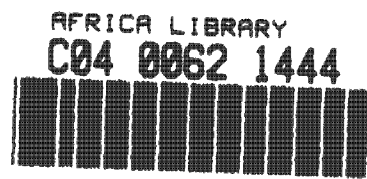


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**LIVING WITH FRAGILITY: CHILDREN IN NEWCROSSROADS**

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Doctor of Philosophy  
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## ABSTRACT

*Living with Fragility*, traces the lives of sixteen African children between 1992 and 1995. It explores the intimate spaces of children's social relationships and charts discontinuities they experienced. The eight girls and eight boys, aged between ten and sixteen years, resided in New Crossroads, Cape Town, a suburb marked by poverty, inadequate schooling, and a history of violent intervention by the apartheid state and other power holders.

The thesis shows that institutions of childhood are fragile, that children's social relationships are fragmented, as are their senses of self. Fragility is traced within and across the social domains the children inhabited and created. The thesis argues that children's senses of self are subject to flux and interruption.

Narrative ethnographies about the children demonstrate their individuality. Nuanced descriptions of children and the changes in their lives over time challenge bald categorisations of, for example, the African child, or, youth at risk. The descriptions demonstrate the agency, dexterity and responsibilities of children in fluid circumstances and lead to a critical appraisal of predominant notions of childhood. The work also outlines processes of social and relational reconstitution to which children and care-givers had recourse.

Methods used in gathering data included a series of formal interviews conducted in Xhosa (the children's first language) in which economic descriptions of households, life histories, social networks, and ritual and religious affiliations of children and care-givers were sought. The formal interviews were complemented by repeated visits to each child's home to record changes over time. The sixteen children were brought together in workshops where discussion was directed towards themes to do with mobility between care-givers, violence, sexuality and senses of self. The data were enriched by use of dramatic improvisations and drawings. Improvisations yielded insight into children's bodily style and their critical appraisal of trends in social relationships in New Crossroads.

The ethnography describes the social circumstances of children in urban South Africa. It is analysed through use of an eclectic set of theoretical fragments chosen because they resonate with the study's ethnographic material. The eclecticism impelled by the data raises questions

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## ABBREVIATIONS

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AFDC	Aid for Families with Dependent Children
ANC	African National Congress
APLA	Azanian People's Liberation Army
AZAPO	Azanian People's Organisation
CATA	Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association
CLPP	Coloured Labour Preference Policy
CPF	Community Policing Forum
COSATU	Congress of South African Trade Unions
CSS	Central Statistical Services
GEAR	Growth, Employment and Redistribution (economic strategy)
IDASA	Institute for Democracy in South Africa
IDT	Independent Development Trust
IMF	International Monetary Fund
KTC	Kakaza's Trading Company
LACOM	Labour Commission
LAGUNYA	Langa Gugulethu Nyanga (taxi association)
MRC	Medical Research Council
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NPA	National Programme of Action
PAC	Pan Africanist Congress
PAGAD	People Against Gangsterism and Drugs
PPA	Planned Parenthood Association

**PRWRA** Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act

**PSLSD** Project for Statistics of Living Standards and Development Survey

**RDP** Reconstruction and Development Programme

**SACHED** South African Committee for Higher Education

**SACLA** South African Christian Leadership Association

**SALDRU** Southern African Labour and Development Research Unit

**SAPS** South African Police Services

**TRC** The Truth and Reconciliation Commission

**TRCSAR** Truth and Reconciliation Commission of South Africa Report

**UCT** University of Cape Town

**UDF** The United Democratic Front

**UNICEF** The United Nations Children's Fund

**WEBTA** Western Province Black Taxi Association

**WHO** World Health Organisation

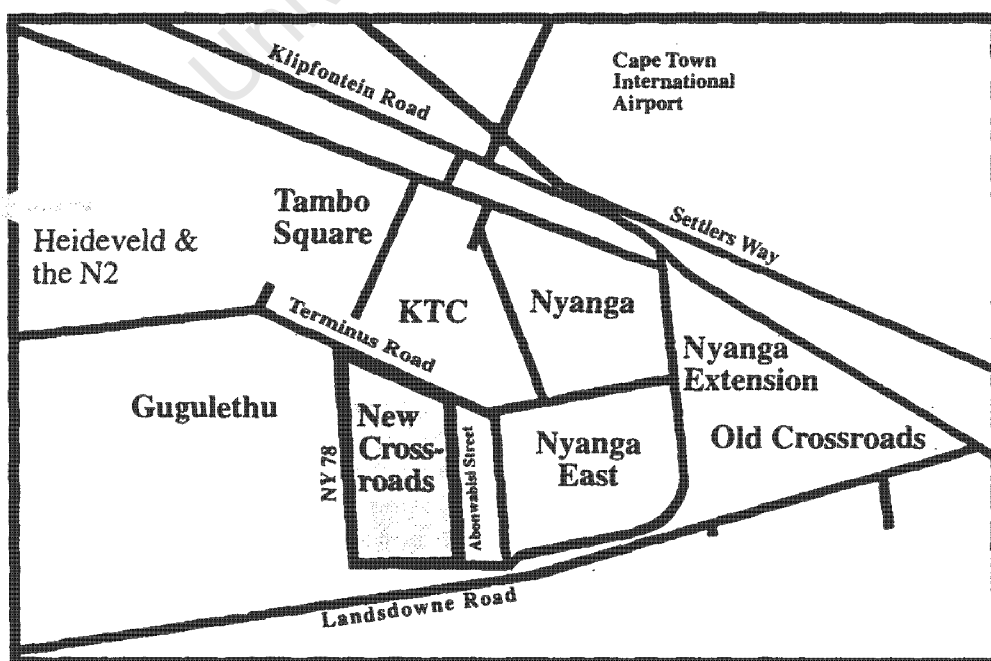
## NOTE ON PHOTOGRAPHS

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In the thesis, I have deliberately excluded photographs of the individual sixteen children with whom I worked closely in New Crossroads. My reason for the omission is that the stories I tell concerning some of the children contain many personal details. I seek to protect the children from being identified through the immediacy of photographic images. The photographs that frame each chapter are of children in New Crossroads who attended large workshops that I ran with bigger groups. They are largely photographs of children's faces and convey expressions of vitality, playfulness, surprise, confidence, vulnerability and pride. The images lack a contextual background showing, for example, housing and streets. That the photographs highlight children's expressions, in my view, is their strength. Images of children living in situations of poverty often fix a sense of victimhood and deprivation to the children they portray. They accomplish the above totalisation through the children's placement in iconic geographies that trigger stereotypical recognition of conditions of poverty in readers: a recognition that underscores the differences between the children thus portrayed and the readers of photographs. Due to their open-endedness, the photographs that are included in the thesis provide an interesting tension in relation to the written text where the difficulties and triumphs of children's lives are outlined in detail, yet in the malleable and more subtle medium of words.



Map 1. Location of New Crossroads in relation to Greater Cape Town



Map 2. Location of New Crossroads in relation to adjacent African suburbs (redrawn from Cole, 1987: xi)

INTRODUCTION



Making clay animals

The resurgence in sociological, psychological and medical studies concerning children and young people designated as adolescent has given rise to philanthropic global notions concerning the nature of childhood and the management of children (Burman, 1994a: 55).<sup>1</sup> The emergence of child-centred disciplines and institutions to defend and socialise the child are best placed within a liberal, neo-Enlightenment framework from which they have emerged. Implicit within the framework is an evolutionary idea that child-care patterns have improved with reforms begun in the 19th century: a modernist conception suggesting a progressive linear accumulation of "scientific" methods of child-care.<sup>2</sup>

Optimum conditions in which children should live have been outlined. In contrast, what are construed as social problems concerning children, as well as aberrant behaviour patterns amongst children, have been increasingly investigated. Predominant categories used in the literature to describe children's and youth's behaviour and experience include: delinquency, teenage pregnancy, drug and alcohol abuse, child abuse, identity, youth culture, etcetera. The above categories suggest that in western industrialised countries discourses around childhood, although seeking to protect children, often emphasise the curtailment of children's potential to disrupt public order (Dingwell et al., 1984). The psychological and scientific assumptions often used in demarcating categories like the above and in analysing child development cannot be easily universalised but, of course, are!

One instance where assumptions prevail is in The United Nations Declaration of Children's Rights. The assumptions that inform the declaration seldom reflect those held by peoples other than those in western industrialised countries. Rather, the ideals contained in the document reflect an ideology of childhood hegemonic in global discourses (Ennew and Milne, 1989: 16-77). Erica Burman (1994b) argues that the 1989 United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child draws, in particular, upon developmental psychological models in demarcating children's natures and interests. A problem with the universalistic pretensions of developmental psychological models is that they tell us little of the specificity of the construction of childhoods in particular social contexts (see Woodhead, 1990; Boyden, 1990: 184). Nor do they equip various authorities to deal with

<sup>1</sup> Sharon Stephens has referred to the expansion of child disciplines as "an elaboration of [the] conceptual space [of childhood]" (1995: 7).

