

**Social power through self-imaging in participatory video
amongst the Khwe Bushmen community of Platfontein.**

By

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Declaration

I, **Jonathan Dockney (205501385)** declare that this thesis is my own original work, and where use has been made of the work of others, it has been duly acknowledged in the text. It is being submitted in fulfilment of the Master of Arts Degree in the Graduate Programme of Communication, Media and Society in the Faculty of Humanities, at the University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa.

It has not been submitted before for any degree or examination, or to any other university.

Signature:

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Abstract

Voices of Our Forefathers (2008) is a participatory video that was made with a group of Khwe Bushmen in Platfontein in the Northern Cape. It is unique not only for its inclusion of the Khwe subjects in the production process, but also for its unique representation of them. It portrays them from historical as well as modern perspectives. This research explores how a group of Khwe youth – the research participants – engaged and negotiated their encounter with the *Voices of Our Forefathers* (2008). It does this within the context of participatory communication for development and participatory video. It draws on theories of empowerment, reception and representation. A qualitative methodology was employed with in-depth interviews comprising the main data collection method, and thematic analysis and semiotics being the main data analysis methods. Thematic analysis was aided through the use of a software programme, *Nvivo 8*.

The research explores research participants' responses to *Voices of Our Forefathers* and critically examines articulations of empowerment. Most of the research participants felt empowered because *VOOF* (2008) incorporated the Khwe in the production process, particularly in terms of how they wanted to be represented. The Khwe Bushmen's participation in their representation resulted in a range of nuanced interpretations and responses to *VOOF* (2008), which included discussions on rethinking their identities, learning new skills, fostering a sense of ownership of the film and the use of their language (Khwedam) in *The Voices of Our Forefathers*. It is argued, however, that although the research participants may have expressed that they are empowered, this needs to be understood and critically examined with respect to the larger contexts within which Bushmen, in general, live, which may or may not affect their senses of and the realities of their empowerment. Finally, it is argued that *VOOF* (2008) needs to be understood as a part of an on-going process in participatory communication for development. It might not have provided research participants with the necessary resources to completely transform their lives; it did, however, contribute to changing how they perceive themselves, which, according to Freirean theory, is a necessary step in empowering oneself.

Abbreviations

AD	-	Another Development
CCCS	-	The Centre for Contemporary Cultural Studies
CCMS	-	Centre for Culture, Media and Society
CPA	-	≠Khomani San Communal Property Association
<i>Dance</i>	-	<i>The Great Dance</i>
EE	-	Entertainment-education
FAO	-	United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation
<i>Gods</i>	-	<i>The Gods Must be Crazy</i> films (all films)
<i>Grievance</i>	-	<i>Indaba Ye Grievance</i>
HCM	-	!Hurikamma Cultural Movement
<i>Nationwide</i>	-	<i>The Nationwide Audience</i>
PAR	-	Participatory Action research
<i>Postscript</i>	-	<i>The 'Nationwide' Audience</i> : a critical postscript
PV	-	Participatory video
SASI	-	South African San Institute
SADF	-	South African Defence Force
SWAPO	-	South West Africa People's Organisation
UKZN	-	University of KwaZulu-Natal
UNESCO	-	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation
<i>VOOF</i>	-	<i>Voices of Our Forefathers</i>
n.p.	-	no page(s)
n.d.	-	no date

Chapter One: Messy videos and messy research: an introduction

‘Ver in die ou Kalahari’¹: where it all began

The Platfontein² audience, *Voices of Our Forefathers* (2008) (*VOOF*)³ and I encountered each other for the first time at a screening of *VOOF* (2008) in the local community hall in March 2009. It was a typical unrelentingly hot Northern Cape summer’s day. Over 100 people were packed tightly into the hall for the screening. This encounter was startling to say the least. The audience found certain scenes hysterically funny and hurled comments as *VOOF* (2008) played. My colleagues and I were concerned as this was, in our opinion, a serious production. We interpreted this as the audience laughing derisively at *VOOF* (2008). However, after the screening, we enquired from the host of the event, Piorro, as to why the audience laughed. He informed us that they laughed out of joy at seeing themselves on screen. It was here that the academic penny dropped so to speak: reception is an important component in meaning-making.

My initial interest in representation stemmed from my previous research whilst reading for my Honours degree (2008). I was registered for a course in Visual Anthropology and had been on a field trip (2008) to the Kalahari, where I made contact with a number of Bushman communities. During this trip I met Piorro and Moshe, who became my Masters research assistants. Moshe was instrumental during the research process as a translator and an assistant. I also met the director of *VOOF* (2008), Thomas Hart, during this trip. My Honours work examined how our idyllic notions of the ‘Bushman’ were exploited for the 2007 Vodacom Rugby World Cup advert⁴ (see Dockney 2008). This work proved invaluable in developing my Masters topic.

Initially, I was interested in how representation functions in *VOOF* (2008), and also in programmes aired on the local Platfontein radio station XK-fm⁵. However, after careful consideration, it became clear that this research should focus on only one media platform. It was therefore decided to research *VOOF* (2008) – a participatory video (PV) – as it became apparent that there is a lack of literature on whether PV is empowering and if so, how PV might empower *audiences* (as opposed to a focus on the participants *involved* in the production).

¹ This is the opening line from a traditional Afrikaans song. It translates as ‘far in the old Kalahari’.

² Platfontein is the research site for this thesis. It is about 5km outside of Kimberley, South Africa (see discussion below).

³ *VOOF* (2008) is a participatory video and was the research document that formed part of this research (see discussion below).

⁴ Available at: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1MHZQK7rfxQ&feature=related>.

⁵ See Mhlanga (2006, 2010) and Hart (2006) for information on XK-fm.

The focus of this research therefore critically examines the research participants’⁶ interpretations and negotiations of their encounter with their representation in *VOOF* (2008). It will also critically examine any instances where research participants might have expressed a sense of empowerment. It is important to note that this second point does *not* assume that research participants will articulate a sense of empowerment. However, based on preliminary interviews – where the research participants (Piorro and Moshe) expressed a sense of empowerment in response to the manner in which they were represented in *VOOF* (2008)⁷ – it acknowledges that the possibility exists. Thus, the question is: how does the community interpret *VOOF* (2008)?

Stepping back and locating *VOOF* (2008)⁸

VOOF (2008) came about after Hart trained two radio producers, Piorro and Moshe, in how to use a video camera, so that he could acquire more varied data for his Masters research. As a result of this experience, Piorro and Moshe decided that they wanted to make a short film. However, they lacked the funding to do so. Hart, Piorro and Moshe then decided to enter the M-Net Edit Student Competition in 2008. They developed a pitch and were awarded R40 000 in production funding, which was managed by the Centre for Communication, Media and Society. Certain conditions, however, were imposed by M-Net. The original script had to be re-drafted several times until it met the conditions stipulated by the M-Net commissioning editor. Piorro and Moshe were, however, happy with the final script, which was an amalgamation of the folk stories about the Bushmen that Hart heard as a child with the stories that aired on the local Platfontein radio station, XK-fm. The project was thus an attempt to showcase the realities of life in Platfontein whilst also providing production experience for the crew.

VOOF (2008) begins with an opening shot of the sunset over Platfontein, with a traditional song being played in the background. It then cuts to the Little Girl (one of the characters) walking through the village. The next scene shows a grandfather (The Old Man) waiting for his grandson (Piorro⁹) to complete a medical examination (Piorro is blind. It is never divulged as to how he became so). The Doctor informs the grandfather that there is nothing that she can do for his grandson.

The film then cuts to the Old Man making a meal for his blind grandson (Piorro). Piorro is angry with his

⁶ I refer to those members of the community who were involved in the production of *VOOF* (2008) as the participants. Those members of the community who watched *VOOF* (2008) and took part in the research are referred to as the research participants. This second group also included some of the participants. The use of “audience” refers to the community members who watched *VOOF* (2008) and who may or may not have formed part of the research; otherwise the context of the discussion will determine what the use of ‘audience’ is referring to.

⁷ This data is included in the Introduction to aid understanding of the approach to the research aims, questions and objectives.

⁸ See http://www.durbanmediaproject.com/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=222&Itemid=250 for an online copy of the film.

⁹ Piorro refers to the character in *VOOF* (2008), whereas Piorro refers to my research assistant after whom the character was named.

grandfather (the Old Man) for his being blind and he promptly tosses the meal aside, argues with him and blames his grandfather for his blindness, and that he wishes his grandfather dead (instead of his mother). As a result of Piorro's bad manners, the Old Man throws him out the house. At this point the Little Girl arrives at the Old Man's house to hear a traditional story. The Old Man tells her to wait by the fire for him.

While she is waiting, the Little Girl speaks to Piorro. He proceeds to tell her a tale of a young Bushman hunter (this part of the film is depicted in cartoon format) who gets lost in the dark whilst out hunting. The stars have not yet been formed in this world and so there is no light for him to hunt by. He has to rely on the sounds of the night to find a springbok to hunt. He eventually makes a kill and attempts to return home. However, he cannot see where he is going, so he chants to the ancestors to help him, who in turn transmit the boy's thoughts to his grandfather. The grandfather realises that his grandson is lost and so he throws the coals of his fire into the night sky, thus lighting the way for the boy. Eventually the young hunter makes it back to safety.

As a result of the happy ending of the story, The Old Man and Piorro eventually reconcile their differences. The moral of the story of is that you do not need your eyes to see; our other senses and our soul (it was, according to the story, the young hunter's soul that 'saw' the ancestors when he chanted to them) can fulfill this function. This resolves Piorro's anger and results in him apologising to his grandfather.

With regards to the degree of participation enabled in *VOOF* (2008), Hart felt that *VOOF* (2008) is semi-participatory (email, Oct 15). The participants had a role to play in direction and decision-making. They were also invaluable with regards to translation. The participants helped the Durban-based participants to adapt to the realities of the location. However, owing to a lack of technical knowledge, the Khwe participants were not able to contribute much to camera work, lighting, sound etc. In addition to this, the stipulations that came with the funding from M-Net might have affected the level of participation. The participants in this instance were not the final arbiters of the story. One would therefore need to consider how this may or may not have affected the story and the community's representation. This is an example of how real world practicalities can affect participation.

Platfontein, Northern Cape, South Africa – in the middle of nowhere

The research population was a group of Khwe youth from the Platfontein community (near Kimberley in the Northern Cape, South Africa – see Figure 1 below). This section outlines a brief history of the Platfontein Bushman (Barnabas 2009, Douglas 1996, Robbins 2006) community in order to provide a historical context to the research site.



Figure 1 Map of Platfontein in Kimberley, taken from Barnabas (2009: 7).

The Platfontein community comprises two ethnic groups: the Khwe and the !Xun. This research was undertaken with the Khwe as they collaborated with Hart on *VOOF* (2008), and links and contacts with them were already established through my and Hart's previous work with the community. The Khwe were also chosen as they are the only South African indigenous group, to my knowledge, that has produced a PV.

While both the Khwe and !Xun live in the same settlement, there are no ethnic linkages between the Khwe and the !Xun (Robbins 2006: 2). The Khwe speak Khwedam and the !Xun speak !Xuntali. The Khwe's and !Xun's journeys to South Africa began in Namibia and Angola respectively, when the South African Defence Force (SADF) recruited them in the war against the South West Africa People's Organisation (SWAPO). After the war ended in 1989, the !Xun and Khwe soldiers opted to relocate to South Africa where they were housed in a tent town at Schmidtsdrift (see Figure 2 below).

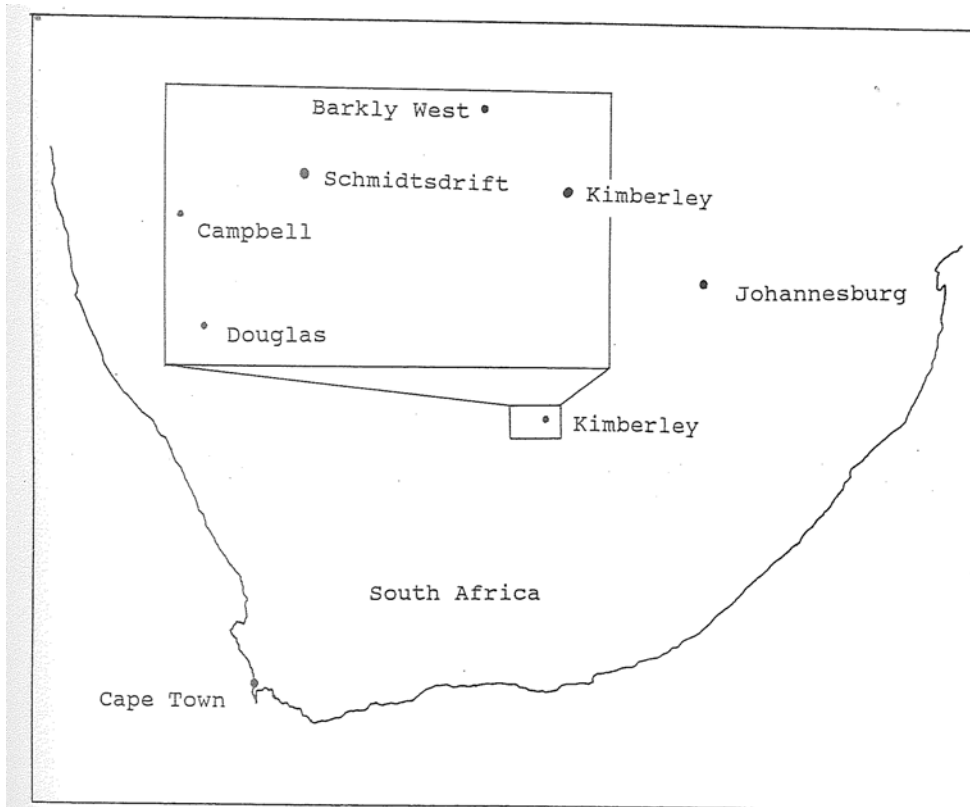


Figure 2 Map of Schmidtsdrift in relation to Kimberley. Taken from Douglas 1996: vi.

The !Xun had fought with the Portuguese in the war for independence in Angola. As a result, the !Xun became targets for violence and revenge acts after Angolan independence. They eventually fled to Caprivi in South West Africa (Namibia) (Robbins 2006: 8). It was here that they encountered the Khwe, and where they were both recruited into the military by SADF in the war against SWAPO (Robbins 2006: 10).

The Khwe and !Xun became dependent on SADF for their survival and, as a result, needed to support the SADF. When Namibian independence was secured and SWAPO had come to power, the Bushmen once again fled as they feared for their safety (Robbins 2006: 17).

The Khwe and !Xun migrants arrived in South Africa and were relocated to a tent town in Schmidtsdrift, about 80km outside of Kimberley. Life in Schmidtsdrift was appallingly difficult: tents provided little protection against howling winter winds and unrelenting summer heat. Promises of housing from the government never materialised. They endured this for thirteen years, and had become what Robbins describes as “superfluous misfits” (2006: 23) in the larger narrative of the transition to democracy in South Africa.

Finally, in December 2003, resettlement from Schmidtsdrift¹⁰ to Platfontein began after a long negotiating process (Robbins 2006: 30-2). The South African government finally recognised that the !Xun and Khwe needed compensation for services rendered to South Africa through supporting SADF, and that they quite simply had nowhere else to go. The Platfontein Farm was therefore transferred to the ≠Khomani San Communal Property Association (CPA) for the Khwe and the !Xun (Robbins 2004: 91).

During the moves from Angola to Namibia, and then South Africa, the !Xun and the Khwe found themselves increasingly dislocated from their culture (Robbins 2006: 13). This dislocation aggravated a sense of cultural schizophrenia (Robbins 2006: 19). They found themselves straddling many identity worlds. As they strived to inch their way forwards into modernity, the outside, largely black, South Africa was hostile towards them, owing to their allegiance to the colonial powers during the above mentioned wars. Also, many people seemed to be obsessed with pinning them into a plastic stone age (see Robbins 2006: 36).

One of the concerns of the Platfontein community (as expressed in the research participants' interviews), is maintaining and asserting their identity as traditional and modern Bushmen in a globalising world. This is picked up by Robbins during an interview with two !Xun men, Salvador¹¹ and Titu (2004: 130-3). Jaoquem/Salvador and Titu felt that they were integrating into South African society, but they did not want complete integration. Rather, they wanted to assert their own identity amongst the differing cultural threads of South African life (Robbins 2004: 132). The tension that exists between the 'westerse mense' (westernised Bushmen of Upington, Kimberley etc.) and the 'traditional' Bushmen of the Kalahari is perhaps metaphorical of the tension experienced by many Bushmen as their worlds negotiate with modernity (see Robbins 2004: 100).

The lives of the Platfontein Bushmen are fraught with disappointment, anger, sadness, loss and a sense of powerlessness, as was expressed in many informal discussions with members of the community. This research operates along these fault lines and represents an attempt at critically examining a development initiative (*VOOF* (2008) by the community through this research.

Modernising development communication: theoretical turns of thought

PVs emerged out of the developments in participatory communication for development and visual anthropology. The former draws on the supposed and intended/desired empowering effect of handing the camera over to the subjects, whilst the latter draws on participant-generated movie ethnographies to address

¹⁰ See Kleibooi 2007 for more information on the Schmidtsdrift land claim.

¹¹ Robbins (2004) confusingly refers to Jaoquem and Titu whereas Robbins (2006) refers to Salvador and Titu.

the Othering process (see Adair & Worth 1975). This research locates itself within participatory communication for development, whilst drawing on elements of visual anthropology.

The move from top-down approaches to development, to Modernisation's antithesis, participatory (bottom-up) development, marks a dramatic turn in thought (see Melkote 2003). Participatory development theory argues that the subjects know what they need more than development specialists who might be abstracted from the subjects' worlds (see Melkote 2003; Melkote & Steeves 2001; Tomaselli 2001: 9). Empowerment, it is argued, can also more valuably take place when the subjects participate in their own development, as they determine their own development strategies.

Within this development paradigm, the espoused communication theory is participatory communication, whereby "multiplicity, smallness of scale, locality, de-institutionalisation, inter-change of sender-receiver roles [and] horizontality of communication links at all levels of society ..." are favoured (Enzensberger 1970 quoted in McQuail 1987: 122; see Decock 2000; Jamieson 1991; Manyozo 2008; Melkote & Steeves 2001; Servaes 1996, 2000; Servaes & Malikhao 2005).

PV is an application of participatory communication for development (Stuart & Bery 1996: 199; see Shaw & Robertson 1997). It ideally locates authority and representative control amongst the subjects. The process of making PVs allows subjects to present their assessment of their own worlds (Traber & Lee 1989: 1). PV is unlike traditional video and film production methods, as the processes of production and reception are *both* important in PV (White 2003b: 65).

VOOF (2008), however, is not perfectly participatory. The practicalities of being in the field mean that participatory development communication specialists often have to make compromises. The Platfontein community, for example, could not be very involved in the editing process as it took place in Durban, which is 800km (500 miles) away from Kimberley. However, the community was consulted throughout the production.

Consistent with the above theories, some of the key concepts that are drawn upon in this research include participatory development, participatory communication, PV, empowerment, representation, and reception.

Questions, aims and objectives

This research focuses on the reception of PV. The research subjects comprised people who were not all involved in the production process. Development communication specialists need to consider how PV programmes impact the wider audience, which may not have been able to directly participate in the production.

The driving question behind this research comprises two parts: (1) how do the research participants interpret their representation in *VOOF* (2008), and (2) in relation to PV as a potentially empowering medium? The research employs a case study method that draws on a predominantly post-modern and, to a lesser extent, a critical paradigm. This research employs the term post-modern with reference to the idea that knowledge and truth are “socially situated and socially constituted, and therefore variable and inevitably intertwined with ongoing power struggles” (Baert et al. 2011: 478). This employment of the term also eschews grand continuous – where time and history are irrelevant – narratives (Baert 2011: 478). This is in keeping with the overall research aim of articulating an account of how the research participants negotiated their encounter with their representation through PV in *VOOF* (2008). This research is oriented towards contributing to improving the subjects’ understanding of themselves and the transformation of their realities for the better (see Morris 2011), and hence the use of the term critical paradigm above.

Representation of the Bushmen has generally, although not in all instances, drawn on romantic and/or racist strategies (see Clelland-Stokes 2007). Romantic representations of the ‘Bushman’ mask abuse and an embattled reality (see Chapter 3). By reworking these images, they may act as sources of resistance and empowerment. *The Gods Must be Crazy* films (1980, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1994) (*Gods*) are a series of comedies that draw on our romantic notions of the Bushmen in their respective narratives. The first three films were directed by Jamie Uys, and the other two were directed by various Hong Kong directors. The films employ a paternalist discourse of black and Bushman Otherness (Tomaselli 2006: 194). In this context, where potentially exploitative romantic representations are pervasive, how do the research participants meaningfully negotiate their representation in *VOOF* (2008)?

The major concern for this research then was relating the research participants’ responses to *VOOF* (2008) back to the overall aim of PV, which was to empower audiences. In other words, could one argue that the research participants were empowered, to any degree, through their interpretations of *VOOF* (2008)? The semantic elements of the text such as the themes that arose in the interviews are therefore important in this regard.

This research employs a qualitative methodology. The methods chosen for this research needed to be sensitive to the idiosyncracies of the field. It was also important to explore which methods would appropriately and rigorously capture the research participants’ meaningful responses. Thematic analysis, embedded within a quantitative and qualitative framework, was one of the methods used to achieve this. Themes are an appropriate and convenient method for organising the semantic content of data (see Boyatzis 1998; Braun & Clarke 2006).

The first objective of this research was to collect a set of responses to *VOOF* (2008) from the research participants. The second objective was to explore these responses, and to develop a list of themes. Once the themes had been established, the third objective was to critically examine any articulations and perceptions of empowerment under the respective themes. The fourth and final objectives were to articulate a theorised explanation of the research participants' interpretations of *VOOF* (2008), in relation to PV as a medium that is used for empowering people.

Significance and parameters

As already mentioned, the literature available on reception of PV is scant. Julia Cain's (2009) work touches on a similar terrain. However, Cain is more concerned with the representation of marginalised voices. My research focuses on understanding the research participants' encounter with their representation in *VOOF* (2008). This research does not seek to measure degrees of change or empowerment. Rather, it describes and critically examines the research participants' responses to *VOOF* (2008), and whether they may or may not have felt empowered by *VOOF* (2008). Any articulation of empowerment by the research participants is critically examined. In other words, this study focuses on the research participants' interpretations of *VOOF* (2008), with a particular focus on how the Khwe are represented. It critically examines these responses in relation to PV as a medium that can be used to empower people, rather than arguing that the research participants are in fact empowered or not.

Finally, considering the research's focus on development, it will be sent to the community for their use in other development projects. By doing this, it is hoped that the Platfontein community to better understand their responses to *VOOF* (2008), and therefore use the film more effectively for empowerment purposes.

Naming the Bushmen

The research participants are referred to as 'Bushman' and not as 'San' in this research, as this is how they prefer to be identified. 'San' encodes pejorative connotations with which the research participants do not identify. 'San' is also an "antiseptically academic" term, which has been employed to generically refer to the Bushmen (Robbins 2004: 89). 'Bushman' (or the Afrikaans 'boesman'), despite its history of negative use, is the term that is most widely understood by this group of people (Robbins 2004: 89; see Bregin & Kruiper 2004: 54; Hollman 2004: 4). However, one also needs to consider that the Bushmen are a diverse group of people who do not necessarily identify as a singular group under a single term. Both 'Bushman' and 'San' are coloniser-given labels (Gordon & Douglas 2000: 4), and both have negative connotations (Barnard 1992: 8; Boonzaier et al. 2000: 70; Gordon & Douglas 2000: 5-6).

Where to from here?

This research is therefore an attempt to understand how the research participants interacted with *VOOF* (2008). The following chapters thus engage the empirical data so as to reach a critical response to the overall research question.

Chapter 2 establishes a framework for understanding what constitutes PV through drawing on literature from development, development communication and PV. These discussions are then related to *VOOF* (2008). This sets the framework for contextualising what *VOOF* (2008) is before moving onto the main aims and objectives of the research. **Chapter 3** offers a literature review, and discusses various examples of reception analyses and their relevance to this research. The aim of the chapter is to lay out relevant literature, and to examine how audiences interact with texts. **Chapter 4** develops the conceptual and theoretical frameworks for understanding the data set. The chapter works from within a Cultural Studies framework and adopts a social constructionist position. The theories examined in this chapter include empowerment, representation and empowerment and reception theory together. **Chapter 5** outlines the qualitative methodology espoused in this thesis. Within this, the chapter problematises the research encounter and details a response/strategy for dealing with research in the field, which includes the use of various methods such as interviews, thematic analysis, semiotics and Phaneroscopy. **Chapter 6** critically examines the research participants' responses to *VOOF* (2008) through using thematic analysis. **Chapter 7** presents the concluding discussions of the thesis. The limitations, weaknesses and strengths of this research are also discussed. Reflections on the research process are discussed as an end piece.

Chapter Two: Navigating the mess: framing participatory video

Sketching out the PV skeleton

This chapter sketches out a conceptual framework for understanding PV. It includes a discussion of Another (participatory)¹² Development (AD), participatory communication and PV. The purpose of this is two-fold: to contextualise the research, and to provide a framework for understanding *VOOF* (2008).

Another Development, developing an Other

AD and participatory development theories emerged in response to Modernisation and Dependency development theories. Modernisation approached development from Western scientific perspectives, whilst Dependency theorists conceptualised the world system as actively establishing underdevelopment so as to service the Western developed nations (see Manyozo 2008, Melkote & Steeves 2001). AD, however, approaches development as a multidimensional, dialectic and relative process. It acknowledges the importance of subjects' participation in their own development. This includes their local culture and local indigenous knowledge systems to “empower [*sic*] communities to formulate [their own] realistic and meaningful development policies” (Manyozo 2008: 131; see Campbell & Vainio-Mattila 2003: 420-1; Crush 1995; Melkote & Steeves 2001; Servaes 1999: 6). Self-reliance is important (Melkote 2003: 130), where the subjects determine their own needs and how to satisfy them. The subjects ideally exercise power. AD focuses on empowering people to determine a sustainable path towards their own idea of development (see Melkote 2003; Tomaselli 2001).

One of the central ideas of AD is subject participation in their own development. The United Nations Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) defines ‘participation in development’ as:

an equitable and active involvement of all stakeholders in the formulation of development policies and strategies and in the analysis, planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation of development activities. To allow for a more equitable development process, disadvantaged stakeholders need to be empowered to increase their level of knowledge, influence, and control over their own livelihoods, including development initiatives affecting them (FAO 2011).

The World Bank views “[p]articipation [as] a process through which stakeholders influence and share control over development initiatives and the decisions and resources affecting them” (White 2003a: 35).

¹² Participatory Development is another term for AD.

Reality is conceptualised in AD as constructed, multiple, changing and unpredictable, as opposed to the linear, singular and apprehendable approach advocated by Modernisation theorists (see Melkote 2003: 142). Knowledge in this paradigm is viewed as a socially constructed process (Huesca 2003: 212), and not eternally “out there” for all to see (Vainio-Mattila 1996 quoted in Campbell & Vainio-Mattila 2003: 425). Participatory communication is situated within the AD paradigm. Participatory models of communication therefore stress that “social reality is produced between people, in material contexts and in communication” (Huesca 2003: 213).

Fetishising the Community

A central tenet of participatory communication is the community. ‘Community’ has been variously defined, including along the lines of group relations (Martin-Barbero 1993: 29; Morris & Morton 1998: 12-13; Tönnies 1963), geography (Leunissen 1986), structural conceptualisations (Hillery 1955: 111), non-geographical relations/community of interest (Lewis 1993: 13; Popple 1995: 4), community of practice (Wenger et al. 2002: 4), virtual/online communities (Castells 1996: 352), interpretive communities (Fish 1980; Lindlof 1988) and communities of meaning (Cohen 1985), whose cultural communalities are established and co-ordinated through the interpretation of texts.

However, current usage of this term can be somewhat problematic. Often the community is “fetishised as an object”, a process that ignores whole stratifications of class, race, gender, sexuality etc. and, which introduces differing sites and forms of domination and resistance (Tomaselli 1989: 11; see Bailey et al. 2008: 14). The Khwe and !Xun, for example, are divided along ethnic and language lines. This poses a complication for participatory media, as their meaning, function and usage within the respective groups become determined by problematic conceptions of ‘community’.

The approach taken to conceptualising ‘community’ in this research is as interpretive communities. An interpretive community is a community of ‘interpreters’ who share similar interpretive strategies. Texts are meaningfully constituted through people ascribing various properties to them through drawing on a range of interpretive strategies that are developed through learning. Similar interpretations are the result therefore of holding similar interpretive strategies, and not some inherent textual quality. It is important to note as well, that the boundaries of interpretive communities can change through negotiations, compromises etc. They are not fixed, and therefore, meaning is not fixed (see Fish 1976). This strategy is employed in this research in a way that remains connected to the context of the subjects’ worlds, so as not to separate meaningful engagement from context. It also takes cognisance of the respective and apparent stratifications within the community complex.

