



# A new South Africa, a new identity?

*A comprehensive study of the Zulu ethnic identity in the Umlazi Township*

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In the new political arena individual South Africans may experience a greater need to identify themselves, to emphasize social borders and to confirm their cultural and/or racial identities. To examine such phenomenon, this project focuses specifically on the largest ethnic group in South Africa, the Zulu's. In undergoing such examination it is vital to consider first theories of *nationalism*, the heart of which lies with the citizens to have a strong identification with the state. This is sometime imposed upon by those with political authority. And secondly, consider the *imaginations* of the communities to which the individual is a part of. These can include the political and the local community.

## Aims

- 1) To examine the Zulu's individual relationship with micro and macro scale communities
- 2) To uncover how processes of nation building have been successful in promoting a positive national identity image amongst the Zulu population in the Umlazi Township



## 1) What community? Methods and Results

Prior to interviews, the twenty participants were asked to complete a generic questionnaire which highlighted the following results:

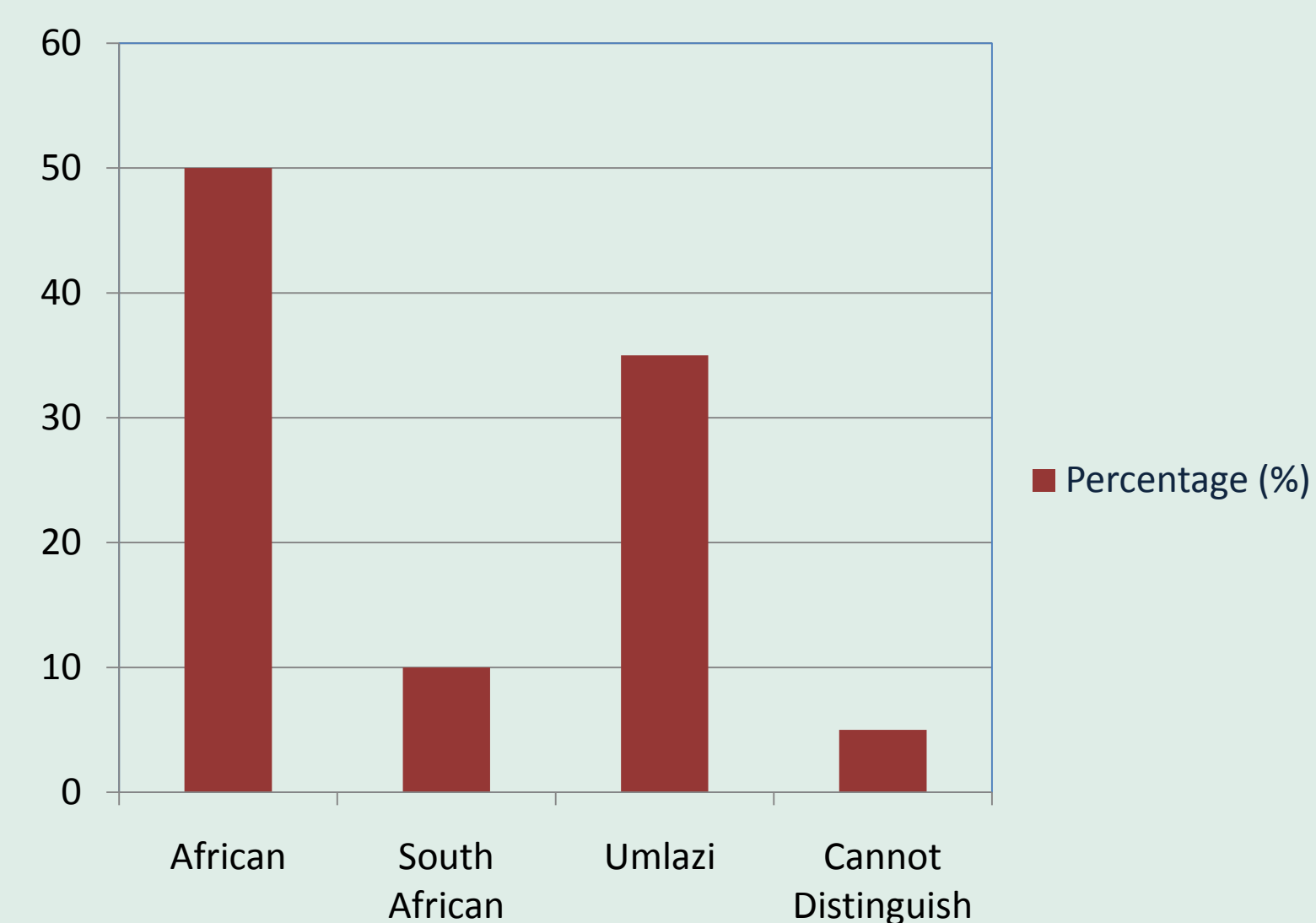
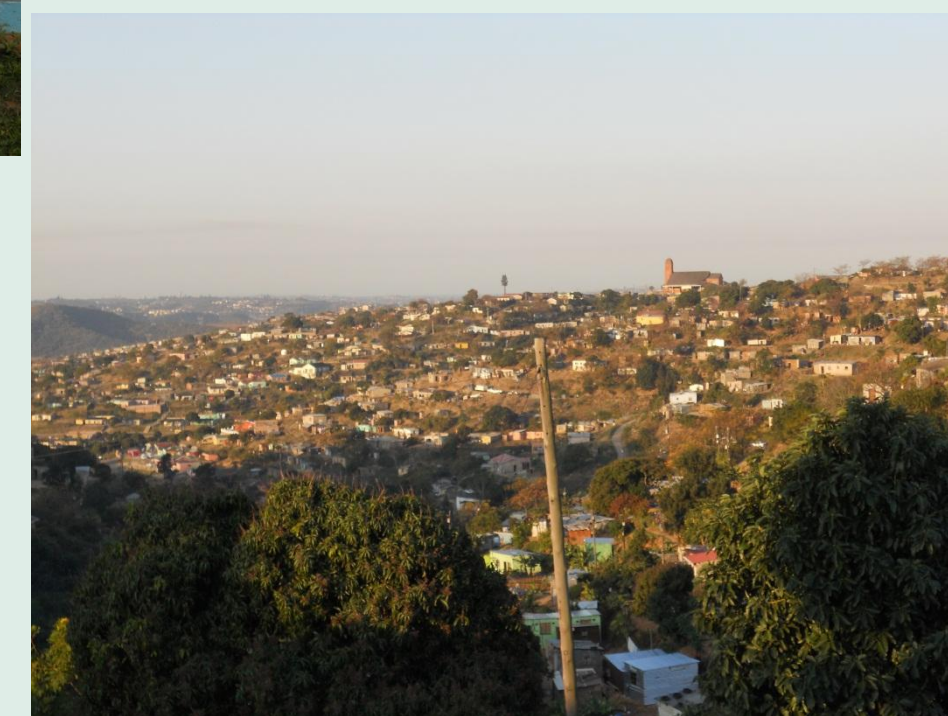