<sup>2</sup> Some of the views of liberal historians, Lloyd De Mause and Edward Shorter reveal questionable aspects of progressivist thought. Hugh Cunningham (1996: 28-29) shows how De Mause (1976: 1) using psychoanalytic theory and historical evidence, for example, argued that the further back one went in history the greater the disregard for and abuse of children. Shorter (1977: 168) in turn, argued that in so-called traditional societies, mothers viewed the

Having briefly considered a few shortcomings within disciplines and discourses to do with childhood, I suggest the need for careful and particular studies of local childhoods. There are few ethnographies that focus on the lives of children. In South Africa, exceptions include the work of Pamela Reynolds (1989, 1991) and Sean Jones (1993). Other disciplines have made important contributions to what is still a disparate set of studies on children in South Africa. Gill Straker's book, *Faces in the Revolution: the psychological effects of violence on township youth in South Africa* (1992) shows the effects of political persecution on a particular group of children in Leandra (an African residential area in Gauteng Province) over a short time period during the 1980s. She emphasises the active role that children play in shaping their political and social experiences. Andrew Dawes' and David Donald's (1994) compilation of articles, *Childhood and Adversity: Psychological perspectives from south African research*, documents the psychological effects of different sorts of adversity in which, and with which, African children live in southern Africa. They argue that psychological theories cannot be universalised and yet stress the importance of searching for some generalities with regard to children's experience (Dawes and Donald, 1994: 20-22; see also Burman & Reynolds, 1986 for a collection of essays on South African childhoods).

Many excellent studies touch on childhood and the position of children in society (see, for example, Mead, 1943; Wilson, 1951; Turner, 1967; Henry, 1965). Until recently, most writers on childhood, including anthropologists, tended to conceive of the young as unformed transitional beings subject to adult socialisation and enculturation processes - a view expressive of the modernist framework I have outlined above. Many writers referred to children largely through the eyes of adult informants. Sifting through rare writings on southern African children in the last century, Pamela Reynolds reflects on Dudley Kidd's, *Savage Childhood: A Study of Kafir Children* (Reynolds, 1995a: 194). Reynolds describes the book as, "a composite of all children's lives across many groups" (1995a: 196). Kidd created a composite African child by amalgamating information from "thrice filtered sources": namely, "missionaries and other writers, and 'many kafir friends who, with considerable tact, obtained information for me from women who would have been disinclined to give information to a white man'" (Reynolds, 1995a: 196; Kidd, 1906: xi). Reynolds describes the literature as reflecting, "attitudes towards the young that distanced them, represented them in sketches of the average boy or girl, and made them ciphers before the forces of socialisation" (Reynolds, 1995a: 193). Just as anthropological studies have increasingly made room

for the exploration of women's worlds, so too, the challenge exists to foreground the individual experience and active agency of children (James and Prout, 1990; James, 1993; Caputo, 1995: 22).

Notions of childhood in hegemonic discourses reflect aspects of the world-views of adults and their desires for particular types of society (see Hendrick, 1990: 38-39; Burman, 1994a: 59, Jenks, 1996: 9). They may constitute techniques that silence children and push children's experience to the peripheries of articulated social knowledge. In many cases, conceptions of childhood deny that children bear the responsibilities they patently have in many social contexts as well as the agency they bring to bear in moulding society. The idea of childhood as bounded and pristine, a period of innocence, an almost magical time out of time, continues to persist in popular discourse (see Boas, 1990; Holt, 1975: 22-23; Jenks, 1996: 74) despite Freud's legacy and an increasing body of research that documents the complexities and difficulties of children's lives (Boyden, 1990; Boyden & Holden, 1991; Ennew, 1994: 51; Holland, 1992; Nieuwenhuys, 1994).

In South Africa the central role that young people have played in the political struggle as well as the impact of dire poverty, inadequate schooling, poor nutrition and a family breakdown that is largely due to political engineering have created concern about the plight of children and young people. "Liberatory" and "apocalyptic" stereotypes have been used to describe young people in generalised ways (Seekings, 1993: 2-10; Straker, 1989: 20-27; see Bundy, 1994). Youth were lionised as the shock troops of the struggle in the late 1970s and 1980s. On the other hand, youth are often pathologised by being viewed as "the lost generation". Girls and young women are mostly absent from the above categorisations.

Dichotomous notions utilised to describe children within social discourses of various kinds are not particular to South Africa. Contemporary scholars have noted dichotomies reiterating the themes of innocence and evil in conceptions of childhood in other contexts, for example, medieval Islam (Shahar, 1990: 9-20; Gil'adi, 1992) and in the history of English and American childhoods (Newson & Newson, 1974: 56). In welfare policies to do with children in many parts of the world, the goal of protecting children may be linked to the stereotype of childhood "innocence", and those aspects of policy that circumscribe children's potential to disrupt public order may be linked to the stereotype of childhood "evil".

Reflecting on a loss of innocence among South African children, the South African writer, Njabulo Ndebele (1995: 321-333), calls for the restitution of childhood to create a moral framework for South African society. He suggests that when children cease to be protected by the

state and by adults in general, society becomes morally threadbare. Ndebele traces South African stories that in the past constituted a form of social criticism through using metaphors of violated childhood. However, he continues, where deaths and other forms of violation are meted out to children with alarming frequency, childhood can no longer carry metaphors of hope for a future vision of society. "The loss of childhood signals the end of metaphor" (1995: 331) and hence a moral turpitude across society. Ndebele writes, "I have posed the issue of the recovery of childhood and innocence as a metaphor for the restoration of freedom and the range of human values that should go with it" (1995: 332). His views clearly demonstrate the ways in which thoughts on childhood reflect longings for the creation of particular types of society, and how it is difficult to think of childhood outside of a relationship with adulthood. That Ndebele uses notions of childhood to think about the status of South African society inadvertently deflects attention from the particularities of children's lives.

Alarm at the position of South African children has been expressed in other fora. At the Joint Enrichment Project conference in 1993 where the National Youth Forum was launched in response to what was described as the marginalisation of South African youth, statistical research on youth was presented based on a large nation-wide survey. Percentages of youth were defined in terms of the following categories; "fully engaged in society", "at risk", "marginalised" and "lost" (Everatt & Orkin, 1993: 34-5). The categories and the statistical analyses relating to them are questionable because a once-off survey does not reflect the way in which children's or youth's lives change rapidly over and through time. They are categories that seem not to have emerged from the research but were rather preconceived.

In the thesis I seek to counter some of the above stereotypes concerning children by describing ethnographically a group of children's lives over a three-and-a-half year period in New Crossroads, an African urban residential area in Cape Town in the Cape Peninsula. The theoretical core of the dissertation derives from my conceptualisation of local childhoods as the proper site for the understanding of children.

More specifically, in relation to describing children's lives, I examine what experience of stability children have; whether there is routine, predictability, security and dependability in social institutions including families in relation to which children can create, respond and shape their

lives; if and how adults and children attempt to impose order on their fractured worlds; and the kinds of subjectivities, styles and agency the children bring to bear on a "kinetic universe".<sup>3</sup>

## **Background to the research**

At the beginning of 1992, I was invited by Dr Mamphela Ramphele, then the Deputy Vice Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, to do the research in a project entitled: "Adolescence - a Time for Reflection". It is necessary to give a brief background to the project, Adolescence - a Time for Reflection, to allow readers to place aspects of the project to which I refer in the text, but that do not form the main focus of the thesis. The project focused on African children predominantly between the ages of ten and sixteen years of age in New Crossroads, a suburb of Cape Town.<sup>4</sup> It set out to investigate the social context of children's lives and to intervene, where appropriate, with a number of strategies aimed at addressing some of the needs of children in the New Crossroads' community.

In 1991, prior to my arrival, Marion Heap, a project researcher, planned and conducted an extensive demographic survey of half the households in New Crossroads. In 1992, my immediate task was to choose a small number of children and work closely with them and with members of their households over a number of years.

Areas of work in the project included: taking children out on walking trails into conservation areas over weekends; designing and conducting workshops for large numbers of children from New Crossroads to plan a youth centre that the project aimed to build; drawing up funding motivations for the youth centre; and drafting plans as to how the centre could be run; and planning and documenting the research process and writing annual reports for the Carnegie Foundation who provided funding for the research component of the project.

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<sup>3</sup> I use the term kinetic universe as a metaphor to suggest the extent of the fluidity in social relationships children in New Crossroads experience.

<sup>4</sup> In the thesis, I deliberately name African neighbourhoods, suburbs. The common name, "township", perpetuates notions of indistinguishable and faceless African residential areas named and cordoned off from the rest of the city by the *apartheid* state.

In 1994, a youth centre was built with funding from the Independent Development Trust (IDT).<sup>5</sup> The centre began operating at the beginning of 1995. In building the centre we had fulfilled one of the conditions established by the Civic Association together with the men and women of New Crossroads for doing research in the area.<sup>6</sup>

In tasks involving fieldwork, I was ably assisted by Elizabeth Seabe. She was a resident of neighbouring Gugulethu, a fluent Xhosa speaker,<sup>7</sup> who knew the area well.<sup>8</sup> I speak Zulu and quickly learnt to speak Xhosa. Together, and sometimes separately, we visited the families of the sixteen children selected for the study, visited the schools in the area, delivered letters door-to-door, organised workshops, conducted taped interviews in Xhosa, translated interviews from Xhosa into English, accompanied children during walking trails, and attended community meetings in New Crossroads where we conveyed the nature of research findings to adults and discussed plans for the youth centre.

