at the end of the training, but they had been taught the lessons behind voluntarism. Those who had finished training and graduated, explained that they continued volunteering even after graduation, whenever there was an opportunity to do so. When there were country celebrations, they went there to offer their services. Ruramai (a graduate) mentioned that:

I never used to do any work, which was not paying. Every time when I saw people repairing roads or doing some other voluntary work, I laughed at them and said they were being used by the government because I thought that the government had a lot of money. I did not know the value of volunteering in

your community. Now I am the first one to volunteer when there is any work to be done. (Quote 9, Shona)

The youth also get involved when there are political meeting or rallies. They organise the rallies and mobilise people to attend. However, they do this only if the meetings are of ZANU-PF, because they consider themselves to be ZANU-PF youth. None of them will be seen to be volunteering services to other political parties, particularly for the MDC. The teachings in the NYSZ teach them that ZANU-PF is the party for the people of Zimbabwe who want to uphold the sovereignty of the country. When they come out of the service, the youth overwhelmingly support ZANU-PF.

The NYSZ graduates embrace the four pillars of the NYSZ. They consider themselves to be quite different from other youth. They prefer to marry other graduates. The males feel strongly about this and most of them mentioned that they would not have anything in common with someone who has not been in the NYSZ.

7.5 The youth identity in the eyes of the community

Interviews with the community surrounding the NYSZ training centre in Mount Darwin and with other Zimbabweans formed the third phase of this research. The researcher investigated how other people viewed the identity that is being created by the NYSZ. The 'other' is significant when someone considers identity. The NYSZ is viewed in varying ways by people in the surrounding community of Mount Darwin and by other people in Zimbabwe as a whole. However, even if they differ in their assessment of the NYSZ graduates and trainees, they seem to agree that the NYSZ has a positive influence on the youth and is changing their lives for the better, especially by assisting them in starting self-help projects. Below is a presentation of the findings on how the youth were viewed by the community.

The NYSZ trainees and graduates alike are perceived as people who have been made politically conscious. Most young people are apathetic towards political issues but the youth that have been through the NYSZ are interested in politics and governance and are keen to participate in elections. Chisvo (community member) pointed out that:

These young people like politics. I think it is because of the teachings that they received at the training centres. They always want to participate in politics. They all support ZANU-PF, they are ZANU-PF people. None of them is MDC. MDC is not even involved in the programme. MDC will never be allowed into the camp to address the youth. (Quote 10, Shona)

Makombe (community member) reiterated the same sentiments when she said:

These young people like to be involved in politics. You find them at all the rallies. Other young people who have not been involved in the programme are not like that. They stay away from politics. MaBorder Gezi (Trainees and graduates) do not support any other party except for ZANU. They think that everyone in the country should support ZANU. They are now like the war vets. (Quote 11, Shona)

Kundai, an MDC youth member, who was interviewed, commented that:

The NYSZ is fundamentally a good programme. It has good principles and creates youth that love their country and are willing to die for it. That is good. The only problem is that the programme has been 'zanunised.' This makes the teachings one sided and uncritical. I know they paint us black in the camps. None of the youth who come out of the national service want to associate with us. They do not have any choice but to support ZANU. I think that it is because of the teachings there.

The NYSZ trainees and graduates are commended for being entrepreneurial. They have started small income generating projects and some of them are involved in farming. Some have also got an opportunity of getting jobs in the government. Makombe (community member) mentioned that:

They are exemplary youth because they work very hard. They are not lazy. Those who failed to get jobs are working for themselves. Other youth should also copy their example so that they become self reliant especially at this time when things are difficult for everyone. You cannot be thirty years and still

expect people to take care of you. They should learn from the NYSZ youth how to be self-reliant. In-fact they should also go to the training so that they can learn for themselves. (Quote 12, Shona)

Makombe also pointed out that:

The national service youth know the value of working for oneself. They have been assisted in starting projects, now they are making money for themselves. They no longer see themselves as dependents even though they are young. Some of them are now taking care of their families. They understood entrepreneurship. What I like about them is that they work very hard. Things are not easy now so even young people have to work hard if they are going to survive. (Quote 13, Shona)

The youth are also seen to be cultural. They appreciate the Zimbabwean culture more and they want to be identified as such. They are beginning to shun some western ways. Dube (a community member) said:

These youth are going back to our traditional culture. You will not see them wearing trousers if they are women. They respect their elders and appreciate being African. You will not see the boys wearing those baggy trousers like they are American. They are taught all these things in the national service. (Quote 14, Shona)

According to the respondents, the NYSZ youth have also been taught the values of avoiding premarital sex, and HIV and AIDS and this has changed their behaviour. Chiundo (community member) pointed out that:

The graduates seem to be disciplined when it comes to sexual issues. They have been taught the importance of abstinence. Many youth are dying because of AIDS but these youth are careful because they have been taught at the centre. They are also helping other youth and teaching them the importance of waiting. On youth day and AIDS week you see them educating other youth about the dangers of premarital sex.