“There’s no alternative”¹³: defining participatory communication for development

The social realities of the 21st century require that participatory communication needs to be understood within a framework of globalisation; otherwise the economic, cultural, social and political forces that govern people’s lives are separated from their worlds. Separating contexts would make local representations of abstract problems difficult (Crocker 2003: 123). Participatory communication methods can be used to address this. PV, for example, can be used to produce locally internalised and contextualised representations of abstract problems, thus bridging local and abstract experiences. It is argued that video’s particular ability to present aggregated details, in a way far more effective than other forms of media, through visual, audio and textual information means that it is particularly suited to this process (Crocker 2003: 124).

The difficulty of trying to capture exactly what constitutes participatory (or alternative)¹⁴ media (and communication) is highlighted by Olga Bailey et al. (2008: 5-6). They argue that essentialised approaches to defining and understanding participatory media cannot fully capture the media’s inherent diversity. They argue against “single underlying principles” that fix the “whole field of differences” (Laclau & Mouffe 1985: 11).

Participatory communication for development can be worked out within an *alternative* paradigm – alternative to that of the “overly prescriptive and top-down model of Modernisation” (Melkote 2003: 133)¹⁵, or “models ... guided philosophically by a combination of behaviouralism and functionalism” (Huesca 2003: 210). The premise behind participatory communication is understanding the meaning sought and ascribed to rather than information transmission (Servaes 1999: 89). Participatory communication is defined as: “a two-way, dynamic interaction, between “grass roots” receivers and the “information” source, mediated by development communicators, which facilitates participation of the ‘target group’ in the process of development” (Nair & White 1987: 37).

Participatory communication operates in such a way that: “[s]ubject-generated, advocacy, and action research ... inject affirmative participatory approaches into development processes. They furthermore aim to do this in terms of the cultural emphases, local frames of reference and experiences of the participating groups themselves” (Tomaselli 2001: 12).

¹³ This is a phrase taken from Jonathan Steele’s (2009) web article.

¹⁴ ‘Alternative’ is placed in brackets here, as Bailey *et al.* (2008) use this term for convenience. They do, however, consider a myriad of other definitions, with most implying participation (2008: 7).

¹⁵ See Tomaselli (2001: 10) for a comparative table listing the different approaches to development, their respective communication approaches (with film examples) and their effectiveness. Also see Melkote (2003: 141).

Freirean (1996) principles with regards to understanding participatory media are significant for this research. These principles focus on facilitating development through stimulating group dialogue, awareness and reflection for “conscientisation”¹⁶ (Freire 1996: 49), social emancipation and empowerment¹⁷. Conscientisation refers to becoming (self) aware of one’s existential condition.

Participatory communication embraces the concepts of dialogue, praxis and the notion of communication as a process (Huesca 2003: 210). Theory and practice are inextricably linked in praxis, where theory informs practice and practice informs theory. Co-learning relationships are developed that are guided by action and reflection, and where knowledge is systematically created, examined and altered (Huesca 2003: 212). Figure 3, provided by Srinivas Melkote (2003: 139), demonstrates praxis as applied in Participatory Action Research (PAR) (also see McIntyre 2008):

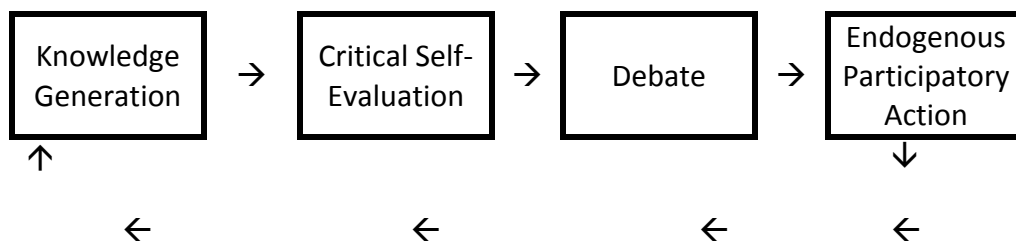


Figure 3 Praxis as applied in PAR.

In PAR, knowledge is collectively generated by the community. This then leads to critical reflection, debate and endogenous participatory action. The process then repeats itself (Melkote 2003: 139). Dialogic communication is contrary to information transmission models (Huesca 2003: 212); communication is conceptualised as a process that constructs social reality through interaction and dialogue (see Stuart & Bery 1996: 199).

Various applications of participatory communication exist, with differing degrees participation, according Robert Huesca (2003). They range from reformist approaches, to entertainment-education (EE)¹⁸, to approaches that consider participation as an end in and of itself, such as PAR and Empowerment (Huesca 2003: 214-216; see de Negri, et al. 1999, Melkote 2003: 138-9). Both reformist approaches and EE follow a top-down approach to development communication to varying degrees. Other approaches, however, which

¹⁶ This is translated from *conscientização* (Freire 1996: 49).

¹⁷ This is not the only approach to participatory communication. The United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) advocates more media-centred principles, which focus on self-management, access, and participation (see Prehn 1992).

¹⁸ Both of these approaches are not, according to Huesca (2003: 215), genuine participatory approaches, and merely serve as “passive collaboration” with the traditional development paradigms.

consider participation as an end in and of itself, are the focus of this section. *VOOF* (2008) is located within these latter theories of participatory communication.

Approaches that consider participation as an end in and of itself advocate incorporating local culture and wisdom in development programmes (see Boeren 1994; Boeren & Epskamp 1992; Melkote & Steeves 2001; Mody 2003). They also espouse the humanising, liberating and catalysing effects of participation (Huesca 2003: 215-6). These approaches have focused on the need to adapt strategies to local contexts and cultures (see Boeren 1994; Boeren & Epskamp 1992; Jamieson 1991; Melkote 2003; Melkote & Steeves 2001; Mody 2003), with a focus on using participatory and folk/indigenous media (see Boeren 1994; Boeren & Epskamp 1992; Decock 2000; Melkote & Steeves 2001; Servaes 1996, 2000, 2005).

Messiness¹⁹ and Films of Discomfort²⁰: What is PV?

PV, as part of participatory communication, is “a group-based activity that develops participants’ abilities by involving them in using video equipment creatively, to record themselves and the world around them, and to produce their own videos” (Shaw & Robertson 1997: 1). The locus of control is ideally handed over to the participants. The participants, ideally, have the power to determine the structure, content and distribution in PV. However, this is not always the case with all productions, as was discussed in Chapter 1 concerning *VOOF* (2008).

Unlike commercial and broadcast television and video, PV has no aesthetic and technical rules other than “consensual thinking, imagination, [and the] creative utilisation of the medium and resources” (White 2003b: 65). The participants’ worlds are recreated through a collective assessment of their lives (Traber & Lee 1989: 1).

PV is also defined under the term independent video, which includes most non-commercial, non-broadcast video production and distribution (Shaw & Robertson 1997: 9). Community videos, which can include PV (see Cain 2009: 88), have also been defined as part of home movies owing to their similarity in two areas: their skill-less production, and their fairly limited appeal to the immediate community or family (Tomaselli 1989: 11-12). Formalism privileges technique over exploratory content and codes, and thus limits our conceptualisation of PV to being similar to home movies. PVs confront and contest different versions of reality, whilst home movies do not necessarily do so. The subjects’ realities are re-represented in opposition to dominant ideologies (Tomaselli 1989: 12). *VOOF* (2008) explored a bottom-up and resistive

¹⁹ See Criticos (1989).

²⁰ See Glauba Rocha (1982).

representative code with regards to Bushman representation. It contested and re-worked representations of the Bushmen with regards to exploitative representative strategies. There is thus an important difference between home movies and participatory and community videos: the development of oppositional codes within community videos and PVs.

Eyes at the eyepiece: bio-documentary

An early example of PV was devised by Sol Worth and John Adair (1970; 1975). The objectives of their research were not necessarily linked to development. Their specific aims were more in line with developing the field of ethnographic research within Anthropology, through developing methods that would enable researchers to understand how subjects perceived their own worlds. However, their research is important in that it presents an early example of handing the camera over to the subjects so that the subject's "eye was at the eyepiece" and the subjects were taught skills in producing and editing films and videos (Worth & Adair 1970: 10). The focus by Worth and Adair on understanding how participants understand their world, highlights efforts to find methods that allow participants to express themselves, their understandings of their worlds and problems, and their solutions to problems (Shaw & Robertson 1997: 9). The approach entailed various aspects, of which the most important was reversing traditional documentary "objects" into subjects. This thereby incorporates the participants' subjectivities, personal value systems and worldviews, which may be beyond comprehension of any one all-controlling filmmaker. *VOOF* (2008) applied this logic by allowing for self-representation of the community's world and their sense of self.

The "bio-documentary" is a concept employed by Worth and Adair (1975: 24) that provides an apt understanding of PV. Bio-documentary is defined in contrast to traditional forms of filmmaking and video-making in terms of operation and intent. Films and videos, no matter their type, *operate* according to similar rules. However, as regards *intent*, they are different. The bio-documentary filmmaker is interested in portraying the subjective and the phenomenological as opposed to the traditional documentary filmmaker's goal of objectivity (Worth & Adair 1975: 26).

The subjects' participation can embed the film or video within a bottom-up framework. As a result, PV takes inactive representations – without context or not yet made meaningful (see Fiske 1987: 14) – of people, where "surface becomes all" (Winston 2001: 152), and activates them – to give context and meaning – through imbuing them with the subjects' perceptions of reality. In doing this, it also incorporates contexts, "the historical processes into which individuals are born and of which they may be unaware," and con-texts, "the web of conflicting historical, social, economic, political and psychological discourses out of which all texts arise" (Tomaselli 1996: 34-5).

PV in the Digital Age

The concept of video has changed with the advent of technologies that make it possible for the ordinary person to produce their own videos (White 2003b: 64-5). PV is defined as part of participatory communication, whereby people speak for themselves and where informational and representative control, and control of the tools, lie (ideally) with the subjects (Stuart & Bery 1996: 199). A little exposition on the moving image in the Digital Age will shed further light on the above PV definition. The focus of this research is not on film in the Digital Age. However, it is important in defining and understanding PV to situate it within its broader contexts.

The Digital Age has seen the moving image escape its traditional confines of the cinema and the television, “its familiar biotopes” (Simons 2009: 7; see Dockney & Tomaselli 2010; Hardbord 2007; Stam & Shohat 2000). Owing to this, the moving image has diversified in its functions, meanings and technologies. The Digital Age has seen what used to be bulky camera equipment become smaller and easier to operate for non-professionals and, as a result, provide opportunities for them to produce their own films. The result is that PV has been “enhanced” through this process. DVDs, CDs and cell phones are now part of the arsenal that the PV-maker has at their disposal.

Technological changes affect what can be done with PV. The role of participatory communication in development has changed in the context of the Digital Age and globalisation. Video and film are now multiplatform and are accessible and available to more people than was possible in traditional mass media forms. One of the resultant effects is a change in the balance of power, particularly with regards to representation of minority groups²¹ (Tomaselli 2002: 205).

Process versus product

PV as a process (see Bery 2003: 113; Crocker 2003: 125-9; Tomaselli 1989) is self-involving. Subjects tape, watch, discuss and then reflect on the issues raised in the PV process (White 2003b: 63). ‘Participation’ in the PV process refers not only to participants’ involvement in production, but also to how PV can stimulate post-viewing discussion and reflection (Mitchell & de Lange in press: 2) The process refers to the entire context of experience of using video for a self-defined purpose, which includes skills transfer, interaction, dialogue, reflection, co-learning, identification, identity modification and strengthening, defining goals, and constructing messages (White 2003b: 65). The video product therefore becomes a vehicle for facilitating and continuing the larger PV process.

²¹ This takes into account the effects of the Digital Divide – that, for some people, access to ICTs has not been realised in the 21st century.

PV as a process-driven product is different to the video product in traditional mass media terms (a product-driven process). As process-driven, the focus is on the facilitation of interaction and self-expression. Video as a product focuses solely on the end product. This is contrary to the process involved in PV, where authorial, interpretive and representative control ideally lies with the community (White 2003b: 65-66). The participants are involved in the entire process, where action research, reception analysis and social intervention are all utilised to make “‘useful films’, productions which recover public memory” (Tomaselli 2001: 10).

Typologies of PV

Various modes of video for social change are classified according to their level of participation (Bery 2003: 106, adapted from de Negri et al. 1999: 4). Community involvement, outsider control and control of agenda-setting are the central determinants. The six levels of participation, based on the continuum of participation as discussed earlier (see Huesca 2003), result in applications of PV that range from: co-option, compliance, consultation, co-operation (Modernisation → Dependency)²², co-learning and collective action (Dependency → Participation) (adapted from Bery 2003: 106).

PV is considered a social medium for education, community action and creating opportunities for under-represented people to express their points of view (Shaw & Robertson 1997: 9). Video for development can be split into six different areas of focus and work (Shaw & Robertson 1997: 9-11, listed below). The focus that most applies to *VOOF* (2008) is a category entitled PV, as *VOOF* (2008) seemed to achieve the points in most instances, but not all, that are outlined by Shaw and Robertson (1997). In this category, video is used as a social and community-based medium for individual and group development. It is used to develop subjects' self-esteem, encourage them to express themselves creatively, develop critical awareness and to provide a means for communicating with others. In addition to the PV category, the other focus categories are: 1) production for the community (a video production crew makes videos for and about the community, potentially addressing various issues, but operates within a traditional television model, where no skills are taught to the community during the process), 2) provision of training and facilities, 3) exhibition and distribution (videos are sold and hired to the community and are designed to stimulate discussion and participation by the community around a certain issue), 4) media education (video is used to teach the community about the media and television in particular through a deconstructive approach to enable understanding and potentially the creation of their own videos) and, 5) the use of video in feedback (Shaw & Robertson 1997: 9-11).

²² I have included the development paradigms here (Modernisation, Dependency and Participatory).

Conclusion

This chapter establishes a framework for understanding PV and *VOOF* (2008). It is necessary to locate *VOOF* (2008) within a broader PV framework in order to understand how the research participants interpreted participant-generated representations in PV, and to analyse how audiences negotiate their experiences of PVs. Within this framework, PV is linked to AD and participatory communication for development; ‘participation’ is the thread that links all the relevant areas in this chapter. Participation is also indelibly linked to the PV process. PV, as a process, does not stop with a final product. Rather, the PV process flows from production through to reception, and back again. The next chapter outlines various cases of reception that are significant for this research.

Chapter Three: Bushman encounters: cases of representation of the Bushmen

Kalahari encounters: confronting the myth

As reception of PV is the main concern of this research, this chapter critically examines various cases of reception of representations of the Bushmen of Southern Africa. A case that does not include the Bushmen, *Indaba Ye Grievance* (1985) (*Grievance*), is also included. However, the conclusions drawn from *Grievance* (1985) are particularly important for this research. The chapter begins with a discussion on representation of the Bushmen, which includes essentialist discourses and the disempowering effects for the Bushmen. It then discusses various cases of reception. The listed cases of reception all point to a pivotal moment: that the incorporation of the Other in participatory communication engenders a fracturing logic that can empower subjects.

This section is informed through the simple but powerful realisations that I made whilst on my first Kalahari research trip in 2008. It was here that it became clear that the essentialist notions of the Bushmen often hide their modern lives in favour of popular myths. The effect of this can be disempowering for the Bushmen – Toby Volkman refers to these popular notions as a “paralyzing [*sic*] myth” (1987: 28).

Essentialism refers to the notion that identity or meaning comprises a core essence that is indifferent to changes in context, time, place, discourse and subject position. However, identities and meanings do shift over time. According to post-modern conceptions of identity, people occupy a range of identities that are specific to historical contexts (Barker 2003: 221). In anti-essentialist thought, people exist within and occupy a range of subject positions and discourses, “social categories do not reflect an underlying identity but are constituted in and through forms of representation” (Barker 2003: 263). This is an important point for this research, as it contributes to a deeper understanding of how the Bushmen negotiate interpretations and their struggles for identity.

The chasm between first-hand experience and representation is labelled by David MacDougall as the “crisis of representation” (1992: 40). Embedded within representations of the Other are caustic binary oppositions and narratives that inform meaning. These binaries and narratives reaffirm myths and grand narratives at the expense of those represented. However, the subjects are not without recourse. PV, for example, offers subjects a “resistive ... film practice” (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 2) that critiques myths through an “oppositional political discourse” (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 2). PV can thus destabilise “‘normative’ attitudes that form part of neo-colonialist narratives ... [allowing for] possibilities for the disruption of real-life politics and social arrangements” (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 1).

Conceptualising films and videos as “allegories of cultural engagement” (Blythe 1994: 10) – that film representations reveal more about the filmmakers than those represented (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 33) – brings added import to the need for film and video reception analysis. In other words, representations can say more of the filmmakers than those who are being represented. This raises the question of how do one’s ideological frames of reference affect representation, and what are the effects for the subjects’ worlds? Considering the above, Sacha Clelland-Stokes argues that it is imperative that aboriginals establish control of, in this instance, their representation in consideration of the power attached to media representations (2007: 4).

Representations of the Bushmen establish respective power relations that impose material effects. For the average person, the signifier ‘Bushman’ draws on a set of preconceived notions that constitute it as meaningful. These notions inform outsiders’ conceptions of the reality of the Bushmen, which often affects the worlds within which the Bushmen exist. The lived experiences of Bushmen however, are incongruous with these notions and myths.

Essentialism and representation of the Bushmen

Other-Same relations in indigenous representation are succinctly discussed by Clelland-Stokes (2007: 1-49). Her discussion operates within the framework of Abdul JanMohamed’s *Economy of the Manichean Allegory* (JanMohamed 1995, 1985) and delineates the underlying motivations (which include political, pragmatic, psychological, and economic motivators) behind representing the Bushmen as Other. These motivators operate within five standard commodities: sex, violence, orality, mysticism, and ahistorical artefacts (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 13-15). The notions of excess and lack are also discussed.

The argument posited by Clelland-Stokes is that essentialist representations of the Bushmen operate along one of two lines: racism or romanticism. Racist representations can be understood along the lines of aggressive excess and as the recipient of the colonialist’s alterity²³ (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 30-1). Romantic representations are argued to correspond to the colonialist’s angst and desire to return to an innocent Eden-like state of being (a lack of) (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 30-31). The standard commodities, excess and lack, and the racist and romantic themes all interact in varying combinations. An important point to make here is that these representations have a real-world impact, and despite their form and purpose, they serve to maintain the Bushmen as Other to the colonial Self.

The essentialist myths of the Bushmen delimit definitions, restrict indigenous rights, strip the Bushmen of authority, control, agency and generally misinform the public. The myth removes the Bushmen from public

²³ The Bushmen are positioned as the binary Other to the colonial Self, and therefore receive the colonialist’s alterity (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 30).

life (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 29). The mechanism behind each typology of Bushman representation is not discussed in this thesis (see Clelland-Stokes 2007: 29-43). However, the almost singular result of essentialist discourse is argued to obscure the Bushmen's histories and their socio-political conditions. As a necessary corrective measure, Clelland-Stokes suggests a PV method that enables the Bushmen to establish meaningful relationships to navigate their way through and assert their position in the modern world. However, the extent to which this is achievable depends on this context of their lives. This is discussed further in Chapter 6.

Reception cases

The Gods Must be Crazy: considering the audience 1.0

The Gods Must be Crazy films (1980, 1989, 1991, 1993, 1994) (*Gods*) offer possibly the most well known examples of Bushmen imagery in popular culture. Some insights into audience reception of the *Gods* films are posited by Tomaselli (2006). A dialectic is set up by Tomaselli (2006) between Western (white) and non-Western (non-white) interpretations of essentialist representations of the Bushmen, and the Bushmen's notions of themselves. In doing this, it not only establishes a meta-comment on audience reception, but also contrasts the Bushmen's historical and material contexts with the myths about them.

The narrative tropes employed by Jamie Uys²⁴ locate the Bushmen within the "paternalistic codes of Western representation" (Tomaselli 2006: 184). The symbolic encoding of an Edenic Afrikaaner pastoralism is reversed by Uys onto the Bushmen (Davis 1985: 51-53). The respondents in Tomaselli's (2006) reception analysis make this connection, albeit indirectly. The African and Bushmen respondents know that the film is not actuality. This highlights their resistance to the disempowering and determining effect of the images (for example, see comments by Gao, Hunter Sixpence and Paul Witbooi in Tomaselli (2006: 184)),

[t]he image of the Bushmen given by the Gods films is not really good because it does not show how people we are really living. It only shows the past. People should not see this as what is happening now. I find it difficult to believe that people don't realise it is just acting (Gao quoted in Tomaselli 2006: 184)²⁵.

Various marketing tactics were also used by Uys that drew on the romantic myth of the Bushmen. The reception analysis in Tomaselli's (2006) study fractures these marketing tactics through contrasting the film's promotional ploys with the responses of the Bushmen respondents. Their lack of identification is a

²⁴ Jamie Uys is the director of *Gods* (1980, 1989).

²⁵ Throughout this research, quotes by the Bushmen are kept in their original spoken form to maintain a sense of context.

result of the distancing effect of the images, owing to the fact that the representations are not based in the reality of the Bushmen's lives.

Many critics have argued that the *Gods* films are racist (Tomaselli 2006: 180). The Bushman respondents in Tomaselli's study (2006) largely corroborate the negative response to *Gods*, but they contrast and imbue the representations with culturally specific meanings and significations. The Western gaze, informed by rationality and science, is deemed to be a destructive force in portrayals of the Bushmen in the *Gods* films. The Bushman respondents saw the images as being somewhat condescending towards Bushmen's senses of consciousness and logic. The Bushman respondents identify with the subtleties and nuances that remain almost inaccessible to Western audiences (see comments by Pedris Motshabisi in Tomaselli 2006: 181)) owing to differing cultural frameworks. This is not to suggest that each group has its own essential set of cultural values and frameworks – rather, they are learned. These learned values and frameworks impact upon meaning.

The underlying theme of resistance in Tomaselli's (2006) study is important to this research. Audiences are able to confront and contest representations of them. The nuanced responses by audience members demonstrate that meaning (power) lies with the audience (an emphasis on decoding), and not solely with the message (an emphasis on encoding). What is more, researchers need to enquire about how audiences make meaning, rather than engaging in deductive applications of preferred readings (see Chapter 4). However, the question remains as to what extent do the Bushmen have the power to influence the meanings negotiated by non-Bushman audiences? The Bushmen may be able to resist and contest representations of themselves, but essentialist notions still leave them ensnared within an exploitative environment. In other words, do the Bushmen have any agency in affecting outsider notions of the Bushmen, which can result in particular policies, legislative frameworks, business strategies etc.? PV projects like *VOOF* (2008) are able to empower the participants to implement some measure of influence, albeit in a limited way.

Crazy Safari: considering the audience 2.0

Crazy Safari (1991) (the third film in the *Gods* films) remains consistent with the representative strategies of the other *Gods* films. The film portrays Bushman culture as having “remained true to its ‘native roots’” (MacLennan-Dodd & Tomaselli 2005: 201).

In a focus group undertaken by Vanessa MacLennan-Dodd and Tomaselli (2005: 218), a respondent (Jack) to *Crazy Safari* (1991) assumed that the essentialist representations of the Bushmen were accurate. However, other respondents in this case study revealed the full complexity of outsiders' negotiations of essentialist representations. Three groups of people were interviewed: a group of Taiwanese tourists, a group of Kenyan

students, and a group of Kenyan street vendors who sold copies of *Crazy Safari* (1991). Most of the respondents were able to critique the film in terms of its use of stereotypes and racism. However, whereas the Taiwanese respondents viewed the film purely as entertainment, the Kenyan students viewed the film “as a serious reflection of the position of Africans in the hierarchy of cultures” (MacLennan-Dodd & Tomaselli 2005: 221). The Kenyan vendors mostly saw the entertainment value of the film (MacLennan-Dodd & Tomaselli 2005: 222-223). However, one vendor felt that the representations could have detrimental effects for Africans (MacLennan-Dodd & Tomaselli 2005: 223).

For while the purpose of this research is to understand Bushmen responses to representations of themselves, the above responses by non-Bushmen audiences reveal that meaning needs to be analysed from the subject’s point of view. Essentialist representations are indeed cause for concern. However, the focus group (MacLennan-Dodd & Tomaselli 2005) reveals that audiences are not passive in meaning-making. However, what does not come out clearly, is that meaning-making therefore needs to be considered in context. Audiences are able to engage and critique texts by drawing on the meaningful foundations of their worlds (see Kim 2004: 98). The audience’s meaningful engagement with texts (and contexts) cannot be delimited through analysts’ applications of preferred readings to texts. However, as already mentioned, decoding analysis would also require acknowledgement of the real-world effects of representation, of which audiences may be unaware. The final point is that audience’s engagement with essentialism is complex and needs careful consideration.

The Great Dance: encountering essentialism

The Great Dance (2000) (*Dance*) is a “romantic documentary” (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 50) made by Craig and Damon Foster, which portrays the !Xo Bushmen as living in harmony with the land. Its focus is on a hunting technique – the “hunt by running” (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 50) – that is rarely used anymore by modern Bushmen. In portraying this, *Dance* (2000) incorporates an essentialist discourse in representing the Bushmen (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 50), and almost suggests that this is how the Bushmen still live (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 53).

However, despite that the Bushmen’s lives are radically modernised, *Dance* (2000) is an example of “anthropological restoration” (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 54). It employs an essentialist ‘victims of modernity’²⁶ representative strategy. It portrays modernity as interfering, and negatively affecting the Bushmen’s

²⁶ Essentialist representations of the Bushmen are often employed by outside societies as strategies for configuring understandings of the Bushmen (Tomaselli 2002: 203).

“natural” lifestyles (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 51). The film suggests that if the Bushmen are removed from this lifestyle, they will suffer.

What is significant, is that *Dance* (2000) was made with the collaboration and approval of a group of !Xo. This presents a paradox to some academics who assail any attempt at essentialism. Debates rage about the alleged disempowering effect of essentialised representations. What some academics might consider disempowering, the Bushmen consider empowering. The Bushman audience’s responses to *Dance* (2000) highlight that rigid categorisations are more semantically porous than initially understood. Thus, negotiating essentialism becomes an important concern. The cultural particularities associated with certain practices and images portrayed on the screen may hold certain deeper connotations and, it could be argued, provide sources of empowerment of which non-Bushman audiences may be unaware. Cinematic restorations and recoveries of an imagined past can become important sources of empowerment, and help to develop a sense of agency amongst the Bushmen (Tomaselli 2002: 208). Historical representations of the Bushmen also recall memories and feelings of deep spiritual significance for some Bushman audiences. Broader interpretive frameworks are therefore at work.

The Bushmen respondents to *Dance* (2000) largely seemed to corroborate an “essentialist rationale” (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 50). Respondents claimed that it restored a sense of cultural pride (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 53). Perhaps one of the reasons for the respondents’ support of the film is that the representations allow them to renegotiate their identities and histories in ways that are positively reinforcing (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 53). In the face of untold oppression and dehumanisation, this may provide for a restored sense of self (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 60).

Participant-generated essentialised representations can empower the Bushmen in certain ways that are contrary to researcher expectations. The importance that these responses hold is that they highlight the need to consider how audiences and texts engage each other. In addition to this, and in the context of this research, how do Bushmen audiences use texts about them in ways that might be empowering for them?

Dance (2000) therefore highlights the value of inductive reception analysis (as will be discussed in Chapter 4). Meaning should be built from the bottom-up (audience responses), and this should inform theory-building. Bearing in mind that any final meaning resides with the audience, meaning therefore needs to be considered from the audience’s perspective – how do they engage and use texts?

However, while the Bushman audiences of *Dance* (2000) might feel empowered by essentialised representations of them, there is no definite mechanism in *Dance* (2000) for contextualising historical and

essentialist representations of the Bushmen in a modern world. In other words, *Dance* (2000) might delimit potential responses and engagements with it based on its abstract and historically de-contextualised portrayal of the Bushmen.

The value of participants' perspectives is starkly indicated in one of the most extensive reception analyses on record, as is discussed in the next section.

***Indaba Ye Grievance*²⁷: bottom-up representation**

Grievance (1985) is a film that provides important lessons in bottom-up cinematic coding and reception. The film was commissioned in an effort to alert South African trade union members to the advantages of following grievance procedures (Godsell et al. 1985: viii). Analyses were also commissioned in order to understand how audiences interpreted the film. Overall, it resulted in changed perceptions and behaviours amongst some trade union members. They became attuned to the need to follow grievance procedures instead of embarking on violent strike action. *Grievance* (1985) achieved this through firstly, engaging a bottom-up codification system that secondly, countered an apartheid code system. Bottom-up codes have a particular political quality to them. Black workers, for example, were not portrayed in a demeaning manner. *Grievance*'s (1985) code system opposed previous cinematic codes and heightened a sense of realism. This enhanced acceptability amongst audiences as a result (Godsell et al. 1985: 1-3). "Hidden ideological content" (Godsell et al. 1985: 7) was thus re-worked.

