

## Chapter 7

### Coercion, consent and contradictions

The stakeholders of the Jewish community schools in Johannesburg experienced the restructuring of the schools as top-down, coercive and incoherent. The process was perceived to be too ambitious and too rushed to ensure substantive and sustainable change. Some financial relief was achieved, but at great human and educational cost. Teachers' and parents' initial consent to the restructuring, which was based on a reasonable sense of agreement owing to the financial crisis, was mostly withdrawn. Subsequently, the management resorted to crude coercion and manipulation. This mode of the change process transformed the community into a "community of suspicious minds" (Hargreaves, 2003). Community members' reputations, achievements and worth were put to shame while the rest of the community looked away, trying to *'keep themselves as clean as possible and not get involved'*.<sup>1</sup> This created division, polarisation and conflict – all ingredients of a low-trust community. As my inquiry tracked the first two years of the restructuring, I recorded the feelings of fear, confusion, blame, guilt, resignation, depression and general negativity that existed in the school community. Yet it was evident that compliance was achieved not only by threats and bullying but also by consent and support. As I explored what I perceived to be an irrational process devoid of integrity, and as I recorded respondents' attempts to reconcile and submit to it, I kept on wondering: How could such control over the community be exerted and sustained?

When I concluded the fieldwork for this research, after the Board conference in March 2003, the general perception was that the CEO was in total control. The newly elected honorary officers were chosen by him to replace the formerly defiant Board members. Nevertheless, a few months later the CEO was suspended after parents managed to organise themselves and demand action.<sup>2</sup> However, in spite of the fact that the CEO's control transpired to be short-lived, the episode became a focal point for understanding the relationship between the global and the local, and how global processes articulated with a whole range of local factors associated with the history and characteristics of the community and its educational system, as well as with local and institutional social/political/economic conditions.

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<sup>1</sup> Teacher voice. Journal entry, 25 September 2001. [Document 55:73 (9224:9231). Codes: Teachers - adapting to change].

<sup>2</sup> While there could have been other forces at play, this was beyond the scope of my research.

The aim of this chapter is therefore to explicate these global, local and institutional factors that both enabled and constrained the restructuring process and sustained the control over the community. Some aspects were already mentioned in the previous chapters, such as the lack of quality lay leadership, the reasons for the lack of organised parents' resistance, the hegemony of the managerial discourse, etc. These determining factors will be revisited in this chapter in order to explain and theorise the restructuring of the Johannesburg Jewish community schools.

### *Global factors*

It is clear that globalisation has impacted in a variety of ways on the restructuring process. Indeed, the Jewish community schools became the arena wherein two processes associated with globalisation played themselves out: the one force pulled the schools towards market solutions and managerialism, while the other force intensified the surge for identity and community. Both forces offered stakeholders rules and parameters to combat uncertainty, failure and confusion. The evidence strongly indicates that the dominant position of corporate principles and religious extremism had shaped the worldviews of many stakeholders. The managerial discourse provided the initial allure of the process by demonstrating the failure of bureau-professionalism, setting fixed boundaries and clear targets, promoting the delivery of more efficient services mimicking business practices, and offering information technology as value-added to education thereby appealing to parents' competitive impulse in a knowledge society. The hegemonic position of managerial discourses restricted the parameters within which the solutions for the financial and administrative crises were sought. However, the democratising aspect of the managerial discourse, such as its claim for diversity and responsiveness to parents' demands, was counteracted by the parallel force of the community. At the same time the surge for community was also conflictual as it was expressed by the intensification of a particular interpretation of Jewish identity that undermined the community. My inquiry demonstrates that as the managerial rhetoric failed to deliver on its promises, the restructuring tended to increasingly rely on religious discourses. Problems with implementation were therefore not solved by appealing to managerialism and its attendant corporate culturalism but rather by resorting to religious concepts such as repentance, the avoidance of slander or "evil tongue" (*lashon ha'ra*), obedience, respect for authority and the threat that *sin'at chinam*

(groundless hatred) would result in the destruction of the community; this despite the fact that the one-off attempt to gain the support of the stakeholders by corporate culturalism – as was the case with the *bosberaad* – proved to be relatively successful. In fact, as the evidence demonstrated, there was a strong sense among stakeholders that corporate culturalism was the “right” way for organisational recovery. This was expressed in recurring demands to demonstrate consultation and to “bring people in” even without real participation. The teacher’s voice quoted below describes the longing to be “captured in the discourse”. It confirms that even those who resisted the mode of change in the Jewish community schools were seeking solutions for the failed managerial process within the managerial discourse. Accommodation, nevertheless, was made to the religious impulse:

Well, I think the first thing would be to get in a total outside motivational company that is going to come in and look at everything. OK, not just financially, not just educationally, even the dynamics of the staff, you know. Some groups haven’t changed within themselves for 20 years. There must be something there that is wrong. I know I see a very good advert on TV about how they can compare animals in the wild to staff members. You need to have something like that that will actually work through the staff from top to bottom ... take us to a place for a *Shabbaton* (weekend) and include in that OK a *Shabbat* if that is what they want, to make it religious, I don’t believe that it has to be a *Shabbat* but that’s my own personal feeling. But take us away somewhere where you are away from the school environment and you can actually work through it ...<sup>3</sup>

The question is to what extent globalisation was mediated by local circumstances. The evidence suggests selective accommodation of global processes. It is apparent that only global influences that coincided with local power relations were adopted. Thus, the Ultra Orthodox (global) religious groups and their views of Jewish identity were accepted, while the “politics of difference” – as articulated by the Israeli Task Force and by modern Orthodox rabbis such as Jonathan Sacks (2003) – was rejected. The global discourse of decentralisation was supported by the national context and by the democratic rhetoric in South Africa, yet it was rejected by the religious and financial powers in the community. My investigation therefore supports the view that:

... there is no essential determinacy to the ways in which globalisation processes work, since for various globalisation pressures there are also sites of resistance and counter movements (Taylor et al, 1997:72).

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<sup>3</sup> Manager, 17 July 2002. [Document 35:73 (1357:1392). Codes: KD - need to be improved].

### *National factors*

The backdrop to the restructuring of the Jewish community schools was the broader restructuring of the South African educational system, which carried remarkably similar managerial discourses such as strong management, efficiency, decentralisation, outcomes, accountability, corporate governance, parents' rights, etc. The national education system after the transition to democracy became an arena for policy development and policy reviews under a stringent macroeconomic regime, which prized performativity (Jansen, 2001a). This echoed the global trend for marketisation and managerialism. At the same time, the transition from an apartheid to a post-apartheid national education system generated many uncertainties regarding the status and place of independent schools, which have been increasingly exposed to legislation on three fronts: education, labour and taxation (Hofmeyr & Lee, 2003). In the aftermath of September 11 there were discussions as to whether faith-based schools could spread tolerance and understanding of others' beliefs (Jansen, 2002; Chidester, 2002).<sup>4</sup> Moreover, as South Africa embraced national identity, it had discouraged the promotion of other national identities, such as Zionism. Instead, it promoted multiculturalism and religion. The schools had to adjust to a different mindset and to numerous new policies, such as: outcomes-based education (OBE); the new Further Education and Training (FET) band for grades 10–12; the introduction of exit examinations from the General Education and Training (GET) band at Grade 9; the reduction of matric subjects from 124 to 35 – whereby both Hebrew and Jewish Studies would no longer be offered as matriculation subjects;<sup>5</sup> and, above all, the introduction of religion education instead of religious education – whereby the right of a school to practice religion was perceived as undemocratic and a form of exclusion. This policy eventually applied only to public schools.<sup>6</sup> The impact of the avalanche of these policies and others and the confusion that they generated, together with the internal restructuring, was succinctly expressed by one manager who commented that *'we are running around like chickens without heads'*.<sup>7</sup>

It is beyond the scope of this research to do justice to the complexities of the South African national context. There is no doubt, however, that the transition from apartheid to democracy impacted on the experiences of all education communities.