Table 1. Which community participants had the strongest relationship with



## 2) Zulu Identity: Methods and Results

Through semi-structured interviews with the residents of the Umlazi Township the following themes were discussed:

- What was their feelings towards the new national flag and anthem?
- In what way did they feel like they were living in a more inclusive society?
- What did it mean to them to be a) South African b) Zulu?

Overall, interviews made positive comments regarding change in South Africa. They appreciated the new flag and the anthem was something they now treasure

However, they highlighted that although hostility amongst racial groups had faded, the idea of cohesiveness was something disagreed with; they commented that they would be reluctant to move elsewhere within South Africa due to community differences

Although their South African identity was not negative, the majority agreed it was not important. What was important was the practicing of their Zulu culture which reinforced their *Zuluness*

## So what does this tell us?

To conclude, these results tell us four main things:

- Identities which are more *embedded* within the individual are substantially more positive. For example these individuals believe they are born with their '*Africaness*' which therefore means that regardless of their location within black communities in the African continent they will be able 'fit in.' Reflecting the strong result with the African community shown in the graph
- Top down approaches to identity construction through nation building processes are more *artificial*, not as concrete and therefore subject to change
- Local communities provide a secure place where local cultures can be practiced and understood, therefore a place which *sustains their* ethnic identity
- That individuals engage in multiple identities which are constructed and contested over time and place