The "hidden ideological content" or the "ideological and cultural assumptions" of the production team can lead to representative strategies that are misleading and unfair (Godsell et al. 1985: 6-7). This can lead to a sense of alienation and dissociation amongst viewers, particularly with regards to sensitive or significant content. This highlights the need to discern the history of particular code systems (see Godsell et al. 1985: 8), and to work out a code that is acceptable to and understandable by the audience.

This would need to engage the audiences' perspectives and engage cultural values (Godsell et al. 1985: 5-8). In other words, depending on the purposes of the film, a film about the Bushmen should be produced from their perspectives. Signifiers mean different things to different people in different contexts (see Godsell et al. 1985: 7). The relevance of this is that it shows that codes that originate from the subject's perspective can be more effective at winning subject's approval and acceptability than codes that do not incorporate subject's codes. The audience is able to identify with the representations as a result.

²⁷ *Indaba Ye Grievance* (Meeting about a Grievance, 1985) was not made with the Bushmen. Tomaselli was script consultant on this production.

Fantasies, fetishes and realities: multiple voices in discursive spaces

The importance of considering the inherent power relations in representations of indigenous people is discussed by Linje Mlauzi (2003). His work reconceptualises photography in general, and suggests new directions, specifically with regards to reading and representation in ethnographic photography. Of particular importance is the process of “activating photographic texts” (Mlauzi 2003: 107) through including contexts and con-texts in the interpretation process. Most importantly, this is achieved through including subjects in the production and consumption of representations about them (Mlauzi 2003: 107). This is meant to ensure ethical representations of indigenous people, which consider any contexts, con-texts and power relations of which readers might be unaware, and which impact upon the representative process.

Mlauzi examines the “spectacularisation” (2003: 107) of the Bushmen. As case studies, he analyses the photographic works of the Bushmen by Sian Dunn (unpublished) and Paul Weinberg (1996, 1997). He uses the various levels of activation enabled by the photographers in each of the sets as a point of discussion about the reading of photographs. It is, however, Mlauzi’s point about the inclusion of indigenous people in the production and consumption processes of their representation that concerns the central crux of this research. This notion is posited as a counterpoint to disempowering images, which entrench subjugation, displacement and dehumanisation. The social myths generated through film (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 3) manipulate visual metaphors and other signifiatory regimes (Mlauzi 2003: 10), be it intentional or not. However, the inclusion of subjects in the reception of their representation ensures that the subjects’ perspectives are brought to the fore. This not only ensures that alternative perspectives are revealed, but that the creator’s assumptions are also made known, and thus qualified.

The exclusion (intentional or unintentional) of subjects in production and consumption of meaning is attributed to a semiological understanding of meaning-making (Mlauzi 2003: 70; see Tomaselli 1996: 123-150). Text-context-con-text relations are taken for granted in semiology²⁸, and thus the myriad of conflicting discourses that constitute meaning are not considered in meaning-making. Meaning, in semiology, is considered as residing solely within the text. The text “imprisons researchers” (Tomaselli 1996: 29). As a result, external forces, not immediately visible or apparent to the interpreter are completely ignored at the expense of a wholly encompassing interpretive process. Texts are thus disconnected and disengaged from their broader constitutive frameworks, and the subtleties of meaning remain hidden. Thus, the meanings that audiences negotiate with texts can be misconstrued, as texts are activated through fantasy (Mlauzi 2003: 72).

²⁸ Semiology is a linguistics-oriented theory of signs as opposed to semiotics which is more easily applied to non-linguistic signs than semiology. See Chapter 5 for further discussion.

The *Gods* films, for example, present readers with images that play on primordial fantasies about First People. However, through the inclusion of the (Bushman) subjects, Tomaselli's (2006) reception analysis deconstructed the binary oppositions evident in the films, which feed the construction of meaning. The Bushmen instead decoded the texts differently to Uys's critics, based on the gap between the experience of their existential condition and the representations in the film, which are deprived of any historical contexts ("the largest unseen reality that surrounds all of us" (Marshall 1993: 51)). These con-texts are suppressed in the *Gods* films, which show only one facet of the Bushmen's existence.

Thus, Mlauzi's central point about photographs (in this case, videos) as being discursive spaces (2003: 45, see Krauss 1999) acts as a reference point for this research. As discursive spaces then, photographs and videos provide platforms where multiple voices and perspectives can be brought to the interpretive process.

Miscast and In God's Places: what is 'Bushman'?

Two cases of reception that have significance for this research are Bushmen responses to Pippa Skotnes' *Miscast* exhibition (1996; see Jackson & Robins 1999) and *In God's Places* (1997) (Tomaselli 2002: 207-8). *Miscast* (1996) was staged at the South African National Gallery in Cape Town. Various Bushman groups attended. The exhibition was an attempt at rethinking the category 'Bushman', through deconstructing the ideologies that it has inherited from various oppressive regimes. According to Tomaselli, *Miscast* (1996) is of particular relevance in the history of representation of the Bushmen, as it symbolises a moment where they were able to negotiate their identities (in response to the exhibit) on the "South African representational stage" (2002: 205; see Tomaselli 1999: 132). *Miscast* (1996) thus represents a rupture in the conventional mode of Bushman representation. The Bushmen were able to assert their own ideas as to what constitutes 'Bushmanness' (this, in no way, suggests that the Bushmen's ideas of 'Bushmanness' comprise some essential idea – the concept is fluid and flexible).

In doing so, they were also able to realign the balance of power to name themselves, "[t]hose who control names empower themselves as representatives of those being spoken for and about" (Tomaselli 2002: 205). Thus, the act of naming themselves enabled them to re-present themselves and establish a sense of agency.

Miscast (1996) actively engaged the museum and public culture as discursive sites that construct identity. However, Skotnes employed various strategies that alienated her spectators in trying to re-think the link between identities and the institutions that represent the Bushmen (Jackson & Robins 1999: 72). She made use of a subtle exhibitory style that showed oppressive representative schemes without much explanation or contextualisation. This only came later (Skotnes 2002). Some audience members could not institute the analytical distance required to appreciate the complexity of the message. Some exhibition viewers were also

alienated and offended, in some instances, owing to Skotnes' use of academic jargon and complex ideas. Some of the Bushmen remarked that the representations showed an inherent lack of respect by not asking the permission of the Bushmen to display them. They also considered the exhibit as a continuation with the past. This generated a sense of shame amongst certain people (Mario Mahonga quoted in Jackson & Robins 1999: 83). As a result, identities that were formed within past oppressive regimes clashed with Skotnes' ideal.

The interactions between the different groups revealed the complexity of the processes involved in identity politics and meaning-making. Some Bushmen from the Kagga Kamma Nature Reserve²⁹ arrived at the exhibition clad in traditional Bushman attire. They claimed that they were the true Bushmen, as evidenced by their choice of traditional dress (Jackson & Robins 1999: 91-2). Members from the !Hurikamma Cultural Movement (HCM), however, expressed shock and dismay at the Kagga Kamma's spectacularisation of their own culture (Jackson & Robins 1999: 83). The desire to clothe the naked Bushman was a source of empowerment for some people – or perhaps it just made them feel powerful – whereas for others, it was seen as degrading. What is significant however, is how the event became a discursive space that was emblematic of a struggle for a sense of identity, where each search was engaged in unique and contested ways.

It also provides an apt example of how subaltern interpreters mobilise strategies for resisting authorial control of meaning and representation (Jackson & Robins 1999: 83). The subject positions were resisted and challenged. The museum, like a text, became “a medium of cultural reproduction and resistance” (Jackson & Robins 1999: 93). The museum became more than just a site of ordering and disciplining. It became a site for cultural production and reproduction (Jackson & Robins 1999: 88). Various groups used it for their own political identity projects. *Miscast* (1996) is reflective of an emerging trend of Africanisation, where African identities are celebrated through the reversal of Eurocentricism (Jackson & Robins 1999: 89). As demonstrated in the *Miscast* (1996) example (and as will be seen in Chapter 6), this celebration can provide for social agency and empowerment.

The second point relates to the presence of the Kagga Kamma-based Kruipers, who claimed an authentic Bushman identity. The importance relates to issues surrounding essentialism. The presence of the Kagga Kamma and the HCM destabilised static notions of ethnic identity. Bushmen were contesting their own and outsiders' notions of Bushman identity in radically different ways. The Kagga Kamma-based Kruiper clan's willing embrace of an essentialised identity further complicates questions of identity. The incorporation of so called essentialist notions of identity can have positive (albeit short term) benefits for the Bushmen.

²⁹ Kagga Kamma is in the Swartruggens regions of the Western Cape (South Africa) where a group of Bushmen live a reconstructed traditional life as a tourist attraction.

The final observation is that culturally sensitive and participant-generated representations and narratives need to be incorporated into any participatory communicative endeavour. Locally relevant worldview systems need to be included so as to generate bottom-up codes. *Miscast* (1996), in many ways, was an example of alienating and offensive non-participatory representative strategies, as was evidenced above.

The *Miscast* (1996) exhibition also housed the photographic works of Paul Weinberg for the purpose of providing dialogue amongst the different representations of the Bushmen. The backstage of Bushman life, so often relegated out of sight, is brought to the fore in Weinberg's work to deconstruct the romantic/racist myth of the Bushmen. This reveals an "alternative symbol" (quoted in Bester & Buntman 1999: 52) of the Bushmen. For while this strategy does some amount of good, Rory Bester and Barbara Buntman (1999) note that neither Weinberg nor Skotnes brought out the voices of the Bushmen. This suggests the existence of particular asymmetrical power relations (Bester & Buntman 1999: 57)³⁰. They launch into a polemic against essentialised representations, and also representations that establish victimologies (Bester & Buntman 1999: 57). However, in some instances, essentialised images provide a source of empowerment (through entrepreneurial activities and restoring cultural pride) for the subject communities, as was evidenced in *Dance* (2000). This poses a critical point: that it is vital that we incorporate the subjects in the production of their representation, and through this, etch out a bottom up representational code system.

The second reception case, *In God's Places* (1997), uses rock art in the Transkei³¹ as a device for revealing the Bushmen's understandings of their histories and interpretations of Bushman rock art (Tomaselli 2002: 211). The film employs two methods that affect an inversion of power relations between the observer and the observed with regards to interpretations of Bushman rock art (Tomaselli 2002: 212).

Firstly, the film uses a reflective participatory method, whereby the ethnographic presence is incorporated into the film's narrative structure. The crew took part in culturally specific practices such as consulting the ancestors in establishing community consent for the production of the film. The crew operated within and engaged the "cultural and ritual parameters of [the] subjects" (Wicksteed 2001, quoted in Tomaselli 2002: 212) through a reflexive participatory method. Secondly, the film integrated community responses to rock art with those of an (outside) expert, David Lewis-Williams (Tomaselli 2002: 212).

³⁰ The irony is that neither Bester nor Buntman ask the Bushmen what they think – or at least they do not reveal whether or not they have asked the Bushmen what they think.

³¹ The Transkei is a region in the Eastern Cape, South Africa.

Unpacking the effect of these tools provides informative comment on the empowering effect of simply asking people how they feel about something. Culturally specific perspectives and interpretations can be engaged and recorded on the world platform through asking people for their opinions. The Bushmen's beliefs, opinions and outlooks are thus communicated to the mainstream from the "margins of knowledge" (Tomaselli 2002: 212/214). Their historical record is also given credence during this process. All of this results in what Tomaselli calls a "coming-in into the local, regional and global worlds" (2002: 214). A multitude of perceptions of the Bushmen are thus engaged in debates, which provides for richer and more nuanced contributions to questions regarding essentialism.

Conclusion

One of the central points that the above literature review raises is that interpreters are the site of meaning making. What constitutes meaning needs to be enquired of inductively. This is the position that is established in the theoretical framework (Chapter 4). The !Xo's interaction with essentialised representations of themselves in *Dance* (2000) is a case in point.

In Clelland-Stokes' (2007) discussion on *Dance* (2000), what becomes abundantly clear is that meaning making needs to be considered from the perspective of how audiences engage texts, and how texts engage audiences. For example, why would the Bushmen approve *Dance*'s (2000) representative strategy despite the fact that it draws on an essentialist (victims of modernity) discourse? However, essentialist representations might empower the Bushmen considering a context of exploitation and a growing trend towards Africanisation. The essentialist strategies used in *Dance* (2000) imbued indigenous audiences with a sense of cultural pride and allowed the Bushmen to re-negotiate their sense of their history and identity. This then requires that meaning making be considered within its broader constituent frameworks and contexts.

Examining audience responses in context helps to reveal and explain the diversity of responses. Audience's relations to essentialist representations of the Bushmen are varied and complex. This was shown in Clelland-Stokes' (2007) discussion on the Bushmen's corroboration of *Dance*'s (2000) representation of them, and in MacLennan-Dodd and Tomaselli's (2005) article on the diversity of audience responses to *Crazy Safari* (1991). Audiences are not trapped by texts.

Therefore, an activation of texts that is sensitive to the subjects' worlds requires that contexts and con-texts be brought to the interpretive process. One of the ways that Mlauzi (2003) recommends in order to achieve this is through involving subjects and participants in the production and consumption processes. This will ensure that their perspectives are brought to the fore, which can expose and re-work hidden ideological and cultural assumptions that the creators might hold. As a result of subject involvement, a bottom up code is

imbued in texts in the production and consumption moments. Bottom-up codes can counter abstracted code systems, which empowers the subjects, and they increase acceptability amongst the subject-audience (see Godsell et al. 1985).

Audiences draw on their cultural capital in the interpretive moment. For example, Bushman audiences are not swallowed up by essentialist notions of themselves in the *Gods* movies. They draw on their experiences of themselves when they confront their representation in the *Gods* movies. Thus, audiences are able to confront, resist and counter determination owing to, in this instance, *Gods*-style representation. They are able to reconstruct texts.

The idea of texts being discursive spaces is central to this research. Audiences bring, amongst other things, cultural sensitivity and nuance to the interpretive moment. This enables multiple voices to exist, which confront and contest each other. The museum in *Miscast* (1996) became a discursive space whereby the notion of what constitutes 'Bushmaness' and Bushman identity were contested and frayed. The identity politics debate that *Miscast* (1996) highlights is important considering the misappropriation that the Bushmen have experienced with regards to their representation and their sense of identity. It represented a struggle for a sense of identity in a fractured and globalised world.

The above points are picked up throughout this research. In the analysis (Chapter 6), the points are all brought into 'conversation' with one another. This chapter therefore represents one element of a process that connects the literature (secondary data), theory and empirical data.

Chapter 4: Empowerment, reception and Phaneroscopy: a theoretical framework

Introduction

This chapter establishes the framework of theories that are drawn upon and used to interpret the data, and to understand how the research participants negotiated readings of *VOOF* (2008). The theoretical framework draws on a constructivist epistemological foundation, with elements of critical and post-modern perspectives. The first section of the chapter develops a framework for understanding reception; an inductive approach to reception analysis is delineated. The second section embeds the research within development theory with a specific focus on understanding empowerment. This is then linked to a theory of empowerment through representation.

Reception Theory

The relationship between audiences and texts has concerned researchers for a number of years. Two predominant schools of thought have emerged: Political Economy and Cultural Studies.

Each school highlights different moments in the circuit of culture (see du Gay et al. 1997, Johnson 1983) as significant in understanding how texts are consumed. According to Johnson, these moments are: production and texts (Political Economy), and readings and lived experience (Cultural Studies) (Johnson 1983: 48). Culture, as a process, comprises each of these four moments, which can each be isolated for useful analysis (Buckingham 2008: 222). However, it is important to bear in mind that none of the moments should be seen as solely representative of meaning. Rather, they are dynamically oriented towards the other moments (Buckingham 2008: 223).

Despite their theoretical differences, the Political Economy and Cultural Studies approaches can be combined in order to find a way out of the academic quagmire (Strelitz 2005). Political economists' focus on the structuration of culture through material relations can be combined with the Cultural Studies argument that audiences and their interaction with texts affect meaning. There are two strands within Cultural Studies: the Culturalists who focus on experience, consciousness, culture and agency, and the Structuralists who focus on the structuration of experience by external factors (Strelitz 2005: 17). The approach adopted by this research is located within the latter framework. The result is a theoretical approach to reception that takes its cue from those authors in Cultural Studies who argue for the relative autonomy of cultural consumption (Strelitz 2005) – texts circulate within systems that structure, to an extent, our active engagement and experience of them. Audiences are not entirely free to interpret texts (Livingstone 1998: 8). Rather, audiences make meaning under predeterminate conditions (Buckingham 1993: 14). These predeterminate conditions include texts, discourses and social contexts.

Stuart Hall: encoding/decoding

The model proffered by Hall (1980: 128-138) establishes that the communicative-interpretive process is sustained through the “discursive articulation” of various moments: production, circulation, distribution/consumption and reproduction (1980: 128). Each of these moments is defined as a practice. Meaning is articulated through practice.

The notion of articulation is used by Poonam Pillai (1992) to develop on Hall’s model. Articulation refers to the non-necessary linkages and coalitions that can be made, under certain conditions, between concepts and their referents, which establishes that the social totality is a unity in difference (Slack 1996: 121-123, see Hall 1986: 53). These linkages can be rearticulated in different ways (Hall 1986: 53). Thus, for the encoding/decoding model, meaning is constituted through articulation – through the linkages established between encoding and decoding moments (Pillai 1992: 230). The concept of articulation allows for an understanding of meaning making that posits readings as interactions with the various levels in encoding and decoding practices.

Two significant concepts from Hall’s work are encoding and decoding. According to Hall, encoding and decoding are “*determinate* moments” (Hall 1980: 129). This means that they are relatively autonomous moments, and are subject to code systems in order to be made meaningful. Relative autonomy, an Althusserian concept, refers to a factor’s relations to other factors whilst still holding its own explanatory power (Kim 2004: 91). This holds significant weight for participatory communication – the filmmaker needs to be mindful of the audience’s code systems in development projects (like with *Grievance* (1985)) in order for the codes to resonate with the audience.

Codes render phenomena meaningful within social structures (Hall 1980: 130). Various frameworks of knowledge, relations of production and technical infrastructures (see Hall’s (1980: 130) meaning structures 1 and 2) will be in operation at the encoding and decoding moments. There would need to be a perfect degree of symmetry between encoding and decoding in order for a symmetrical transferral of meaning to occur (Hall 1980: 131). Any distortion of the mediated messages arises from there being non-identification between the respective code systems.

The encoding/decoding model showed that mass communication is a structured activity. Despite this, the model still attributed power to the media through arguing that the media set agendas and frameworks within which audiences operate (Morley 1989: 17). In addition to this, the reading positions that are sketched out by

Hall (dominant-hegemonic, negotiated and the oppositional)³² have also been critiqued for not fully covering the reading spectrum (Morley 1989: 18). Morley unpicks the terms to allow for a “differentiated model of actual decoding positions within the media audience” (1980: 20). The three categories proposed by Hall do not reflect the notion that all readings are negotiated. This indicates that other reading positions may emerge (Pillai 1992: 231).

In addition to this, the same reader can produce contradictory readings (Pillai 1992: 231). Various inflections may exist even within one particular decoding position (Morley 1980: 135). Furthermore, Hall’s concept of decoding reduces multiple acts into a single act. Rather, what Morley suggests, is that the act of decoding comprises many sets of processes, of “attentiveness, recognition of relevance, of comprehension and of interpretation and response” (1992: 121). The decoding positions outlined by Hall are therefore used in this research as guidelines rather than rigid categories. Despite these criticisms, Hall's encoding/decoding model was an improvement on the earlier effects, and the uses and gratifications models of communication. One of the strengths of the encoding/decoding model is that it highlights that meaning making takes place within predeterminate sociological conditions that impact upon readings (Morley 1989: 19).

David Morley: social contexts

The Nationwide Audience (Morley 1980) (*Nationwide*), one of the seminal texts in reception studies, develops the encoding/decoding model. *Nationwide* delineates a model of reception that considers context. The fundamental critical threads that run through Morley’s analysis argue that meaning is structured within social contexts.

Morley rejects unstructured methodological individualism based on the tenet that we need to maintain our sense of the audience as a social complex, and speaking and hearing as *social* phenomena (1980: 16). The interdiscursive nature of interpretation is lost in methodological individualism. Social contexts "provide a framework of meaning for [the audience's] activities" (Elliot 1973: 6). Social contexts render articulations possible and also establish structured relations where “the unity is not formed randomly but has a determinate configuration” (Pillai 1992: 224).

The social structure, according to Morley, produces various patterns, codes and correlations with statistical probability (1980: 17). Cultural competencies are developed through audience interactions with their social environments. However, this is only a probabilistic relationship. Decoding strategies therefore range across the social structure.

³² Hall developed these terms from the political decoding positions of Frank Parkin (1971).

The data analysis in *Nationwide* shows that social position plus discourse results in differential interpretations (Morley 1980). Audiences’ relations to different sets of discourses are argued to be determined by their positions within the social formation (Morley 1980: 19). Differential positions and involvement within discourses can result in different readings from within the same groups (Morley 1980: 141). Discourses, according to Morley, “may re-structure both the meaning of the text and the discourses which [they] meet” (1980: 18)³³. Meaning is not fixed, but is rather fluid and dynamic. The evolution of meaning develops through the interaction of intra- and extra-discursive relations.

The approach espoused by Morley to reception is ethnographic. It is argued in this approach that reception needs to be considered within the “culture of everyday life” (Livingstone 1998: 4). Audiences bring various communicative repertoires when they engage with the media owing to their location within the various discursive and social terrains of their lives (Schröder et al., 2003). Reception analysis, as a result, focuses on media use, interaction and interpretation as a social practice in relation to the other social practices of peoples’ lives (Schröder et al. 2003: 16). Being a member of an audience is only one aspect of one's broader social experience (Buckingham 2008: 224).

Justin-Wren Lewis: rethinking signifiers, subjects and signs

Encoding and decoding need to be considered as signifying practices that draw upon a range of signifiers within a social structure (Wren-Lewis 1983: 180). It is important is to understand decoding in relation to two signifying practices: how, in the encoding moment, signifiers are drawn upon and interpreted, thus resulting in a televisual signifier (the programme) with which the audience negotiates (decoding) (1983: 180). The interpreter must be conceived within signifier/ied relations (1983: 194). The TV object, programme *and* the objects surrounding audience members need to be conceived as signifiers (Wren-Lewis 1983: 194). The encoding/decoding model allows for understanding televisual communication as a “stage in a process”, between encoding and decoding signifying practices (Wren-Lewis 1983: 179; see Table 1 below). Encoding and decoding are the “loci [*sic*] of a whole range of signifying practices” (Wren-Lewis 1983: 181).

Signifier (event/object) → encoding → signifier (TV programme) → decoding

Table 1 Encoding and decoding as signifying practices.

³³. The confusion that, according to Kim (2004), exists in Morley’s work is a result of his misuse of Hall’s theories. Social position, according to Morley (1980), does not necessarily elicit particular reading patterns. Where Hall advocated social positions, Morley favoured class positions (economic determinism) (Kim 2004: 87). With this in mind then, Kim reworks Morley’s findings to show, through statistical analysis, that social positions do correlate with decodings through their over-determination effect (2004: 104). Kim revised Morley’s work so as to show that the decodings that emerged in *Nationwide* were clustered around the audience’s *social* positions (and not just class) (2004: 88).

According to Wren-Lewis, approaches that have adopted either textual determination or even those that argue for a preferred reading, limit the range of decoding positions that may emerge. As a result, “the functioning of the subject in constituting signification is *denied*” (Wren-Lewis 1983: 184). His argument is premised on building analyses up from evidence (inductive analysis), rather than applying preconceived models to decoding. In establishing this, Wren-Lewis reconfigures the model (1983: 185):

<u>Constant</u>	<u>Variable</u>
Text/preferred meaning/inscribed subject	Subject in history

with,

<u>Variable</u>	<u>Variable</u>
Text + subject in history	Preferred readings/subject positions

Table 2 Remodelling the function of the subject in constituting signification.

Signifiers remain as such until the entry of the subject. What Wren-Lewis argues for, is that theorists should focus on building analyses up from the data rather than applying pre-emptive models. He does not, it would seem, suggest that the notion of structured polysemy must be abandoned – textual features and sociological factors do exert some structuring influence. However, the evidence should reveal what meanings emerge from audiences, and how meanings are structured; not the analyst’s preferred meanings (which impose interpretations on the text).

Likewise, conceptions of subjects and subject positions need to be built from the data. Conceptualising the subject obviously takes considerable importance in any study concerning decoding. Theorists need to reconsider the notion of the decoding *and* sign constituting subject. The subject is an interdiscursive site, where one discourse is always underpinned by others (Morley 1980: 143). What needs to be considered here, is that the reader is an interdiscursive subject who brings their own discourses to decoding. The data should rather determine whether a dominant, negotiated, oppositional or any other reading position (Hall’s model ignores the possibility of other reading positions) is evident.

Subject positions

The spectator has become the focus of much attention since the 1980s. One of the most important paradigm shifts has been a move away from the passive ‘couch potato’ to audiences who actively constitute texts as meaningful, and are at the same time constituted by texts. The intra-, inter- and extra-textual forces and the subject discourse, which all exert influence over the viewer, require that any comprehensive ethnography of

reception accounts for the ways that the audience is shaped, and the ways that the audience shapes the meaningful encounter (Stam 2000: 231). This would require acknowledging the impact of the text on the audience, the impact of technical apparatuses on the audience, the institutional context's impact on the audience, the ambient ideologies and discourses' impact on the audience, and the audience as embodied, raced, gendered, sexualised and historically situated (Stam 2000: 231).

Critical areas that reinforce the logic of the above five acknowledgements are pointed out briefly by Robert Stam (2000: 233-4). Any preconceived category of the audience necessarily overlooks and represses the inherent heteroglossia located in the audience. Like with 'community', as discussed earlier, whole stratifications and levels of contradiction and difference can singlehandedly become shunned through essentialist names and labels – not all people within a category identify and ally themselves accordingly.

Audiences and texts

The final comments on decoding in *Nationwide* ally the text and audience in the interpretive process. Texts and contexts are neither irrelevant nor wholly determinate. They instead establish the working parameters for interpretation. In addition to this, context also structures the reading encounter. The various social positions and discourses that readers are able to access in their real lives engage the subject positions that are offered by the text in a historical and dynamic process (Morley 1989: 20-21).

Audiences do not freely produce responses to texts. Rather, they “struggle within the constrictions of the available forms” (Willis 1978: 124), they are “structured in dominance” (Morley 1980: 12). Socially constructed subjects engage with texts that operate within “pre-existing social representations” (Morley 1980: 151/153). However, one needs to bear in mind that these “pre-existing social representations” are only signifiers, and not signs, without a meaning constituting subject (see Wren-Lewis 1983).

What Wren-Lewis (1983) argues is that the focus in decoding research should not be on establishing and employing pre-emptive conceptual devices for audience analysis. Rather, evidence should inform model building. Likewise, Wren-Lewis criticises academics such as Morley for their top-down approach to considering how formal textual features operate. Morley argues that texts limit and structure potential meaning. He employed a form/content device for conceptualising audience responses (see Wren-Lewis 1983: 188). However, these imposed divisions can result in “misleading conceptions of *how* signification actually works” (Wren-Lewis 1983: 188). The focus should not be on texts reducing meanings, but how signifiers (texts) interact with audiences to produce meaning, through a complex signifiatory process. After all, it is this interaction between signifiers and audiences, and not an inherent textual mechanism, that generates meanings. The audience “*ultimately* restricts [the text's] plurality” (Wren-Lewis 1983: 191). The

audience-text interaction generates additions to the audience's consciousness and offers "new traces of meaning with each association, each set of differences" (Wren-Lewis 1983: 191).

However, textual features like topics, themes, and what Kim labels as the "specificities of the text" (2004: 95), also impact on decoding. One would obviously also need to consider the encoded ideological factors inherent in any text (Kim 2004: 96). However, as already established, it is important to ask how does the audience interact with these factors? Until the entry of the audience, textual and contextual features remain purely signifiers. What Wren-Lewis identifies as problematic, is the *a priori* manner in which some researchers categorise actual audience responses without considering the evidence.

Pleasure, power and reception

The Cultural Studies approach to reception considers how audiences use texts to make sense of their lives (Strelitz 2005: 11). In doing so, theorists have considered how pleasure is gained through readings of texts. However, according to Strelitz (2005: 16), what has resulted is a focus on the celebration of resistance without actually qualifying it in relation to existing, potentially oppressive, structures. This is referred to as Cultural Populism. What are the larger frameworks within which these readings exist, and what structures of dominance might they reinforce (Strelitz 2005: 25)? Cultural populism does not adequately account for the inherent power relations that reception is interwoven into (Strelitz 2005: 18). Power is exercised in the relationship between the text and the audience (Buckingham 1993: 14). It is therefore important that one examine how various ideologies might be sustained by a particular reading. According to John B. Thompson, ideology is the ways that particular meanings sustain asymmetrical power relations (1990: 7). It is therefore vital that we consider meaning in the service of power (see Abercrombie & Longhurst 1998: 31).