A number of people felt negatively about the NYSZ graduates. One of them, Mugadza (community member), said:

Those children have been corrupted by ZANU-PF. They think that they are the rulers of this country. They do not respect people who have not been through the national service. They think that they are superior to some of us. Even at the workplace they are a problem. You cannot be free in their presence. I think that they are all CIOs [Central Intelligence Organisation]. When others are striking, they will not strike. What is so special about them? They think that having that national service certificate makes them better than us. They have got a big ego those national service children. That is why they are called green bombers. (Quote 15, Shona)

People view the NYSZ and its graduates in different perspectives. Those who adopt a political perspective made political connotations when referring to the NYSZ graduates. They referred to them as ZANU people, as ZANU militia or as ZANU brigades. They also referred to them as 'green bombers.' Other see them as people who are restoring lost social values. To such people, Zimbabwe is facing challenges that threaten the fabric of society and the NYSZ is going a long way in ensuring that important social values are not lost forever. Further, others see the NYSZ graduates as young people who have been emancipated economically through the teachings that they received at the NYSZ and through the financial assistance which they have received from the government, as a way to assist them to start their own small income generating projects.

7.7 Conclusion

In summary this study has revealed that the NYSZ is making a huge impact on the youth and thus influencing their identity. The researcher investigated the reasons for the establishment of the NYSZ. One of these, was to create an institution that would

unite the youth of the country. Of special importance to the researcher was the reason to influence the identity of the youth by imparting on to them a Zimbabwean identity. There are many ways that the NYSZ is using to create identity. History teaching emerged as the most important way. It constitutes the major component of the NYSZ. History is taught from the Afro-centric perspective rather than the Eurocentric perspective. The colonial history of the country is emphasised to the youth so that they gain an understanding of current issues by relating them to the history of the country. The following chapter brings together the conclusions of the study and some recommendations are made.



Chapter Eight

CONCLUSIONS OF THE STUDY

8.1 Introduction

The preceding three chapters gave an exposition of the findings of this study. The researcher sought to answer the questions posed by Castells and those additional questions generated in the study, detailed in earlier chapters. The findings from the study show that the NYSZ is a platform on which the conscious construction of identities is taking place. This chapter provides a summary of the research and proceeds to draw some conclusions.

Qualitative methods were used to gather information from the Department of NYSZ in Harare and the students at the Border Gezi training centre, as well as from NYSZ graduates and the community of people who live close to the centre. Interviewing was the main method of data collection, but observation of the training process, as well as a study of the material that is used at the training centres was also conducted. Qualitative data analysis was used to evaluate all the information that was gathered in order to arrive at an answer to the questions that the research sought to address.

8.2 Summary of the major findings

The officials linked identity to the knowledge of the history of the country and emphasised that knowing where one comes from gives one an identity. Thus, the youth are taught the history of the country so that they begin to understand who they are as Zimbabwean people. They discussed identity in terms of national identity rather than personal identity. The teachings of the NYSZ are modelled towards influencing the youth to view events in an Afro centric, rather than a Eurocentric way.

The research also revealed that it is not easy to distinguish a party programme from a national programme. It depends on the angle from which one explores the issue. The youth showed a remarkable understanding of identity. They defined it in the same way as the officials and their instructors, which shows how successful the

programme is. They also viewed identity in terms of national identity rather than personal identity.

The NYSZ participants are taught about the values of patriotism and they have developed an understanding of its importance from the point of view of their instructors. The value of voluntarism has also been impressed upon the youth; so much so, that they even continue to volunteer after their graduation. The youth have been taught the value of discipline and the programme teaches them to be disciplined in practical ways. Entrepreneurship is also one of the modules that the youth are taught, and it has helped them to start their own self- help projects that are generating income.