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<sup>4</sup> Holier than thou. *The Teacher*, January 2002.

<sup>5</sup> Learners may be limited in choice of subjects. *The Star*, 2 October 2002.

<sup>6</sup> National Policy on Religion and Education. <http://www.gov.za/reports/2003/religion.pdf>.

<sup>7</sup> Journal entry. [Document 55:332 (387:394). Codes: Curriculum 2005, OBE].

The uncertainties that were produced by such changing social, political and education contexts left the Jewish community with feelings of isolation, disengagement and powerlessness. This was coupled with the uncertainties produced by the institutional, local and global pressures, including the leadership and financial crises at the schools, the demographic changes in the Jewish community in South Africa, the political conflicts in Israel and the increased worldwide incidence of anti-Semitism (described in Chapter 3). All these heightened the tensions and anxiety in the community and generated a yearning for stability and security. Nevertheless, it is clear that the manner in which the community reacted to these tensions was shaped by its history and unique character, as well as by the power relations in the community.

### *Local factors*

While global and national influences were clearly implicated in the analysis of the restructuring of the Jewish community schools, most stakeholders understood and experienced the process at local or institutional levels. The following sections identify different aspects of the local/institutional context that shaped the implementation process, and determined the response to national and global pressures. Among the enabling factors were the financial recovery and the feeling that the schools were saved from closure by the managerial restructuring in contrast to the perceived failure of the previous regime; the micropolitics of schools which allowed some factions within the school community to benefit from the change process; the community response to charismatic leadership; the hegemonic position of the managerial discourse; the fears and insecurities of the community in times of political and social instability; the endemic lack of debate; and the absence of a sustainable and organised counterforce. But above all, the restructuring was supported by a power bloc that included financial and religious forces in the community.

### *The financial recovery*

The financial turnaround was undeniably a major factor that generated strong support for the restructuring from a community that, owing to the political, social and economic transformation in South Africa, had to rely on its own resources to support its education system:

The loss had been up to R40 million; now they are down to R30 million; and now they are in surplus. ... They are running in surplus without government money. Only because of him.<sup>8</sup>

... in terms of the funding of the organisation, he's done a remarkable job in the space of one year. That's not to say it hasn't been without pain, and that's not to say that there are no problems which have arisen because of it. But money is finite, unfortunately, and that was the problem he had to work with.<sup>9</sup>

[The CEO deserves the credit] for restoring the King David system's viability and making significant inroads into its debt-burden.<sup>10</sup>

The financial recovery also explained the support for, or at least the lack of resistance to, the CEO from the honorary officers of the Board who realised that they '*were legally, fiducially, responsible for the financial liability and [they] were running an insolvent company and could be held liable for that for not taking the action that directors ought to take when you run an insolvent company*'.<sup>11</sup>

Once the CEO was able to address the financial problem, the Board members felt indebted to him. According to an honorary officer that support was coupled with a certain amount of dependency:

The Board members were just too pleased to have someone who they think can rescue it and they will overlook a whole lot of other things or not question things. They don't want to offend him or the management committee (Manco) because they need him. They are too scared he will walk away and everything will be undone or that it won't be completed ... I think it is a bit of indebtedness and gratitude rather than active support. There are some people who are just fans ... rather than supporters. It is not that I think they really understand the issues ... I think they don't like controversy, they don't like debate, they don't want things to be said that will upset him or will alienate the [Manco]; they want to show their appreciation for the work being done and the success achieved on the financial side and they want to present a united front ...<sup>12</sup>

### *The perceived failure of the previous regime*

The CEO pointed to many aspects that were undeniably wrong with the system (see Chapter 3), thereby achieving consent to the proposed changes. Raising this point, Apple (2001:9) observes that the reason some people listen carefully to rightist criticism is because there are problems in the educational institutions. Criticising the CEO's tactics did not mean that there were no problems to be solved; however,

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<sup>8</sup> Community leader, 18 July 2002. [Document 23:15 (294:302). Codes: CEO - financial success].

<sup>9</sup> Lay leader, 13 August 2002. [Document 45:6 (188:201). Codes: CEO - financial success].

<sup>10</sup> Zulberg deserves praise. *SA Jewish Report*, 15–22 August 2003.

<sup>11</sup> Honorary officer, 16 July 2002. [Document 26:12 (248:320). Codes: Lay leaders - accountability].

<sup>12</sup> Honorary officer, 16 July 2002. [Document 26:33 (628:681). Codes: Lay leaders - CEO relationship].

acknowledging the problems did not mean that the solutions offered by the CEO were the correct ones.

*The dominance of the managerial discourse*

Many parents, honorary officers and donors had a background in management and accountancy. They were familiar with this managerial discourse and supported it, while they might have been less aware of the ideological transformation or the educational implications. As indicated in Chapter 5 the hegemonic position of the managerial discourse and the elevation of business concepts and corporate culture, blinded stakeholders to its negative impact on educational systems. Stakeholders therefore continued to support the restructuring, as there was “no other alternative” to the managerial solution.

*The micropolitics of schools*

As mentioned in Chapter 2, change put some people in the limelight and others in the shadows (Bascia & Hargreaves, 2000). The suggestion that there was no alternative may also be described as the desire by certain powerful people to ensure that certain things would happen because of the benefits such policies generated for them. It is evident that a number of stakeholders within the system agreed with the restructuring process, either for ideological reason, such as the Ultra Orthodox members of staff, or for political reasons, such as those members of staff who had been promoted or had become more powerful. They were therefore willing to support the restructuring and to turn a blind eye to its downside. The restructuring was therefore set within the micro-political history of the schools. Ball maintains that:

Change in school is rarely politically neutral. Interests are enhanced or threatened by change. Conflict and change are inevitably interlocked as any redistribution of power and privilege will be sought by some and resisted by others. Furthermore, change does not usually arise within a set of social relations, which have been previously untouched by competition or dissent. Advocates and opponents typically ‘dig in’ along established lines of ideological dispute (Ball, 1987:78).

The restructuring of the Jewish community schools promoted an unequal distribution of power by privileging managers who conformed to the CEO’s requirements over any stubborn managers who failed to comply. One compliant manager, for example, was able to ensure employment for two members of her family, while at the same



time other teachers were being retrenched. The Jewish Studies teachers were given a more privileged position and power, while Hebrew teachers were sidelined.

As has been mentioned in Chapter 2, during periods of restructuring there is an increase in both manipulation and micro-political activity in schools (Ozga, 2000). These on-going micro-political struggles intensified the polarisation in the school community – an “us and them” relationship developed between the managers and the teachers; between those who fell under the charisma of the CEO and those who fell out of favour:

Teachers speak about kings (principals and deputies) and peasants (the rest). [The principal] doesn't mention any vice-principals – like they are not important anymore.<sup>13</sup>

It is evident that while some middle management – such as heads of departments and vice-principals – retreated into their classrooms, a new middle management had emerged. One teacher described how she tried to forge a new role for herself and the status she felt she deserved after she was sidelined by the previous management:

I went to speak to [the CEO] – I asked him: ‘Where am I going?’ straight. And I said: ‘Is there a place for me?’ ... What has happened in the past – there were so many vice-principals. Now it's a case of reshuffling, getting rid of people as they are retrenched or retired or whatever the case may be. ... But I think whereas in the past the frustration was that somehow the teachers were doing more than anybody else – what's happened now is that everybody's got a heavy teaching load. It doesn't matter what your title is. So that's kind of balanced it a bit – but not salary-wise. I now sit in on the executive meeting. I am treated exactly like they are, but without the title.<sup>14</sup>

A power shift also took place among the lay leaders, whereby the vice-chairperson – who surrounded herself with outside corporate and business advisors – and the chairperson – who was perceived to have played a lesser role – as well as a few other executives were working with the CEO to control the school community. Other members of the Board were either ignored or were used as a sounding board for decisions made by the CEO. It was perceived that while the previous people at the Board were blamed implicitly for what had gone wrong, ‘*the new guard claimed credit for saving things*’.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Journal entry, 8 December 2001. [Document 55:136 (8253:8260). Codes: Teachers - relationship with colleagues].