Methods used that were of pertinence to the thesis included formal interviews with children and care-givers. All interviews were conducted in Xhosa. The interviews involved life histories of children and care-givers as well as investigations concerning the economic status of households, the social networks of children and care-givers and children's connection with ancestral rituals and religious groupings. Repeated visits to households provided information concerning changes in the lives of children and their care-givers. The visits enabled me to compare the actions of children and care-givers with the ways in which they explained their experience. Fieldnotes were made of all visits. In addition to numerous interviews and conversations, I ran collective workshops with the sixteen children around predominant themes that emerged spontaneously within individual interviews. Workshops involved further exploration of issues to do with sexuality, friendship and violence. Just as informal interaction complemented formal interviews, other methods, including drawing and improvisation, were used to add richness to the data. The use of drawings and improvisations enabled children reflect on their relationships with one another, their care-givers and the wider world critically and humorously. Improvisations afforded me a sense of children's

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<sup>5</sup> The IDT is a funding body set up by the state to address issues of development and poverty. Funding for the equipment and for the running costs of the centre were provided by other organisations.

<sup>6</sup> Civic Associations are management bodies set up in African residential areas by residents originally in opposition to apartheid management structures.

<sup>7</sup> The dominant language spoken by Africans in New Crossroads and in surrounding areas, is Xhosa.

bodily style and their knowledge of social relationships. I kept a journal with which to chart my own experiences of entering and exiting the field. I collected newspaper cuttings that reported on events in New Crossroads and surrounding areas.<sup>9</sup>

### Historical background

The suburb of New Crossroads was built by the *apartheid* state in response to a bitter struggle by the women and men of Old Crossroads and other shanty towns for rights to residence.

Most of the families with whom I worked came to New Crossroads from Old Crossroads between 1980 and 1985. Old Crossroads was established in February 1975, on a piece of land east of Nyanga. The Old Crossroads "camp" was viewed by the *apartheid* state as a transit area where officials could separate inhabitants whom they regarded as having a legitimate right to live in the Cape Peninsula from those they regarded as having no right to remain.<sup>10</sup> The majority of early residents of Old Crossroads were not new-comers to the Cape Peninsula but had lived in the Cape Town region for over ten years. Fifty percent of the male population was employed either as contract workers or permanent workers in the area and therefore had the right to reside there. Only 9.3 per cent of the female population had legal rights to be in Cape Town (Cornell & Maree, 1978).

It is not surprising, then, that women formed the back-bone of the struggle in the 1970s against forced removals in the squatter communities of Cape Town. They were the first to be endorsed out of the area when arrested under pass-law legislation. Being endorsed out of an urban area in terms of pass-law legislation meant that one was forced to leave the city for an "ethnic homeland" or reserve area in an impoverished rural hinterland. With respect to African people living in the Cape the homelands to which they were forced to move were the Transkei or Ciskei. One's pass - a document that all Africans were forced to carry - used to record whether one had the right to be in an urban area. The homelands, with the exception of KwaZulu, were transformed by

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<sup>8</sup> In the thesis I have used the correct spelling in Xhosa for Gugulethu. In many instances it is spelt without an h.

<sup>9</sup> For critical reflection on the value of particular methods used, see the Conclusion.

<sup>10</sup> The particular form that Influx Control Regulations under the *apartheid* state took in the Cape are delineated further on in the text. For a comprehensive exploration of the legislation, see Martin West's (1984) work. Ceridwen Oliver-Evans (1993) explores how massive urbanisation was not the necessary outcome of the abolition of Influx Control regulations in 1986. Rather, her work in the Western Cape showed how Africans were embedded within support networks that straddled both urban and rural areas.

the state into so-called independent states in the 1970s and 1980s.<sup>11</sup> In so doing, the state hoped to deprive Africans of their right to live and work in South Africa and to entrench, in perpetuity, the migrant labour system. In the Western Cape, the form of labour control adopted by the state took on a particular character. Known as the Coloured Labour Preference Policy (CLPP) (Koch, 1983: 13; West, 1984) it allowed people categorised as Coloured preferential access to work in the Cape Province. In contrast, Africans were not encouraged to seek work in the province.

The legislation had profound effects on Africans. As early as 1961, African women were not allowed into the Western Cape for the purposes of seeking work. Even if they had lived in the area for decades and had registered with the local Labour Bureau in the 1950s when passes were first issued to control the movements of Africans, they were frequently forced out of the Cape Peninsula as soon as they became unemployed (Cole, 1987: 8). Legal residence in Cape Town required both men and women to have worked continuously for one employer for fifteen years - a condition that many found impossible to fulfil. One particularly pernicious stipulation for the residence of female de-facto heads-of-household in Old Crossroads was named the "Bread-winners Clause". Women were given six-month temporary residence permits in Cape Town allowing them to work with the proviso that their children resided in the Transkei or Ciskei (Cole, 1987: 8).

In the late 1970s, it became clear to the state that it could no longer control the African population that sought residence in Cape Town. Negotiations with the community of Old Crossroads began with the intervention of Piet Koornhof, then the minister of what was euphemistically known as the Department of Plural Relations (a state department that attempted to control and liaise with African people).

Koornhof successfully steered and diverted the squatter struggle by refusing to respond to the community's foremost demands not to remove its residents and to up-grade Old Crossroads. He informed residents that he would move the people of Old Crossroads to, "A proper Crossroads with the blessing of almighty God" (Cole, 1987: 35). He could not guarantee that all people living in Old Crossroads would find housing in the New Crossroads. The state would take over the construction of 2 575 living units from the Urban Foundation in a new African suburb adjacent to Nyanga (see Maps 1., 2. & 3.).<sup>12</sup> By 1992, only 1 738 houses had been built by the state in New Crossroads.

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<sup>11</sup> The rural areas that became "independent states" under the *apartheid* regime were known as the TBVC states, and referred to the Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda and the Ciskei.

KTC,<sup>13</sup> the adjoining shanty town that was to provide land for the housing shortfall, remained undeveloped. Only householders who had jobs in Cape Town, and their families, were entitled to houses in New Crossroads. All lodgers and unemployed people would be endorsed out of the area to the homelands. Koornhof could not guarantee that the new suburb would be exclusively for the residents of Old Crossroads.

The unity of the squatter movement was broken due to the combined effects of the negotiation strategies on the part of the *apartheid* state, and emerging conflict between leadership groupings among squatters. People who had long experienced the hardships of demolition of their shacks and police brutality began to move into New Crossroads in 1980. In 1979, through a survey conducted by government officials and twenty members of what had now become the Joint Committee of Old Crossroads, it was discovered that, contrary to the estimated population of 20 000 residents, there were at least 40 000 to 50 000 people living in Old Crossroads (Cole, 1987: 50). Competition for houses in New Crossroads was therefore fierce. Increasingly, splits were developing between male leadership of the old community, namely between key leaders, Johnson Ngxobongwana and Oliver Memani.<sup>14</sup>

The residents accused the leaders of involvement in fraudulent activities. Leaders imposed taxes on the people of Old Crossroads and issued false permits for permission to stay in the area. In periods when the leaders were absent from Cape Town - sometimes due to imprisonment - youth, often in alliance with women, attempted to seize leadership because of the corruption they associated with the leaders. Youth's membership of organisations affiliated to the United Democratic Front (UDF) (an umbrella body of organisations founded in 1983 mobilising against the state) challenged in some respects the patriarchal leadership style of male adult leadership. Power struggles between leaders and other interest groups, including youth and women, and the continuing oppression of the state of other squatter communities in the Peninsula led to armed confrontation not only in Old Crossroads but in the new settlement of New Crossroads. In January,

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<sup>12</sup> The Urban Foundation was a private consortium established after the 1976 Soweto uprising that attempted to improve the housing situation for African residents.

<sup>13</sup> KTC is named after the local trader, Mr Kakaza who set up the Kakaza trading Centre on the site of KTC in 1958 (interview with Mr Kakaza by researcher, Anne-Maria Makhulu, September 1998).

<sup>14</sup> Anthony Mehlwana (1994) has written of leadership struggles of a similar ilk in the 1990s in the Cape Town area. The leadership offered by Memani and Nxobongwana, as well as more recent shanty town leaders, is described by Andrew Spiegel and Anthony Mehlwana (1996: 8) as characterised by "the patronage politics of site allocation" - a kind of leadership, they argue, that is particularly prone to factional violence.