There seems to be no consensus as to how community members view the NYSZ youth. Some people thought that the programme impacted on the youth in a positive way and gave them economic emancipation. However, some community members thought of the programme in political terms, and viewed it negatively, as a way that the ruling party has of creating a small army of supporters.

Identity is the characteristic of thinking, reflection and perception that are held by people in a society. But how do people come to have certain ways of thinking, reflection and perception? Identities are made; they do not just exist in and of themselves. Thus identity is a construction. How then is it being constructed in the NYSZ?

Findings show that there are various ways that are being used in the NYSZ to construct a Zimbabwean identity among the youth. The lessons that the youth receive in the NYSZ impress upon them certain ways of thinking and viewing the world. They are taught to analyse events in an Afro centric way. The history that they is taught in the camps is biased towards Afro-centrism. The youth are taught about the atrocities committed by white colonial masters. More emphatically, they are taught the suffering that the African people went through as a result of colonisation and the shame and physical and emotional abuse that Africans suffered at the hands of colonial masters. This kind of portrayal makes the youth appreciate what was done by the war veterans when they fought against the imperialism and brought independence. It also encourages the youth to support to ZANU-PF, which they see as embracing all the important values that will bring emancipation to the people of Zimbabwe, and which upholds the sovereignty of the country.

The NYSZ graduates thus begin to detest any political party that is linked to white imperialists: hence their dislike of the MDC. As an opposition political party in Zimbabwe, it is portrayed as being a puppet of the white imperialists. The youth are discouraged from having anything to do with such a party, because it is supported by the people that the war veterans fought against; the same people who brought suffering to the people of the country when they colonised it.

The quasi-military setting at the training centre is also instrumental in creating an identity. The students have a very strict time-table that they have to adhere to in military style. Even the hierarchy at the camps is in military terms, with the camp commandant at the top and other commanders below. The students further stay in military style barracks, and are taught military salutes. Drills teach them to have a certain posture which makes it easy to identify the graduates even in the streets. Learning the drills is not an easy process. On average, it takes about a month for trainees to fully understand the instructions and to learn to act accordingly. Commands are given by the instructor, and they have to process them in their minds and act quickly. They have to think fast and act quickly, otherwise they will be out of line and this can warrant punishment. The drills are a way of instilling discipline in the youth because they have to follow orders without questioning them.

8.3 What kind of identity is being created?

The study has shown that the identity that is being created in the NYSZ is primarily a Zimbabwean identity that encompasses four aspects, which are patriotism, entrepreneurship, voluntarism and discipline. By the time that someone has gone through the NYSZ, they would have embraced this identity and they will identify more with the nation rather than with their different tribes. They are taught that, first and foremost, a youth is a Zimbabwean. Moreover, before individual identity, there is national identity. Individual identities should flow from the national identity; it is what defines the individual identity. The officials of the NYSZ argue that the country is in need of citizens that are patriotic and responsive to the country's needs, and that the country has been affected by a brain-drain that resulted in many educated people leaving the country to work in developed countries where the standard of living is much better. This emigration of Zimbabwe's human resources has been a cause of

worry for the government, thus the NYSZ is also a way to mould people that will not take the option of leaving the country, no matter how difficult things get.

8.4 Shaping youth in a truly Zimbabwean manner

The researcher drew a number of conclusions on the NYSZ and, in the process, managed to answer the questions generated in the study. Significantly, the researcher discovered that the NYSZ is a programme that is unique in nature. In its initial stages, sociologists who had an understanding of issues of identity were employed to set up the curriculum of the programme. To achieve this end, they incorporated what they considered to be important topics that should be taught. Influencing the identity of trainees thus forms an integral part of the NYSZ mandate. This explains why the youth spend more time in the camp than actually volunteering, as is the case in other NYS programmes.

The NYSZ was instituted for a number of reasons, some political, some economic and some social. Irrespective of the reasons for its establishment, it has resulted in change in the lives of many youths in the country. Joining the NYSZ opened many doors of opportunity for self-advancement of the youth. With each camp accommodating about 1000 youth for each intake and having two intakes a year, more than 50 000 youth have already gone through the training and some of them are already working or have started income-generating projects. The involvement of some of the youth in political matters has, however, tarnished the image of the NYSZ, but morale is being restored as changes are being made in the NYSZ administration as well as in the curriculum.