The Cultural Studies approach taken in this research examines clusters of meanings that emerge within specific historical contexts, in the service of power. According to Buckingham (2008: 220) Cultural Studies in general concerns itself with the relationship between particular cultural practices and the broader processes of social power. This approach then requires that researchers consider how power is reproduced, resisted and negotiated in reception. Meaning making, according to Buckingham (2008: 222), is a social process that is characterised by "forms of power and difference."

Particular readings may in fact sustain a particular power bloc despite that they are pleasurable and resistive. Each moment within the circuit of culture takes place within a social context (Buckingham 2008: 222-3). The circuit of culture refers to the sites at which meaning is produced and the practices and processes through which meaning flows (du Gay 1997: 10). These social contexts do not pre-determine readings, but they do establish constraints and possibilities that favour particular meanings over others (Buckingham

2008: 223). According to Abercrombie and Longhurst (1998: 11), the media attempt to impose a particular set of values and meanings on a society – ideology (meaning, however, is negotiated between audience, text and context, and not imposed by any one institution or text). This occurs as the media operate, from a production point of view, within a certain set of assumptions that structure, frame and prefer particular meanings (Abercrombie & Longhurst 1998: 12).

Particular narratives are dominant over other narratives in particular cultures. In order to address this, the democratic process needs to be engaged and alternatives need to be presented. This is where real change is possible – in the imagination and presentation of alternatives (Strelitz 2005: 22). The creation of meaning, according to Livingstone (1990: 23), is a site of struggle of alternatives between the audience and the producers. Ideology is not fixed; meaning is contested (Abercrombie & Longhurst 1998: 13).

The reception analysis in this research considers whether, and examines how, audiences may negotiate a reading that is empowering, and does not simply make them feel powerful. The question is therefore, what social change is permitted through a particular reading that extends beyond the symbolic realm, and provides an alternative to the oppressive structures of the world (it is not suggested that change in the symbolic realm is unworthy of analysis, but rather that a fuller account of the oppressive system is needed).

Power and empowerment

AD strives to enable subjects to empower themselves. Power has been reconceptualised in postmodernism beyond simplistic approaches that merely call for it to be redistributed (see Servaes 1999: 56-9). Power is a dynamic, multi-centred and asymmetrical concept that each institution and individual possesses and reproduces according to certain norms. It circulates within all levels and structures of society and relationships (Barker 2002: 226).

There are two ways of viewing power: as constraining, and as enabling or generative (Barker 2003: 9). Constraining notions of power focus on control and constraint. Foucauldian notions, however, posit that power is generative – power produces the self, social action, relationships and social order through the disciplinary power of various institutions and discourses (Barker 2002: 88). Power is also the capability to regulate and structure actions inside asymmetrical relations, and the ability to effect “alternatives of actions” (Servaes 1999: 57).

The approach to empowerment discussed by Robert Adams (2008) embraces a discursive understanding of empowerment. It accounts for the structures that affect empowerment, the importance of understanding the

role of conflict in social reality, and the social construction of reality (2008: 64-6)³⁴. This discursive approach, rejects monolithic definitions of reality in favour of multi-dimensional and dynamic definitions (Adams 2008: 3-4).

Empowerment, within postmodern approaches, is defined as the capacity of people to take control of their circumstances, exercise power and achieve their goals (Thomas & Pierson 1995: 134-5). It is the process by which, individually and collectively, people are able to help themselves and others maximise the quality of their lives (Adams 2008: 17). Empowerment involves not only winning power, but also transforming it (Mullender & Ward 1991: 6). It is the ability to make effective choices that result in the desired outcomes and actions through personal agency and opportunity (Alsop & Heinsohn 2005: 4).

People from different cultural and social perspectives may experience empowerment in ways that do not conform or that are not understood by Western science. The cultural relevance of empowerment, however, means that one cannot assume that rationalist, humanist and existentialist (Western) values are applicable across the board (Adams 2008: 23). Empowerment practice needs to constantly maintain a level of criticality and dynamism in order to better serve subjects within their respective contexts. Theorists need to engage grassroots conceptions of empowerment rather than applying pre-conceived and top-down approaches (Adams 2008: 24-5). Theories of empowerment need to be constructed in such a way that they take into account the alternative means that people embrace in empowering themselves (Adams 2008: 59).

However, one also needs to consider the limits to which people can realistically exercise power. Some critics might argue that the research participants in this study felt powerful and were not necessarily empowered. Feeling powerful and being empowered comprise two different things. Being empowered enables one to achieve ones' goals and to transform one's circumstances for the better, whereas feeling powerful does not necessarily facilitate this. One needs to consider the larger complexities and contexts of feeling powerful. Embracing a traditional or essentialist notion of self might have simply made the Bushmen feel powerful (in *VOOF* (2008) and *Dance* (2000)). It confronted their sense of disempowerment and helped to reconfigure their sense of identity and history in ways that were positively reinforcing. However, this strategy also objectifies them in a sense. One would therefore need to critically examine how embracing a traditionalist notion of themselves helped the Bushmen to better their lives, or at least feel powerful. However, it is important that we consider that perhaps *Dance* (2000) kickstarted a process of empowerment through allowing the Bushmen to see themselves in radically different ways to how they had been previously

³⁴ Different views are the result of our social construction of reality, which is where power relations come in. As a result of this, theories of empowerment need to be reflexive i.e. responsive to actual practice (Adams 2008: 66).

represented. The use of Freirean principles comes in at this point – the process of empowerment begins with an (self) awareness of one's existential condition in the world. Further research could engage in a longitudinal study of how the process ignited by *VOOF* (2008) played out with regards to empowerment.

Empowerment through the process

The process through which the goals of PV (empowerment, self-confidence, development etc.) are arrived at, function through the operation of four distinct elements: participation motivates action, empowerment leads to personal growth and risk taking, video allows for story sharing, and the incorporation of various practical tools. In PV there are two groups of people that are potentially empowered in the PV process: community producers and viewers (Bery 2003: 102-3). The focus of this research, as already mentioned, is on the viewers of *VOOF* (2008).

Power operates through the interaction of the four elements, mentioned above, and the two community groups. The community is able to “rearticulate the locus of power within the individual, communities and ultimately politics” as a result of the above (Bery 2003: 103). These two groups become sites for the flow of power during the PV process, which includes production and consumption. Producers (potentially) engage each other and the community, achieve status, gain skills, and become storytellers. The viewers (potentially) unite, engage each other and the film, redefine issues, challenge stereotypes and internalise the stories told. It is the process of interaction and working towards a common goal in PV that can enhance empowerment (Crocker: 2003: 128; see Dudley 2003: 150).

Empowerment and Freire

One of the central theoretical components behind participatory communication is dialogical communication. Freirean principles provide a means for conceptualising empowerment and the requirements for its implementation (Freire 1996). Empowerment within a Freirean framework is hinged on the recognition of dehumanisation – that the oppressed have been objectified by the oppressor and therefore need to regain their humanity in order to overcome this oppressive yoke. Self-affirmation and humanisation are both denied by the oppressor's commodification of the world (Freire 1996: 40). Empowerment, in this research, is based upon the concept of conscientisation and collective action of subjects to help address their existential condition.

The mental and physical structural constraints instituted by the oppressors condition and delimit reflective thought by the oppressed – the oppressed remain unable to fully perceive the full extent and depth of their existential condition owing to their “submersion in the reality of oppression” (Freire 1996: 27). Instead of perceiving contradiction, they identify in part with their oppressors, thus resulting in no significant

deconstruction of the oppressor-oppressed binary (Freire 1996: 38). Empowerment, therefore, requires a transformation of the oppressed consciousness *and* reality, “the objective reality which has made the [oppressed]” (Freire 1996: 31). The oppressed must experience themselves as oppressed in order to change their situation. Thus, the main research question could be rephrased as: does *VOOF* (2008) initiate a transformation of an oppressed consciousness amongst the Bushmen? Obviously, this would need to acknowledge that transformation is a gradual and non-linear process, and that a once off viewing of *VOOF* (2008) could not immediately change the oppressed consciousness.

Constant critical reflection is thus required in order to identify the sources of exploitation. Pursuit to this end is, in itself, a humanising process (Freire 1996: 29). Through conscientisation and constant praxis oriented dialogue, the oppressed, according to Freire, become empowered. They therefore become their own models for development and empowerment, rather than remaining engulfed within an oppressor reality (Freire 1996: 36). Any attempt to comprehend one’s reality requires one to embrace one’s subjectivity. This is not a solipsistic denial of an objective reality. Rather, Freire purports subjectivity and objectivity in a “constant dialectical relationship” (1996: 30). In Freirean terms then, any chance of achieving empowerment necessitates subjects engaging critically with the material world.

The oppressed continually second their subjectivities to the oppressors’, as they are overwhelmed within an oppressed mindset. The oppressors are deemed by the oppressed as knowledgeable and as superior to the (also knowledgeable) oppressed (Freire 1996: 45). The dependence that such forms of consciousness can create sets up destructive lifestyles. Empowerment thus requires conscientisation – the regaining of one’s humanity through reflection and action, which unshackle the oppressed from the oppressor’s reality and control (Freire 1996: 50-51).

An effective participatory communication campaign therefore needs to ignite critical reflection and dialogical, praxis-oriented engagement with, and action on social reality. Critical intervention must not remain purely at the level of perception (Freire 1996: 34). Injurious myths that feed oppressor-oppressed power relations must be culturally confronted and expelled in pursuit of self-affirmation (Freire 1996: 36-7).

The ethical and political principles of Freire’s work are still relevant today. However, his theories need to be critically qualified – Freire was theorising and writing in a radically different time and context from this research. The ideas posited by Freire make sense in theory but whether or not they are equally sensical in practice is debatable. Empowerment is a complex and difficult process that requires will power, effort and a particular imagination. This may be all the more difficult to achieve in a social welfare state such as South Africa, where those in receipt of welfare support may perceive it as easier to rely on the government than to

empower themselves. A lack of access to resources, funding, gatekeepers, infrastructure etc., also compounds this.

One of the central problems with Freire's theory is that it assumes a foundationalist stance that ignores Freire's historical situatedness (Glass 2001: 16). Humanisation is posited by Freire as something inherent to all humans, and is something to which we must all strive. However, Ronald D. Glass argues that this approach locks Freire's work in history and place; we should consider that our notions of the self change over time and place (Glass 2001: 16). Modern applications of Freire should develop unique, historically and context specific, and local responses to dehumanisation that also engage the limits of our world.

Two other criticisms levelled at Freire are that he considers knowledge and knowledge of the self from an essentialist viewpoint. The uncertainty of knowledge and identity mean that firstly, there is no ontological core from which to contest dehumanisation. Secondly, individuals, whether oppressors or oppressed (to use Freire's logic), occupy complex positions within dehumanisation. Thirdly, knowledge itself is fraught with power relations, which fourthly, constrain our knowledge of self, freedom and oppression (Glass 2001: 20-1). Considering these criticisms then, what Glass recommends in order to reconstruct Freire's theory is constant critical praxis. This should account for the idiosyncracies of the local and historical experience, and the complexity of identity, fragmented diversity (that results in varied notions of humanisation etc.) and uncertainty of knowledge (Glass 2001: 22).

Phaneroscopy and Semiotics

A discussion on Peircean semiotics and Phaneroscopy is necessary here in order to elucidate the concepts used in the final sections of this chapter. This explanation is done with the use of the Phaneroscopic Table (Table 3 below), which has been adapted from Peircean semiotics (see Tomaselli 1996: 37).

Orders of Signification	Phaneroscopy	2 nd Trichotomy of Signs	Nature of Semiotic Interaction	Phenomenology
1	Firstness: Central Idea	Icon	Encounter	Being-there
2	Secondness: Identity in the face of the Other	Denotation Index Connotation Myth	Experience	Activity/Doing Reading/writing Conceived/received texts
3	Thirdness: Codes/syntagma Modes of relations	Myth Symbol: commonsense Ideology	Intelligibility Making sense	Public signs

Table 3 The Phaneroscopic Table.

The Phaneroscopic Table provides a means for understanding how we experience and interpret phenomena. Semiotics is central to understanding the table. Therefore, the key concepts from Peircean semiotics that inform the table are explained³⁵. Peircean semiotics is considered to be better suited to understanding non-verbal sign systems than Saussurean semiology³⁶. Saussure's semiology was derived from spoken and written language and only incorporates a signifier and signified in his model. However, images also constitute signs. Peirce's semiotic model included signs other than just linguistic signs.

Saussure's semiological model comprised signifiers (e.g. the word 'tree') that signify signifieds (the mental image of and including the real world object). Peirce's sign components comprise the representamen, the interpretant and the object. A representamen is the signifier and "stands to somebody for something in some respect or capacity" (Peirce quoted in Short 2007: 164). An interpretant is the mental image or "mental equivalent of the representation" (Peirce quoted in Short 2007: 29) generated by the representamen. The object is the real world thing referred to by the representamen³⁷. Objects give quality to representamens – they qualify the existence of representamens.

³⁵ See Seiter 2006: 253-260 for a further discussion about these concepts

³⁶ See Daniel Chandler's book *Semiotics: the basics* (2002) for a discussion about Peircean and Saussurean semiotics.

³⁷ Saussure's 'signified' straddles both the interpretant and the object in Peircean semiotics.

Unlimited semiosis is a key concept for understanding the table: an initial signifier elicits a signified. This signified then elicits further signifiers and signifieds in a chain reaction. Unlimited semiosis moves horizontally down the levels of experience, according to the table. However, our material existence means that at some point the semiotic process stops.

Contexts impinge upon meaning. In other words, in the *context* of underdevelopment and exploitation, Bushman audiences might read non-participatory (con-text) essentialist representations of themselves less constructively than participatory (con-text) representations. This was found in the interviews in the dialectic between *Gods* (apartheid) and *VOOF* (2008) (post-apartheid).

Order of signification: 1

This initial (Firstness) level of signification is primarily concerned with the immediate encounter. This is purely an iconic encounter with no further semiosis. In other words, the audience encounters representations of themselves and no more, “[f]irstness is the mode of being of that which is such as it is, positively and without reference to anything else” (Peirce quoted in Short 2007: 75). The iconic sign literally represents its signified (see Bignell 2002: 15). This does not include denotation, i.e. understanding that these are representations of themselves. It is purely the object. The (icon) signifier is directly connected to its (icon) signified. This is the produced inactive text where the representation is all that is of significance (Tomaselli 1996: 38). However, we are meaningful beings embedded within meaningful cultural networks and webs of meaning. Signs rarely exist purely at the iconic level. Their cultural reference frameworks elicit a range of meaningful associations.

Order of signification: 2

At the level of Secondness, the sign has entered the cultural frameworks of the interpreter. We relate the encounter to our cultural reference points. Firstness moves in to Secondness firstly through denotation. The audience interprets the sign initially at the denotative level. Denotation refers to what the sign literally represents. Denotation communicates the fact. For example, a film about the Bushmen denotes (shows) the Bushmen (Bignell 2002: 16). However, unique cultural frameworks give the sign further meaning through connotations. These are “extra associations” (connotation) that arise from our social experience (Bignell 2002: 16). Idyllic portrayals of the Bushmen connote isolation and blissful ignorance. The representations of the Bushmen in *VOOF* (2008) show community members playing various roles in a film (denotation) that comes to generally represent the Bushmen’s glorious past for members of the audience (connotation).

What is important to note, is that at the level of connotation, aberrant readings begin to emerge, which result in a variety of divergent readings amongst individuals (Tomaselli 1996: 38). Subjects can re-articulate

preferred readings with their own readings and discourses (see Tomaselli 1996: 38). The indexical signifier has a causal relation to its signified (Bignell 2002: 15). Smoke indexically signifies fire (i.e. ‘causes’ the interpretant ‘fire’). Signs’ associated meanings exist through cultural convention. Therefore meaning can change through re-articulation of signifiers and signifieds.

Order of signification: 3

Signs become part of our symbolic stock. Symbols are arbitrarily associated with meanings. For example, a heart has no direct connection to love. Our meaningful engagement with the world requires that signs be imbued with conventionally agreed upon meanings. At the level of Thirdness, the sign enters the mythic and interpretive frameworks of the individual and society. The frameworks allow us to make sense of the world. Myths according to Jonathan Bignell are “ways of thinking about people, products, places or ideas which are structured to send particular messages to the reader or viewer of the text” (2002: 16). What do the representations of the Bushmen in *VOOF* (2008) represent for the community, and how are these representations meaningfully used by the community? Western audiences would read idyllic representations of the Bushmen (they are public signs) as perhaps links to a lost sense of innocence. The community read and used the representations as sources of empowerment through links to a glorious past.

The Phaneroscopic Table thus draws on semiotics and other concepts to explain our meaningful encounter with signs.

Representation and empowerment

Dis/harmony and representation

Representation according to Stephen Crocker empowers people in two ways, which is envisaged from two circular points in Figure 4 below: the representation-audience encounter and the establishment of an imagined community (Marcus n.d., n.p. quoted in Crocker 2003: 130-33). The Peircean concepts of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness have been included in the diagramme so as to introduce a semiotic element to the theory to increase its explanatory power.

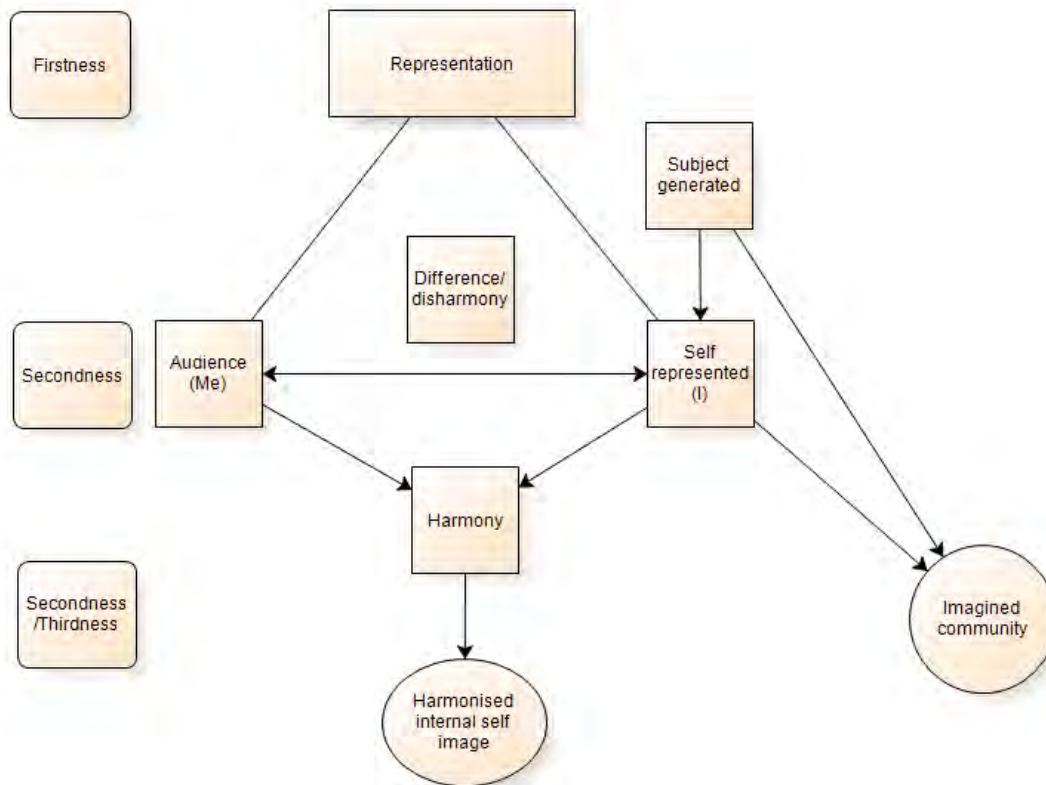


Figure 4 Empowerment through representation.

At the level of Firstness (the encounter), the audience literally just sees *VOOF* (2008). At the level of Secondness the encounter enters the experiential frameworks of the audience. The audience starts to make sense of texts through drawing on their cultural frameworks. When the audience encounters themselves on screen, they experience themselves in “a new light, as others might see them” (Williamson 1989: 5). Self-reflexivity and the development and/or enhancement of a sense of an inner self are key here, “the empowering effects of seeing one’s “life” ... on screen” (Crocker 2003: 130).

The representations establish an enhanced or magnified self-image. The audience’s encounter, experience of themselves (as they understand themselves) and their represented selves emerge in a state of disharmony. The experience of *myself* (me) and others’ representations of who *I* am (I) – “identity in the face of the Other” (Tomaselli 1996: 37) – creates an emotional dilemma. This is where the audience’s awareness of their existential condition begins to develop (conscientisation). The audience strives to close the gap and establish a moment of harmony. A harmonious inner self is then established.

The positive associations attached by the audience to their representations could result in the audience harmonising the emotional dilemma in an empowering way. Representations in PV are subject-generated. They are therefore perhaps seen as more truthful, and the community audience is more willing to trust the

representations. Trust is important in social development projects (see Chapter 6) where empowerment is a goal. If the audience does not trust the representations of themselves in PV then no manner of positive associations attached to the representations will empower them.

According to the Phaneroscopic Table, encounter through to experience moves denotation through to connotation and then to the level of myth – laws and codes for making sense of the world. Secondness leads to myth, which then becomes Thirdness. This inner self-image elicits positive or negative feelings and “increases self knowledge” (Marcus n.d., n.p. quoted in Crocker 2003: 131). It functions along a broader spectrum at the level of Thirdness that allows audiences to make sense of their worlds and/or change their mindsets (self knowledge). The audience can see themselves as oppressed or as more whole subjects. The Phaneroscopic Table shows that empowerment entails a re-articulation of signs and discourses at the level of experience and intelligibility.

However, it is important for audiences to maintain a critical distance between representation and their sense of self so as “not to be swallowed up in the socially created images others have of [them]” (Crocker 2003: 131). In other words, harmony does not mean equalisation of identification. It refers rather to the emotional and psychological state of equilibrium than the sense of identification of the representations.

Mediated representation establishes a collective sense of self that provides a means for overcoming geographical and psychological isolation. This also provides an external sense-making reference point for the community – a “virtual community” (Crocker 2003: 132). A virtual community allows a group of people to imagine themselves as part of a community (a projected collective representation), which exceeds their geographical boundaries (Crocker 2003: 131-132). The community is thus able to draw on a collective sense of self. This operates at the level of Secondness and Thirdness, as it not only forms part of the community’s experience of themselves, but also forms an interpretive mechanism for navigating the world.

Conclusion

Empowerment and reception are the central concepts that this chapter addresses. The approach to empowerment in this thesis conceptualises power as exercised amongst people, dynamic, multi-centred and asymmetric. This approach does not apply preconceived models of empowerment. It rather allows the data to reveal, if and how empowerment is expressed. This approach therefore engages grassroots expressions and articulations.

The theory espoused by Freire has been utilised in this research owing to its conceptual and explanatory power, despite that Freire’s theories fit more into humanism and structuralism. Freire’s concepts provide a

means for firstly conceptualising oppression and exploitation, and then secondly exploring how the oppressed can empower themselves. The oppressed have been objectified according to Freire. They need to regain their humanity through becoming conscientised. Therefore, one of Freire's most important points, for this research, is that empowerment requires a change of consciousness.

The section on reception represents a body of theory that the research is embedded within. It provides a framework for understanding how audiences negotiate texts and readings. The central approach taken in this regard posits that the data need to determine theory building. This approach considers meaning making within context and does not ignore audience-text interactions. Ultimately the world of encoding and the televisual object comprises a range of signifiers from which audiences actively decode meaningful responses.

The concepts posited by Crocker (2003) provide a model for how representations in PV may empower respective audiences. What needs to be clarified here is that the research participants' negotiations of *VOOF* (2008) need to be examined first before any conclusions about empowerment can be made. Otherwise, all complexity of response will be lost.

The above theories delineate a framework for understanding the research participants' engagement with *VOOF* (2008). The theorisations on empowerment and representation are then applied within this theoretical framework to further outline a response to the research aim, questions and objectives.

Chapter: 5: Between textbooks and the field encounter: methods and methodologies

Introduction

Design in qualitative research should be primarily concerned with ensuring that the chosen methodology and the results are appropriate, valid, and reliable. Considering this, the approach also needs to be suited to the research question, how do the research participants interpret their representation in *VOOF* (2008) in relation to PV as a potentially empowering medium? The research design responds to the research objectives of: 1) collecting a set of responses to *VOOF* (2008) from the research participants, 2) exploring the research participants' responses to *VOOF* (2008) and developing a list of themes, 3) critically examining any articulations and perceptions of empowerment under the respective themes, and 4) articulating a theorised explanation of the research participants' interpretations of *VOOF* (2008) in relation to PV as a medium that is used for empowering people.

Each method also needed to be sensitive to the epistemological – social constructionism – grounding of the research. Social constructionism treats knowledge as “created and negotiated between human beings” (Oliver 2008: 105). In-depth interviews captured individual responses to questions about *VOOF* (2008) and empowerment. Thematic analysis and the Phaneroscopic Table provided means for exploring and understanding the research participants' responses with regards to the research aims, questions and objectives. Thematic analysis is also considered an effective method in case study analyses (Creswell 1998: 65).

The theoretical recasts to Freire's theories posited by Glass (2001) in Chapter 4 are fed throughout this research and the methods. The approach to reception embraces inductivity so that the research participants' responses guide the examination of their responses and any articulations of empowerment. The research participants' responses therefore are accounted for within the historical context of their complex identities and lives.

Validity, reliability, and rigour

Validity in social constructionist social science is difficult to measure. How does one measure social constructs objectively? In other words, how does one ensure that one's methods measure the right phenomena? In response to this, a mixed methods approach was used that worked as close to the data as was possible. This allowed for a multifarious perspective of the data. Inductive thematic analyses also contributed to this end.

Internal validity

There are various methodological issues that affect internal and external validity. Internal validity is the extent to which research design allows one to draw unambiguous conclusions from results (de Vaus 2001: 28). External validity refers to the extent to which results can be generalised (de Vaus 2001: 28).

It is important that cases are not separated from their contexts (de Vaus 2001: 235; see Babbie & Mouton 2008: 282). A sense of context was maintained through immersing myself in the community where possible, and I consulted information about the community and the larger frameworks in which the community exists. The extent to which theorists explain data also affects internal validity. As a result, each case is explained as fully as possible within its respective context (de Vaus 2001: 233-4).

Trust was also an important area to consider in this regard. Trust between the community and outsiders is fraught with tension, particularly towards researchers who spend brief periods of time in the community and then leave with no further contact. I therefore felt that it was important to maintain trust and honesty by revealing my researcher identity. I did not want to strain trust to the extent that it might jeopardise mine or other researchers' work (see de Vaus 2001: 245-6).

External validity

The samples that were used were non-representative and non-probable. Non-probability sampling also means that external validity is dependent on replication logic (de Vaus 2001: 238). Replication logic is the level to which the same results will be obtained under the same conditions (de Vaus 2001: 238). A higher replication level instils greater confidence in the research results. Most of the research participants felt similarly about certain topics and therefore replication was achieved, which suggests a higher degree of external validity. However, in this instance, replication may have been indicative of anthro-speak rather than external validity. Anthro-speak is where research subjects say what they think researchers want to hear after having learned stock responses over time. This is discussed later in this chapter (see also Tomaselli et al. 2008: 349-50). Anthro-speak and interviewee collusion could be disastrous for any sense of external or even internal validity. However, it was eventually established that the research participants' similar responses were truthful.

The research was conducted with only one group within the Khwe in Platfontein. This also weakened external validity. It suggests a degree of generalisation. However, differing conditions might elicit different results, and thus prove ruinous for external validity. However, time and cost were constraints in this regard. As a result, only the Khwe research participants were interviewed within the time and cost constraints.

Reliability

Reliability was achieved through using percentage agreement tests (see Stage 2, Step 5 below). These tests are more suited to nominal or ordinal data, but the principle remains relevant nonetheless (Boyatzis 1998: 154). Percentage agreement tests ascertained that the list of codes and the rules for what constituted an instance of a code (coding scheme) were reliable and accurate, barring a few errors.

Rigour

Ensuring that the approach to collecting, organising and analysing the data was rigorous was an important concern. The epistemological foundations required specialised methods such as reflexivity, mixed methods and an adaptation of textbook approaches to methods to my encounters in the field. A mixed methods approach also ensures that data are examined from as many facets as possible, thus avoiding the bias that may pertain in any single approach, whilst also ensuring data complexity. With regards to reflexivity, the researcher-subject encounter, and how it may have impacted on the results, is discussed in later sections.