<sup>14</sup> Teacher, 24 October 2002. [Document 49:3 (95:167). Codes: Middle management - loss of position].

<sup>15</sup> Honorary officer, 16 July 2002. [Document 26:12 (248:320). Codes: Lay leaders - accountability].



*The effect of charisma*

While the restructuring of the Jewish community schools drew heavily on the discourses of new managerialism with its emphasis on decentralisation, efficiency, accountability and shared goals, the evidence shows that in fact it was the deep ideological views and the personality of the CEO that shaped many choices around downsizing, efficiency and retrenchment. While not opting for individual analysis, I concur with Bottery (2000:26) that the personalities of those in power are a powerful mediating factor in determining how a general policy stance would be approached and implemented. The CEO was able to understand the managerial and ideological concepts and solutions and to play into the gaps created by the discourses. The most significant attribute of the CEO was his uncanny ability to captivate his audience. Stakeholders described it as manipulation through charisma:

When he talks – he manipulates. Half the stuff that you hear him talking, I would like to turn around to the parents and say: ‘That’s a lie. And that’s the next lie, and that’s the next lie’ ... he has an incredible way of telling a joke – winning you on his side – and telling you the good things financially ...<sup>16</sup>

There’s charisma that he can stand up and he can persuade an audience tremendously, okay. But it’s a different element of charisma. A politician has that. There can be total insincerity, but you can get up in front of people and sway the crowds. He can do that – no question. ... You know he sometimes reminds me of ... leaders of sects. They have a way of controlling people ... that they are almost brainwashed.<sup>17</sup>

If you look at the people who are working there at the Board, how they actually idolise him. He is like a king and all the people who are working for him are his puppets. You dare not, you dare not criticise one little thing; you dare not.<sup>18</sup>

He speaks very nicely. He knows what to say so people will get excited about it.<sup>19</sup>

If you listen to Eugene Terreblanche, you will believe in the policies of his party as well. I mean, [the CEO] is a good orator. My husband sums it up – he’s a con man.<sup>20</sup>

He’s a wonderful orator, so he can tell you anything, and you will believe it ... When you go to have a meeting with him ... he can talk for two hours and you won’t say one word – you won’t open your mouth. And you walk out of there, and you’ve been totally brainwashed or you are totally frustrated.<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:51 (880:895). Codes: CEO - captivating stakeholders].

<sup>17</sup> Parent, 31 January 2003. [Document 63:57 (1544:1578). Codes: CEO - captivating stakeholders].

<sup>18</sup> Manager, 26 May 2002. [Document 11:127 (688:696). Codes: CEO - captivating stakeholders].

<sup>19</sup> Community leader, 24 April 2002. [Document 15:33 (350:358). Codes: CEO - captivating stakeholders].

<sup>20</sup> Parent, 14 August 2002. [Document 40:21 (371:375). Codes: CEO - captivating stakeholders].

<sup>21</sup> Parent, 15 November 2002. [Document 44:70 (1456:1490). Codes: CEO - captivating stakeholders].

The next quotation is instructive as it shows the effect of charisma on a manager who seemed to agree with the CEO's suggestions, even though her past experience told her otherwise:

The CEO doesn't want special Jewish Studies or Hebrew teachers in the nursery schools, which I agree with. But at the same time it is very hard for a teacher who has no feeling, who has no background, to start teaching about Jewish concepts ... I don't know if it is financial – he just feels that the teachers need to be all encompassing. That a teacher, specifically in pre-school, and I agree with him, but there just aren't the staff available ... He wants there to be a lot more *Yiddishkite* (Jewish values), a lot more values; that when people walk past each other they greet each other, that we respect each other, that we treat the black staff with respect. [CH: *Does he set an example of that?*] Well you see, he is the opposite, but then I don't use him as an example; I use the theory – the philosophy is a good one.<sup>22</sup>

Charisma is an important component in religious outreach communities (Harris, 1999); it has also been an attribute of many CEOs in the corporate world, even though their “superstardom” has been in decline in recent years, as there is a growing realisation that charismatic leaders are ‘*good for the bosses, but bad for companies*’.<sup>23</sup> Charisma is also an effective local force. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the South African Jewish community had traditionally reacted well to charismatic leadership: first, because its national-ethnic identity was perceived to be based on spontaneous sentiment rather than on deep involvement in learning or intellectual argumentation; and second, because the community, with its roots in the apartheid regime, was trained to respond to a totalitarian authority structure (Kaplan, 1998a). It is therefore feasible that some members of the community reacted to the CEO as the new charismatic leader, both in terms of ideology and economics, and as someone who would rescue the community and provide it with the order it so desired.

House (1988), who studied the politics of charisma, maintains that there are advantages and disadvantages to charismatic leadership. The strength of charismatic leaders is that they can order followers to do things simply because they say so, and this control gives them greater flexibility in charting policy direction. They can advocate one policy one day and another the next, with minimal cost to their authority. Many stakeholders experienced this aspect of charisma as they watched the

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<sup>22</sup> Manager, 25 June 2002. [Document 17:8 (209:231). Codes: Stakeholders - supporting the CEO - contradictory discourse].

<sup>23</sup> The curse of charisma. *Economist*, 364(6289), 9 July 2002.

CEO initiating policies, and then changing them or retracting them without *'thinking that he's lost face'*.<sup>24</sup>

Charisma also has serious limitations. First, the extent of charisma – not everyone will find a particular person to be charismatic. Second, people who incite strong positive emotions in some people also incite extremely negative emotions in others, which means that charismatic leaders can expect an intense backlash. Third, there is a potential lack of accountability because it is difficult to call a charismatic leader to account for his/her absolute certainty. Fourth, charismatic leaders have a certain amount of endemic disorganisation. This style of administration, however, seems to be deliberate rather than an oversight; by setting up rivalries and confusion among their subordinates, charismatic leaders seek to ensure control and force others to be dependent on them. House (ibid) therefore argues that in the educational context charisma by itself is not enough to restructure or transform school systems. It can mobilise, but it cannot organise. In order to sustain charisma it is important to have supportive structures, which the CEO was trying to build by bringing in, and promoting, those who complied with his demands. As mentioned before, charismatic leaders unintentionally do more harm than good because they usually provide episodic improvement followed by frustrated or despondent dependency (Meyer, 2003; Fullan, 2001).

The stakeholders of the Jewish community schools experienced all these features. The CEO's charisma caused divisions and polarisation; while some respondents glorified him, others demonised him. The evidence suggests that dependency was also produced. And indeed when the CEO left the organisation, he left a vacuum that the stakeholders seemed to fill by reinventing the past or by reinforcing authoritarianism. (This could be a topic for further research.)