The NYSZ training process makes a lasting impact on the youth. The quasi-military setting creates a youth that is resilient, not easily affected by difficult conditions and that can endure hunger, thirst and pain. This is the type of youth, which can survive any difficult situations and can make the best of them. The drills that the youth do in the camp are not only important as a way to be physically fit, but also teach the youth discipline. They have to listen carefully, think quickly and respond fast so that they stay in line with others. Turning left when the order was to turn right warrants punishment. Thus the youth are expected to be alert all the time. They are not expected to answer back to the instructors or any elder. Any instruction

should be taken as it is, with no questions asked. Unfortunately, this is also how they also receive their lessons.

Of importance to the researcher is how the success of the NYSZ can be explained. Various factors contribute to the success of the programme. Most important is that the stage of youth is an impressionable stage in the development process of any individual. At this stage it is easy to influence how the young people view the world. The NYSZ mainly recruits youth who have just completed their O levels. Moreover the youth that participate in the NYSZ are from poor backgrounds, most have not passed their O Levels and very few are exposed to the media or any outside influence. Most of them have grown up in rural areas and have little understanding of politics, ideology or manipulation. They are thus obliged to the government for giving them an opportunity to leave their rural areas and to go on an 'adventure.' Moreover, the NYSZ training is free of charge; the youth are encouraged to be grateful to a government that takes care of them for three months without them paying a cent. The significance of this should not be underestimated. Because of these factors, the training centre authorities are highly regarded and the youth are receptive to what they are told by the commanders and instructors. Instructions are received uncritically, assisting the NYSZ in achieving its goals.

Identity formation is, however, negotiable by its very nature. People do not just accept things as they are told. They accept some things and reject others. Thus they try to negotiate their new identity. However, the research revealed that there is very little negotiation in the process of identity formation in the youth in the NYSZ. They all seem to conform to the teachings that they receive. There is very little analysis of the information. The angle from which the information is presented makes it all sound totally correct, yet the information is uncritical and is uncritically received by the students. Even the graduates who are now working accept the teachings as they were presented. They have not developed critical thinking and they do not question the way things are. They are taught to obey and even in orientation classes, they accept everything as it is. There is no or very little negotiation of identities.

Given that people have multiple identities, when this happens, they will have other sources of meaning that they will draw upon to interpret their new experiences. Moreover, in some contexts, which this project has not investigated, some of these identities may come to the fore, and be nourished. Nevertheless, what is striking is

that, for now, the youth who have been trained by the NYSZ have, overwhelmingly, accepted the taught ideology.

However, one should be careful not to over generalise. Some of the participants, especially the older ones, are more critical and their main reason for going into the NYSZ is to access jobs and it is possible that having found one, they will be in a better position to be more critical of the NYSZ. At some point, ideas taught in the NYSZ will be weighed against the graduate's experiences and if there are disparities, the youth may begin to reject those ideas.

The NYSZ is an institution, which is involved in consciously constructing an identity by manipulating the shared experiences of the youth who participate. Power relations are involved in this manipulation of the shared experience. The instructors have all the power, and they are in a position to dictate what they want from the youth. When people share an experience, the meaning that they attach to it is similar, thus they begin to interpret the world in the same way. They begin to take on a similar identity. Issues such as land redistribution are seen in the same light by the youth because they have similar understandings of the world and hence the same overarching identity.



8.5 Recommendations for further research

While this research has added some valuable insights into the study of NYSs in Africa, further avenues of research should be explored. The situation at the other training centres may not be quite the same as at Border Gezi. Arguably, Border Gezi training centre has the best facilities since it was the first to be established. It is probably the most desirable to most people because it is near the capital city, Harare, and is easily accessible. Researching a training centre in a remote area may produce somewhat different results.

Also, a comparative study could be undertaken looking at the NYSZ and NYS programmes in other countries. Differences and similarities could be noted and explained. This would be of assistance to countries like South Africa that are in the process of establishing NYS programmes. Further, a comparison could also be made between NYS programmes in developed countries and those in developing countries with a view to learning important lessons from the long established NYSs

8.6 Conclusion

Very little research has been done on NYS programmes in Africa, particularly in the case of Zimbabwe. There is just one known Honours dissertation on the NYSZ. In this project, I have detailed the NYSZ and thus made a contribution to the body of knowledge on NYSs. Moreover, I have shed some light on the NYSZ which, to some extent has been misjudged. The research has explored the link between identity and NYSZ and has demonstrated that the NYSZ is indeed a platform on which the conscious construction of identity takes place, and with considerable success. The research is valuable because it focuses on an NYS programme that is not like other programmes adopted by African governments in the 1960s and 1970s, immediately after independence. It's an NYS programme that emerged 20 years after independence, and one of its aims is to influence how the youth view the world and interpret events around them.