Another means for ensuring that the approach was rigorous was to draw on a range of literature for the main analytical method, thematic analysis. However, Richard E. Boyatzis' (1998) approach was preferred as it developed a method that anticipated both qualitative and quantitative approaches to social science. This further ensured scientific rigour. However, even this detailed account of thematic analysis was not always appropriate to the data. The Khwe's use of language incorporated a logic that was at times different to Western logic (even in English or Afrikaans). Their English or Afrikaans speech is riddled with syntactical mistakes, flowery and metaphorical, and words were used in unconventional ways. For example, the word 'play' was used by the research participants to mean 'act' (as in performing a role in theatre or television).

Research Design

Each interviewee formed a single case. Multiple cases are necessary in inductive research (de Vaus 2001: 227) so as to build theories. The qualitative methodology of this research draws methods from the inductive theme set in the theoretical framework. A theory building (as opposed to testing) explanatory case study method (de Vaus 2001: 221-3) was utilised. The cross-case comparative element that is indicative of a multiple case study approach was not a focus in this research, despite that a multiple case study approach was used (de Vaus 2001: 223). This could be construed as a weakness of the research design.

The thick descriptions used in the analysis and interpretation were concerned with the relation between the research participants' negotiated readings and whether or not they articulated a sense of empowerment. This was considered within the case's context (de Vaus 2001: 220) as separating cases from context would dilute rigor.

After an extensive literature survey, Piorro and Moshe³⁸ were interviewed to establish a preliminary data set (pilot interviews) so as to establish ideas and perspectives of what may arise in the primary interviews. Moshe and Piorro were also two of the producers of *VOOF* (2008). These were semi-structured interviews with “open [and] active dialogue” (Deacon et al. 1999: 65) so as to establish a direction for questions such as how they felt about their representation, how did the community’s participation in *VOOF* (2008) affect audience reception etc. (see Babbie & Mouton 2008: 289).

Contact was made with the community through a larger research project, *Rethinking Indigeneity*, run by Professor Keyan Tomaselli of the University of KwaZulu-Natal and funded by the National Research Foundation. Permission to research in the community had to be obtained from the Kimberley branch of the South African San Institute (SASI) prior to commencing the research. An agreement was signed with SASI.

Sampling

The sample comprised fifteen youth from the Khwe community. The sampling method was non-probable and non-random, which allowed for a detailed data set, but a smaller unit of analysis than probable sampling (Oliver 2008: 109). Snowball sampling provided “initial contacts [who] suggest further people for the researcher to approach, who in turn may provide further contacts” (Deacon et al. 1999: 53). Snowball sampling does not necessarily determine representative samples; it better facilitates exploration (Babbie & Mouton 2008: 167). In addition to this, elements of convenience sampling occurred, where the “sample selection is less preconceived and directed, more the product of expediency, chance and opportunity than of deliberate intent” (Deacon et al. 1999: 54).

The initial criteria for selecting the sample were that the research participants had to be between 18-35 years of age (so as to keep the research participants within the youth bracket), they had to be from the Khwe group, and preferably not have been involved in *VOOF* (2008). The focus on a specific age group was deliberate, as it was considered important to establish an in-depth understanding of their responses rather than a broad and shallow understanding of a wider range of ages. Youth were chosen as this group of people represent the future of the community in the modern world. However, this presents a limitation for this research. The incorporation of a wider spread of ages could have increased a sense nuance and complexity, and therefore a fuller account of the audience’s interaction with *VOOF* (2008).

Research was undertaken with the Khwe for reasons of convenience. Relationships had already been established with them, they comprised the majority of the crew and the film was shot in Khwedam. The

³⁸ Moshe is a filmmaker from the community.

initial focus was solely on people who had not been involved in the production of *VOOF* (2008). However, flexibility was required for a number of reasons. Firstly, it was difficult trying to get people to participate. For example, people would agree to, but not arrive for interviews. Thus, where convenient, some of the crew members were also included in the research process. However, it quickly became apparent that the crew – Moshe, Rena and Piorro – could provide deep insights (see Chapter 6), so they were included.

Interviews

The in-depth interviews took place during six field trips over the period March 2009 – March 2010. A total of fifteen people were interviewed over the period: Andre, Emma, Hendrik, Kasivi, Makuanda, Moshe, Nasako, Noria, Nunke, Piet, Pieter, Piorro, Robert and Sonia. The research participants were offered the opportunity for anonymity. However, all of them said that they wanted their real names included in the research. They were youths and all were eighteen years or older at the time of the interview.

VOOF (2008) was initially screened for the whole community at one of the local churches. This was their first viewing of *VOOF* (2008), and indirectly formed part of the research methods through participant observation. Initial questions and ideas were developed from this, and contact was made with the community at this screening. The research participants were selected from this group. *VOOF* (2008) was re-screened during some of the interviews as some of the research participants wished to refresh their memory. The interviews took place in another smaller local church, as this was the most convenient and conducive space in which to conduct the interviews. Most of the research participants made use of the translator during the interview. However, some of them preferred to respond in English or Afrikaans.

In-depth interviews were chosen so as to reach as close as possible an ethnography of reading (see Appendix A for a list of questions). The interview schedule was designed in a way that explored and examined the research participants' negotiations of their encounters with *VOOF* (2008). The questions did not aim to direct responses or the general flow of the conversation. The interviews were semi-structured so as to facilitate this. The in-depth interviews aided in accessing the semantic depth required of the research aim and questions. The questions proceeded from simple and general questions that explored research participants' immediate reactions to *VOOF* (2008) to more in-depth questions that explored depth and complexity. One of the strengths of semi-structured interviews is that they counter interviewer preconceptions in shaping content (see Gillham 2000: 3). This helped reveal the themes that interacted and impinged upon meaning such as, the research participants drawing on their 'glorious past' as a source of empowerment, the importance of modern representations of the Bushmen etc.

The interview research design was iterative and required constant reflection, modification and updating (see Rubin & Rubin 1995: 46-7). The later interviews were a considerable improvement on earlier ones. The initial interviews were too particular and were overly focussed on detail. Often this detail was not easily translated, and was sometimes nondescript. For example, “does *VOOF* (2008) make you aware of your life” became “does *VOOF* (2008) make you think about your life”. ‘Think’ was better understood than ‘aware’ by the research participants. Word choice therefore required careful consideration and reflection.

There are various types of questions that one can draw on in order to effectively manage and guide an interview (see Kvale 1996). A range of questioning strategies was drawn upon in the development of the interview process. Introductory questions such as “do you remember the movie you saw a while ago?” set the interview in motion, and gently eased the research participants into the interview. Follow-up and specifying questions focussed the research participants, and helped to provide more information on a topic. Examples are “what do you mean by that?”, “how did it make you feel to see your friends in the film?” and “why do you think that the film belongs to the community?” Interpreting questions entail interviewers repeating research participants’ responses to ensure that the interviewer understands the response correctly. Probing is an interviewing technique that avoids researcher bias (Babbie & Mouton 2008: 289). It propels the interview in the direction suggested by the interviewee’s responses (see Gillham 2000: 46). The underlined question below is an example of probing,

Jonathan: Does this film help you to understand the past and the present?

Makuanda: I think so.

Jonathan: How does it do that?

Makuanda: I don’t live with the past...

Probing also allows the researcher to ascertain the level to which respondents can conceptually go. It was necessary, for example, to find other ways of asking whether the research participants felt that *VOOF* (2008) was an act of resistance for them. This was rephrased as “do you think that *VOOF* (2008) told the world who they are?” Probing thus allows for clarification, enquiry of the level of interviewee understanding, seeking justification, understanding the relevance of responses, seeking an example, pursuing accuracy and getting interviewees to reflect on their comments (Gillham 2000: 47-52).

The interview process was based on conversations whereby the research participants would speak the most. Control (management) and direction of the interview, however, rested with the interviewer, which is unlike normal conversation (Gillham 2000: 1; see Kvale’s 1996 concepts of the miner and traveller in interviewing). This requires good listening skills and that the researcher functions as a “socially acceptable incompetent” (Lofland 1995: 56-7).

Moshe was the initial translator for the interviews. He made contact with the various research participants prior to the interview periods. He translated from Khwedam and Afrikaans into English. He was also an interviewee³⁹. However, as of the 22nd February 2010, a new translator was required, Aaron, as Moshe became employed full-time. Andre eventually took over from Aaron during the third round of interviews later in 2010 for reasons that will be discussed later in this chapter.

The primary interviews (after the pilot interviews) were semi-structured and largely allowed the research participants to determine what issues they wanted to discuss, which included the impact that top-down representational approaches had on the Bushman and how the research participants responded to their representation in *VOOF* (2008). Each interview was recorded on a dictaphone, then transcribed and digitally stored. The research participants all agreed to being recorded, and none showed any hesitancy towards speaking about certain issues whilst being recorded. Each participant signed a consent form (see Appendix B), outlining the research project, the process and their rights before beginning each interview. The form was translated for them into either Khwedam or Afrikaans if they required it. Their details and responses were kept strictly between myself, the translator and the respective research participant.

However, weaknesses in the interviewing method were brought about owing to time and cost constraints. As already mentioned, Kimberley is about 800km away from where I live (Durban), and the costs of getting there are sizeable. Eventually, certain responses had to be left unexplored as a result of the costs of getting to the research community.

Focus groups

A focus group was held on 12 August 2009, which comprised a further ten Khwe people – five males and five females – in addition to the research participants from the interviews. The research participants in the focus group did not form part of the in-depth interview group. The group was researcher-constituted, and not pre-constituted (Deacon et al. 1999: 56).

Focus groups allow for what Morley calls an “ethnography of reading” (1981: 130), which brings to light the social context and personal agency involved in decoding. The data that focus groups generate gives insight into group “interactional dynamics” (May 1993: 95). This can reveal the ways in which interpretations are constructed through groups, and where research participants “create meaning among themselves, rather than individually” (Babbie & Mouton 2008: 292).

³⁹ It was decided that Moshe should be one of the research participants owing to a number of reasons: he was knowledgeable, educated at university level, and able to conceptualise and express concepts and issues well.

However, the focus group did not work as well as had been intended; the group did not necessarily elicit a sense of “interactional dynamics” owing to a number of reasons that are discussed later. The focus group was therefore not used as part of the core data analysis, but rather as additional data to compare and contrast interview responses to. This route was also chosen as qualitative complexity can be missed in focus groups (see Babbie & Mouton 2008: 292). It was also difficult to obtain a response from each of the research participants during the focus group, so the respective data may be biased.

Methodological issues can arise in using focus groups as a representative device. Attitude polarisation can occur during the procession of the focus group (see Kim 2004: 102). The dynamics of the group, such as dominant speakers, apathy, language issues, cultural and gender roles can result in a superficial convergence of opinions. Language and cultural barriers, such as gender roles and race, seemed to be the main impediments to in-depth free-flowing dialogue in the focus groups. Female research participants, for example, seemed more reserved than male research participants. Race relations need to be considered as well. I am a white man. The research participants seemed more comfortable, in some instances, talking to the black translator than to me. Language barriers could have also been the reason for this. Various elements of the focus group and the interviews could have also induced ‘anthro-speak’. It is for these reasons why the focus group was utilised as additional backup and comparative data.

Translation and transcription

The transcription process was aimed at keeping the written interviews as close as possible to the recorded audio interviews, so as to minimise any divergence in meaning. I am semi-fluent in Afrikaans. However, there were some instances where first language Afrikaans speakers were needed for translation. Community translators, colleagues and friends provided these. The community translators provided Khwedam/Afrikaans/English translations. Neither Afrikaans nor English is the mother tongue language of the community. Afrikaans has become a *lingua franca* of sorts for them. However, it is spoken to varying degrees with very few people speaking it fluently.

It was imperative that all members of the research process trusted and connected with one another. There were parts of the interviews that I could not understand and therefore had to rely solely on trust that the translators were telling the truth. Granted, information was verified with others, but this was always secondary experience. As a result of this, it was imperative that bonds of trust were established between me, the translators, and the audience. These bonds, it was hoped, would facilitate a smooth research and analysis process, helping the participants to understand their responses to *VOOF* (2008) and then (hopefully) use this understanding for further development projects, thus contributing to knowledge in the development and participatory communication fields.

The idiosyncracies of the Afrikaans spoken by the research participants and translators posed numerous translation difficulties. For example, Aaron's English, and to an extent his Afrikaans, became problematic. He relied on certain stock phrases and words such as "dis baie interessant" (*this is very interesting*) when translating a research participant's appreciation of *VOOF* (2008). This could have missed nuance in the responses. His Afrikaans was also broken and mixed with English. However, Aaron's translations were compared to the same questions translated by Moshe – where responses were similar – in order to assess whether any discrepancies in translation might have existed (similar research done by myself (see Dockney 2008) with the same community also facilitated this). Any digression from the patterns that might have emerged would have perhaps indicated a problem. However, there were no indications of significant difference between the two translators besides differences in word choice. Word choice was not so drastically different that it altered meaning substantially.

There were also instances where particular unique phrases and words were used during the interviews by all three translators. For example, "huis mense" (house people) was used for the Afrikaans "familie" (*family*, but not the immediate family). This was addressed through asking the translators what they were referring to, and if not possible, (e.g. if the translators were not immediately available or contactable) then through soliciting colleagues' and friends' advice.

Moshe's university education meant that higher order questions could be translated and posed to the research participants. However, neither Aaron nor Andre was able to conceptualise ideas to the same extent as Moshe. Therefore, some lines of questioning could not be pursued no matter how they were re-phrased.

It was also of concern as to whether or not words were introduced to the research participants that they did not fully understand, or that may not have been directly equivalent to similar words in their spoken languages. Vocabulary became a constraining factor on expressivity. Therefore, the questions were made as neutral as possible. Questions were also asked in different ways so as to facilitate better understanding and tease out nuance. "How do you feel about your representation in *VOOF* (2008)" could also be asked as "what do you think about the representations of the community in *VOOF* (2008)?" The word choice may elicit different responses, however they functioned along similar lines, thus ensuring that responses were teased open. This ensured a degree of certainty and brought out the complexity in the research participants' responses.

Coding

Coding transformed the interviews into raw data. The initial stages of developing a coding system were done by hand, and thereafter, through a qualitative data analysis programme, NVIVO 8⁴⁰.

Defining coding

Coding is a means for tagging data of a similar nature under a single classificatory heading for later retrieval. Codes stand for “semantic or latent content [*sic*]” (Braun & Clarke 2006: 88) in such a way that they facilitate a meaningful analysis of the phenomenon at hand (Boyatzis 1998: 63).

Thematic analysis was one of the main methods used in this research. The coding schemes (templates for how to code similar data in a data set) were developed so as to tease out the themes of the text in relation to the research questions (see Franzosi 2004: 550). Codes and themes were organised as follows: codes represented the broad classificatory categories such as ‘participation’; themes represented unique narratives under each code such as ‘because the community took part in the film, it therefore belongs to them’ (under the code ‘participation’). Themes could fit under multiple codes. For example, the above theme could fit under the ‘participation’ and ‘ownership’ codes.

Issues with coding

Early on in the research it became apparent that it would be difficult to find an approach to developing coding schemes that has been standardised. The lack of any standardised approach has posed problems for researchers, despite that thematic analysis is extremely useful for qualitative research (see Franzosi 2004: 550). Numerous authors’ approaches to coding, specifically authors such as Boyatzis (1998) and Jennifer Fereday and Eimear Muir-Cochrane (2006), were drawn on in order to imbue rigour within the data.

The general coding style that was employed in the research comprised both the “broad-brush” (coding broad topic areas) and “coding detail” (coding for in-depth detail) approaches proposed by Pat Bazeley (2007: 67-70). This was done owing to either the plenitude of fragmentary detail available in the responses (coding detail), or the almost featureless and, in some instances, nonsensical responses by some participants, which fell under broad brush coding.

‘Participation’ is an example of broad brush coding in this research. Anything that was linked to participation was coded here. ‘The Bushmen told Tom’ is an example of coding detail. It could have been coded under participation, but initially it seemed a worthy stand-alone code. However, in some instances

⁴⁰ See Bazeley (2007) and Richards (1999) for more information on NVIVO.

there were technical issues at stake. Double coding can arise and coding detail can be too detailed. Double coding occurs when two codes represent the same data. For example, ‘participation’ and ‘taking part’ are two codes that could be joined into one code. Therefore, the latter code was subsumed under ‘participation’ in the analysis, as this was more efficient, revealing and convenient.

A tabulated response (see Table 4) was developed, for the purposes of this research, by building on the step-by-step approaches to coding and thematic analysis advocated by Jodi Aronson (1994), Boyatzis (1998), Virginia Braun and Victoria Clarke (2006) and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006). However, Boyatzis (1998) and Fereday and Muir-Cochrane (2006) formed the backbone, as they incorporated means for ensuring reliability, rigor and validity. Coding and thematic analysis are also considered by Boyatzis (1998) through both qualitative and quantitative lenses. He provided the most systematic, step-by-step approach to thematic analysis. Table 4 is my application of Boyatzis’ Stage 2, steps 1-4. His approach (1998: 29, 41-51) is outlined in Figure 5 below.

Name	Question	Response	Response summary	Response outline	Question code	Response pre-code	Code level: 1	Code level: 2
Andre	How did VOOF make you feel?	It makes me feels happy because it's our culture and our forefathers. That's why it makes me feel so happy.	Feel happy; Because; It's our culture; It's our forefathers	Happy as our culture and our forefathers	Feelings (VOOF)	Happy Culture Forefathers	Positive feelings (V) Culture	

Table 4 Tabulated response to coding data and developing themes.

Stage 1:

Sample and design issues; select subsamples

(Sample design)

Stage 2:

(Develop themes and codes)

Step 1: Reduce raw information (summaries and outlines)

Step 2: Indentify themes within subsamples

Step 3: Compare themes across subsamples

Step 4: Creating a code (level 1 and 2)

Step 5: Determine the reliability of codes

Stage 3:

(Validate and use code)

Step 1: Apply code to remaining raw information

Step 2: Determine validity

Step 3: Interpret results

Figure 5 Boyatzis' approach to code and theme development.

Table 4 includes an extract from an interview with Andre as an example. This table allowed for the systematic break down of the interviews into codes without losing a sense of context. The table is explained in Stage 2, steps 1-4, below.

Stage 2, steps 1-4

Each research participant's name was entered into the table followed by a copy of the respective question, their response and then a summary of their response. Response outlines entailed, if possible, breaking down the summaries into smaller coherent fragments in order to facilitate "easier ... comparison across units of analysis" (Boyatzis 1998: 69) (stage 2, step 1). The *question* was then given a code. Having a question code readily available assisted in preserving a sense of context by being able to see exactly what was asked (see Bazeley 2007: 121).

The ‘response pre-code’ represented the final summarised response statements *before* they were collected into codes (level 1 and 2). This device was an application of, for example, Boyatzis’ Stage 2, Step 2 and 3 (1998: 86-9) in the inductive method of code and thematic development. The response outlines were broken down into one word fragments (pre-codes), which allowed for the comparison of themes within and between sub-samples (stage 2, step 2/3). Similar final pre-codes were collected into groupings firstly within, and then secondly, across sub-samples. Thereafter, they were developed into codes and themes.

The final columns contained the codes that were entered into NVIVO. Level 1 codes represent what is interesting, useful or relevant in the data. This level of coding reduces raw information to a more manageable focus (Hahn 2008: 86) by “attaching labels to groups of words” (Robson 1993: 385).

At level two, “pattern coding” takes place, where the themes and patterns that emerged in level 1 are coded for (Robson 1993: 385); “themes, causes/explanations, relationships and emerging constructs” are coded for (Bazeley 2007: 111). However, not all responses were coded to this more abstract level. Themes were developed from within each of the respective codes. The process of developing codes and themes is a dynamic process that can be refined *ad finitum*. However, this process was discontinued once what was needed had been achieved.

Thematic analysis

Thematic analysis allows researchers to identify, analyse and report patterns within their data (Braun & Clarke 2006: 79). It is an encoding process that can be put to many uses, and readily assimilates with other research methods (Boyatzis 1998: 4). A theme is “a pattern found in the information that, at a minimum, describes and organises the possible observations, and, at a maximum, interprets aspects of the phenomenon” (Boyatzis 1998: 4).

Approach to thematic analysis

There are three approaches to thematic analysis: deductive/theory-driven approaches, prior-research driven approaches, and inductive/data-driven approaches (Boyatzis 1998: 29). The inductive approach was applied in this research as this was the line – bottom-up analysis – established in the theoretical framework towards reception analysis.

Inductive thematic analysis brings a high level of uncertainty to the research process as researchers are not equipped with a theoretical support system to guide their development of codes and themes. Themes are developed from the raw data without the aid of any pre-existing coding frame/scheme. A lack of any established coding route does not mean that epistemological preconceptions therefore become irrelevant.

The researcher's subjective experience and interpretation of the data presages the entry of personal ideologies (see Boyatzis 1998: 30, Braun & Clarke 2006: 83). The inductive method is therefore not necessarily any more objective than other methods. It is also important to acknowledge that themes, in all approaches, are constructed by the researcher and not inherent to the research. Rather, themes are constructed by the researcher in making links throughout the text (Ely et al. 1997: 205-6).

Stage 2, step 5

However, one of the upshots of the inductive approach is that because of the relative closeness of the code (and the resultant theme), and its sensitivity to the context, there is a higher inter-rater reliability (consistency of judgement), and therefore a reliable coding scheme (Boyatzis 1998: 30). Reliability refers to a method's level of consistency in attaining results (de Vaus 2002: 17). Reliability does not determine whether a method is measuring the appropriate phenomena (validity), however.

Reliability in the interpretive social sciences entails a relatively high degree of consistency of judgement (Boyatzis 1998: 145). Consistency of judgement lessens the threat of researcher projection. It is central in permeating the qualitative researcher's voice with credibility and allowing for the generalisation of the research (Boyatzis 1998: 144). The approach used by Boyatzis (1998) for conceptualising reliability assuages the concerns of positivists and interpretivists.

There are two forms of consistency of judgement in qualitative research that Boyatzis discusses (1998: 146-150). Consistency of judgement in the first instance entails inter-rater reliability/synchronic⁴¹ reliability – will multiple observers come to similar conclusions over the same time period? The reliability of the research coding scheme was tested by asking two colleagues, Natasha Sundar and Caitlin Watson, to apply the coding scheme to a sample interview. Test-retest reliability/diachronic⁴² reliability refers to a researcher coming to the same conclusions over two different times or different settings. However, Boyatzis critiques this second approach as it can disregard sensitivity to the phenomena under study – one may feel exuberant now and exuberant in two weeks time, but the degree and nature of one's exuberance may not be the same at the two points in time. Sensitivity is sacrificed for stability and "reliability" (Boyatzis 1998: 148). A test-retest reliability of sorts was achieved, however. The development of the coding scheme had to be restarted three times over a three month period. Each restart resulted in more detailed, albeit similar, codes, thus suggesting test-retest reliability.

⁴¹ See Kirk and Miller (1986)

⁴² See Kirk and Miller (1986)

Confidence, according to Boyatzis, can also indicate a level of reliability (1998: 150). The use of multiple observers (who come to similar results) can yield a greater degree of confidence and potentially, reliability, through convergence of thought, which was achieved through the similar results of Natasha and Caitlin. However, whether this is a result of group talk or a function of social construction is a matter of epistemological paradigms. Convergence of thought does not necessarily indicate objectivity. Interpretive social scientists see socially constructed knowledge as intrinsic to human reality – we cannot know the world outside of socially constructed language. This approach would therefore require that social scientists employ reflexivity. The positivist, however, would seek to cut through social construction by trying to determine whether the observations “exist” independent of our cultural precepts, i.e. the validity of the observations (see Bryman & Cramer 2004: 22-3). For this research, knowledge is viewed as socially constructed and not separately existing for the world to see.

Reliability, in this research, was approached from a synchronic perspective. The relevant percentage agreement calculation recommended by Boyatzis in order to “measure” coding scheme reliability is:

% agreement = number of times both coders agreed divided by the number of times coding was possible/instances of coding.

A score of 70% or higher indicates minimum reliability (Boyatzis 1998: 156). A score of 68% was reached after calculating the results from Natasha’s application. Caitlin Watson was then asked to apply the codes to a smaller selection of questions (owing to time constraints), which yielded similar results. However, the coding scheme was still utilised, despite the low scores, for the following reasons. Firstly, the codes were taken directly from the research participants’ interviews, which indicates a reasonable level of closeness to the raw data. This also suggests that therefore validity was intact. Caitlin and Natasha both agreed that the derivation of the codes seemed logical. Secondly, the coding process had to be restarted three times. Each time yielded more refined but nonetheless similar results, which further indicated that the problem was not the codes themselves. Rather, the problem lay with the fact that Natasha was not given a clear set of coding limits that stipulated what constituted an instance of coding. There was a lack of clear heterogeneous distinction and homogenous similarity between the codes. As a result of this, the respective codes were either made more distinct or incorporated into other codes.

Stage 3, steps 1-3

After determining a satisfactory level of code reliability, the code scheme was applied to the rest of the raw data. Step 2 of stage 3 involves validating the code. It is not entirely clear what Boyatzis means here, but it would seem that he is referring to firstly developing themes from the codes and then meaningfully contextualising the themes (1998: 36-7, 40-41, 50-51). This is done through connecting the codes and then identifying the themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006: 7).

Identifying themes

Each code had to be manually examined in order to collate the data and abstract themes (Attride-Stirling 2001: 391-2, Braun & Clarke 2006: 87). The data within the codes had to be connected into themes (Fereday & Muir-Cochrane 2006: 7). In order to do this, summaries of the coded texts within the codes were developed and models were also built so as to provide a diagrammatic representation of the themes. These models were also used to generate a sense of the thematic flow and interaction. An example of a model is provided below (Figure 6):

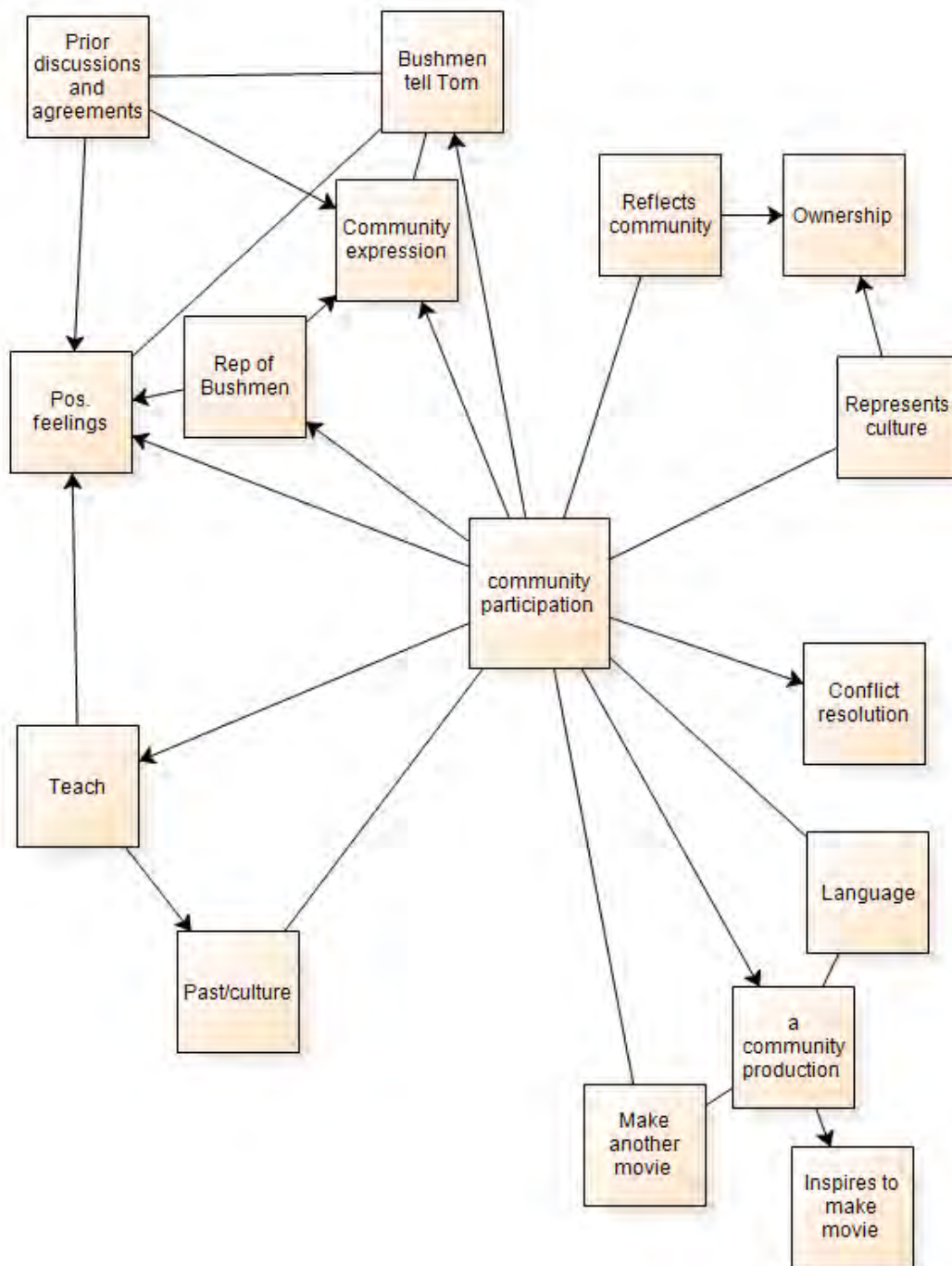


Figure 6 A diagram of the themes under the code: (community) participation.