1984, Ngxobongwana's men, whom various mothers of the sixteen children described as *witdoeke* (an Afrikaans term meaning white scarves on account of the white scarves they wore around their heads) pursued Memani's supporters into New Crossroads.<sup>15</sup> Memani eventually took up residence at KTC, a shanty town adjoining New Crossroads. In January 1985, a rent boycott commenced in New Crossroads, the first in any African community in the Cape Peninsula. Since the beginning of 1982 rent had gone up R6 each year, rising from R24 a month in 1982 to R42 a month in 1985 (Interview, Joyce, Thulani's mother, 13 May 1992; see Cole, 1987: 104). Youth also participated in consumer boycotts in the area. Consumer boycotts were national events that caught the imagination of young people across the country. They refused to buy goods from white owned shops and enforced general boycotts of consumer goods purchased at white-owned chain stores in their communities. Boycott action was part of a general campaign to attack bodies associated with the state and white privilege in general. Councillors who worked for state administrative structures were also attacked by youth in New Crossroads. From the end of 1985 - after his release from prison where he had been incarcerated due to his involvement in the rent boycott in New Crossroads - Ngxobongwana formed an alliance with the state to try to combat the increasing resistance of youth in the communities where he held power (Cole, 1987: 111, 113-115; see Ngcokotho, 1990 for the exploration of similar alliances between state and leaders in the late 1980s). Many attacks were made on New Crossroads and surrounding areas by Ngxobongwana's men and state officials in an attempt to stifle youth organisation and resistance. In the end the alliance led to the full scale destruction of numerous remaining shanty town communities including KTC, Nyanga Bush, Nyanga Extension and Portland Cement. It was an alliance that spanned two states of emergency imposed by the *apartheid* regime. It was an alliance that left many people dead and thousands homeless.<sup>16</sup>

The momentous events alluded to here impinged on the lives of some of the children with whom I worked from 1992 to 1995. Even where they did not do so directly, the events have shaped

<sup>15</sup> It is important to understand that the term *witdoeke* applied not only to Nxobongwana's men but to many other adult men who, with state backing, attacked the shanty areas of Cape Town in the late 1970s and the early 1980s (see Truth and Reconciliation Report of South Africa (TRCSAR), vol. 3: 463).

<sup>16</sup> According to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) (the body set up in south Africa to investigate gross human rights violations by individuals and organisations affiliated to the *apartheid* state or to liberation movements during the *apartheid* regime), between the years 1983-9, 120 people died in leadership disputes in informal settlements adjacent to New Crossroads (TRCSAR, 1998, vol. 3: 418).

an environment in which violence of all kinds continues to mould the lives of all residents of New Crossroads.

### **New Crossroads as a field site**

In 1994, prior to the first national democratic elections held in South Africa, I described a journey into New Crossroads from the suburb in which I lived:

Getting to New Crossroads I drive along the N2, a highway leading to the east Cape coast. The N2 marks a route that many residents in New Crossroads take on long journeys to other homes in the rural hinterland. Fifteen kilometres along the N2 from my house, I turn right at the Gugulethu - Heideveld turn-off, crossing the highway. A mosque with all its windows covered in heavy wire mesh is marooned in a sea of grass on the left hand side of the road - a material sign that I have now entered a physical location marked by spasmodic turbulence. Here is the coloured residential area of Heideveld.

I soon turn left at a large police station built strategically at a major entrance to Gugulethu and a string of other African residential areas including New Crossroads, Nyanga, KTC, Tambo Square and Zinyoka. The police station is fenced with concrete vertical blocks topped with razor wire - the same blocks that are visible from the N2 and that fence off the residents of numerous shanty areas from direct access to the main road. Above the police station, the national flag flutters [the old South African flag]. Against the fence, plastic bags of every hue find a place to lodge themselves. Some of the children I know in New Crossroads call the bags "our plastic flowers".

Driving across the railway bridge, on one side is the hall where pensions are paid out to elderly residents of Gugulethu; on the other, an informal taxi-rank with men busily polishing their vehicles waiting for passengers who wish to travel to the city. Across the road, tied to the fence of a churchyard, is a banner advertising a concert by Brenda Fassie (a well known South African pop-star).

I turn onto the NY1, a major road in Gugulethu snaking its way first through a section of more elaborate housing and then into a poorer section of familiar "township" houses numbered on the outside with large, black stencils. On the yard walls of many of the houses, political slogans are boldly painted. Some of them extol the power of [the Azanian Peoples' Liberation Army] (APLA), the armed wing of the Pan Africanist Congress. Others celebrate the African National Congress and its leaders. Should I remain silent about the spot on this road where Amy Biehl, an American student studying at the University of the Western Cape, was killed? Many local people have

died on the streets of Gugulethu.<sup>17</sup> Yet because of Amy's death, I steel myself to drive to New Crossroads. I, too, am marked by whiteness. I feel that if I concentrate on each moment of the journey, on each point in the unfolding landscape as I successfully negotiate it, I will arrive safely at my destination.

I turn again, driving along Terminus Road, past Tambo Square, a shanty town of corrugated iron houses built very close together, where washing lines strung between dwellings are draped with clothing. On the other side of the road the municipality has placed a ship's container in which public telephones are installed. Having crossed the NY78, KTC, another shanty area, lies on my left hand side. Residents have set up spaza shops [a local term for home-based and pavement shops]. I notice with happiness a shack displaying a small mealie (maize) garden and sun-flowers. On the right hand side, opposite KTC, is New Crossroads with its brick houses. I turn into Ncebo Crescent and head towards Mzovuyo's house. His mother's prayer flags flutter on long poles in the yard.

The route to New Crossroads marked a ritual journey, often undertaken daily, in which I crossed different worlds. Various political events shaped my feelings of anxiety in crossing the worlds. The first years of research took place in the last two years in which the *apartheid* state held sway. The years were characterised by different forms of mobilisation in African urban residential areas. In New Crossroads and neighbouring Gugulethu, mass events included teachers' boycotts and mass marches, battles between rival taxi associations, national stay-aways, attacks on delivery vehicles prior to the 1994 elections and the death of several people on the streets.

My reactions to journeying to, and exiting from, the field require some elaboration. I experienced unease at encountering difference mythologised by shifting ciphers of race, class and gender. As will become clear in the examples that follow, the quality of situationally emphasised differences was never sustained or coherent. Differences shifted through time depending on changes in the political body and on aspects of inter-personal identities and relationships that were emphasised.

My status as researcher in New Crossroads varied according to how I was perceived by people with whom I worked in a different historical period and in different capacities. Throughout the 1980s, I worked for non-governmental organisations in rural development, with long established African communities in Kwazulu-Natal mobilising against forced removals by the state,

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<sup>17</sup> Seven young men – Zandile Mjobo, Zola Swelani, Mandla Mxinwa, Jabulani Miya, Themba Mlifi, Zabonke Konile and Christopher Piet – known as the Gugulethu Seven, who were killed by the state in March 1985, are among them (for testimonials concerning the deaths of the young men, see the TRCSAR, 1998, vol. 3: 438). After the attack on KTC,

and, as a theatre facilitator workshopping plays about worker experience for the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) (the largest trade union organisation of the country). In all prior working contexts - even while creating plays with workers and young people in the Natal Midlands in the midst of civil-war - I felt protected by the friends with whom I worked and with whom I lived because of the strength of common goals and the intensity of collective work. Our determination to work together in situations of extreme confrontation with the state and other interest groups in the area overshadowed any predominance of the cipher of race or class.

In the early 1990s, when I began my research in New Crossroads, an atmosphere that made the cipher of race more pertinent developed in African residential areas, especially prior to the 1994 first national elections. My position as researcher placed me in a new relationship with the people with whom I worked and the communities in which they lived. It was not possible to claim, as a researcher, that I necessarily shared common goals with children and parents in the contexts in which we were to meet.

I recount two examples in which race and gender became totalising ciphers in defining how some people perceived me in New Crossroads. In February 1994, prior to the national elections, I attended a community meeting with the Civic Association leadership and adults and youth from New Crossroads. I reported on the latest developments with regard to plans for the youth centre. Adults and youth present in the hall indicated how they would become involved in the construction of the centre. Youth outside the hall who were sympathetic to APLA, began to stone the building while I spoke. It was at this point that African National Congress (ANC) youth and the leadership of the Civic Association escorted me out of the area in a convoy of cars and pick-up trucks. They could not guarantee my physical safety in the tense build-up to the 1994 elections, particularly from APLA sympathisers who were attacking white people regardless of their political affiliations.

An example in which gender became a totalising cipher to put me in my place occurred at a gathering of children and parents. Elizabeth Seabe and I organised a huge meeting in which - unusually for New Crossroads - both children and their parents were present. The Civic Association leader, threatened by the success we had in calling so many people to a report-back meeting, pointedly tried to change the programme we had organised. He asserted his authority by calling me "*ntombi*" (girl) while addressing the audience and by dispersing the children away from the meeting

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men described as *witdoeke* attacked New Crossroads where they met with considerable resistance. Even of the attackers were killed and burnt by the residents of New Crossroads (TRCSAR, 1998, vol.3: 475).

with *sjamboks* (rubber whips). Individuals are named differentially in New Crossroads to mark their social status in terms of age. In calling me "girl", the leader had publicly insisted on a particular configuration of power between myself and his position as a leader.

Once I had traversed areas where I was unknown and had arrived in New Crossroads, I always felt a sense of relief. I had entered a space in which I was familiar to many residents and where mutual perceptions could be negotiated. Interviewing and speaking with individual mothers and their children at their homes always provided mediated conversations that helped to overcome the difficulties of getting there. In the intimate spaces in people's homes much could be shared, stereotypes could be humorously challenged and alliances could be made across the categories of race and gender.