#### *Lack of organised resistance*

Support was not only achieved by consent but also by the absence of organised opposition and a viable alternative. The evidence points to the difficulty of the parents to organise themselves as a cohesive group. This confirms Noddings's (1996) claim that a community cannot be created merely on the basis of a rejection of another ideology. A community needs to have a definite core that would hold its members

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<sup>24</sup> Manager, 8 October 2002. [Document 34:6 (168:182). Codes: CEO - reversing decisions].

together. The parents were relatively successful in creating committees, but they were not able to overcome the diverse interests that they represented or to establish a community with a leader strong enough to lead it. While this did happen temporarily at Victory Park when the community bonded together to save the campus from closure, there was not enough impetus to initiate a similar process to take over the management of the schools.

The Board members, who had the constitutional rights to dismiss the CEO or at least to demand to see his contract, were also not unified and there was *‘a lot of political play going on ... and “divide and rule”*’.<sup>25</sup> Even those who resisted the CEO were not working together as they represented different political and ideological stands. A defiant member of the Board was therefore reluctant to ally himself with another member who was pushing a liberal agenda. Interestingly, it was against the latter that most members of the Board were eventually reunited to support the CEO at the Board conference, and to object to any constitutional change that might take power away from the Board and devolve it to the schools:

Let’s say there was a contentious issue ... we got an onslaught from Victory Park to say they want to open the schools to all races ... It’s very simple to call an extraordinary Board meeting, and get all those old people ... and say, ‘Come on guys – listen, let’s put our heads together. We are not going to open King David to the blacks – we are going to keep it solely Jewish, and whoever’s now asking for that, let’s stand as a united force’. So although ... [the Board] is a lopsided body, it’s a useful lopsided body.<sup>26</sup>

Lack of resistance was also identified in the broader community with the dearth of community leaders with high status to interfere in the process of the restructuring of the Jewish community schools:

If you’d asked me that 20 years ago – if something like this had occurred ... there would have been personalities within the community, even if they weren’t sitting on the Board, who were strong enough as leaders of the community. I don’t believe that that exists today at all. “At all” might be a bit harsh. There are people for whom those issues are important enough ... .<sup>27</sup>

As already mentioned in Chapter 3, the leadership of the Jewish community in Johannesburg in the 1990s was mostly affiliated to the Orthodox establishment with Ultra Orthodox undertones. The Reform movement was depleting both in terms of

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<sup>25</sup> Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:44 (764:817). Codes: Lay leaders - CEO relationship].

<sup>26</sup> Lay leader, 20 August 2002. [Document 41:7 (173:238). Codes: Lay leaders - life members].

<sup>27</sup> Other stakeholder, 15 July 2002. [Document 25:54 (1221:1230). Codes: Jewish community leaders - forsake schools; Resistance].

numbers and leadership. Organisational representation of secular Zionism was almost non-existent. Many intellectuals and liberal thinkers had left the country during the apartheid era; others tended to be excluded from any communal establishment, regardless of their political or religious ideology:

Even if you try and get into those Jewish communal institutions as an Orthodox right-wing Zionist man who's not a businessman, you won't get past a particular stage ... Maybe they will tolerate a lawyer or two. But I mean, if you are an academic or, heaven forbid ... a manual worker, or an artist, or I think even a medical doctor, then don't interfere in what the big people are doing ... because they know better.<sup>28</sup>

There was no counterforce, therefore, to oppose the Orthodoxy's takeover of the community and the schools:

In a conference that we had in Israel last year with all the rabbis, the rabbis were told that there are no leaders in the community. There is a gap. And if the rabbis will not fill the gap the community will have no leadership.<sup>29</sup>

It was also perceived that the liberal, secular or non-observant Orthodox Jews who were left in the community had little Jewish knowledge to understand or debate Orthodox and Ultra Orthodox ideologies that were being presented as the authentic type of Judaism. These ideologies had therefore begun to forge the “common sense” of the community and the schools:

The lay leadership in the main doesn't have the Jewish knowledge to understand what you and me are talking about. They don't see the broader heritage of Judaism, they see [the Ultra Orthodox] people as authentic, and frankly don't have the courage or the intellectual awareness to do anything about it. And so sadly you get the school reflecting the community and the community reflecting its right-wing tendencies and more and more going into the ghetto in Johannesburg and wherever they are ...<sup>30</sup>

The few community leaders who opposed the restructuring of the schools and their shift to the “right” complained softly so as not to “destabilise the community” and perhaps their precarious positions within it. It therefore appears that the narrative of the “homogenous community” had contributed to silencing the opposition to the restructuring and to facilitate a further shift to the “right”.

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<sup>28</sup> Parent, 8 November 2002. [Document 32:25 (838:888). Codes: Jewish community - leadership].

<sup>29</sup> Community leader, 24 April 2002. [Document 15:15 (202:225). Codes: Jewish community - leadership].

<sup>30</sup> Community leader, 3 June 2003. [Document 73:6 (255:262). Codes: Jewish community - leadership].

*Uncertainties and fear*

As emphasised throughout this dissertation, the restructuring was motivated by “manufactured uncertainties” as well as by a multitude of varied fears: fear of losing livelihood or position; fear of not having a suitable school at which to educate the community’s children; fear of assimilation and intermarriage; fear of left liberals who wanted to open the schools to gentile pupils; fear of anti-Semitism and especially the insecurities produced by living in a pro-Palestinian state; and fear of being without the CEO. All these fears had kept resistance at bay and had generated a sense of compliance to the process. One should not underestimate these fears:

There is anti-Semitism today at a level that I wouldn’t have believed was possible. I thought it was history, that it would never happen again, not in my lifetime. It was something my parents knew. There was the Holocaust. About two-and-a-half years ago [I thought that the] Jews are affluent, they are generally doing well [and that] there is no explicit anti-Semitism ... and it has completely turned around. So today, I am experiencing 1938 here, and I was in Durban. I have never recovered from that ... I was terrified. I wasn’t terrified physically, but I was horrified at what I saw. And it has just gotten worse from then ...<sup>31</sup>

Yet these fears were spread and exploited. In the CEO’s speeches and letters, the enemies were always present. This is exemplified even in a reply letter to the pupils of Victory Park who complained about being excluded from a tour to Israel. The CEO wrote, *inter alia*:

When one is excluded, or does not get one’s way, it is not an excuse to try and jeopardise others ... I do believe that unity is strength. In these difficult times we have enough enemies challenging our existence ...<sup>32</sup>

The fears of the left liberals and Reform Jews were related to the attempt to decentralise the Board. It seems therefore that while most respondents were attracted to new managerialism and to the jargon of accountability, efficiency and shared goals, the notion of decentralisation contradicts the local emphasis of community unity and the values (as well as the power) that its leaders would have liked to preserve:

But we have a very big threat from the left wing. The left wing wants to open up, wants to split the Board up and let the schools run themselves ... They want to have a separate board, to divest the assets of the Board to the schools, which they can’t do because it’s a community school. Who’s going to do subsidies? There is a whole major issue of left wing Reform guys who want to bring in constitutional changes and this is a major problem. And as the Chief Rabbi said in our last meeting, he said that if this comes through it comes through as a death knell ...<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Other stakeholder, 6 March 2003. [Document 67:22 (536:559). Codes: Fear of anti-Semitism].

<sup>32</sup> Letter to the Editor. *SA Jewish Report*, 2–9 November 2001.

<sup>33</sup> Honorary officer, 7 March 2003. [Document 65:27 (857:873). Codes: Fear of left radical].

*Lack of open debate*

Throughout the restructuring there was a deliberate attempt to obscure any information and to curtail any open debate about the tensions and conflicts at the schools. One example was the refusal to allow the Israeli Task Force report to be distributed to parents and teachers. Another example was the attempt to restrict the topics to be discussed at PTA meetings or the distribution of these meetings' minutes. The CEO usually refused to take any questions after his presentations to parents.