A theme captures data that is relatively important to the research question at hand. It also represents a patterned response within the data set (Braun & Clarke 2006: 82). This formed the key criteria for theme identification. Other aspects such as how many people referenced a particular theme and how many times it was referenced within samples were also considered as a second criterion. This proved problematic, however, as not only are some unimportant themes frequently referenced, but some important themes are

infrequently referenced. The response therefore was to consider both criteria and use discretion in the final decision.

Eighty eight codes were initially classified. However, some codes were double-coded and some themes constituted sub-themes. As a result, the double codes and sub-themes were worked into the final codes and themes. In addition to this, on closer inspection, some of the codes were found to be irrelevant and were therefore discarded. In the final analysis, only nine codes were considered with the relevant themes linked to each code. The analysis was then begun after the final theme set was identified.

Thick descriptions, networks and Phaneroscopy

The analytical approach comprised various methods in order to tease out the nuance of the data. The stock method throughout analysis was what Boyatzis calls “verbal description” (1998: 128). This not only brings “qualitative depth” to the fore, but also fits the social constructionist framework of this research (Boyatzis 1998: 128-9). The application of thematic analysis utilised both rich verbal description and detailed accounts of the themes through drawing on literature from the literature review and theoretical framework. A semantic analytical approach was used. Semantic analysis “is an attempt to theorize [*sic*] the significance of the patterns and their broader meanings and implications” (Patton 1990; see Braun & Clarke 2006: 83-4).

The analytical approach also used elements of thematic network analysis to better understand the themes (see Attride-Stirling 2001). Thematic networks constitute maps of the main themes that comprise a data set (Attride-Stirling 2001: 386). The analysis focused on individual themes with references to other themes. The diagram in Figure 6 is an example of a thematic network – it was predominantly a detailed mapping of the participation code despite that it referred to other themes. The primary function of thematic network analysis was the depiction and representation of the salient themes as they occurred at the individual level. Thematic network analysis also organises themes into a hierarchical structure (basic, organising and global themes). This research focussed on individual themes rather than summarising a hierarchy of the themes, and therefore did not apply thematic network analysis to this extent. However, inter-theme links were made in the description pieces.

Phaneroscopy and Semiotics

The Phaneroscopic Table (see Chapter 4) provided a means for understanding how the themes arose (the analysis did not undertake a semiotic analysis per se, but semiotics is fundamental in understanding the table). The concepts provided by the table are applied to the data to explain the audience’s semiotic encounter with *VOOF* (2008) and to delineate interpretations/readings.

One moves down, row by row, in order to read the table. The columns within each row are not read sequentially. Rather, they represent various conceptualisations of Firstness, Secondness and Thirdness, and are read simultaneously, as a unit (row). The research participants' responses are therefore mapped onto the table; the concepts in the table provide a means for understanding the research participants' responses. The table was used to conceptualise the research participants' general responses and positions rather than working through each, which would have been cumbersome and repetitive.

The concepts were applied to the responses once they had been collected into codes and themes. These concepts allow one to ascertain which level the responses fell into. For example, where research participants spoke about how they feel about or experienced the representations, this would have been conceptualised under Secondness, based on the concepts listed in the relevant row. Where research participants spoke of meanings that aided them in understanding (interpreting) the world, these were classified under Thirdness.

However, these examples are rather simplistic (although applicable to the data nonetheless); more complex responses require the researcher to study the table carefully so as to ascertain at which levels of experience the research participants were operating. For example, a hypothetical discussion by the Bushmen on the exploitation of their representation in the modern world would probably fall into Secondness and Thirdness.

Encounters of the research kind: some reflexive considerations

Reflections on the research encounter are vital in order to understand how researcher presence might have affected results. The effects of the research encounter on the data may not be precisely known. Nonetheless, it suffices to say that the data are in part influenced by the researcher-participant interaction (see Oliver 2008: 114). The research *process* cannot be obscured. Cultural reflexivity requires that researchers "bend back on Self [*sic*] and look more deeply at Self-Other interactions" (Ellis & Bochner 2000: 740).

The analysis in this research involved interpretation of the data. Some might argue that this makes qualitative research a futile exercise. However, meaning does not exist independent of text *and* reading, "[m]eaning, interpretation, and representation are deeply intertwined in one another" (Denzin 1998: 332). The researcher is a co-creator or negotiator of knowledge (Corbin & Strauss 2008: 49). It is therefore imperative that researchers account for their presence in the research process and interpretation of the data.

Reflexivity infuses a sense of objectivity in social science research, where the cultural fabrics of the research participants can impact upon data.

Some guiding principles in directing research towards reflexivity are that researchers should:

- foreground the respondents' lives,
- clarify the reasons for the study and the methodological procedures,
- explore how the researchers' own lives impact upon data, and
- account for the researchers' and subjects' emotions (Maynard 2004: 139-40).

These points were worked into the research to varying degrees through writing about context, my expectations, detailing the research encounter etc. However, full reflexivity can only be aimed at and not fully attained (Maynard 2004: 140).

“Ons tol met hulle”: “We are taking advantage of our fans’ – this is what they mean”

The quote above was taken from a conversation between Betta Steyn and David Robbins about how the Bushmen have learned the romantic myth of the Bushmen (see discussion by Clelland-Stokes in Chapter 3), and take advantage of its economic spin (Robbins 2004: 96). It became apparent, after having completed a certain number of interviews, that the research participants' answers were fairly similar, and it seemed that they were drawing on stock responses (see “anthro-speak” Tomaselli et al. 2008: 349-50). At times, it seemed as if the research participants were not being entirely honest. I initially paid my informants/translators and the research participants. However, it became apparent that the issue of money needed dealing with as I was running out of funds and I felt that money was resulting in questionable responses. When the research participants were told in later interviews that they would no longer be paid (they were offered the chance to opt out), the effects were instant. Some research participants withdrew from the interviews to the point of becoming obstinate and difficult. Those who decided to carry on taking part expressed a subtle change in tone in certain areas.

The research participants had vehemently opposed the *Gods* films up until that point. However, after money had been taken out of the proceedings, some research participants said that they actually found *Gods* to be quite funny. They knew it was not real and they certainly did not appreciate the more insidious effects of the films, however, they appreciated the comic relief. This is in accordance with other research done on similar topics (see Gao's comments about *Gods* in Tomaselli 2002: 207).

The validity and reliability of the data collected up to this point needed to be reconsidered. The general tone and range of comments had not changed much in comparison to previous interviews. Andre, the third and final translator, was asked to interview people on his own who had not yet been interviewed. He asked general questions about the film, which were not going to be used as data. It eventually became clear that the

range of comments were similar to those that had been recorded during the official interviews. I had to trust that Andre was telling the truth as they were conducted in and translated from Khwedam, which I cannot speak.

Conclusion

This chapter is an attempt at tailoring textbook applications of research methodology and methods to particular material circumstances. Specific approaches to research methods had to be developed in many instances. The research design needed to be appropriate, rigorous, reliable and valid in addition to adapting methodology to the real world.

The methods were developed in response to the theoretical framework, and the research questions and objectives. Essentially then, the approach needed to capture audience responses to *VOOF* (2008), and provide an effective tool for teasing open and examining the responses. This was done within a social constructionist framework. The methodology therefore drew on a range of strategies for examining the semantic content of the interviews. What follows, in the next chapter, is a discussion of the analysis, whereby the literature, theory and methodology engage the data.

Chapter 6: Analysis Chapter: Threading the Conversations

Introduction

This chapter presents the codes (participation, representation, language, trust, ownership, lessons, favourite character and favourite scene) and themes that are examined in the interviews. The thematic analysis lists and explains the relevant themes under the relevant code heading. The most relevant and important themes are included. This is not to say that the other themes are unimportant or irrelevant; rather, that the listed themes were considered most pertinent to answering the research question. The listed themes were largely representative of the broader data set. Research participants' sense of empowerment is discussed with reference to power and pleasure by contextualising their responses with respect to the larger frameworks within which they live.

What is important to bear in mind is that each theme is linked to many other themes. For that reason, it may seem that there is repetition. However, each repetition reveals greater nuance in relation to that specific theme, and in doing so, contributes to the whole matrix of codes and themes that the data constructed.

Code: Participation

The code 'participation' is important as, in many instances, it unlocked/enabled the expression of various other codes and themes.

Participation and ownership

The community's participation in *VOOF* (2008) was seen as an indication of ownership for some of the research participants. Kasivi, for example, expressed that because the community participated in the production process, *VOOF* (2008) therefore belonged to them (Interview 22/02/2010).

Participation was also indirectly linked to a sense of ownership amongst the audience towards the film through its references to their culture. Representation of the community's culture was possible owing to the participation of members of the community in *VOOF* (2008). Cultural representation was therefore indexical of ownership for some of the research participants. Emma felt that *VOOF* (2008) belonged to the community because of the cultural realism that it adopted (Interview 12/08/2009). For Emma, *VOOF* (2008) was representative of their lives. This allowed the community to identify with the representations, and in so doing, claim ownership of the representations, and by extension, *VOOF* (2008).

However, an analysis with a more diverse range of research participants might have resulted in differing senses of ownership. Members of the community who might not identify with their representation in *VOOF* (2008) might express a different, if any, sense of ownership.

Bottom-up stories and codes

The research participants appreciated their involvement in and the sensitivity taken towards representing their culture despite that *VOOF* (2008) employed what seems, romantic representative strategies:

we are being well represented. We don't feel anything from the film that is making us to feel guilty. And the other thing is acceptance and upliftment. If *VOOF* (2008) could not be there, then how could our truth be exposed? (Moshe interview 24/09/2009).

The fact that the community was involved in the production of *VOOF* (2008) immediately established positive links with the research participants, “[I] liked the fact that the outsider did not come in and do his own thing ... that he had discussions with the community and had agreements about it” (Noria interview 12/08/2010). The community’s take on their own lives is represented. The system of seeking the community’s agreement and approval meant that the story emanated from the community, “[s]omething from the community was represented” (Noria interview 12/08/2010).

The symbolism in *VOOF* (2008) was therefore routed through the community’s symbolic framework. The codes that were used in *VOOF* (2008) were located within the community. In the discussion of *Grievance* (1985), it was argued that codes that are derived from the subjects’ worlds are more likely to win audience approval. The data from the interviews builds on this by showing that subject participation results in codes that are in tune with the cultural and symbolic worlds of the participants. As a result, the symbolism attached to the representations in *VOOF* (2008) is activated from a perspective that did not alienate the research participants. The representations in *VOOF* (2008) are therefore iconic of their everyday lives, indexical of everyday life processes, and they are imbued with a similar symbolic set as would exist in the research participants’ lives. As a result, the audience is able to better relate to the on-screen representations.

This is important for development communication as it allowed the research participants to confront their magnified on-screen sense of self rather than the Other’s interpretation/representation of them. The participant-generated representations draw on a contextualised and (perceived to be) better past, whilst the Other’s representations of the Bushmen (*Gods* for example) draw on a de-contextualised and degrading representative strategy. The research participants were able to confront and engage the myths about the Bushmen, and in so doing, they were able to re-negotiate their sense of history and identity. PV can therefore help people to overcome the disempowering and disaggregating effects of Othering (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 49). Therefore, the comparative associations between the research participants’ sense of self and their on-screen magnified selves are more than likely positive and empowering.

There is no doubt that this was appreciated by the research participants, and it certainly made them feel powerful. However, one would need to examine this from a perspective that considers whether this sense of power provides them with survival strategies. Another issue that stands out is that of representation. *VOOF* (2008) cannot claim to represent the community in all its entirety. The chances are that *VOOF* (2008) might represent a select group's perception of themselves. One would therefore need to consider how meaning works in the service of power – who do these representations benefit, and who do they marginalise? This is discussed throughout the analysis.

Control and resistance

Moshe's comments about participation are particularly insightful. He raises numerous points, in which contestation and resistance are critical. The Bushmen are some of the most exploited people in the world with regards to their representation (see Bester & Buntman 1999: 53). However, the participants were able to (re)claim control of their representation in *VOOF* (2008) through Thomas Hart being told how to represent them, "Tom was told ... [o]ut of what he heard from the community he made the movie" (Noria interview 12/08/2010). PV establishes a system of checks and balances through soliciting the community's approval of their representation. It enables a counter "televisual public" sphere (Crocker 2003: 123) where communities can empower themselves through resistive and corrective representative strategies. Moshe's sardonic remarks about "[the] lies out there" (Interview 24/09/2009) with regards to representing the Bushmen set up an antagonistic relationship between externally (non-community) and internally (community) mediated representations.

This antagonistic relationship was exemplified in the *Miscast* (1996) exhibit. It became representative of the Bushmen's struggle for control of their representation. The museum in *Miscast* (1996) became a site for resistance. However, Skotnes' non-participatory representative strategies alienated her audience and left them with few strategies for resistance, unlike *VOOF*'s (2008) more participatory strategies. *VOOF* (2008) thus represented a strategy that enabled the Bushmen a degree of control of their representation and opened a space where multiple voices are brought to the fore.

Thus, *VOOF* (2008) presented an alternative to externally mediated representations of the Bushmen. However, their ability to reclaim control was really only possible in this instance, and it is questionable as to what extent they might be able to exert control of their representation outside of this context. *VOOF* (2008) no doubt represents a stage in a process of reclaiming one's representation, but talk of reclaiming control needs to be critically examined. As a result, one would also need to consider to what extent this instance of reclaiming control actually allows the community to challenge exploitation in general.

Moshe argued that the “community’s truth is exposed” (Interview 24/09/2009). PV allows people to reveal the hidden and complex aspects of their lives (Dudley 2003: 146). This was brought up in earlier discussions (the Bushman talking to the Baboon, see Tomaselli 2006: 177) of how the Bushmen’s engagement with their representation often re-positions the logic behind the representative strategy. Thus, a Bushman talking to a baboon in *Gods* is explained within its broader contexts rather than positioned as nonsensical and silly. The community’s experience of life thus critically engages lifeless and voiceless externally mediated representations. However, it needs to be noted that the research participants’ and community’s experience of life is probably not uniform, despite that this is what the interviews may have suggested, even on further questioning. Therefore, it is probably only representative of a select group within the community.

Anthropometry and essentialism have set up abusive power relations that milk outsider notions of the idyllic Bushman hunter-gatherer. The community uses *VOOF* (2008) to re-vision, re-position and re-present itself on the mediated world stage, “[*VOOF*] (2008) told everyone that this is who we are” (Hendrik interview 12/08/2009). The system of seeking community involvement and approval meant that *VOOF* (2008) became an exercise in bottom-up representation, which resulted in some research participants articulating feelings of empowerment.

Participation and new lessons

Participation also meant that the participants learned new skills. This enabled them to achieve a level of self-sufficiency. Empowerment, as far as Moshe was concerned means that “you are bringing something into the community ... we now know how to collect ideas and how to make it into a film” (Interview 24/09/2009). Piorro, one of the community producers, said that “[he] liked being involved in the film and learning new skills. It also gave us skills about setting up a business plan and how to request funding to run the project” (Interview 05/2009).

Participation and gaining knowledge may have empowered the community participants to an extent. However, one would obviously need to consider other issues that allow those skills to bear fruit. A lack of access to infrastructure, equipment, resources and funding constitute the environment in which the participants operate. Without these resources, their skills are of little value. *VOOF* (2008) certainly furnished the community participants with a skills set, which was empowering. However, a lack of access to valuable and vital resources means that the research participants’ comments about feeling empowered need to be qualified. This is not to say that gaining skills is not empowering, but that skills only form one part of the broader picture – there are other resources that are also needed. In addition to this, one would also need to consider the quality of their educational experiences whilst working on *VOOF* (2008). Questions need to be asked that concern what they learned on set and what was the extent of their training? These questions have

ramifications for whether or not the participants are able to represent themselves in the world, on their own. Therefore, it is important to remember that *VOOF* (2008) only really provided the community participants with one of many sets of necessary resources: skills. *VOOF* (2008) was therefore perceived as empowering because it taught the community participants skills, which will no doubt help to kickstart the process. However, it did not empower them through access to other resources.

Code: Representation

Themes:

Battling the Forefathers and the Gods

Responses about representation weighed externally mediated representations of the Bushmen against the internally mediated representations in *VOOF* (2008). Andre commented that representations of the Bushmen such as those in the *Gods* films “make me feel so bad ... they are doing just like the Bushmen don’t know something” (Interview 22/02/2010). Kasivi hinted at a sense of cultural alienation when she watched the *Gods* films because “they didn’t act all the cultural things” (Kasivi interview 22/02/2010). Some of the Bushmen who attended the *Miscast* (1996) exhibit considered it a continuation with past representative regimes that elicited a sense of shame amongst them (see Jackson & Robins 1999: 83). *Gods* was thus a continuation with the representations of the Bushmen of that time, and in many ways it has become iconic in popular Bushman representation in the modern world.

According to Tomaselli, the difficulty of Westerners in understanding Bushmen culture is transferred onto the Bushmen in *Gods*. The Bushmen are depicted in *Gods*, as a result, as unable to relate to or understand Western culture (Tomaselli 2006: 180). The metaphorical tropes used by Jamie Uys in *Gods* therefore bore no relation to their lived realities. They spoke more of the director as “allegories of cultural engagement” (Blythe 1994: 10) (see Chapter 3) than the Bushmen. The result was that the Bushman audience dissociated themselves from the representations, which increased a sense of alienation between the Bushman audience and their representation.

Gods “framed an apartheid mythology” that perpetuated debilitating myths about the Bushmen (Tomaselli 2006: 174). Moshe related a story of when he met two German tourists when he was a boy living in Namibia. The tourists wanted to see Bushmen who were “short ... stupid [and] ... who live in ... huts ... ” (Interview 24/09/2009). They did not believe Moshe when he told them that he is a Bushman. These representations can mislead outsiders according to Rena (Interview 22/02/2010). The result is a historically stunted communicative effect that denies the Bushmen’s historical and material conditions.

However, responses towards films like *Gods* were a little more complex than either like or dislike. On the whole, research participants felt that *Gods* dealt the community an injustice. The research participants were expected to react negatively towards *Gods*. However, after I stopped paying the research participants, some of them said that they felt that *Gods* was funny and entertaining. They were able to distance themselves from the romanticism and see the film for its humour. In addition to this, research participants, like Nunke, felt that “it is how my community started. So I will not complain” (Interview 22/02/2010). Research participants in other studies also aberrantly (subvert) re-read *Gods*. They felt that *Gods* actually showed the Bushmen as wise and savvy, as the films actually showed the wisdom of the Bushmen (Tomaselli 2006: 181). Even in *VOOF* (2008), what would seem as degrading romanticised representations, were instead read in positive ways by the research participants (this will be further theorised below).

However, *VOOF* (2008) worked in contrast to the *Gods* mode of representation. Moshe described how *VOOF*’s (2008) representations do not elicit any feelings of guilt amongst the Bushmen (Interview 24/09/2009). He linked this to the idea that *VOOF* (2008) exposes the “community’s truth” because of the system of seeking its approval and agreement before signing off on each step in the production process (Interview 24/09/2009). This generated a sense of empowerment amongst some of the research participants. Andre and Rena said that *VOOF* (2008) respects the Bushmen, and that the means by which *VOOF* (2008) arrived at such representations were through engaging the community (unlike *Gods*), “Tom has talked to [the Bushmen] ... then he has some information from the Bushmen and then he make” (Andre interview 22/02/2010).

Cultural representation in VOOF (2008)

The cultural items represented in *VOOF* (2008) were in sync and appropriate to the community’s cultural practices, “die vuur en die pyl en boog en daai goedes gaan saam met ons kulteer so dit het baie gepas (*the fire and the bow and arrow and those things go together with our culture so it’s very appropriate*)” (Rena interview 22/02/2010) (see section on representation and hunting for further elucidation). The result was a positive chain of semiotic associations. Piorro picked up on the positive spin offs from *VOOF*’s (2008) representative strategy. He said that representations like those from *VOOF* (2008) helped to foster a communal spirit amongst the community members and to bring about constructive dialogue, “[w]hen the Bushmen are shown that way it makes people proud and come together and talk about problems” (Interview 05/2009). Representations such as these draw on the similarities of the different Bushmen groups and on the symbolism of a supposedly better past. The research participants felt that this was empowering.

The idea of a communal spirit is captured by Crocker (see Chapter 4) with the concept of a virtual community (2003: 132). However, Crocker applies this second aspect of his theory of empowerment through

representation to communities that have had little interaction with mass media. The Platfontein community is not isolated from mass media. Cellphones, radios and television sets are widespread throughout the community.

Therefore, the empowering effects of the 'imagined community' probably do not function to alleviate geographical isolation through media as much as it does psychological and cultural fragmentation. The Platfontein community comprises about 6000 people in an area of about 5km² about 5km outside of Kimberley (Northern Cape, South Africa). The community comprises two ethnic groups at loggerheads over past disputes, in a world that is rapidly globalising and possibly threatening their sense of local culture, where Bushmen are exploited. The 'imagined community' effect in *VOOF* (2008) possibly alleviates tension amongst the Khwe and the !Xun through drawing on their sense of a better past, which imbues the community with pride and strength. The idyllic images of a past life provide an on-screen better self.

VOOF (2008) illustrated the cultural particularity of the Platfontein community to the rest of the world (in the research participants' opinions). Hendrik felt that it was important for outsiders to "know how we lived in this time" (Interview 12/08/2009). Moshe explained his comment about *VOOF* (2008) "exposing the community's truth". He felt that in the face of misrepresentation and lies, *VOOF* (2008) allowed the community a chance to claim their cultural identity in the world. It made their experience of their lives available to the outside world. However, it is questionable as to whether *VOOF* (2008) holistically represents the community. Identity is not uniform but rather fragmented, diverse and fluid. It is therefore important to consider whose identity may be marginalised in this process. Nonetheless, this was perceived by some research participants as empowering:

[s]omehow we are living in this world, if I can use the example of the old man and the boy's character, that interaction, people would not have seen that. And the other thing is the way we do our storytellings and stuff around the fire, not everybody knows about these things. There are lies out there ... but *VOOF* (2008) has been here, by our approval, and it has been done as we said in our community. So these things were being done correctly, so for me, I would say that *VOOF* (2008) was a good empowerment (Moshe interview 24/09/2009).

Exposing the nuances of the community's life also entails increased visibility and an attendant increased political power. The community is able to reveal issues affecting them with increased access and authority (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 49). Engaging the community's life and their experiences of the world allows for what Tomaselli calls a "coming in to the local, regional and global worlds" (2002: 214), as happened in *In God's Places* (1997). This empowered the research participants owing to a level of increased political

power. However, it is not clear to what extent they may exercise this new political power as a result of *VOOF* (2008). It may very well be a stage in a process of empowerment, however, taken as a single event, one cannot label the experiences thereof as empowering in the full sense of the word. It would obviously need to be considered within the broader, and sometimes exploitative, structures of the world.

Historically sensitive representations

Some of the research participants picked up on the theme of historically sensitive representations of the Bushmen. *VOOF* (2008) represented the Bushmen from a perspective that is sensitive to their past and present. Modern and historical representations held particular meanings for the research participants. Sonia felt that *VOOF* (2008) functioned as a tool for better understanding her identity. Historical representations made her “feel as a San” (Interview 22/02/2010) and evoked feelings of pride in her. She often related talk about the Bushmen’s culture and history to a familial experience. Sonia spoke of historical representations as showing how “her people or [great] grand father” lived (Interview 22/02/2010). *VOOF* (2008), it was suggested, provided a means for connecting the research participants to their history where, in a globalising world, local and marginalised identities may be threatened by a potentially erosive globalised culture. Nasako said that she “saw both lives represented” and that this is good for her, as it functions as social commentary about their present lives, “[j]ust because we live in modern times doesn’t mean that we have to forget about old times” (Interview 12/08/2009). Historically sensitive representations therefore functioned as reminders and connections to their past and present for many research participants.

In a similar vein, *VOOF* (2008) also allowed the youth members of the audience ‘access’ to their past. For example, a common response was “I was not born in that time, but this movie remind me” (Kasivi interview 22/02/2010) (all the research participants were youths for this case study). One can therefore only presume that *VOOF* (2008) functioned in the same way as elders’ stories – as vicarious connectors to their cultural past.

This temporally sensitive filmic strategy allows the research participants to maintain a sense of their cultural-historical identity that, as will be seen, is extremely important for them. In addition to this, the research participants articulated a sense of empowerment as a result of the film showing them as “people like other people” (Tsamkxao =Oma quoted in Clelland-Stokes 2007: 43). In other words, *VOOF* (2008) did not trap the Bushmen by portraying them as living in a ‘plastic stone age’, but rather as modern people with a particular history.

Historically sensitive representations thus ensured that their magnified on-screen sense of Self was not alien to them. They were able to recognise themselves (both past and present) and make connections through

relating to the representations. Thus, placement of their modern selves alongside their past selves, through representation in *VOOF* (2008), almost functioned as a bridging device. The placement brought the two sides of their identity in harmony with one another, and functioned to contextualise, and thus make their present and past recognisable in the face of representative exploitation. In the face of misrepresentation and exploitation, it could be argued that the research participants' comments about feeling empowered as a result of historically sensitive representations were understandable. The representations affirmed their past identity whilst not locking them in their histories, as do many other representations of them. This, according to Moshe, provided the community with a survival strategy in the 21st century (Interview 24/09/2009).

One of the distinctions between *Gods* and *VOOF* (2008) is that the research participants are not alienated from the representation of their past and present identities. Robert made positive associations with the modern representations by highlighting the benefits of modern medicine for the community, “daar was ‘n dokter ... daarso om die kind te help” (*there was a doctor there to help the child*) (Interview 12/08/2009). Their modernity was celebrated as much as their past, and they were brought in tune with their past and present.

VOOF (2008) locates their history and present life (their sense of identity) in a globalising world through establishing a corrective cultural-historical platform, “it shows our culture in the ... world ... it shows traditional things in the modern world” (Piorro interview 05/2009). Marginalised communities are able to examine their role and identity in the world as a result of participatory representation (see Dudley 2003). The presentation of both modern and historical representations of the Bushmen provided a space where anxieties brought about by the tension between modernity and tradition could be resolved.

Historically sensitive representations also unpicked stunted romanticism. ‘We have changed’ was a common remark by research participants as to why they preferred *VOOF* (2008) representations over others. The idea of “communities frozen in time” was contested and negated with this refrain of change (see Tomaselli 2002: 204). Gao (in an interview with Tomaselli), also contested this idea of ‘frozen communities’; that the notions of the Bushmen in *Gods* do not account for “how people are really living” (Gao quoted in Tomaselli 2006: 184). In addition to this, *Gods* denied the fluidity of identity in general through drawing on stereotypes. Their semiotic encounter with themselves in *VOOF* (2008) contested the stunting representative codes of *Gods*.

Piet linked the theme of change to the act of recognition. He felt that misrecognition or a lack of recognition of the Bushmen's modern cultural identities resulted in him feeling ashamed (Interview 12/08/2009). Romanticism would therefore seem to deny outsiders' recognition and affirmation of the Bushmen's *modern*

cultural identity, where it denies a sense of change at the level of representation, and thus also real life. *Gods* denied the historical cultural complexity of the Bushman subjects. The Other's interpretations of the representations were denied context. Romanticism stunts the progression and development of the subjects' sense of identity as recognised in the face of the Other. Eurocentricism disregards African identities as was evidenced in Tomaselli (2006) (see Jackson & Robins 1999: 89). Hendrik said that he would feel embarrassed if a tourist, for example, said that he is not a Bushman because he does not fit preconceived idyllic notions (Interview 12/08/2009).

Historically sensitive representations were articulated as empowering because they celebrated the research participants' sense of cultural identity, harmonised their past and present identities and challenged romanticism. However, changing the Bushmen's perceptions of themselves is only one aspect of many in empowerment – outsiders' perceptions of the Bushmen need to be challenged as well; otherwise the research participants' sense of empowerment might only be exercised in a vacuum, without the research participants being fully cognisant of larger oppressive structures. *VOOF* (2008), for example, needs greater distribution and increased exhibition, and more films about the community need to be produced by the community.