The mediated relationship between researchers and children elicited a type of reflection in children to which they were not necessarily accustomed. Their relationship with researchers opened areas in which children could speak in different ways. The nature of the research relationship was not bound by the same rules that governed interactions between family members and neighbours, precisely because of the researchers' status as outsiders. Where social relationships in their habitual domain frequently created areas of silence, our status as outsiders enabled some children to appeal to us, fracturing the boundaries of their worlds by exposing discontent and puzzlement. Thus individuals sometimes challenged their own thinking about habitual worlds. In coming to know the worlds of children I also challenged some of my own notions concerning the state of childhood. The mediated space in which we came to know one another was not without ambivalence.

I experienced unease at the predatory nature of research. I wanted to explore the lives of children as individuals - something that anthropological work often ignores. I wanted to examine areas of children's silence. Areas of silence in social life are often embedded in emotional forms of expression. Would the articulation of emotionally bounded experience be construed as legitimate academic enquiry? Would the work not raise ethical questions in relation to disclosing privacy? It became my firm view that areas of silence and illegitimacy are seen to be outside the bounds of coherent articulation because of hegemonic power relations. Areas of silence and illegitimacy are occupied by marginalised individuals and groups. If the research findings fulfilled an advocacy role in relation to children's experience in New Crossroads, evoking areas of silence would become an essential component of the thesis, even if this meant revealing critical divisions within the research population.

## Descriptions of place

The streets of New Crossroads are always full of people: young children going to and from school, youths playing a form of table soccer on street corners, or simply eyeing passers-by, women and men on their way to and from work, women in church uniforms of one sort or another, children playing games in the street, men and young boys panel-beating and repairing cars. Speckled goats are often seen traversing the streets.

The residential area of New Crossroads is bordered by the NY78, Terminus Road, Abonwabisi Street and Landsdowne Road (see Map 3.). The suburb comprises 1 738 residential sites and 40 designated Public Open Spaces. Many of the Public Open Spaces are, to date, empty tracts of sand. Apart from the areas where schools have been built by the state, all other structures in public spaces have been developed by residents and outside funding bodies.

There are three primary schools in New Crossroads, one, a Catholic school, St Mary's, bordering on New Crossroads and Nyanga. The High School was officially named X-Three by the erstwhile state, but is known by local residents as Sithembele Matiso, the name of a young student who was killed by police using a rubber bullet in the streets of New Crossroads on the 29th of July, 1985 (TRCSAR, 1998, vol. 3: 420). Residents have constructed two crèches with funds raised. Jungle gyms and discarded car tyres converted into various obstacles over which little children can climb, are found in the yards of both crèches. The Eyethu Crèche provided a large venue for researchers to run children's workshops prior to the construction of the youth centre.





There are three churches, a Catholic Church attached to St Mary's Primary School and two churches constructed with donations from residents. Many residents did not belong to formal churches and often held religious meetings in their own houses. There is a South African Christian Leadership Association (SACLA) Clinic in New Crossroads that was threatened with closure towards the end of the research period because of lack of funding. The clinic ran community health worker training programmes and provided basic health care for New Crossroads residents. On the 28th of August 1985, clergy marched to Pollsmoor Prison demanding the release of Nelson Mandela. The march was violently intercepted by police. Eighty nine people from New Crossroads and surrounding areas were treated for injuries due to the assaults of police at the SACLA Clinic in New Crossroads (TRCSAR, 1998, vol. 3: 423).

While I worked in New Crossroads, the Ikapa Town Council (a state body responsible for the up-keep of the area) built a community centre on Koornhof Street - a tin hall with a very narrow stage surrounded by towering walls. Most money was obviously spent on the construction of the walls that circle the building, illustrating a fear on the part of the authorities and planners that public spaces would inevitably be attacked by residents in times of political upheaval. The style of the walls that take on the organic curved shapes of rondavels encapsulates a patronising attempt at indigenous design. The building is regarded with disdain by the residents of New Crossroads and has variously been described as, "a cattle kraal", "a stable", or humorously named, "Jericho" - presumably with a playful threat that indeed the walls might come down.

University of Cape Town

Tambo Square

KTC

-  = Public open spaces (p.o.s.)
-  = Dirt roads and paths designated as p.o.s.
-  = Houses
-  = Tarred streets, roads, closes, crescents

Nyanga Taxi Rank where men and women sell meat, vegetables and clothes.

Open lot with roundabout and other playground equipment.

Public open space designated for business. It remains an empty lot on which women sell roasted maize in summer.

Nyanga East

Narrow strips of land between rows of houses designated as public open spaces but appropriated by residents as roads and paths.

3. New Crossroads

Landsdowne Road

Philippi Zinyoka

NY 78

Terminus Road

Crèche

Youth Centre

Sacla Clinic

Church

Nomlinganiso Primary School

School playing fields (undeveloped)

Sithembele Matiso High School

Andile Primary School

"Jericho" Community Centre

Koornhof Street

Church

Eyethu Crèche

St. Mary's Primary School

Church

Abonwabisi Street

Quintoluhun

At the end of Terminus Road on the border of New Crossroads is the Nyanga Taxi Rank, the scene of much fighting between taxi drivers during the taxi-wars of 1991 to 1993. Men and women are always busy on the sides of the road leading to the taxi rank. They sell second-hand clothes laid out on tarpaulins on the ground. Depending on the season, peaches and other fruit from the country are often sold off the back of small pick-up trucks. Cooked and raw meat is sold on wooden stalls traders have constructed.

At major junctions throughout New Crossroads and Gugulethu, Rastafarians have built wooden stalls where they sell vegetables and more covertly marijuana (*dagga*). The marijuana is sold illegally and the stalls are intermittently raided by the police. In summer, on the empty grounds in front of the Eyethu Crèche, women sell roasted maize out of oil barrels in which fires are lit to cook the maize. One person in New Crossroads has turned part of his house into a formal café, selling a variety of goods. The café, is situated opposite the youth centre. There are a number of *shebeens* (pubs, often in private homes where alcohol and home-made beer are sold) including an outdoor *shebeen* next door to the home of one of the children who took part in the study. There are no developed sport fields, cinemas, or shopping centres in New Crossroads.

### **The children**

The sixteen children with whom I worked from the beginning of 1992 to the end of 1995 lived a played in the environment I have described. They were members of families documented in a demographic survey of New Crossroads conducted in 1991 (for details of the demographic survey, see Chapter One).

In 1992, the research team took groups of children between ten and sixteen years of age on bush trails into the Cape mountains on weekends. The trails were led by the Wilderness Leadership School in Cape Town.<sup>18</sup> Children were taken on the outings to remove them from their habitual neighbourhood. Given the conflict-ridden environment in which the children grew up in New Crossroads, it was hoped that the excursions would provide relief on a regular basis from everyday experiences. It was intended that the outings provide a context where children could freely express

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<sup>18</sup> The Wilderness Leadership School is a private organisation that promotes appreciation of conservation areas and attempts to facilitate particular kinds of personal reflection by participants on the relationship between people and "nature".

ideas and discuss experiences they found more difficult to articulate with their families and in their neighbourhoods.

From 1991 to 1992, 32 children were randomly selected from the original database developed from the 1991 survey to go on bush outings. They ranged in age between ten and sixteen years old. The sixteen children selected to be part of the long-term study were chosen from amongst the larger group of 32 children. I selected the children in terms of an equal gender distribution and an even spread in terms of age. In 1992 the group of sixteen children therefore ranged in age from eleven to sixteen years of age and included eight boys and eight girls. Other criteria in choosing particular children had to do with friendships formed between children and researchers during bush outings. I also selected the children in terms of what I perceived at the time to be varying degrees of family cohesiveness. As I visited families repeatedly, however, I came to realise that all families were subject to flux and discontinuities.

The following short evocations of each of the sixteen children outline their most immediate particularities as I remember them. They are my own mediated constructions, weaving together spasmodic interaction between the children and myself. They aim at giving each child a presence that is often lost in general forms of description and analysis. I have numbered each piece so that demographic data documented below may be linked with the descriptions. I use pseudonyms throughout the thesis to protect the children. I do so for two reasons: firstly, because children live within a world articulated by violent intervention across private and public spheres of social interaction (their identification might expose them to further acts of violence); and secondly, because the thesis will articulate areas of children's silence that may challenge existing power relations.

**1. Siphokazi**, a silent girl, is harsh in her speech with other children. She has a boyfriend living in the Gugulethu hostel who gave her a watch. She has a cross expression on her face much of the time. She is reluctant to take part in some activities. She refuses swimming lessons in which all the other children participate and sits aloof on the side of the pool. She rejects her own drawing of her family because it is not neat enough. She continually tries to perfect it by drawing precise circles around the bottom end of a bucket. We dub her one of the princesses when she and a few of the other older girls spend hours grooming themselves on the mornings of a bush outing and are later reluctant to take part in activities.