There is evidence to suggest that there was also a restriction on what was published in the community's weekly newspaper – the *SA Jewish Report*. There was one attempt to publish an article that explored the diverse opinions within the KD community.<sup>34</sup> The article did not produce debate, but rather rage among certain community leaders who were perceived to discourage the future publication of similar articles. It is therefore argued that freedom of speech has not been promoted in the Jewish community; not only on the topic of education but also on other political topics which might be in disagreement with the “community's view”.<sup>35</sup>

Furthermore, as mentioned in Chapter 3, this lack of debate seemed to be endemic to the community at large. It is perceived that critical articles usually generate defensiveness and blame but no constructive engagement with their content.

It is very hard in this community to stimulate open debate about anything, anything at all. If the newspaper publishes stuff on Israel – left, right, centre, whatever it is – very seldom would it get a genuine engagement with the issues. What will come will be a message from all sorts of directions: Why does the newspaper publish such provocative stuff? So there is a general atmosphere here – and I think to some extent it has always existed in this community – of an inability or unwillingness to have a good debate about anything, not just education. There is intolerance for debate. It has become worse over the years. It was bad enough during apartheid, and there you could sort of understand some of the reasons more logically ... . There is also the kind of personalities who run the community, from the Board of Deputies side and the Board of Education side or the newspaper board, they don't actually encourage debate. The leadership does not encourage debate. Traditionally, the leadership of this community is very authoritarian ... .<sup>36</sup>

While every newspaper operates within boundaries, the *SA Jewish Report* operates within narrow political and religious boundaries, thereby shaping and being shaped by the narrative of the “homogenous community”, as well as by the power bloc that controls the consensus.

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<sup>34</sup> Diverse views: parents, educators, administrators. *SA Jewish Report*, 1–8 March 2002.

<sup>35</sup> Parent, 8 August 2002. [Document 32:22 (711:761). Codes: SA Jewish Report].

<sup>36</sup> Other stakeholder, 6 March 2003. [Document 67:1 (27:59). Codes: Jewish community - lack of knowledge/debate; SA Jewish Report].



*Power bloc*<sup>37</sup>

The restructuring of the KD schools was supported by a power block in the broader community which comprised three main forces: the Chief Rabbi and the Orthodox establishment; the business and the financial elite of the community, and the growing Ultra Orthodox community which interlinked with the other two forces. This power bloc, which supported the employment of the CEO, kept rescuing him whenever his policies were resisted. The aim of the next section is therefore to identify and describe the various members of this alliance and to explore how stakeholders understood and experienced the power bloc's continual support for the restructuring.

The Chief Rabbi and the Orthodox establishment

The Chief Rabbi is the honorary president of the Board, even though historically he hardly ever attended Board meetings or became involved in the management of the schools. His participation was usually confined to the Board's conferences or special meetings. The evidence shows that he was involved with the restructuring from its inception when he endorsed the CEO's appointment. While the Chief Rabbi's role during the process was not clear to my respondents, it was perceived that he had '*a lot of influence on the CEO and ... on the vice-chairperson*'.<sup>38</sup> As the restructuring evolved and resistance mounted, the Chief Rabbi began to take a more active role by attending selected Board meetings – sometimes to ask for reconciliation, and sometimes in order to silence opposition.

As mentioned earlier, the unconditional support that the Chief Rabbi continued to give the CEO – despite the stakeholders' attempts to alert him to the autocratic manner in which it was being implemented – frustrated many stakeholders and increased their feelings of isolation. They began to fear that there was no one to turn to:

I remember sitting and saying to different people: 'Surely there's got to be somebody who we can speak to'. And people were saying there was no one. Someone would say: 'What about the Chief Rabbi?' And: 'The Chief Rabbi's involved in the process'. And I know if anything goes to the Chief Rabbi, the Chief Rabbi would immediately go off to [the CEO]. There's no sense of confidentiality.<sup>39</sup>

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<sup>37</sup> The notion of a power bloc, or the "rightist alliance", is borrowed from Apple (2001, 1996).

<sup>38</sup> Lay leader, 28 October 2002. [Document 30:29 (783:787). Codes: Chief Rabbi].

<sup>39</sup> Manager, 15 October 2002. [Document 39:17 (582:590). Codes: Chief Rabbi].

Stakeholders struggled to understand that support. Some respondents maintained that the Chief Rabbi was grateful that the CEO had saved the Jewish community schools from closure, while others argued that the Chief Rabbi was being conned by the CEO or that he was pushed by powerful people in the community to support the CEO. The citations below describe various attempts by the respondents to explain the perceived failure of the Chief Rabbi to protect the school community:

The Chief Rabbi has sold himself totally out to [the CEO]. ... Whether it's a – if it's a money issue and those things – it's blasphemous to say – but I don't know. If it's all the people that are the monied people in town that have bullied certain people, and therefore they won't change, because again – I think most of it revolves around this pecking order, and money, and power and those sorts of issues.<sup>40</sup>

The Chief Rabbi will not resist the idea of making Jewish Education more intense; he is a Chief Rabbi after all. Knowing him I am sure that a lot of things that are happening in the Jewish community in South Africa are not to his personal taste – moving towards extremism or separatism – but on the whole if you are the Chief Rabbi you would say it is going fantastically. He would say that it is fine, that it is amazing what is going on ...<sup>41</sup>

I think [that the Chief Rabbi] could very well be tied up ... on a political level. I think also that he thought ... 'Ah, here's the solution, and the solution must now work'. And they weren't prepared to look at the solution again and say: 'Hold on a second. Maybe it's not working ...'.<sup>42</sup>

Other respondents tried to explain the Chief Rabbi's attitude by looking at the political situation within his community. The perception was that the Chief Rabbi, who was usually seen as being modern Orthodox, had to contend with a rabbinate that had become increasingly more extreme.<sup>43</sup> It was perceived that this process was not only local, but rather a global phenomenon whereby modern Orthodox rabbis – such as the Chief Rabbi of Britain, Jonathan Sacks<sup>44</sup> – need to look constantly “over their right shoulder” to accommodate the more extreme members of their communities and to prove to them that they are *'serious Orthodox Jews, because serious Orthodox Jews go to the Yeshivot and they don't go to Cambridge University'*.<sup>45</sup>

Other respondents maintained that the Chief Rabbi used to complain about the lack of Jewish knowledge among King David graduates who had spent 15 years at the

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<sup>40</sup> Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:46 (803:817). Codes: Chief Rabbi].

<sup>41</sup> Other stakeholder, 9 December 2002. [Document 22:8 (165:181). Codes: Chief Rabbi].

<sup>42</sup> Manager, 15 October 2002. [Document 39:21 (622:652). Codes: Chief Rabbi].

<sup>43</sup> Lay leader, 28 October 2002. [Document 30:33 (830:845). Codes: Chief Rabbi].

<sup>44</sup> The respondent refers specifically to an incident whereby Rabbi Jonathan Sacks had to withdraw from publication and change some comments in his book (2003), *The Dignity of Difference*, in response to an Ultra Orthodox faction in his community who described the book as heresy.