The research showed that the NYSZ is successful in creating a new identity. Even though the training period is only three months long, which may seem short, there are factors, which account for the success of the programme. The NYSZ consciously aims to manufacture a youth identity; hence they implement strategies to reach their goal. The use of sociological theory and sociologists is significant especially considering that sociologists were involved in the early stages of implementation and structuring of the NYSZ curriculum. The emphasis on history from an Afro-centric perspective and the teaching of history in the training centres is significant and underlines the importance of recreating the past to define the present. Manipulation of the shared experiences and the quasi-military nature of the training all contribute to the success of the programme.

The NYSZ serves to anchor an already existing identity. From an early age, Zimbabweans are imbued with messages and teachings on patriotism and nationalism; hence the identity is not entirely a new one but is created from an already existing identity. This explains why, in a space of three months, a strong identity is constructed in the youth, and why it becomes the dominant identity among multiple identities that the youth may have. This identity is emphasised by the lack of negotiation in the process of identity construction.

An important factor contributing to the achievements of the programme is the age of the trainees. Youth is an impressionable stage of life whereby one can easily be

influenced. Power relations play an important role in the success of the programme. Commanders and instructors are respected and everything that they say is law. The youth are also desperate to complete the training and the hope for a job keeps them submissive. The changing nature of the NYSZ is also working in its favour and is also ensuring its success. The trainees are mostly from poor and rural backgrounds, and for them, participation in the NYSZ is a step up, and one that might lead to further study or a job and this contributes to them looking up to those who can assist them. Also, they are not very well educated and are therefore less likely to resist what they are told. Finally, the selection procedure and partisan nature of the NYSZ makes it unlikely that anti-government youths will be selected.

In bringing out the different dynamics of the NYSZ and interrogating identity theory, I have made a contribution to the debate on identity. The findings of the study support McDonald's (2006) argument that manipulation of the shared experience results in the creation of a particular identity. Further, the findings also support Dawson's (2006) criticism of Castells (1997) when she argues that he does not seem to account for the fact that time is relative and meaningful identities sometimes develop through relatively short-lived, shared experiences.

In comparison to other NYSs, the NYSZ can be regarded as an NYS of a special kind. The nature of the training, time frame and socio-economic background of recruits mark it out as different from the others. However, the NYSZ is not entirely unique. Sherraden and Eberly proposed a three-perspective model to understand NYSs: young people as national resource, national service to address social problems and human development as a focus. There is evidence for all three of these aspects of this model in Zimbabwe. However, our Zimbabwean case study also revealed something else that was critical: that is, an NYS, through shared experience and ideological training, can be instrumental in moulding a new national identity. I want, therefore, to suggest a *fourth perspective*. In future, the study of national youth services should consider their role in *the construction of social and political identity*.

APPENDIX: TRANSCRIPTION OF SHONA QUOTATIONS

Quote 1

Patriotism tingangoti kuda nyika yako, uye kuzvipira kuifira. Munhu anofanira kuona nyika yake seiri pamberi pedzimwe nyika dzose. MaZimbabweans ngaangofarira kunzi uyu muZimbabwean.

Quote 2

Ini ndinoda nyika yangu uye handisi kuzobuda munyika ino. Hapana nyika ingakunda yangu. Vamwe vanhu vanofunga kuti kunenda kuUK ndiko kunopedza maproblems avo. Chavasingazivi ndechehekuti havazomboitwi sevaridzi venyika iyo nekuti havasi verudzi irworwo.

Quote 3

Hapana kana chikonzero chekuti titengese nyika nekuti iko zvino zvinhu zvakaoma. Vamwe vanhu vakafira nyika ino. Tinofanira kungoshanda nesimba chete. Munhu anobuda munyika instead yekuti ashande nesimba kuti matambudziko apere. More than ever, tinofanira kutoda nyika ino, uye kumira nevatungamiriri vedu.

Quote 4

I am willing to die for this country. Tese tinofanira kuita masacrifices *for this country.* Tikatarisa mawar vets nemagamba enyika ino, vanhu ava vakaita masacrifice makuru saka tinofanira kudzidza kubva kwavari. Deno vanhu vari patriotic, nyika ino ingadai isimbori pairo nhasi.