**2. Sindiswa** is very small. She looks like a little woman. She is reserved and dignified despite her young age (12). She describes, in detail, the preparation of *smilies*

(sheep skulls), and *amaqhina* (the forelegs and hooves of sheep). She sells meat on the Nyanga taxi-rank after school and on weekends. Once, when her mother was not at home, she called in her neighbours to separate her brothers who were members of rival gangs and who fought one another in their house. All her utterances are calm, even when she is describing turbulent events.

3. **Thandi** is quiet, gentle and self-contained. She lives in a large household where *Sis' Makoti*, the lodger's wife, acts as a mother to her. (*Sis'* is a shortened version of sister and a term of respect.) When I visit her, she is playing *calling-cards* (a local card game) on a table with other young children in an otherwise empty room. She begs for clothes from "white" suburbs on a Saturday to help the family. She describes how she sleeps in the same room as her alcoholic father. Her mother left her nine children with their father and returned to the house for only three days when Thandi's brother, *Mzovuyo*, was killed in *Zinyoka*, a shanty area near *Philippi*, on Christmas day.

4. **Boniwe**: a shy, delicate girl, always fastidiously dressed. She seldom speaks and seems strangely absent from interaction around her. She denies she has made the mealie-doll in her hand that I complement. She claims it is ugly and made by another. Her writing in "diaries" written during bush outings is very poor. She is beaten at school for not being able to answer questions. Always, I am aware of her silence. She allows me, with delight, to hold her afloat in a mountain pool. She comes repeatedly and silently into my arms. When she leaves her mother's house there remains on the wall a photograph of herself in a beautiful frame made of shiny sweet wrappers into which the words, "Education is Life", have been cut.

5. **Nozuko** speaks fluently and easily about her world. She is a good runner; she loves singing; she wants to escape New Crossroads to become a singer. She proudly shows me the new rooms her mother and father have added to the house and asks me when I am coming to stay. She is aware of what is happening in the neighbourhood. She tells stories of rivalries and conflicts in her own street. She describes how, with strong prayer, she and her family came through the terrible times when her mother periodically left home.

6. **Nosipho** is a feisty girl. She is beautiful, talkative. She is a good swimmer. She misses her mother who left for Johannesburg when she was a young girl and who has only visited once since then. One day, when I visit her school, she and six other girls in her class are eating rice out of a large plastic bowl. She, together with her friends, had just finished scrubbing the school floors. She begins to sleep away from home and is sometimes drunk. Her teacher describes her as, "ripe". She does not wash the pots her aunt and grandmother have asked her to wash. Her aunt and grandmother beat her for her misdemeanors. Her boyfriend is involved with the accidental killing of the son of the care-taker of the youth centre in a fight outside a shebeen. *Nosipho* refuses to go to the youth centre afterwards.

7. **Lydia** comes from a family of beauty queens. She is lively, beautiful, enthusiastic. She loves her church choir. She becomes a spokesperson at Wilderness

Leadership School functions. She sets up an environmental group at the youth centre we have had built in New Crossroads. She works hard at school. She is ebullient in spite of the real difficulties that afflict her family: the separation of her parents, the death of her grandmother, and her mother's poverty.

**8. Lelezi** has spent a great deal of her time in the Transkei at Tsolo, her father's home. She is friendly and inquiring, a conscientious student. She tells me unreservedly about how she and her sister attacked a woman in their street in New Crossroads who continuously taunted them about her family being *barries* - ignorant people from the country. She describes the way in which the fight polarised the entire street and had to be arbitrated by the Civic Association. She succumbs to *amafufunyana*, a culture-specific mental affliction. We assist her in her illness by taking her to a counsellor who spoke Xhosa at the Child Guidance Clinic at the University of Cape Town. Her family takes her for healing in The Apostolic Church. When she is healed, she and her family attend an elaborate thanks-giving ceremony for her family's ancestors in Tsolo, in the Transkei.

**9. Themba:** a charming boy, small of stature with bright eyes - brave in the face of the severe beatings that his father has meted out, scarring his body. He visits me in a suit, teaching me Xhosa, dwelling with great attention on pictures from a magazine of youths on a burning street in Thokoza (an African suburb in Gauteng), noticing things I have not noticed - the discarded shoes of those who have run away from the police. He copies an image off my office wall - a giraffe - and gives it to me as a present. He describes his friendship with his father's goats, their warm bodies, and how he sleeps against them in the back-yard when he is locked out of the house by his father because he has gone, yet again, to watch his favourite video, *Cry Freedom*,<sup>19</sup> at a neighbour's house. The person he loves most is his mother.

**10. Mzovuyo** grows into a tall boy, a good "traditional" dancer, at the youth centre. His mother is a faith healer and his own tales are often magical. Both he and Themba love gum-boot dancing at the centre. He describes how, from the roofs of houses as a little boy, he and his friends catapulted rival gangs coming into New Crossroads.

**11. Zolile:** a positive, fresh-faced boy lives with his cousins, the children of his mother's sisters. He loves soccer and rides a bicycle around the streets of New Crossroads. He dreams of being a lawyer. He finds it very difficult when his uncle, Vini, leaves the house. His uncle had promised to look after him after his mother's marriage. The marriage meant her relocating to Paarl (a town north east of Cape Town) and leaving Zolile behind in the care of her brother. He takes me to Jericho (the community hall in New Crossroads) to watch his performance of Hip-Hop dancing with his friends.

<sup>19</sup> The film, *Cry Freedom*, directed by Richard Attenborough, depicts the life of South African activist, Steve Biko, as recounted by journalist, Donald Woods. The film shows Woods' flight into exile following the coverage in the press of Biko's death at the hands of the South African Police.

12. **James** is a quiet, gentle young man with a love of taking mechanical gadgets apart. He receives a beating from his father for using wires from an old gramophone player to fix a radio. He tells us of the terrible time when his father's taxis were burnt during the taxi-wars in Cape Town and how his family struggled to survive. He is stabbed in the face by friends, fighting over a girl.

13. **Vusumzi**: a lean, shy boy, who in the end I hardly know. He and his siblings are regular church goers. On the last bush outing he describes how his family has completely dispersed because of conflict between his parents. It is very painful for him, as it is for me. He goes to live with his uncle in Paarl who works as a waiter. I later learn that Vusumzi has been arrested on two charges of theft. Before the arrest I hear that he has been to visit his youngest sister, the only remaining sibling living with his father in New Crossroads.

14. **Thulani** befriends me early on, sitting on a sand dune with Nozuko and I on an outing to Cape Point. He asks me why children are so severely beaten at school. He is level-headed, politically-minded, responsible, clever, polite. He draws pictures of Africa in the shape of a woman's face. She has a *doek* [the Afrikaans word for scarf] on her head and cries bitter tears. He also draws, perfectly, the insignia of *uMkhonto weSizwe* (the armed wing of the African National Congress). He is the only person who consistently asks what we are going to do with the research. He is aware of the way in which lives are plundered for the benefit of those who write about them.

15. **Eric** is very tall, over six feet. He has a deep indented scar on his forehead. A metal plate was inserted here after his skull was fractured when he was knocked over by a car as a little boy. He is often very angry and worries about his school work. On the last bush outing, he refuses to speak to me during a long walk across a mountain because I have reprimanded him for bullying some of the younger children. He wants to succeed at the "white" school where his mother has enrolled him. At times he is very self-conscious about his appearance and more than anything wishes for a girlfriend. He shows me a poem written for the school magazine that articulates his desire. His school work overwhelms him from time to time. He becomes mentally disturbed. He wears protective medicine in a small pouch around his neck to help him with his affliction.

16. **Monga** is a handsome youth, intrigued by the mask-making I do with children at the Eyethu Crèche in New Crossroads. He speaks little of his life because it involves theft and drugs, and yet he is visibly pleased whenever he sees me. He leans jauntily into my car window, saying, "Hello, *Sis'* Pat. Long time no see!" He is wearing a woman's leather jacket, gold earrings and chains. On a walking trail, he wears a porcupine quill, stylishly angled through his hair. In improvised role-plays he enchants the audience with his gangster-type walk and the slang with which he greets an imaginary girlfriend. He draws the most socially interactive drawings of his family out of all the children. His figures are whole bodies. They strike attitudes. He is embarrassed when Elizabeth and I visit him at Siyakhatala, a "safe-holding place" for young criminals, near Stellenbosch. He has again been convicted of theft in Claremont - this time of a bicycle.

## The idea of fragility

I use the notion of fragility as a framing metaphor throughout the dissertation to explore flux and discontinuity in the lives of children and in the institutions of family, and neighbourhood. The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Current English (Thompson, 1995: 275) defines the word, concept, in three different ways: as a general notion or an abstract idea, as linked to developing an advertising concept, and, as a form of philosophical understanding. My conception of fragility is that of a general notion or abstract idea that invites fresh ways of describing children's experience, and releases ways of listening, observing and knowing. Sociologically, the notion of fragility stands in juxtaposition to firm sets of ideas concerning family and its relationship to society, in particular in relation to social norms and conventions out of which flow policy that very closely affects the very workings of society and so the manner in which children are held within society. A detailed ethnographic description of the lives of children exploring themes of continuities and discontinuities has led me to question the notions of coherence and order that continue to inform theoretical, popular and social service discourses, and policy formulations concerning children in South Africa.<sup>20</sup> Detailed knowledge of experience, strategies and understandings of children could allow for the formulation of more appropriate policy formulations with regard to children in South Africa.