<sup>45</sup> Parent, 8 November 2002. [Document 32:33 (1257:1293). Codes: Chief Rabbi].

schools.<sup>46</sup> As mentioned in Chapter 3, the Chief Rabbi was quite vocal in his objection to the schools' emphasis on marks and achievements, while, in his opinion, less emphasis was given to Jewish values and Jewish morality at a time when these were most needed in order to cope with the uncertainties of a changing world. While the Chief Rabbi and the modern Orthodox establishment might oppose hard indoctrination – such as that used by *Ba'al Teshuva* movement – authoritarianism is not uncommon in religious communities wherein diversity needs to be controlled and relativism is not accepted. The Orthodox establishment would therefore support the right of the schools to fix their level of religiosity as a blueprint, and to guide pupils and parents in that direction.<sup>47</sup> It would not be a matter of the majority of parents deciding what they wanted the school to be; where religion is concerned, democracy is a relative concept. While the religion–democracy debate was not a new tension among Board members (as was discussed in Chapter 3) it is feasible that having a strong CEO as the head of the organisation who could control the opposition, eventually gave the Orthodox establishment the upper hand in a debate that had begun in 1928. The managerial change therefore became a tool to resolve the religion–democracy conflict:

[The CEO's] feelings ... are that we are not a democratic institution. We are a Jewish day school with a Board, which is elected, and that Board makes decisions. Parents should know what the school is all about before they send their children there. And just like you read an organisation's constitution before you decide to join ... you decide whether this is a good school or a bad school to send your kids to. We don't ask the community to decide what kind of school. It's not a democratic school in the sense that every Jewish parent has a stake holding ... The Board does not ask the stakeholders, who are the people who pay for the education, what they would like it to do. If you had to propose to the parents of the school to take a vote on whether or not to accept non-Jewish children at the school ... I think that decision might be different to the decision taken by the Board. So it's not totally a client-orientated kind of school.<sup>48</sup>

Moreover, with the help of the CEO the Orthodox establishment won the “broadly national–traditional” dispute and managed to have it changed to “Orthodox Zionist”, thereby clearly redefining the borders of the community. The means to achieve that end were deceitful, even though one respondent was unsure as to who deceived whom:

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<sup>46</sup> Other stakeholder, 20 December 2001. [Document 62:11 (516:524). Codes: Chief Rabbi].

<sup>47</sup> Community leader, 28 January 2003. [Document 60:16 (433:437). Codes: KD - reason for attending the schools].

<sup>48</sup> Other stakeholder, 8 November 2002. [Document 50:5 (207:310). Codes: Process - creating a vision].

[The CEO] came and asked the rabbis to support him at the [Board] conference. [The Chief Rabbi was also there.] The rabbis were very enthusiastic about it. Rabbi... said to them to be careful and not to fall into a trap, [the CEO] has got his own agenda and it has nothing to do with religion ...<sup>49</sup>

The rabbis, nevertheless, also had their own agenda. For them the coercive CEO was instrumental in resolving the Orthodox-Reform Judaism conflict. In a letter to all the *shuls*, the chairman of the Rabbinical Association advised them that each *shul* was entitled to have one to six delegates to vote at the conference. He therefore appealed to them to send their full complement of delegates and to ensure that the voters would choose only delegates that belonged to Orthodox *shuls*. The CEO helped by registering over 40 new affiliates to the Board two weeks before the election at the conference, even though legally they did not comply with all the demands for affiliation. The obedient new delegates had clear instructions what to vote for and why:

Well, besides the fact that most of our congregants, at least in the mainstream *shuls*, have children at King David and as rabbis, we should be taking an interest and making a contribution towards enhancing their *chinuch* (education), this conference is particularly important. There are some very vocal and well-connected members of the Reform temples who are making a concerted effort to get elected to the Board at this conference. They have a very specific agenda, which will *chas v'sholom* (God forbid) set back the cause of *Torah*. You can help in a simple but significant way ...<sup>50</sup>

And indeed, a few minutes before the election for the executive committee, the hall filled up with many Ultra Orthodox and Orthodox rabbis who voted-in the constitutional changes and elected the new Board members, as described in the Prologue.

In sum, it seems the Orthodox establishment, represented by the Chief Rabbi as an active player in the restructuring, had a few reasons to support the process, namely: the perceived failure of the schools to instil their notion of Jewish values; their wish to define the schools as Orthodox schools and to guard them from any changes that the South African transformation to democracy might bring into the community; and to win a long-standing battle with Reform Judaism and secular Zionism regarding the ideological base of the schools. The paradox is that they could have won it with a simple show of hands. By defining the borders of the community the Orthodox establishment was able to choose the parameters within which Jewish

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<sup>49</sup> Community Leader, 9 April 2003. [Document 74:2 (88:117). Codes: Chief Rabbi].

<sup>50</sup> An urgent message to all *Chaverim* (friends) from Rabbi Yossi Goldman, Chairman of the SA Rabbinical Association, undated.

education would be provided, thereby aspiring for the creation of a defined, unified and exclusive community.

This brings to mind Professor Adar's comment when he observed the schools in 1965:<sup>51</sup>

I cannot rid myself of the unfortunate impression that public figures from different groups tend to project all their political and ideological arguments on to the field of education, to the extent that any educational discussion turns into a reflection of the various party trends within the small Jewish community (Adar, 1965:20 translated from the Hebrew).

### The business and the financial elite

I include in this category the donors, businesses or banks that had historically supported the schools and could have influenced the process. While reliable information was not available, there is evidence to suggest that donations did begin to come in as soon as the restructuring process took place. Moreover, there was certainly some direct support as banks donated money or expertise to ensure the success of certain policies, such as the graduation ceremony and the CEO–staff relationship (e.g. the *bosberaad*).

A few explanations were forwarded to explain this support. First, as already mentioned in Chapter 3, donors became frustrated as the schools were constantly in debt despite the financial assistance. They were perceived to be interested in having a '*tight rein on finance*'.<sup>52</sup> Once they had found the solution they gave it their full support whatever the consequences:

[The chairman of the bank] tends to support [his] own protégé ... He comes from a point of view of financial survival or financial disappearance. And from his perspective [the CEO] has done a great job ... . The school still exists on a financial basis. But you see, the guys at [the bank] were only brought in from a financial survival point of view and if they say he's good, they will say he's good because he did what they wanted him to do. But ... you've got to look beyond that. You've got to look at the whole heart and soul of a school.<sup>53</sup>

Second, it was suggested that some donors had a personal interest in sustaining a process that promoted their wives (such as in the case of the vice-chairperson or the human resources manager). It was therefore perceived that community members would not oppose the donors (or their wives) as many were dependent on these financial institutions for their livelihood:

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<sup>51</sup> See Chapter 3.

<sup>52</sup> Teacher, 4 November 2002. [Document 19:22 (465:472). Codes: Banks - support to CEO].

<sup>53</sup> Parent, 31 January 2003. [Document 63:33 (777:813). Codes: Banks - support to CEO]

One idea I've got, for example, is [human resources officer] working on the Board. [Her husband] is the chairman of a [bank]. He is a big donor. Well the minute [the bank] is supporting the restructuring, most people in town are dependent on [the bank] – for some sort of area in their business. They don't want to lose it. [A financial institution] is a very big player [A director of this institution is the vice-chairperson's husband]. The minute you get enough of the big players financially involved, then other people will become scared to argue, because they will be – not only pushed out of the Board, but they become non-players in the business world, if you need those sorts of people.<sup>54</sup>

Third, it was perceived that businesses and corporations had to support education so as to exhibit some social morality and responsibility, as well as to ensure the economic continuity of the community:

The bank supports the Jewish school because this is where they are getting their future actuaries and accountants who will be happy to do business with the bank. This is where the bank's money will be made in the future.<sup>55</sup>

Fourth, there were players among the financial elite who supported the ideological shift to the right either because they themselves had become more religious, or because of the historical association between rabbis and business people. Many successful firms in Johannesburg provide their staff with a weekly lesson given by a rabbi.