Romanticism and empowerment

The traditional images of the Bushmen in *VOOF* (2008) are similar to the romanticised images in *Gods* on first appearances. This then begs the question of where the difference lies in romantic non-participatory representations and participatory representations.

It has been established in chapter three that films like *Dance* (2000) reconstruct a “glorious past by re-enacting the extraordinary” (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 53). *Dance* (2000) also drew on the romantic metaphor, and with the approval and participation of the Bushmen subjects. However, *VOOF* (2008) actively cuts its own path through historically sensitive representations, unlike *Dance* (2000), which drew on a discourse of a dying culture and the Bushmen as victims of modernity. *VOOF* (2008) draws on their “glorious past” but did not entrap the research participants in essentialist speak – *VOOF* (2008) negotiated the research participants' historical contexts and showed them as modern people and not as people trapped in a lost time. Strategies such as these can challenge stereotypes (the results of which are seen on many tourist brochures for example) and the denigrating effects thereof.

Reclamation of their heritage as in *VOOF* (2008) and *Dance* (2000) elicits a sense of pride. In *VOOF* (2008) however, the approach is integrationist rather than isolationist. *VOOF* (2008) navigates a proactive and politically progressive representation of the Bushmen. The emotive gap established between *VOOF*'s (2008) magnified on-screen selves and the research participants, uses the Bushmen's ‘glorious past’ within the

context of their survival in modernity. They are not trying to remain in a frozen time period. In other words, the positive associations attached to their 'glorious past' help to close the emotive disharmony in a constructive manner, and also represent a means for them to survive the 21st century. This strategy seemed to better aid renegotiation of their identities in the modern world.

The research participants accepted that they have changed and did not aspire to preserve their heritage at the expense of their survival. They felt that adapting their culture to modernity would be more effective for survival and development (and perhaps empowering) than preserving their culture for "museums, films and cultural tourism villages" (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 58). Moshe said "I can take this thing from the modern world and another thing from the past. And then you mix it and hold onto it ... never throw one thing away ... and then hold onto the other. I have to learn to take the old and the new things" (Interview 24/09/2009).

However, not all the research participants identified with the romantic images of the Bushmen in *VOOF* (2008). Their mentioning of 'ons het verander' (*we have changed*) was also indicative of either partial or complete non-identification with the romantic representations. According to Clelland-Stokes (2007: 60), drawing on romanticism and authenticity might not prove effective for everyone in negotiating their survival and advancement in the 21st century. It is important here to remember that she was discussing this in relation to *Dance* (2000), which did not provide a contextualising mechanism for the audience. Unlike *VOOF* (2008), *Dance* (2000) drew heavily on a 'victims of modernity' discourse with no immediate recourse for the Bushmen audience. In addition to this, the research participants' remarks about 'we have changed' represent a moment of critical differentiation. They established a critical distance between how others perceive them and how they perceive themselves. This shows that they are not swallowed up in representations about themselves (Crocker 2003: 131).

As a final point, it is important to note that we cannot reject peoples' sense of empowerment when they reclaim their heritage. Reclamation can be, in itself, empowering. It also situates the Bushmen as authorities of their own heritage. The cultural symbolism behind spectacularisation and "cinematic restorations" (Tomaselli 2002: 208) might hold significant importance for the Bushmen. Identity politics takes on its own expressive life that needs to be accounted for within context and from the subjects' perspectives, as was seen in the discussion on *Miscast* (1996). However, on the other hand, it is important to remember the exploitative system in which people live. One must be careful not to lapse into cultural populism when discussing the research participants' articulations of empowerment. That sense of power that *VOOF* (2008) generated amongst the research participants needs to be qualified with respect to the larger exploitative structures and systems.

Representation of Hunting

The frequent talk about hunting requires a brief aside into the symbolism behind the practice. The meanings behind hunting for the research participants were not enquired about in depth. There are four areas to consider here: bonding, ownership, mobility and recalling feelings (Tomaselli 2002: 209-210). Hunting not only provided the Bushmen with food, but also strengthened platonic bonds between the male hunters (Tomaselli 2002: 209-210). Their survival during a hunt depended on close knit relationships. Hunting also represents an act of defiance in the face of hunting laws, restrictions and land rights. This indirectly represents a sense of ownership “as this mode of production predates white, black and state land titles to areas on which the San once roamed” (Tomaselli 2002: 209). The Bushmen communities of the 21st century are not nearly as mobile as previous communities were. *VOOF* (2008) may recover this sense of mobility for dislocated communities (Tomaselli 2002: 208) through recalling their past and their nomadic lifestyles. This recovery of their past was expressed as empowering for the research participants, as it rekindles positive feelings. Their preoccupation with the past is perhaps a desire to re-ignite subject-object dialectical relations in the pursuit of a more whole sense of self (see Freire 1996: 30).

Code: Language

Themes:

VOOF (2008) was shot in one of the local languages, Khwedam (the other language spoken in the Platfontein community is !Xun⁴³). Language was coded relatively infrequently compared to other codes. However, the symbolic status it held for the research participants makes it nonetheless powerful. In many instances it unlocked various responses such as trust in *VOOF* (2008), as will be seen.

All the research participants who raised the language issue expressed positive feelings towards *VOOF* (2008), as it was in Khwedam. The use of Khwedam provided Hendrik with a source of inspiration (Interview 12/08/2009). Emma critically located *VOOF*'s (2008) use of Khwedam in relation to other films, “dit gebeur nie elke dag by ons nie in onse lewe nie” (*it does not happen everyday in our lives*) (Interview 12/08/2009). Non-mother tongue language use also further alienated audiences from *Gods*. Piet spoke of how he understood *VOOF* (2008) better than *Gods* as a result of mother-tongue language use (Interview 12/08/2009). The use of Khwedam also strengthened cultural-historical connections (Pieter interview 22/02/2010).

⁴³ During the first community screening, I was told that the !Xun could understand *VOOF* (2008) through the English subtitles, or through watching the images.

Trust

The use of Khwedam crucially enabled a deeper sense of trust in *VOOF* (2008). *VOOF* (2008) did not conform completely to PV production practice, as various compromises had to be reached owing to constraints. Many people knew that Hart – a Caucasian male – was directing *VOOF* (2008). Therefore, the question is, what devices did *VOOF* (2008) employ that allowed it an element of believability and connectedness that films such as *Gods* lacked? The use of Khwedam was one of those key elements that achieved this. Nunke and Piet both said that they believed and trusted *VOOF* (2008) as it is in their own language (Nunke interview 22/02/2010, Piet interview 12/08/2009).

Nunke also said that the use of Khwedam made her think about her identity in the various cultural webs that cross her life (Interview 22/02/2010). *VOOF* (2008) was located in the community's webs of meaning, as the film drew on various recognisable social, cultural, historical and psychological factors of the community's life. This, as a result, provided a device that drew the audience into a self-critical relationship through drawing on aspects of their lives. This may have aided in shifting them from an oppressed consciousness to a sense of empowerment.

Code: Trust

Themes:

Another theme that was infrequently referenced, but extremely important, is trust. Achieving a level of trust amongst the audience towards the film was reliant on the existence/appearance of a number of story elements. Sonia listed participation as a factor that allowed her to trust *VOOF* (2008), “[b]ecause [the director] didn’t do his own ... I trust it because he [Hart] worked with the community” (Interview 22/02/2010). Participation located *VOOF* (2008) within the community's symbolic structures of meaning. Andre said that Hart engaged in productive dialogue about their representation in *VOOF* (2008), “because he was asking the community and the community was telling him it is like that” (Interview 22/02/2010).

Trust gave *VOOF* (2008) its pedagogical standing. The research participants trusted the film and saw it as bearing an educational message. As a result, the research participants were willing to engage the educational messages in a constructive and positive manner.

Andre also listed cultural representation as a factor that elicited a sense of trust in *VOOF* (2008), “[w]hy the people are trusting the film is ... the film is showing them the forefathers” (Interview 22/02/2010). The mechanism behind this seems to counter the cultural alienation so often obtained in externally mediated representations of the Bushmen. Hart also drew on the symbolism of the community's forefathers (there was a preoccupation in the interviews with their forefathers) and other cultural elements. The result was that Hart

activated the community's symbolism at the levels of Secondness and Thirdness rather than activating alienation. The levels of Secondness and Thirdness concern meaning making at deep levels. Hart's incorporation of the participants' symbolism, which delved deeply into their cultural worlds, meant that the research participants were better able to identify with their representation in *VOOF* (2008). This would have enabled a greater sense of trust in *VOOF* (2008).

Along with this, participation meant that the research participants recognised their community in the film, "I trust it because ... I recognise the people" (Pieter interview 22/02/2010). A self-self relationship was established between the research participants and the film, rather than as in non-participatory (Other-Self) practices. Their magnified on-screen selves were therefore recognised. Activating the symbolism and Second and Third levels of meaning, according to the Phaneroscopic Table, means that the film operates at the levels of experience and myth. This holds tremendous import for programmes seeking social change. *VOOF* (2008) integrates with the experiential and mythic levels rather than deflating the community's experiences and symbols. It achieves a sense of authenticity and genuineness that better affects social change. The emotive gap between the *me* (audience) and the *I* (representation) (see Figure 4) is undergirded by trust.

However, it is important to consider that the representations of the community in this film cannot be seen as entirely representative of the community. Firstly, the !Xun need to be considered. *VOOF* (2008) draws on the similarities of the two ethnic groups, but some might argue that it is largely a Khwe production in Khwedam. This could potentially restrict any sense of empowerment amongst other members of the Platfontein community. Secondly, what complexity and cultural nuance that exists within the community cannot be portrayed in its entirety in *VOOF* (2008), a short film. It is vital that articulations of empowerment are qualified in relation to who and what is marginalised in *VOOF*'s (2008) representative strategy.

Code: Ownership

Themes:

A sense of ownership is important in participatory development programmes, as it contributes to locating the programme within the community. Most of the research participants felt that *VOOF* (2008) belonged to the community for various reasons. Their responses do not conform to capitalist and Western notions of ownership and copyright. It could be construed, in some instances, that they have a simple understanding of ownership. The use of 'simple' here does not imply that any one understanding is better than the other; rather that the research-participants' understanding of ownership did not take in to account other factors that can be used to claim ownership, such as financing and copyright. However, what was central to the research

question was their *sense* of ownership. It is important to bear in mind that ownership of *VOOF* (2008), in terms of South African law, lies with M-Net, and not the community.

Participation in *VOOF* (2008) was linked by some of the research participants as being indicative of ownership. Makuanda, Nunke and Pieter felt that because the community took part in *VOOF* (2008), it therefore belonged to the community.

Some research participants linked their cultural representation in *VOOF* (2008) to a sense of ownership. Kasivi and Sonia felt that the presence of their culture in *VOOF* (2008) meant that it belonged to the community. Emma drew attention to the representation of the community's daily cultural and social practices, "[*VOOF*] (2008) is part of the community because when she saw the way that the young boy was acting towards the old man ... those are things that are usual here" (Interview 12/08/2009). The presence of their cultural history was also linked to a sense of ownership by Piet (Interview 12/08/2009).

Kasivi and Sonia, however, felt that the issue of ownership was a little more complex than this. They saw *VOOF* (2008) as a means of cultural expression and performance for outsiders:

[t]he movie belongs to us, but other parts of the movie belong to others who don't know about our culture. So it's very important for people from outside to see how the Bushmen used to live and the present (Kasivi interview 22/02/2010).

The link is not clear. However, it would seem that the act of performance of their culture indicates, and perhaps magnifies, their sense of ownership. It would be difficult, for someone from a different cultural background, to identify and (effectively) perform another person's culture. This is not to imply that this cannot occur, but rather that the nuances of the cultural experience would take time to identify with. Therefore, perhaps the act of performance acknowledges that this is their culture and thus reasserts, and perhaps strengthens, links to it. Sonia in particular saw *VOOF* (2008) as a means for cultural exchange⁴⁴ and for teaching people about their traditions, "you have to show your culture and tradition to other people and the other people have also to show you what have they" (Interview 22/02/2010).

Research participants, such as Rena however, brought in a Western concept of ownership and copyright. She works for the South African Broadcasting Corporation (SABC), and this may explain her position on 'ownership'. She included the law and financing in her discussion about ownership. According to Rena,

⁴⁴ Pedris Motshabisi (in Tomaselli 2006: 185) also picked up on the theme of cultural engagement. He felt that showing the Bushmen in the *Gods* films would enable the Bushmen and Westerners to share information.

VOOF (2008) did not belong to the community because it did not provide the financing for *VOOF* (2008) (Interview 22/02/2010).

Moshe provided some insight into the importance of ownership for the community. In pre-production discussions, Moshe said that it was important for the community to not only receive financial compensation for *VOOF* (2008), but also that they receive ownership and a means for recognising their ownership (Interview 22/06/09). This, he felt, was important as it would build the community. However, the community did not receive any compensation for their efforts, and they have no legal ownership of the film.

Ownership from Moshe's perspective can be considered within a context of exploitation. The signifier 'Bushman', in all its guises and forms, has been exploited for various ends. Therefore, a sense of ownership might provide a means of resistance for the community, which led to their sense of empowerment. The research participants are able to assert that this expression of an idea of themselves through *VOOF* (2008) is theirs in the face of exploitation. This also therefore locates control, authority and power amongst the participants and community audience.

However, this needs to be tempered with the fact that, as already mentioned, the community do not legally own *VOOF* (2008). This was problematic for some research participants, as they wanted the film to be distributed throughout the community, but the copyright to do so is not theirs. The community may express some sense of ownership towards *VOOF* (2008) and a sense of empowerment as a result; however, this sense of ownership is not recognised outside of the community. The community is therefore not free to build on the film through exhibition and distribution, and they cannot economically profit from the film. Thus, their sense of ownership is not recognised and supported by South African law. Nonetheless, the community's sense of ownership did give them some sense of power. However, this pleasure and resultant power need to be qualified within the real world – there is not much that the community can legally argue as theirs, M-Net holds copyright and ownership.

Code: Lessons

Themes:

VOOF (2008) imparted various lessons for the research participants. The structure of this section is organised according to: what the participants felt that *VOOF* (2008) taught them, how *VOOF* (2008) functioned as a tool for passing on cultural and historical knowledge, and how it contributed to helping the community.

What respondents felt VOOF (2008) taught them

New Skills

Piorro, Moshe and Rena felt that *VOOF* (2008) imparted new skills to them. They were all involved in the production process. Piorro learned how to develop business plans and request funding (Interview 05/2010). Moshe's comments tie up the inferences in Piorro's remarks: that the crew were furnished with a degree of self-sufficiency that led to a sense of empowerment, "[w]e feel empowered somehow because with the knowledge that we had from the whole process, I can be able to do something by myself" (Interview 24/09/2009).

Learning new skills and gaining technological and productive self-sufficiency locates representative authority within the community nucleus (Dudley 2003: 153). As already discussed in Chapter 4, the participants are able to "re-articulate the locus of power" (Bery 2003: 103) through producers gaining new skills. This can overcome destructive Self-Other relations through incorporating participant-generated representations onto the mediascape (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 44-5). The community is now able to surmount their Otherness and embrace their sense of self (Clelland-Stokes 2007: 49), and redefine themselves. Redefinition entails reconceptualisation and thus a change in the audience's experience of themselves and how others perceive them (Secondness and/or Thirdness). According to the Phaneroscopic Table, changes in thinking occur at the levels of Secondness and Thirdness. Having new skills also allows the producers the opportunity to leverage meaningful relationships in the world.

Rena played the part of the doctor in *VOOF* (2008). The impact on Rena was impressive despite her relatively small role. The most significant lesson for Rena included reflection on her emotional presentation in her role. She used the scene where she tells the Old Man that there is nothing that she can do for his grandson (Piorro) as an example of her lack of emotions in her acting. She also cited Nashada's (the Little Girl) acting style as enlightening. Her reflections on her acting indicate that *VOOF* (2008) imparted not just skills but also encouraged reflection at emotional and psychological levels amongst some of the research participants.

Rena's sense of narrative and plot were also enhanced. In the scene mentioned above, there is no clear indication of what has happened to Piorro. Rena picked up on this flaw within the narrative and indicated that she should have rather spent more time on this scene, ensuring that it was clear without it seeming contrived (Interview 22/02/2010). Lessons such as these are important for any future endeavours that involve narrative development and story telling.

However, being able to locate representative authority within the community, or perhaps within a select few of the community, is dependent on various resources being made available to the producers in order to practise their skills. As discussed earlier, without these resources such as infrastructure, equipment, funding and quality training available for the community's use, then it is important to carefully consider the research participants' statements about feeling empowered. The research participants may have been empowered in one sense of the word, but there are other areas, as discussed, that could deplete their sense of empowerment.

Sympathy, inspiration and respect

VOOF (2008) also imparted psychological and emotional lessons for the audience. Piet and Kasivi both discussed how *VOOF* (2008) exposed the realities of life of a blind person to them. Kasivi further elucidated this point when she said that:

VOOF (2008) teaches me how you must help a blind person and how you must control everything in your house with a blind person. How you must make them comfortable in the house (Interview 22/02/2010).

The presence of community members in *VOOF* (2008) represented sources of inspiration for research participants such as Noria. She felt that the familiar faces stood as "examples that are teaching [me] that [I] can do it also" (Interview 12/08/2010). Andre felt that because someone from the community acted in the film "it told [him] more" (Interview 22/02/2010).

The role of the elder within the community was examined in *VOOF* (2008). For many research participants it offered social commentary on the community's life. 'Respect for elders' was a lesson that was frequently brought up by research participants, "I think there's something like respect, you can respect your elders, they are learning us like that" (Makuanda interview 22/02/2010).

Certain critical audience faculties were thus engaged (Secondness and Thirdness) that may have developed the audience's sense of self and developed their thinking. These lessons are important as they help to establish the necessary self-reflective and critical mindsets that empowerment (at least in Freirean terms) requires.

Reminder of the past

The most frequently listed lesson was *VOOF* (2008) as a reminder of the past. The existence of other themes and codes such as trust and participation was necessary in order for this lesson to be activated effectively.

Moshe discussed the idea of *VOOF* (2008) as sharing past cultural memories amongst the youth, “[b]ecause in those days, things happened and ... everybody wasn’t being told by that. But the memory was there, being silent. It was ... being told in this film” (Interview 24/09/2009). *VOOF* (2008) established cultural and historical bridges into the past for the youth in particular. It reignited an interest in traditional cultural practices such as storytelling, which had significant importance for Moshe, for example. He spoke of how storytelling is a cultural practice that is dying out. *VOOF* (2008) encouraged parents to maintain practices such as these (Moshe interview 24/09/2009). Sonia spoke in a similar vein when she said that *VOOF* (2008) shows audiences traditional rules (Interview 22/02/2010). She acknowledged that the community does not live in a traditional manner anymore, but nonetheless, *VOOF* (2008) kept alive the knowledge of various traditions. In this sense then, *VOOF* (2008) functioned as a tool for navigating their experience of modernity through providing a guide. It also represented a means for the community to garner cultural and historical knowledge about themselves, which impacted on their sense of identity in positively reinforcing ways.

Research participants felt that maintaining links with their past is important because it links to their identity. Sonia said that “it is important [to see representations of their past] because our people lived like that and I belong to my ancestors, the San people and the Bushmen” (Interview 22/02/2010). *VOOF* (2008) was embedded within the research participants’ networks of cultural identity by heralding their past. It also reinvigorated the intensity of meaning/feeling in their cultural practices, “those guys who are being exposed to the idea ... the ancestral spirits where hunting and gathering took place” (Moshe 24/09/2009 interview).

The intensity of meaning is perhaps encapsulated in the spiritual power of *VOOF* (2008). The spiritual power behind the traditions represented in *VOOF* (2008) was captured in Rena’s remarks about her belief system,

Ja, [*VOOF*] het my geleer oor die voorvaders want...toe ek die christe met die geloof gevat het ek worrie nie oor voorvaders en daai goedes nie. Maar [*VOOF*] het vir my gewys hoe belangrik dit is in onse kulteer, dis in jou bloed. Jy kan nie weg hardloop van dit. So daar is ‘n voorvader en jy moet daar respek (*Yes, VOOFF (2008) taught me about the forefathers because...when I became a Christian I didn’t worry about the forefathers and those things. But VOOFF (2008) showed me how important it is in our culture, it’s in your blood. You can’t run away from it. So there are forefathers and you must respect them*) (Interview 22/02/2010).

VOOF (2008) operated within and respected the spiritual symbolism attached to cultural representations. It not only showed youth cultural practices, but also brought them into the non-tangible spiritual world. Robert put it simply, “[*VOOF*] teach us *how* (my emphasis) our culture was happening” (Interview 12/08/2009).

VOOF (2008) functioned as a device that helped them better navigate their sense of identity in the modern world by reminding and teaching the research participants about the past. However, one would need to question whether this truly empowers the research participants, or whether it simply makes them feel pleasure or powerful. Pleasure, in this context, needs to be critiqued. On the one hand, one could argue that *VOOF* (2008) helped the research participants navigate the modern world through their reflection on their identity. However, on the other hand, one would need to consider to what extent this may be beneficial to the research participants (which is not in the scope of this research). It would seem however, that *VOOF* (2008) was part of a broader process of empowering the community.

Teach the children

Research participants felt that it was important to represent their heritage in *VOOF* (2008), as it meant that younger generations, who bore no direct connection to their past, were able to connect with a past life. From a semiotic point, the myths and symbols (Thirdness) associated with the representations were transferred to younger audiences. However, one would need to consider how these myths and symbols are received/interpreted by the youth. *VOOF* (2008) showed the youth the “deep things of our lives” (Nunke interview 22/02/2010). Nunke felt that *VOOF* (2008) represented a youth-elder interactive platform that enabled young people to maintain a sense of their cultural historical identities.

Helping the community

Piorro established that the representative strategies used in *VOOF* (2008) helped to unify the community. Andre further reinforced this idea when he was asked whether he felt that *VOOF* (2008) could bring the two groups of the community⁴⁵ together. He responded that because the film shows the cultural similarities between the two groups, it would help to unite them (Interview 22/02/2010). However, Andre’s comments need to be tempered with the fact that the !Xun were barely involved in the production and this could further aggravate any tension⁴⁶. What Emma posed as a solution is testament to this, “as ons bymekaar ‘n film of iets doen dan kan dit gebeur, saam met hulle [die !Xun]” (*if we make a film together, or do something together, then it can happen, with them* [the !Xun]) (Interview 12/08/2009).

Part of achieving this requires that a system of vigorous agreement and approval seeking occurs beforehand. Each party’s needs require addressing and satisfying before one can discuss the benefits of *VOOF* (2008) to the community. Moshe’s sentiments summed this up: “I think that if there’s an agreement or an

⁴⁵ The community comprises two ethnic groups, the Khwe and the !Xun. The relationship between the two groups is fraught with tensions.

⁴⁶ The !Xun were not sidelined in this production, but rather logistics resulted in Hart working mainly with the Khwe. He was approached by a group of Khwe producers who wanted to produce a film, and production developed from there (Hart personal communication 6/08/2010).

understanding beforehand then I think it can unite people ... but ... all the involved negotiating parties have to understand each others' needs" (Interview 22/06/2009).

Sonia addressed the issue of conflict resolution in *VOOF* (2008). She felt that *VOOF* (2008) taught her about forgiveness and "how to solve problems". Hendrik also mentioned this lesson. Sonia discussed the progression of Piorro from an angry young man to the point where he and his grandfather resolved their differences. This, Sonia felt, was due to his talking to people about his problems, "[a]nd then he talked to the Little Girl about his problem and then talked out" (Interview 22/02/2010). This holds potential, for Sonia, for developing the community as it will teach people about the benefits of talking about problems rather than resorting to destructive resolutions. Hendrik said that *VOOF* (2008) "showed me how to talk to the person who did [me] wrong" (Interview 12/08/2009).

Code: Identity

Themes:

VOOF (2008) encouraged the research participants to consider their identity from a cultural-historical perspective. It contextualised their sense of self as part of a Bushman community by strengthening and expanding on their connection to their past. *VOOF* (2008) represents a pursuit of a "static authenticity" (Tomaselli 2002: 215), albeit moderated, for a community dislocated and fragmented from their cultural roots.

Most of the research participants attached a sense of belonging – their roots – to the representations of their past in *VOOF* (2008). Andre felt that it helped him to better understand who he is today by teaching him about his past (Interview 22/02/2010). However, some research participants like Makuanda felt that *VOOF* (2008) did not really make them consider their identity in much depth. Nonetheless, their sense of their historical roots was very important to them. *VOOF* (2008) in this sense functioned to connect them to their past and increase their understanding of their identities, "[i]t helps me [to understand our culture] because I was not growing at that time but this movie help me to remember the past, how they used to live in the past" (Kasivi interview 22/02/2010). This could also aid in developing a collective sense of community.

"For me there is a tension that we are struggling ... now ... from the knowledge that in the old, people lived very traditionally and now people are very mixed up" (Moshe interview 24/09/2009). Events in the research participants' immediate past, which detached them from their traditions, and the clash between the globalising world and their local traditions may serve to intensify tensions in terms of the research participants' identities. Moshe, however, felt that *VOOF* (2008) resolves these tensions.

It provides the community with a constructed space where they can work through issues with their sense of self,

Jonathan: Does the film help you to work through any tensions?

Moshe: Absolutely, it gives me a clear picture to distinguish things. It shows me so that I can take this thing from the modern world and another thing from the past. And then you mix it and hold onto it (Interview 24/09/2009).

Nasako echoed Moshe's remarks about preserving their historical sense of their identity through amalgamating it with the modern. She enjoyed the fact that *VOOF* (2008) showed both modern and traditional representations of the Bushmen. By doing so, *VOOF* (2008) took neither an outright rejection nor an acceptance of their temporal identities. It rather appropriated their historical and modern identities, which the research participants seemed to generally like. However, for some like Piet, their sense of an amalgamated identity was tempered by the fact that they were obviously aware that they have modernised.

Moshe discussed the role of their traditions and beliefs in determining their sense of identity:

[s]ee the other thing is, when wanting to identify things that identify a person (for us), it's firstly our belief, customs, rituals and everything else and secondly it's the person and who he is, where he has been raised (Interview 24/09/2009).

The western Enlightenment project has, according to Moshe, denied the reality of many of the Bushmen's beliefs through rationality and science – 'if it cannot be apprehended through scientific enquiry then it does not exist'. Yet, for Moshe, "there is reality in things I don't see" (Interview 24/09/2009). *VOOF* (2008) seemed to reaffirm their beliefs in the face of the rigid laws of some aspects of Western science and religious beliefs. Their sense of identification was affirmed rather than dissected and subjected to proof seeking in *VOOF* (2008). This had a positive effect on the audience "[i]n *VOOF* (2008) you guys say that it is fiction, but we say we are empowered, therefore we say that it is a real story as it shows today's lifestyle. It is real therefore it is empowering" (Moshe interview 24/09/2009). Integrated intelligence was preferred over mechanistic ways of knowing (see Anthony 2005). Perhaps this is the one area where *VOOF* (2008) can be argued as truly empowering for the research participants. It not only reaffirmed their sense of culture and identity but also did this in such a way that did not alienate them from the modern world. *VOOF* (2008) negotiates the clash between the modern secularism of the 21st century and their traditional cosmologies (Tomaselli 2002: 208). However, this would need to be verified through examining their experiences of the modern world, which is beyond the scope of this research.

Code: Favourite Character

Themes:

There were four characters that the research participants referred to as their favourite: the doctor, the Old Man, Piorro and the Little Girl. This section starts with the character cited less frequently and then works towards the most cited character (the doctor is left out of the analysis as it was felt that it did not contribute anything to the discussion – all the data revealed was that one of the research participants liked the character and nothing else).

The Little Girl

Rena and Nasako said that the Little Girl was their favourite character. Nasako expressed identification with the Little Girl. For Nasako, this scene conveyed messages of the future, of being able to do as others do outside the community. However, it is unclear what she is referring to. This reading seemed to negotiate a sense of alienation that some of the research participants expressed in relation to the broader modern South Africa.

Rena felt that the Little Girl provided a reflective device for her own acting. In comparison to Rena's acting, the Little Girl put "passion and emotion" into her acting (Rena interview 22/02/2010). The Little Girl thus provided Rena with a comparative point of reflection on developing her skills as an actress.

The Old Man

The Old Man represented a pedagogical messenger for Moshe in relation to the larger issues of the Platfontein community. Moshe felt that he taught Piorro two important lessons. Firstly, the Old Man provided Piorro with a parental support structure. This was important for Moshe in the face of problems with the number of orphans in the community. The orphans' caretakers, according to Moshe, do not explain to them what happened to their parents, "we have many orphans these days ... they are relatives who don't tell them ... why their parents died" (Interview 24/09/09).