The Oxford dictionary's (Thompson: 536) definition of the word fragility is linked to the idea of shattering, breaking and weakness. My usage of the word differs from that definition: although I show how children's worlds can "shatter", I uphold children's strength and improvisation in the face of discontinuities. Fragility, then, is linked to fluidity and it is out of a social context characterised by discontinuity and flux that children's senses of self emerge as multiple and variable. Attempts to reconstitute social worlds, sometimes through ritual processes, seldom reach a point of finality. Healing and repairing of the social fabric is thus an ongoing process. Fragility suggests the shadow, or the traces, of *apartheid* state policies in the every day lives of children. The idea of fragility is particularly explored through grounding the notion in explications of the economic standing of children's households, their experience of mobility and

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<sup>20</sup> See Appendix 6 for an exploration of aspects of South African social service discourse and their links with some of the notions of childhood that I have thus far introduced.

care-giving, violence, power in sexuality and through senses of self that are continuously being worked upon appealing at times to imaginary ideas of coherence.

### Chapter outline

Chapter One of the dissertation stresses levels of poverty in South Africa for the majority of South Africans and allows for a critical examination of survey data as usually collected. Demographic details of a 1991 Survey of half the households in New Crossroads are briefly explored as a benchmark against which an elaboration of the sixteen households begins. Demographic descriptions of the households are discussed in relation to the above with some additional details. After that there is the beginning of the very detailed ethnographic description that make up subsequent chapters. Chapter One provides background information for the exploration of the major theme of the thesis, tracing social fragility within children's lives. Intimations of fragility are suggested in data that document the educational standing of care-givers and children, the diversity of household configurations, children's work within the home, employment within households, poverty, violence and injury.

Chapter Two traces the changes experienced by children from birth until the end of the study period in the bonds they established with their care-givers. Some of the children's affective responses to these changes and their experience of the severance of primary bonds are given. A sense of the layering of fragility within families is expanded on by tracing the movement of all household members during the research period in two of the children's families. In the case studies, mobility within households is linked to issues of economic insecurity, poverty and sexual politics. The idea of layering of fragility is linked to the ways in which crises have multiple repercussions in children's worlds as relationships within households become the conduits through which crises are registered and their effects compounded. Layering of fragility refers to the effects of a failure of institutions to consistently support members, a failure bound up with the traces of *apartheid* intervention in the intimate spaces of family relationships.

In Chapter Three I move beyond the domestic ground to explore children's occupation of locales outside their homes, namely the street and school. In particular, I show how violence of differing forms traduces all the domains in which children live, thus blurring the boundaries between public and private space. I examine how children position themselves in different ways in

relation to multiple repertoires of violence. Their doing so results in various ways of speaking of their experiences of pain and also suggests areas of silence concerning pain. The chapter calls for a disaggregation of violence into differing forms with particular local meanings and warns against a too easy explication of violence and its effects.

Chapter Four traces fragility within the intimate spaces of children's lives through a prism of children's sexuality. It demonstrates how children's sexuality articulates with silence by focusing on the reticence of girls to give voice to their desire and their sometimes harsh sexual experience. It contrasts the latter with the ways in which manhood is a publicly and ritually acknowledged transformation for boys. Silences, I suggest, mark lines of power and show how boys and girls are differentially placed in relation to their emerging sexuality. The chapter infers the importance of researching intimacy yet raises ethical questions to do with research.

To summarise thus far, the first four chapters of the thesis trace fragility within domestic settings and beyond in the locales of street and school. Here fragility is linked with mobility and violence, and the shortcomings of institutions like the family, the schools and the state in their provision of care, education and protection for, and of, children. Institutional incoherence reveals the traces of *apartheid* state policies on institutional spaces and within the relationships and lives of individuals that make up institutions.

Chapter Five explores the kinds of senses of self that children develop in a world characterised by discontinuities. Mental affliction is explored as an embodiment of the consequences of discontinuity tracing both defiance and anger at the world in which the children find themselves. As reiterated above, senses of self are ongoing projects for children in their attempts to mend the social fabric in which they live.

All the ethnographic chapters (Chapters Two – Five) seek to highlight the lives of particular children to celebrate their differences within a shared social context and thus to write against any general conception of the African child. The Conclusion seeks to draw together threads of fragility and strength within the lives of the sixteen children as I have explored them. I tie together the theoretical and methodological approaches employed in the work and give an up-date on each child at the time of the completion of the thesis.

CHAPTER ONE  
DEMOGRAPHIC DESCRIPTIONS OF HOUSEHOLDS



Simon says, "Do this!": a game at a workshop

In Chapter One I seek to do two things: to give a demographic description of the children's sixteen households and to simultaneously point to some inadequacies that may lie within more general statistical means of gathering data. In doing so I wish to stress the need to draw on ethnographic studies in helping to shape the questions asked within statistical analysis in particular localities. Some survey data is gathered through the development of abstract formulations concerning persons that are taken as universally applicable. My argument is that a search for demographic data that reflects difference and particularity needs to be sensitive to local relationships and their demonstration of different sorts of persons with differential access to power. This is particularly the case for children. An assumption sometimes contained within survey procedures is that the household is a seamless, coherent entity. Unless surveys are done repeatedly over time in particular localities it is unlikely that they will be able to capture change and discontinuities.

In exploring the degree of poverty within their families I utilise a definition of poverty derived from the 1993 survey conducted by the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the South African Labour and Development Research Unit (henceforth referred to as the World Bank/ SALDRU survey) survey of 9 000 South African households.

There is a range of statistical evidence that document high levels of poverty in South Africa (see, for example, recent Central Statistical Surveys of South African households) and it is thus important to stress the effects of poverty on the lives of the majority of South Africans. In terms of the World Bank/ Saldru survey 95 per cent of poor people in South Africa are African. Seventy-five per cent of poor people live in rural areas with the greatest proportion concentrated in the former homelands and the TBVC (Transkei, Bophutatswana, Venda and Ciskei) "independent" states. Of these, the poorest is the Transkei. Many of the children who took part in the study have family links in the Transkei and the Ciskei, and they and their family members often journey between Cape Town and these rural hinterlands. I retain the names, "Transkei" and "Ciskei", although the places to which they refer are both now in the Eastern Cape Province, as the areas continue to demarcate particular rural areas that are specifically distinguished by the children, their parents and their neighbours. People in New Crossroads referred to the Transkei as *emaXhoseni*, the place of the Xhosa. The Ciskei was referred to as the Ciskei or the place of Sebe (referring to its *apartheid* appointed leader).

The World Bank/SALDRU survey found that large households are more likely to be poor and that poor households have larger numbers of dependents than wealthier households. The dependency ratio - the number of children below sixteen and those aged above 64 divided by the number of people aged sixteen to 64 - is more than twice as high among the poor than the better-off. De facto female-headed households have nearly a 70 per cent poverty rate, meaning that of the women headed households, 70 per cent are poor. About 61 per cent of children live in poverty. Among Africans the poverty rate for children is higher, averaging more than 70 per cent. An important factor in the high child poverty rates is the higher poverty rate among large families with many children. The unemployment rate among the poorest twenty per cent of the survey sample is 53 per cent as opposed to only four per cent among the richest quintile. In other words, large families are less likely to have members who are employed.

#### **The 1991 demographic survey of New Crossroads**

In February 1991, a household demographic survey provided data on half the households in New Crossroads (869 out of 1 738, see Heap, 1992: 8-17). Data from the 1991 household survey are referred to in the chapter as a benchmark in relation to which the sixteen children's households are described. The sixteen households fell within that survey and my analysis of them gives data gathered two years later. The survey, as I have explained above, formed an early part of the research project in which I was involved, **Adolescence: A Time for Reflection**. Basic demographic information concerning the residents of New Crossroads including a list of household occupants and particularities pertaining to each person was sought. Age, gender, relationship to household head, marital status, educational profile, income and employment profile, type of employment in which bread winners were engaged, gender of household head, dependency ratios and migration and settlement patterns were established.

From the 1991 survey and a sample population of 4 569 persons, it was estimated that the total population of New Crossroads was 10 340. Children under sixteen years formed 36 per cent of the sample. In 1991, adults in New Crossroads between sixteen and 60 formed 59 per cent of the population. The over-sixty year-olds comprised only four percent of the sample group. These percentages correlate well with national percentages pertaining to Africans (World Bank/SALDRU, 1995: 13).

In the 1991 survey, 87 per cent of children less than sixteen years in New Crossroads were born in Cape Town. Of the people aged 64 years and older, only five per cent were born in Cape Town. Of the overall New Crossroads sample, 51 per cent were born in Cape Town, 35 per cent in the Transkei, seven per cent in the Ciskei and seven per cent in other places. The figures seem to suggest, for the overall population, an increasing tendency to live in urban areas (see Amoateng, 1997).

In the 1991 survey the average number of wage earners per household was 1.8 and the average income per week per income earner was R148. The average per capita income for 1991 was R180.61 and the average income per month per household was R1 065.60. Seventy nine per cent of income earners were wage earners and 11 per cent received disability grants and pensions.