There's a kind of mutually ... reinforcing thing very often between the businessmen and the rabbis. And there's a kind of "deal" which works for both of them – which is the rabbi's get to decide on the religious stuff, and you have the businessman controlling the secular – well, not the secular – the communal stuff.<sup>56</sup>

Some respondents viewed this mutual relationship in a negative way, whereby the Ultra Orthodox manipulates business people by filling their '*sort of spiritual hole*'.<sup>57</sup> The following quotation illustrates how one respondent perceived the restructuring of the Jewish community schools as a type of alliance between the businessmen and Ultra Orthodoxy:

These *charedim* are brilliant with the princes of this community. They aren't interested in you and me; they are interested in people with bank balances. So, they essentially feel their way into the affections of the rich, who get status and [respect] from that, and then the rich think to themselves 'My goodness, if we can solve the financial crisis at the school we don't have to give more money'. And who better than [the CEO] who did very well with his private college?<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>54</sup> Manager, 16 October 2002. [Document 21:45 (790:802). Codes: Banks - support to CEO].

<sup>55</sup> Parent voice. Journal entry. [Document 55:280 (66:70). Codes: Banks - support to CEO].

<sup>56</sup> Parent, 8 November 2002. [Document, 32:25 (838:888). Codes: Business - support to the restructuring].

<sup>57</sup> Lay leader, 28 October 2002. [Document 30:9 (370:515). Codes: Jewish community - receptive to religiosity].

<sup>58</sup> Community leader, 3 June 2003. [Document 73:3 (115:145). Codes: Jewish community - leadership].

### The Ultra Orthodoxy

As mentioned in Chapter 3, many of the rabbis even in the mainstream Orthodox synagogues identified with the Ultra Orthodox communities. The rabbis were mostly perceived to be young, bright, energetic and charismatic. The perception was that:

The left is withering away ... and that the power in this community has shifted to the Ultra Orthodox Rabbinical establishment ... And if you go to some of the *shiurim* (lessons) in the little *shtetls* ... you will find that they are full of young people. It's not a bunch of old people sitting; they are young dynamic lawyers, doctors and architects. All sorts of people, intelligent, articulate people are joining this group. They have the money and the power. So the cream of this community is going in that direction.<sup>59</sup>

In spite of their relatively small numbers, the Ultra Orthodox voice is vociferous, and their worldview began to slowly occupy the common sense of many community members. The latter had very little Jewish knowledge to debate the issues brought up by the Ultra Orthodox adherents (whose Jewish knowledge is also debated by some), or were just indifferent to the religious authority not realising that the education system socialises and produces the next generation, which will reinforce this *charedi* worldview. Furthermore, secular Jews in Johannesburg did not have any other ideology to follow; they therefore tended to follow the “rightist alliance”:

If you've got a situation in which people don't feel that strongly about these things anyway, then small groups of people can control the whole thing. I think that's the reality you sit with. I mean the *charedi* – the Ultra Orthodox ... they are not much more than 10% either – so there are 80% in the middle who will go along with all this stuff because they are quite ignorant and they don't want to be accused of rocking the boat by people who are the “real Jews”.<sup>60</sup>

Modern religious fundamentalism often cloaks itself in the language and authority of traditional faith. The appeal of the Ultra Orthodox movement in South Africa, especially *Ohr Sameach*, is that they give the impression that they are the only authentic Jews who keep the narrative of the “imagined” community, that is, the *Mitnagdim*/Zionist/Orthodox/homogenous community. While the *Mitnagdim* and the Orthodox ingredients are evident, the Zionist element is not that clear. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the movement has a strong emphasis on *Torah* learning, uncompromising adherence to the *halacha* and opposition to Zionism as a political

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<sup>59</sup> Other stakeholder, 6 March 2003. [Document 67:11 (213:255). Codes: Jewish community - religious background].

<sup>60</sup> Parent, 8 November 2002. [Document 32:23 (762:837). Codes: Jewish community - lack of knowledge/debate].



ideology. Yet, they have many learning centres in Israel, to which they send a number of followers, some of whom choose to stay in Israel in closed communities. They therefore might give the perception of being Zionists, but this is neither secular Zionism, nor religious Zionism. Their attachment is to the Land of Israel rather than to the State of Israel.

The Ultra Orthodox/Orthodox movements continue to send messages of great consensus and unity, thus sustaining the narrative of homogenous community. In this “imagined” community parents are “happy” that their children are becoming more “right-wing”<sup>61</sup> and the various religious movements live in harmony:

Anywhere else in the world, if a Jewish student goes ... to *Lubavitch* one night, it's very difficult for you to go to an *Ohr Sameach* the next night, or to go to *Bnei Akiva* the next night, or to go to the *Kollel*. Here, it's user friendly ... nobody's going to point a finger and say, 'Oh, I saw you at *Ohr Sameach* – you've got a label, and because, for want of a better phrase, the '*Kochot shel Torah*' (the powers of the *Torah*), have come together in Johannesburg. It's healthy competition ... whereas almost everywhere else in the Jewish world, the competition is unhealthy.<sup>62</sup>

The above citation could also indicate that those who join the religious movements do not engage with them on an intellectual or ideological level, but rather as a form of socialisation and identity, in which the charisma of the speaker is vital. The rabbis react to that by popularising their sermons:

The rabbis don't want to bring people to Hebrew. They want to bring them to religiosity, as they interpret religiosity. ... I remember the tradition of preaching where the rabbi would take up a sentence and interpret it ... It would be a proper sermon. No more – because the community doesn't want to hear it. ... I can't stand sermons that bring down to the lowest common denominator. And these are the ones that are popular. So instead of bringing people up, they bring down the *Torah*. ... Even Rabbi... on *Kol Nidre* night,<sup>63</sup> started to give a sermon about 'Big Brother' ... and he made people laugh. And I think ... there are so many occasions outside of *Kol Nidre* that people could laugh. I didn't approve of people laughing in *shul*, for example, and not on *Kol Nidre*. Maybe on *Simchat Torah*.<sup>64</sup>

My personal experience and the evidence suggest that not everyone is happy with the turn to “right”, and that there are no idyllic relationships, even within the “rightist alliance”, as the following voices illustrate:

And the young people – so many of them – have become extreme. I knew a number of people. The late Mrs..., she was a very cultured woman ... . Her husband was a

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<sup>61</sup> Task Force report, The South African Jewish Day School System, Comments by Chief Rabbi Harris. Office of the Chief Rabbi, Johannesburg, 21 October 2002.

<sup>62</sup> Community leader, 28 January 2003. [Document 60:19 (577:641). Codes: Jewish community - religious background].

<sup>63</sup> An opening service on the Day of Atonement.

<sup>64</sup> A Jewish festival in which Jews dance and rejoice with the *Torah*. Other stakeholder, 20 December 2001. [Document 62:16 (1020:1045). Codes: Jewish community - religious background].