Quote 5

Muyouth wese akabva kunational service haapfeke maearings, uye haana madreads. Munhu wemurume anopfekerei maearings? Vese vakauya kutraining vane madreads vakatonzi vamagere, nokuti hadzisi tsika dzedu. Haumbooni munhu akabva kuyouth service ane madreads.

Quote 6

Ndakadzidziswa kuti mumazuva ano eAIDS, hatifaniri kurisker hupenyu hwedu nekurara nevasikana vakawanda nekuti hauzive anenge ane hutachiwana. Handidi kufa neAIDS saka ndinofanira kungwarira.

Quote 7

Zvidzidzo zveentrepreneurship zvakandibatsira chaizvo nekuti ndanga ndisina kuwana basa kubva zvakapedza chikoro muna 1997. Handina kunyatsopasa kuchikoro. Ndanga ndava kubhowa munhu wese nekuti ndaingogara ndichingokumbira mari. Ndaiva ndisingazivi kuti ndinikwanisa kuita zvimwe zvinhu zvingandiunzire mari. Pandakapedza traning yangu, ndakafunga project ndokubva ndabatsirwa ne hurumende nemari. Iye zvino ndava kuita mari uye ndava kutobatsirawo vamwe vakauya kuzobatana neni.

Quote 8

Ini hangu ndinonyanya kufarira mateachings eentrepreneurship. Pandichagraduater, handisi kuzotsvaka basa. Ndanga ndichingotsvaka basa kubva zvakapedza chikoro. Ndava kuda kutanga project kuti ndigoita mari.

Quote 9

Ini ndaisaita basa risingabhadharwi. Pese pandaiona vanhu vaigadzira maroad kana mamwe mabasa akadaro, ndaivaseka ndichiti vari kushandiswa negovernment, nokuti ndaifunga kuti government ine mari zhinji. Ndaisaziva kukosha kwekuvolunteer maunogara. Ikozvino ndini wekutanga kuvolunteer.

Quote 10

Vana vacho ava vanoda zvepolitics. Ndinoona kunge zvinokonzerwa nemadzidzisirwo avanoitwa mumacamp. Vanoda kungoita zvepolitics. Uchivaona vakadai, vese masapota Ezanu. Hapana weMDC. Vanhu veMDC havatombobvumidzwi kunodzidzisa vana.

Quote 11

Vana vacho vanoda kungopinda-pinda munezvepolitics. Unovawana vakazara kumarali. Vamwe vezera ravo vasina kuenda kunotirenwa havana kumbodaro. MaBorder Gezi haasapoti imwe party kunze kweZANU. Vanofunga kuti munhu wese ari munyika ino anofanira kusapota ZANU. Vangova kuita sema war vets.

Quote 12

Vana vacho mucherechedzo kune vamwe vana nekuti vanoshanda nesimba, havana husimbe. Vamwe vana vanofanira kuvatevedzera kuitira kuti. Vagokwanisa kuzvishandira kunyanya panguva ino zvinhu zvakaomera munhu wese. Vamwe vana vanofanira kudzidza kubva kuvana veyouth service. Infact ngavazviendere ikoko vanozvidzidzira pachavo.

Quote 13

Vana veyouth service vanoziva kukosha kwakaita luzvishandira. Vakabatsirwa kutanga maprojects, Iye Zvino vava kuzviitira mari yavo. Vamwe vavo vava kutochengeta vabereki. Chandinonyanya kufarira pavana vacho ndechekuti vanoshanda nesimba. Zvinhu zvkaoma ikozvino saka chero uri mudiki unofanira kutoshanda nesimba kuti urarame.

Quote 14

Vana ava vava kudzokera kutsika dzedu dzakare. Hauone vechikadzi vakapfeka matirauzi. Vana vanoremekedza vabereki vavo. Hauone vakomana vakapfeka matirauzi anoremba. Zvose izvi vanodzidziswa kuyouth service.

Quote 15

Vana vava vakakanganiswa mhani neZANU. Vava kutozviona sevatongi venyika ino. Havatomborespecta vanhu vasina kuenda kucamp. Even mavanoshanda, they are problematic. Haukwanisi kusununguka kana varipo. Ini ndinofunga kuti MaCIO chete. Kana vamwe vachistriker, ivo havadi. Vanofunga kuti kuva nechicertificate cheyouth service kunoshamisira. Vanozvihwa vana vava. Ndosaka vachinzi magreen bomber.

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