Secondly, the Old Man also taught Piorro about the Bushmen's culture and history through the story. Specifically, he taught Piorro about hunting. Moshe lamented that young people do not know about their heritage. *VOOF* (2008) intervened in the research participants' cosmological frameworks (this is based on the interview data and not on an assumption that the research participants all shared the same cosmological frameworks) by providing a source of cultural-historical information that was trusted and, for all intents and purposes, 'accurate'. *VOOF*'s (2008) incorporation of the community, cemented the film firmly within their social milieux. Many research participants expressed, either directly or indirectly, identification with certain scenes of the film as a result of this. These will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Old Man represents their traditions in the modern world for Piorro. He liked this as he felt that the Old Man brought a sense of tradition to the film (Interview 05/2009). Historically sensitive representations and The Old Man functioned similarly. The Old Man was dressed in modern clothing and lived a modern lifestyle but was portrayed as a link to the community's past through his knowledge and stories. The symbolism (Secondness and Thirdness) associated with The Old Man possibly helped the community navigate the modern secularism of the 21st century. The character, as a wise elder, served as a cultural anchor for youth largely disconnected from their heritage.

Piorro

Piorro was cited by the most people (nine people) as their favourite character. This section is organised accordingly: reasons why he was their favourite character, identification, and whether they learned anything from him.

Six people stated that the reason why they liked Piorro was because he acted well. Robert provided insight into the meanings and associations behind Piorro's acting – it was clear for Robert that Piorro was focussed, which he felt was important:

...hy het baie gefokus in die film, die manier hoe die kind die film gespeel het baie belangrik vir hom
(*he was very focussed in the film, the way the child acted in the film (was) very important for him*)
(Interview 12/08/2009).

Being focussed becomes an important lesson, when one considers, for example, the lack of education amongst the community members. Robert also attached a sense of power to Piorro, “hy [Piorro] het die krag” (Interview 12/08/2009), with regards to Piorro being focussed, although it is not clear what he meant by this.

Three people also expressed some kind of familial relation to Piorro, which they listed as a reason why they liked him. These ‘bonds’ to the actor helped to associate positive feelings amongst members of the audience towards the actor and his character.

Andre and Hendrik were the only two who expressed identification with Piorro. Andre said that he too had been blind once, but he did not wish to discuss it. Hendrik mentioned that, like Piorro, he too gets angry when he is sick and people bother him (Interview 12/08/2009). Identification with characters could have better aided any social development agenda that *VOOF* (2008) might have espoused. However, there was no definite sense of identification with the characters amongst the research participants. This was probably

owing to a lack of character development in a manner that would have aided identification of the research participants with the characters.

Research participants expressed five lessons that Piorro taught them: the need to respect elders, “traditional things”, the difficulties of being blind, the inspiration to make a film, and the importance of talking about one’s problems. Emma, Nunke and Sonia deplored Piorro’s behaviour because of “the behaviour that he have when he threw out the plate ... I learn that you don’t have to do with your father” (Nunke interview 22/02/2010). Emma felt that Piorro taught young people about the need to respect their elders (Interview 12/08/2009).

Sonia saw a lesson in constructive dialogue in the interaction between Piorro, the Little Girl and the Old Man. She felt that the community could learn from such a relationship through learning about how to talk constructively about issues.

Pieter expressed that, as a result of Piorro, he realised that he too can take part in films (and possibly by extension, other activities), “why mustn’t I do things like this? This are young children doing things, very beautiful and I can also do it”. Realisations such as these are critical to edging towards the larger aims of participatory development programmes. However, as has been discussed, this needs to be tempered with their lack of resources and opportunities.

Piet said that Piorro taught him that “dis nie lekker nie om blind te wees nie” (*it’s not nice to be blind*) (Interview 12/08/2009), which showed that Piet, at the very least, engaged Piorro at the level of sympathy.

Hendrik remarked that Piorro’s story to the Little Girl taught him “traditional things” (Interview 12/08/2009). However, it is not clear in the transcripts what he is referring to. Hendrik said that he means “how [Piorro] tell the story parts” (Interview 12/08/2009). One can only assume that he is referring to the story of the traditional hunter and the traditional items from their culture in the story, such as how to negotiate the spirit and physical worlds that Bushman hunters encounter(ed).

Each of these lessons in turn taught the research participants various values: respect, sympathy, inspiration, and constructive dialogue. These values were integrated into the personal, communal and traditional value networks of the research participants. This represents a change at the level of Thirdness – a change in how they make sense of and navigate the world. However, this is not to say that everyone experienced these lessons. These were the expressions of individuals that may or may not have been representative of the broader research group and community.

Code: Favourite part

Themes:

Research participants also indicated that various scenes of *VOOF* (2008) held particular meanings for them. These were: the beginning, the cartoon, when the Old Man tries to help Piorro, and the story.

Beginning

The song in the opening scene of *VOOF* (2008) held particular significance for Emma. It was in Khwedam, which means that *VOOF* (2008) immediately resonated on a level that connected with Emma (and possibly the Khwe audience). She also remarked that “dit gebeur nie elke dag by ons nie in onse lewe nie” (*it doesn't happen everyday in our lives*) (Emma interview 12/08/2009). *VOOF* (2008) cuts through many other Bushmen oriented texts (such as the *Gods* movies) by establishing a particular strategy of representation of the Bushmen's lives, thus aiding identification. However, Khwedam is not the only language spoken in the community, and as a result, the !Xun may not have expressed similar sentiments to Emma.

Cartoon

Andre, Kasivi and Rena cited the cartoon as their favourite scene. All three research participants developed cultural-historical associations with it. Andre and Kasivi made connections to the Bushman's past, “[t]he cartoon part of the movie remind me of how our people used to hunt at that time” (Kasivi interview 22/02/2010). Rena on the other hand made connections to her culture by saying that certain cultural icons, such as the fire, were present in the cartoon and were therefore appropriate to their culture, “en dis pas ook by die Boesmans. Die vuur is ook daar en so aan” (*and it is appropriate to the Bushmen. The fire is also there and so on.*) (Interview 22/02/2010). The historical and cultural icons represented in *VOOF* (2008) held special significance to the research participants for at least two reasons: they indicated community participation, and the difference between externally and internally mediated representations of the Bushmen.

VOOF (2008) as a whole intervened symbolically at the level of representation for the research participants. It allowed for bottom-up representative code systems (see Godsell et al. 1985; Tomaselli 1989) to emerge that could only have been achieved through the inclusion of the participants in the production process. *VOOF* (2008), in this instance, was able to institute points of connection with the audience that allowed the film to enter the cultural-historical webs of meanings that encircle the research participants. Rena, Andre and Kasivi, were able to read constructive meanings into *VOOF* (2008) after having achieved this level of authenticity; rather than the alienation, disconnect and non-identification that many respondents expressed towards texts like the *Gods* films.

Old Man tries to help Piorro

The comments with regards to this scene lacked any commonalities. Reasons why the research participants listed this scene as their favourite were: the Old Man used traditional medicine, Piorro's acting was good, and the scene reflected the community's reality. Nasako commented that *VOOF* (2008) is realistic, which means that the film is located within the community's life worlds. This scene also taught Kasivi that blind people in the community need to be helped (Interview 22/02/2010). This suggests that the scene helped to instil a sense of sympathy amongst certain audience members.

Story

The symbolism of this scene was captured in Hendrik's and Makuanda's comments. Hendrik listed this scene as one of his favourites because "[it] told the boy how to be like a man" (Interview 12/08/2009). However, one would need to consider whether the scene presented a hegemonic notion of masculinity in line with heteronormative patriarchal power relations that may have empowered (or at least, made to feel powerful or pleasure) only a select few. For example, how would gay members of the community truly respond to portrayals of a patriarchal notion of masculinity in *VOOF* (2008)? Thus, for while this scene may result in a few people expressing a sense of empowerment, perhaps it is broadly indicative of a weakness in PV. PV, in terms of representation, it can be argued, could better serve its empowerment goal by including multiple perspectives in the representative process. This would decrease the likelihood of representations becoming locked within narrowly defined views of the world.

Makuanda related the scene back to her own life "[w]hen I was a little girl, my father was telling me these stories by the fire" (Interview 22/02/2010). The symbolic significance of similar real world cultural events that was experienced by the audience was transferred to the on-screen representations. This seemed to imbue it with a realistic quality, thus echoing Nasako's comments about the scene where the Old Man tried to help Piorro as iconic, indexical and symbolic of the community's reality.

Owing to the sense of realism brought about by the various cultural icons in this scene, some of the research participants felt that it taught them something and helped them work through any tensions with regards to their senses of identity. Nunke said that the scene would help teach youngsters about their past. Nunke also felt that the scene helped her better understand who she is and where she came from as a member of the Bushman community, because of (culturally "accurate") references to their past.

A point of harmony

The research participants arrived at various readings of *VOOF* (2008), many of which were positive. The main foci that this chapter highlighted are that community participation and *VOOF*'s (2008) representative

strategy enabled various responses about feeling empowered by *VOOF* (2008). However, these were not the only areas that the research participants discussed in the interviews. A total of nine codes, with many themes, were accounted for including participation and representation. The above analysis maps out how the research participants negotiated their experience of *VOOF* (2008). The scope of this research was not to measure empowerment, but rather to critically examine the research participants' responses to *VOOF* (2008) in relation to PV as a potentially empowering medium.

Empowerment is a complex notion. The research participants' feelings of being empowered need to be seen within the larger whole within which they exist. When one considers their expressions of empowerment in relation to the realities of their lives, then this somewhat diminishes the force of their praises. This is not to say that the research participants were not empowered. Rather, it is important to realistically consider what that sense of power enables the research participants to do that can better their lives.

With respect to the above, it could be argued that *VOOF*'s (2008) greatest strength is its participatory approach to representing the Platfontein Bushman community (although, it is debatable whether it is representative of the whole community). In particular, its use of both their past and modern sense of identity in representation almost seemed to tap into and address their sense of exploitation. This was achieved through a number of ways. Firstly, by representing the community as ordinary people, *VOOF* (2008) did not lock Bushmen in a plastic stone age for tourists' entertainment. It, secondly, allowed for resistance and reclaiming of representative control and authority (also with regards to re-affirming their sense of belief and culture). It, thirdly, acted as a stage in the process of rearticulating Other-Same relations.

However, as has been discussed, *VOOF* (2008) may have marginalised or excluded diverse identities that may exist in the community. It largely represented only one ethnic grouping within the community. It was also not clear how the research participants' responses to *VOOF* (2008) manifested outside of the research context i.e. did their responses genuinely empower the research participants, or did they just fall back into normal life once the interviews were over?

VOOF (2008) seemed to rather partially elicit a sense of empowerment amongst the research participants. For example, where the community producers learned new skills, which were potentially empowering, they could not fully exercise these skills as a result of a lack of resources. However, it is important to emphasise that this research does not argue that learning new skills was not empowering, but rather that empowerment needs to be contextualised within the broader context of their lives.

One of the central tenets of Freire's work is that the 'oppressed mindset' needs to be overthrown. Empowerment involves a change in operation at the Second and Third levels of experience. It involves a re-articulation of signifiers with different discourses. Change takes shape in the minds of people, which affects their knowledge, values, attitudes, perceptions etc. (Boeren 1994: 11; see Melkote 2003). If we draw on the representation theory discussed earlier then, the positive participant-generated representations of the Bushman move the community in a positive direction as they attempt to address the emotional dilemma generated from the encounter of their sense of themselves and their romanticised representation in *VOOF* (2008). Thus, perhaps this is where *VOOF*'s (2008) other strength lies – in that it seemed to help change the research participants' perception of their existential condition.

Chapter 7: Conclusion: The Cogs in the Process

This chapter brings the research aims, questions and objectives into dialogue with the literature review and the empirical data. As a reminder, the research aim was to articulate an account of how the research participants negotiated their encounter with their representation, through PV, in *VOOF* (2008). The research question examined how do the research participants interpret their representation in *VOOF* (2008) in relation to PV as a potentially empowering medium? The individual research objectives were to 1) collect a set of responses to *VOOF* (2008) from the research participants, 2) explore the research participants' responses to *VOOF* (2008), and to develop a list of themes, 3) critically examine any articulations and perceptions of empowerment under the respective themes, and 4) articulate a theorised explanation of the research participants' interpretations of *VOOF* (2008), in relation to PV as a medium that is used to empower people. This chapter thus covers the findings and conclusions, the limitations, strengths and weaknesses of this research, and then finally provides a reflective piece on the entire research process.

Responding to the literature and empirical data: findings and conclusions

Dance (2000) showed that inductive reception analysis is necessary when considering how audiences interact with texts. Meaning needs to be analysed from the audiences' point of view. What Tomaselli (2006), MacLennan-Dodd and Tomaselli (2005) and the research participants' responses to *VOOF* (2008) all reveal, is that audiences are able to critique, contest and resist disempowering representations of them through drawing on their experiences of themselves and their lives.

The research participants expressed a sense of empowerment as they felt that they were able to use *VOOF* (2008) as a platform for resistance and assertion of their identities. A space was therefore opened – a counter televisual public sphere – for the research participants, where their voices were heard. Texts are therefore activated in a manner that highlights contexts and con-texts, and therefore brings complexity and nuance to the interpretive process. This also contests producers' assumptions and the inherent power relations between Bushman and non-Bushman producers.

VOOF (2008) actively drew on the community's code systems. This, as established in Godsell et al. (1985), enhanced acceptability amongst the research participants as it countered previous oppressive representative regimes through either resisting those regimes or reworking them. *VOOF's* (2008) representative strategy intervened in romantic representative strategies of the Bushmen and provided a bottom-up representation of the Bushmen. As a result, the research participants were not alienated from their representation as they were in *Gods*. Representations such as these also established a sense of communal spirit through drawing on their cultural similarities and symbolism.

The dialectic between externally mediated representations of the Bushmen (e.g. *Gods*) and internally mediated representations was strong throughout the interviews. Representations in the style of *Gods* made the research participants feel guilty and alienated from their representation. However, *VOOF* (2008), through its representative strategies, countered this and resulted in some of the research participants expressing a sense of empowerment. This is one of *VOOF*'s (2008) strengths; it reworks popular and sometimes damaging notions of the Bushmen. This has, firstly, a pleasurable effect for the research participants in the face of exploitation; secondly, it provides a means for resistance to disempowering representations of the Bushmen for the research participants; and, thirdly, it helps the research participants see themselves in different and less exploited ways. However, it needs to be remembered that this point may only be applicable to the research participants, and those in the community, who identify with the representations. For those who do not, the effect may be quite different.

Participation in the production process allowed the community to bring cultural nuance and their opinions of themselves to their representation in *VOOF* (2008). The Bushmen's responses to *Gods* in Tomaselli (2006) also achieved this. The result is that the Bushmen's senses of the world, rationalised and deemed inferior by colonialism and Western science, is repositioned in a positive light. Participation in *VOOF* (2008) means that the community's codes and stories are foregrounded, which the research participants felt was empowering. Thus, authority and control of their stories and representations were reclaimed. However, the extent of this authority and control needs to be examined. One would need to consider to what extent that *VOOF* (2008) is representative of the entire community. In addition to this, *VOOF* (2008) may only represent an isolated incident of the Bushmen being able to exert control over their representation; it is not clear to what extent this incidence might translate into greater opportunity for representative control on a larger scale for the Bushmen.

Parts of the community's life, albeit selective, are thus revealed as a result of bottom-up representation in *VOOF* (2008). Revealing the Bushmen's experiences of their lives has a political effect, which research participants such as Moshe felt was empowering. The political effect is increased visibility. Asking people for their opinions can generate a sense of empowerment amongst them, and brings their knowledge and opinions into the local, regional and global domains.

As a result of *VOOF*'s (2008) representative strategies, it established a Self-Self relationship rather than an Other-Self relationship, where the research participants were able to recognise themselves on screen. As a result of this, the research participants identified with their representation, although this is not to assume that everyone from the community would identify with the representations. The representations of the Bushmen in *VOOF* (2008) drew on the positive elements of their past and contextualised this within a modern world

(historically sensitive representations). The research participants expressed this as empowering. The research participants' experiences of their representation positively harmonised the emotional gap established between their sense of themselves and their representation. This would seem to explain why the research participants felt empowered.

However, *VOOF* (2008), like *Dance* (2000) drew on an essentialist discourse in representing the Bushmen. The data analysis and Clelland-Stokes (2007) revealed that the audience's interaction with essentialism is complex and unique. The Bushmen's responses towards *Gods* in MacLennan-Dodd and Tomaselli (2005) and the data analysis critiqued the films' use of stereotypes, and they were also able to see the film for its comedy. Both the Bushman audiences of *Dance* (2000) and the research participants (*VOOF*) felt that the films' use of essentialist notions of their history and culture was empowering. Essentialism, in these instances, drew on the deeper symbolic frameworks of the Bushmen. This allowed the Bushmen to positively experience and navigate modern secularism. However, *Dance* (2000) did not employ a device that contextualised the Bushmen's modernity. *VOOF* (2008) achieved this and seemed to better aid empowerment through renegotiating their sense of history and identity, and generally showed the Bushmen as 'people like other people'.

VOOF's (2008) use of historically sensitive representations meant that the research participants were not alienated from their historical representation. Essentialism without contextualisation (such as in *Gods*) can deny the historical and material conditions of the Bushmen. *VOOF*'s use of historically sensitive representations, however, re-aligned their present and historical worlds.

Historically sensitive representations connected the research participants to their past, and contextualised their experiences of the past within a modern context. As a result, the research participants better understood their modern selves, and expressed a sense of pride. *VOOF* (2008) connected younger audiences to their past. It normalised their experiences of themselves as ordinary people. As a result of participant-generated historically sensitive representations, the research participants were able to recognise and not alienate themselves. This, they felt, was empowering. It located their culture in the modern world and unpicked stunted romanticism through a link to the theme of change. However, it could be argued that their representation of their history was portrayed selectively, at the very least, and only from the Khwe perspective. It is important to at least consider the possibility that the !Xun might not identify with the representation of their history in *VOOF* (2008). Therefore, any potential broader responses to *VOOF* (2008) need to be qualified.

One of the results of *VOOF* (2008) was an attempt at rethinking the category 'Bushman'. Bushmen audiences negotiated and asserted contested notions of their identities in both *VOOF* (2008) and *Miscast* (2000). This enabled the Bushmen to exercise a sense of power in the face of exploitative representations. However, the result of *VOOF* (2008) was more positive and constructive than *Miscast* (1996), which flared up tensions. *VOOF*'s (2008) inclusion of the subjects in production (which *Miscast* (1996) did not do) meant that the research participants were not alienated from their representation, and it drew on the more positive (and contextualised) perspectives of the subjects.

The lessons that *VOOF* (2008) imparted to the research participants resulted in them feeling empowered. The new skills that the participants were furnished with meant that they were now somewhat self-sufficient and could therefore make their own films, reclaim authority for their representations, and engage the world more wholly. At a semiotic level, this allowed for the production crew and the audience to surmount their Otherness and redefine themselves (Secondness and Thirdness) on the world stage. This liberating factor instilled feelings of being empowered amongst the research participants. However, the community lacks resources, which could diminish the benefits of gaining new skills. Authorial control and greater engagement is also potentially hampered as a result of the participants' lack of resources.

The research participants were also furnished with a psychological and emotional skills set. This skills and lessons set included: inspiration through community participation, sympathy towards blind people, being taught how to forgive wrong doers, and respect for elders. These skills are critical in empowerment as they aid development. However, ongoing research in the community would be needed in order to ascertain how the skills and lessons were applied and what manifested.

The research participants felt that it is important to keep their heritage alive, and therefore it is important to teach the younger members of the community about their heritage. *VOOF* (2008) reinvigorated and shared cultural-historical knowledge, and established links to the past. One of the benefits of this was that their heritage was passed on to the youth. Semiotically speaking, this is a transfer of symbols (Secondness and Thirdness).

Participation was a key theme in the interviews that unlocked the other themes such as ownership, language, and trust. The community's participation in *VOOF* (2008) was appreciated by the research participants, and helped to establish positive links with the film. Participation generated a sense of ownership through community participation and cultural performance. A sense of ownership of *VOOF* (2008) may have also aided in lessening any sense of alienation that the research participants may have felt. It might have also helped the research participants view *VOOF* (2008) as an expression of their identity.

Language was another theme that participation enabled. The film, unlike *Gods* for example, was shot in Khwedam. This immediately resonated with the research participants and did not alienate them. It aided in drawing the research participants into self-critical reflection. Both language and participation furthered a sense of trust in *VOOF* (2008). However, !Xuntali was not incorporated into the film, so it is not certain how the !Xun members of the community would have reacted on viewing the film.

The film was located in the community's symbolic structures. This allowed for a greater sense of trust in *VOOF* (2008). Trust in development communication initiatives is important, as without it, a distance would probably exist between the audience and the text. Owing to the research participants' trust in *VOOF* (2008) they were more willing to accept the film and enter into a self-self critical relationship.

The characters and specific scenes of the film also contributed to a sense of empowerment amongst the research participants. With regards to the characters, they were played by members of the community, which probably aided the development of a sense of empowerment. The Little Girl, the Old Man and Piorro had the most impact on the research participants. Some of the most important lessons that the research participants identified are listed below. The Old Man was symbolic of a support structure, and taught the research participants cultural and historical lessons. These lessons helped with navigating modern secularism. Piorro was listed the most frequently as being a favourite. Some of the most important lessons that the research participants listed with regards to Piorro were that he taught research participants to respect their elders, about their past, sympathy for blind people, he inspired them to make a film, and he taught them about the need to talk constructively about their problems.

The scenes that the research participants listed as significant are listed below. Some of the research participants immediately connected with the film through the use of Khwedam. The benefits of this are linked to the language code. The cartoon was an example of bottom-up developed storytelling. It drew on the community's codes and symbols and was, as a result, listed as empowering. The scene where the Old Man helped Piorro was expressed as empowering as it was reflective of the community's reality. This seemed to affirm and assert their culture in a world that affords little space to marginalised groups. Finally, the story was listed as empowering. The story was located within the community's symbolic and cultural frameworks and drew on them, and affirmed them. The real world symbolism was celebrated on screen.

The main thrust of this research was to ascertain how the research participants negotiated their experience of *VOOF* (2008) in relation to PV as a potentially empowering medium. The research participants' articulation of a sense of empowerment is complex and draws on many diverse aspects of *VOOF* (2008). As can be seen,

their participation in *VOOF* (2008) and resultant representation were two of main areas that the research participants expressed as empowering.

Limitations, strengths and weaknesses

One of the strengths of this research is that it incorporated a rigorous research design that utilised both qualitative and quantitative approaches to code and theme development. This approach meant that the shortcomings of qualitative approaches to thematic analysis were addressed through drawing on the best of both approaches.

The research design drew on a non-representative case study method. Therefore, there is not a strong focus on generalisation of results. This could prove a weakness in the research depending on perspective. The conclusions drawn from the data may not be easily transferable or applicable to other contexts. It therefore might not contribute to a general body of theory on PV. However, this does not mean to say that the research is irrelevant. It can contribute to a local body of theory of participatory communication for development amongst the Platfontein community. The research findings will be sent back to the community for their use. This will hopefully help with development initiatives.

Throughout the analysis, the research participants' articulations of empowerment are critiqued within their larger frameworks. One of these critiques concerns whether the representations capture the community in its entirety. Obviously, the cultural nuance of a community of 6000 people cannot be portrayed in a ten minute film. However, the fact that the !Xun were not involved in the research process means that their voices are not part of the final research document. The focus on the Khwe, despite that this was intended, may mean that the results are applicable only to a very select group, time and context. In addition to this, as already mentioned, the Khwe were specifically selected owing to various time and cost constraints, and relationships (with other researchers) with them had already been established when the research began.

The incorporation of only one age group (youth) from the community in the research could also be construed as limiting. This limited the research to the youth's experience of *VOOF* (2008). However, the sample was meant to focus on the youth, and an equal number of men and women were interviewed in order to address any potential gender bias.

The reliability and validity of the instruments and data were a concern during the research process. For example, thorough limits were not written up for the coding scheme. This could have affected the reliability of the coding scheme. However, tests were applied to measure the reliability of the coding scheme. It was

decided to continue using the coding scheme, for the reasons discussed in Chapter 5, despite that the tests did not achieve the recommended minimum reliability score.

As already mentioned, validity is a difficult concept to measure in social constructionism. However, this is one of the reasons that it was decided not to measure empowerment, and rather critically examine the research participants' articulations of empowerment. A multi-method approach was also used that examined the data as closely as possible, thus ensuring that the analysis was nuanced and inductive.

Perhaps one of the single most limiting factors of this research was the focus on the research participants' articulation of a sense of empowerment. Despite this being done for practical reasons, it necessarily means that the research only examines a sense of empowerment (which could be misconstrued as feeling powerful) and not actual empowerment. This obviously limits the extent to which the research findings can be used. However, from a Freirean perspective it is significant in that it shows how *VOOF* (2008) contributed to generating the sense of self-awareness needed in conscientisation.

Reflections

This final section of the chapter focuses on some of the lessons that I learned during the research process. It focuses on the complexities of the research process, particularly in the social sciences.

My encounter in the field revealed first and foremost that doing research is messy, complicated and requires the researcher to constantly negotiate their position in the field. None of the research methodology texts adequately prepared me for the research encounter in the field. Doing research requires one to constantly negotiate between the researchers' objectives and what the subjects want from the research. In this case, I had to negotiate issues such as payment for information, and where participants commoditised the research process. In order to address this, I had to constantly sensitise the research participants to the larger benefits of the research.

Situations like these required that textbook learning had to be adjusted to the actual encounter. Particular strategies were developed for dealing with the idiosyncracies of the research process. The approach to thematic analysis, as discussed in Chapter 5, required that I develop on various theorists' ideas of what thematic analysis should be. My own strategy was a response to dealing with the demands placed on me whilst researching in Platfontein and then organising and analysing the data.

Research requires patience and stamina. It requires foresight and a proactive mindset. However, most of all it requires that researchers apply themselves to the task at hand and the situations that they find themselves in, and respond in kind. This has been the single most important lesson for me; that the textbook can equip

me only so far. Thereafter, it rests on the researcher. This research therefore represents my response to the objectives, the research context and finally, trying to make sense of data.

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Indaba Ye Grievance, 1985. Film. Directed by Harris, K. South Africa: National Institute of Personnel Research.

Voices of Our Forefathers, 2008. Film. Directed by Hart, T.B. Durban: M-NET Edit, CCMS, University of KwaZulu-Natal. 10 min.

Appendix A

This is a guideline for the semi-structured interviews that I conducted. Discussions varied according to each interview.

- What do you think of the film? Why?
- How do you feel about the images of the Bushmen in the film? Why?
- What do you think of the way *VOOF* showed your community? Why?
- What do you think of the way that *VOOF* showed your culture? Why?
- What are the differences, for you, between *VOOF* images of the Bushmen and others, like in *The Gods Must be Crazy*? Explain.
- Are there any differences or similarities between the *VOOF* images and how you see yourself?
- What do you think of the fact that *VOOF* showed you as modern people?
- Do you think it is important that the Bushmen be portrayed like this? Why?
- How do you feel about Tom coming in to the community and asking you about how to represent you?
- What do you think that *VOOF* tells the world about the Bushmen?
- Do you feel that the images tell you who you must be?
- Who do you think that *VOOF* belongs to? Why?
- What did you learn from *VOOF*?
- What did you think of the fact that *VOOF* used your language?
- What was your favourite part of the film?

Appendix B

Consent Form:

Title of the Project

Social power through self-imaging in participatory video amongst the Khwe Bushmen community of Platfontein, Kimberley.

Project Description

A research study in fulfillment of the requirements for a 100% research Masters in Culture, Communication and Media Studies, Faculty of Humanities, Development and Social Sciences, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban.

In my research I aim to examine the disablement or enablement of social power through participatory video, and in particular, how self-imaging can enable social power. I want to examine how the subject positions that are created through self-imaging in participatory video are occupied and how this enables social power.

Procedure

Production teams (Durban and Kimberley):

You will be interviewed by myself, where I will focus on the process of making *Voices of Our Forefathers* in order to understand this process and how it might impact on the enablement of social power.

Audience members (Kimberley participants only):

You will be required to watch the film and then respond to questions (individually) about the images of the Bushmen on screen.

Financial Benefits

You will not be paid for participating in this research.

Confidentiality

You can choose to remain anonymous in the research by using a pseudonym of your choice or you can use your real name.

Ownership and Documentation of Research Data

All data collected from the entire research process will be used solely for the purposes of this research project. Research data will be filed safely throughout the duration of the project, and will subsequently be housed in the CCMS department of the university for a period of one year. Shredded disposal of all research data will take place thereafter.

If you would like any further information or need to contact me, please feel free to contact me (Jonathan Dockney) on:

Cell 079 593 0740

Email dockney254@gmail.com

DECLARATION

I.....(full names) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I agree to participate in the research project.

I understand that I am taking part in this project voluntarily. I also understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time, should I so desire, and that doing so will not have negative consequences for myself.

SIGNATURE

DATE

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