*shochet* (a ritual slaughterer). ... She brought up her children in a very *datti* (religious) home. ... She told me the story with tears in her eyes: Her little grandson comes to her house once a week. He wants milk. So she says, 'Go to the fridge'. 'No', says the mother, 'that milk is not *kosher*'. And she says, 'In my house – in the house that my daughter grew up, and suddenly my grandchild cannot drink the milk from my fridge'. So you see, Mrs... 's home was an informed and knowledgeable Jewish home ... there were people there who came to the house, *Rabbonim*, *chazonim*, and everybody ... observant people.<sup>65</sup>

On the one hand this is a town that's viewed as much more religious, so naturally you attract a lot more people. And you've got a whole different set of ways of influencing people – through the *shuls*, through the rabbis, etc. But at the same time it's a very, very competitive space. I mean, Rabbi..., who is a leading member of *Bnei Akiva*, will get a call from an [*Ohr Sameach* rabbi] once a week to try and take him away, you know. It's a very aggressive, predatory environment in that the *charedim* are just waiting to go in and take as many people out of *Bnei Akiva*, out of *Mizrachi*, as they possibly can, and out of the general system.<sup>66</sup>

While the rhetoric of the "homogenous community" does not seem to apply even within the "rightist alliance", it definitely fails to include the "others", such as the non-observant Orthodox Jews; the secular and the Reform Jews. In the struggle over identity in the globalised world, the recurring message from the strained religious alliance is that you either join one of these "user friendly" communities or you might lose your Jewish identity:

We cannot sustain a middle road anymore. We must move to a more observant path or we will lose our Jewish identity. There were two directions the youth are taking simultaneously. On the one hand, there was a revolution with many youth coming back to religion, but at the same time there was a crisis because the youth were moving away, being assimilated and intermarrying.<sup>67</sup>

Subsequently '*the secular flexi-orthodox kind of group is marginalised in this community and it actually feels ... disempowered today and disenfranchised*',<sup>68</sup> even though it is perceived that the majority of the community is '*still by far ... the middle of the road, traditional but generally not fully observant shul-going*' Jews.<sup>69</sup>

In summary, there is no doubt that global forces influenced the restructuring of the Jewish community schools in Johannesburg, and that global managerial and religious discourses dominated the language and the thinking of the stakeholders. These

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<sup>65</sup> Other stakeholder, 20 December 2001. [Document 62:8 (228:249). Codes: Jewish community - religious background].

<sup>66</sup> Community leader, 8 April 2003. [Document 72:13 (380:418). Codes: Jewish community - Zionism].

<sup>67</sup> Youth carrying the Jewish vision. *SA Jewish Report*, 25 October–1 November 2002.

<sup>68</sup> Other stakeholder, 6 March 2003. [Document 67:15 (317:337). Codes: Jewish community - religious background].

<sup>69</sup> Judaism in Johannesburg – strength in diversity. *SA Jewish Report*, 21–28 February 2003.

discourses set the boundaries of what is thinkable and reduce stakeholders' ability to generate a critical and democratic argumentation. Yet, the practices associated with these global forces were mediated by national, local and institutional cultures. It is evident that those in control were able to steer the above pressures in directions that served their interests. This supports Bottery's claim that global forces are contextualised and that there are convergences, as well as divergences, between the different levels of global manifestations, that is, national, local and institutional (2000:24). The divergence and convergence of these influences created conflicts and contradictions within the context of the Jewish community schools, as the following examples will demonstrate:

First, the uncertainties of living in unstable and transitional global and local contexts have produced a yearning for order and security, as well as fears. Both managerial and religious discourses addressed these fears and claimed to rescue the community schools from chaos. Yet both created division, suspicion and fragmentation.

Second, the CEO's knowledge of both managerial and religious concepts enabled him to play into people fears and insecurities and thus use the discourses to his advantage. The community's receptiveness to charisma played an important part in achieving consent to the restructuring. At the same time it also created an equally strong, hostile response and polarisation.

Third, in times of national economic austerity and global neo-liberalism emphasising privatisation instead of welfarism, the financial turnaround generated support from those who had historically financed the institution, such as donors and bankers, from lay leaders who were held responsible for the schools' finances and from parents who had to pay the increasing fees. Yet, it alienated the teachers that had to work "more for less" and the parents who had to pay more for the services. The fact that the CEO personally financially benefited from the financial recovery increased suspicion among parents and other stakeholders who were reluctant to raise funds for the schools. Thus the financial recovery created both strong negative and positive feelings from the same group of stakeholders.

Fourth, micro-political struggles in the schools created a new power elite that comprised administrators and other compliant managers, while it marginalised the teachers and other professionals. This sat well with the global elevation of the managers' position and the devaluation of professionalism. Lack of effective

resistance and diversity among stakeholders supported the restructuring by default. Even though many stakeholders shared hostility to the autocratic mode of change, they were not able to produce any alternative or to establish a core that would unify them beyond their antagonism. Their preoccupation with the CEO blinded them to the complexity of Jewish education and to the broader contexts within which the restructuring took place.

Fifth, the South African transformation to democracy and its forging of a national identity elevated the role of religion and discouraged the Zionist/national/secular character of the Jewish community schools, identity that was artificially maintained by the apartheid regime with its emphasis on separate development based on ethnicity (see Chapter 3). The emphasis on religion created synergy with global and local tendencies and with the decline of secular Zionism. The intensification of identity based on religion conflicted with the democratic rhetoric in South Africa and its advocacy of tolerance and diversity, yet it was supported by the power relations within the community and by the dominance of the Ultra Orthodox faction.

Sixth, most significantly, the hegemonic position of the market solution interacted well with the hegemony of the Orthodox/Ultra Orthodox perspective in the community. These hegemonies were further enabled by selected processes and by the unique character of the community. These include the type of its religiosity, the crisis in its predominantly Zionist identity and the absence of a competing ideology, the elevating of the rhetoric of homogeneity and consensus, the prevalent lack of open debate, a tradition whereby the authority of those in power is not questioned, and the nostalgic yearning for the maintenance of the *Mitnagdim*/Orthodox/Zionist/cohesive narrative of the “imagined” community.

One would hope that the short episode of the restructuring would make people aware of the consequences of being under a regime of religious extremism, and would alert them to explore the changing direction of the “imagined community”. However, with the endemic lack of self-introspection and deliberation, the weakening of the “left” and the hegemonic status of the “right”, there is no visible force that would counter the schools’ shift towards the “right”, and there is very little prospect that open debate and democracy would be encouraged. While the borders of the school community became narrower, at least in rhetoric, and more Ultra Orthodox/Orthodox teachers were employed at the schools, the counterforce that was created may not

persist. Even the temporary community that was created by the United King David Action Group (UKDAG) was not able to overcome their diverse interests after they achieved the dismissal of the CEO. Many of the more liberal parents became weary and disillusioned. As shown in Chapter 6, the management of the Jewish community schools continued to be secretive and authoritative. Instead of the CEO, the coordinator of Jewish Studies was appointed as the acting director and the vice-chairperson became the chairperson. To date (March 2004) there is still no open debate on the goals and mission of Jewish education. At the same time more “road shows” are currently performed to promote the schools to the parents. Yet, as was indicated before, the research can only provide a snapshot of the restructuring process and its immediate impact. The long-term effects are still to be seen, and it is hoped, researched.

Shamai (2000) uses the term “cultural shift” to denote the change from cultural dominance to non-dominance or even to subordination. He uses it to describe the situation in the Israeli education system, whereby – owing to historical and political events, such as the coalition between political parties – hegemony over culture and over curriculum moved from secularism to religiosity. This resulted in the secular majority losing its dominance to the religious minority. Apple (2001:53) likewise maintains that the “New Right” authoritarian populist movement in the United States is exceptionally powerful and influential beyond its numbers owing to the immense commitment of its activists, its large financial base and the aggressiveness by which it pursues its agenda.

This study of the restructuring of the Jewish community schools in Johannesburg exhibits a similar process of cultural shift. The managerial restructuring accelerated the shift, but the haste with which it was imposed and the obvious lack of integrity in the process, caused a strong counterforce that managed to slow down the process. Yet it is argued in this chapter that there are various global and local factors that are likely to support the continuation of both the managerial and the religious restructuring, albeit in more subtle ways. Such is the work of hegemony.