### **Demographic description of households**

I now discuss the sixteen families in relation some of the points I have made above concerning poverty within New Crossroads. It is the beginning of the detailed ethnographic description concerning the children and it shows the vital limitations of survey data as usually gathered. I begin by outlining the demographic particularities of the sixteen households including the children's ages and educational standing, their principal care-givers, their relationship with other household members, and the educational standing of principle care-givers. From the tabulation of the above information I discuss differences between kinds of household. I then proceed to do a detailed analysis of the economic standing of the sixteen households. The chapter ends with the tabulation of the kinds of work that children do within rural and urban households and the extent to which children are exposed to injury in the streets and homes of New Crossroads. Injury becomes one concrete way of showing how the bodies of children carry the traces of a general lack of protection for children in a social context deprived of resources through the policies of *apartheid*. I am aware that, on their own, the documentation of only sixteen households cannot be expected to represent more than the sum of their parts. The data outlined above set the scene within which these details lie and suggest possible patterns and implications.

TABLE 1.1 Basic Demographic Data Pertaining to the Sixteen Children

Children's names	Year of birth	Place of birth *	Age July 1992	Care-givers July 1992 **	Number of household occupants 1993	Members of households excluding child 1993 ***	Educa-tional level 1995 standard	Educational level of care-givers	
								Male	Fem
<b>GIRLS</b>									
1. Siphokazi	1981	OC	11	m, f	5	m, f, b, z	7	4	8
2. Sindiswa	1980	OC	12	m	4	m, 2b	7		4
3. Thandi	1980	T	12	f, <i>ldg</i>	10 + 5 <i>ldgs</i>	f, 3b, 4z, zs, 5 <i>ldgs</i>	7	1	
4. Boniwe	1980	OC	13	m, mz, mz	14 + <i>ldg</i>	m, 2z, b, 2mz, 5mzs, mzd, mbs, <i>ldg</i>	6		4
5. Nozuko	1979	OC	13	m, f	6	m, f, z, 2b	8	6	9
6. Nosipho	1979	OC	13	mz, mm	12	mm, mz, 5mzd, mbs, 2mzs	7	4	0
7. Lydia	1977	G	14	mf	3 + 6 <i>ldgs</i>	mf, z, 6 <i>ldgs</i>	9	4	
8. Lelezi	1977	G	15	m, f	7 + 5 <i>ldgs</i>	m, f, z, 2b, mm, 5 <i>ldgs</i>	10	5	7
<b>BOYS</b>									
9. Themba	1980	L	12	m, f	9	m, f, fbs, fzd, mbs, fzds, z, b	7	5	6
10. Mzovuyo	1980	KTC	12	m	5	m, z, mzs, mzd	7		4
11. Zolile	1978	OC	13	mb, mmz	11	2mb, mmz, mbw, 2mbd, mzs, 3mzd	7	?	?
12. James	1978	OC	14	m, f	7 + <i>ldg</i>	m, f, 4b, <i>ldg</i>	6	6	5
13. Vusumzi	1977	CT	16	m, f	9	m, f, z, 3b, 2zs, <i>ldg</i>	6	4	3
14. Thulani	1976	OC	16	m, f	12	m, f, ms, md, mds, z, mb, mz, mzd, b	9	2	5
15. Eric	1976	T	16	m	3	m, b	10		10
16. Monga	1976	OC	16	m, f	14	m, f, b, 2z, 5zd, 3zs	4	5	6

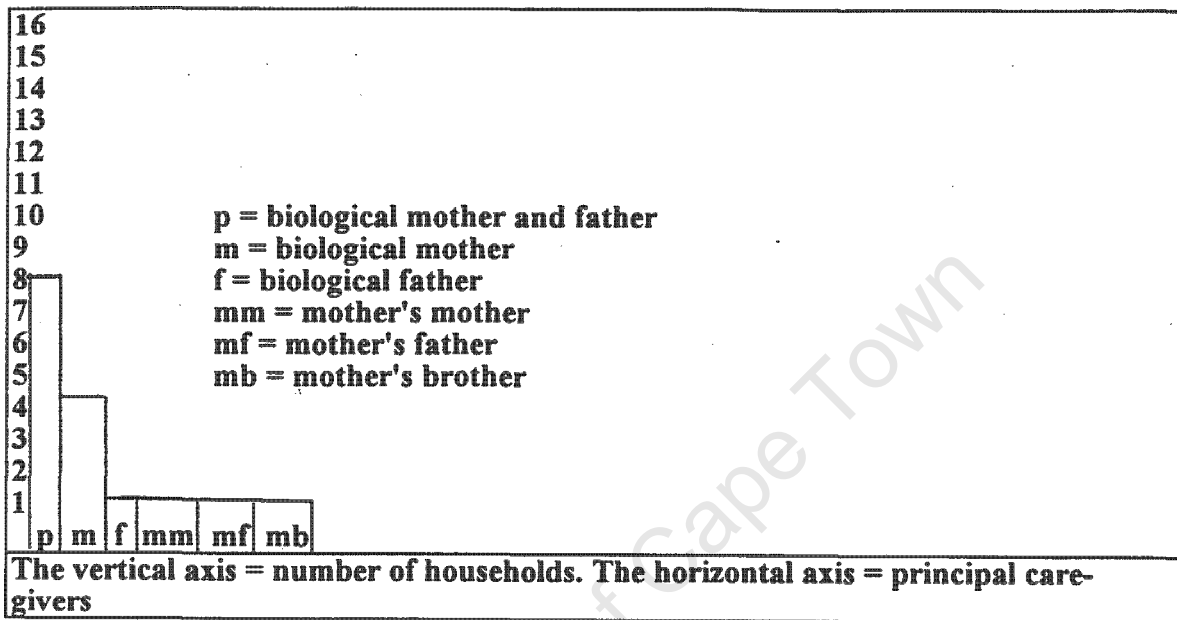
KEY: \* place of birth: CT = Cape Town, G = Gugulethu, KTC = KTC, a shanty town adjoining New Crossroads, L = Langa, OC = Old Crossroads, T = Transkei. For columns \*\* and \*\*\* symbols of care-givers and household members follow standard anthropological kinship abbreviations (see Appendix 1); *ldg* = lodger, *ldgs* = lodgers.

From Table 1.1, we find that among the sixteen children in July 1992, there were: one eleven year-old, four twelve year-olds, four thirteen year-olds, two fourteen year-olds, one fifteen year-old, and four sixteen year-olds.

Eight children were born in Old Crossroads: one in Cape Town (the specific place is not known), one in KTC (a shanty area adjoining New Crossroads), one in Elsies River, a coloured residential area, two in Gugulethu and only two in the Transkei. In other words, the bulk of children were born in greater Cape Town. Under the jurisdiction of the last regime, the place where one was born as an African was of crucial importance as to whether one had legitimate rights to live in an urban area. The consolidation of an urban base, however, did not mean that rural homes ceased to be important. Many of the children whose lives I seek to describe have links with relatives in the erstwhile Transkei and Ciskei in the Eastern Cape. In later chapters, urban and rural settings are viewed as a fragmented totality utilised for a variety of reasons by a mobile population. Locations of birth for young people reflect their parents' presence in political struggles to secure the right to live in an urban area in the 1970s and 1980s in Cape Town.

The average number of people living in each of the sixteen households in January to February 1993, was nine, with the smallest household comprising three persons and the largest, fifteen. I paced out different plot sizes for the sixteen families. Most plots were eighteen by nine metres. Two plots were bigger. They were 15.5 by twelve metres.

In July 1992, in eight of the sixteen households, both biological parents of the focus child were present. In four, biological mothers were the primary care-givers. In the remaining four, a father, a mother's mother and mother's sister, a mother's father, and a mother's brother were the central care-givers for the children. In 1998 when I completed writing the dissertation five households remained with both biological parents and in one household the child had moved from his uncle's house to that of his mother. Eight mothers were now primary care-givers. One child remained with her father, another with her mother's mother and mother's sister and one child had died. In recounting particularities of individual children and their households, differences in children's care-givers for July 1992 are visually represented in the following figure.



**FIGURE 1: Distribution of Type of Care-givers for Sixteen Households, July, 1992**

I have numbered each child's name as they appear in the text. The numbers provide a link with Table 1.1 and the prose pieces on the sixteen children with which I opened the chapter so that readers are able more easily able to link information.

In July 1992 seven of the sixteen biological fathers were absent. Three had died. Sindiswa's (2) father died in a car accident. Eric's (15) father died from unknown causes after his son's birth. Mzovuyo's (10) father died from unknown causes having left Mzovuyo's family four years before. Two fathers, those of Lydia (7) and Boniwe (4), were absent because of separation from the children's mothers. Zolile's (11) and Nosipho's (6) fathers had never lived with the children and their mothers: their mothers gave birth to the children before marriage or before beginning a long-term relationship with a man other than the father of these children.

The four absent mothers are accounted for as follows: Thandi's (3) mother separated from her partner and left her eight children in New Crossroads with their father. She went to live at the Strand on the Cape west coast. Nosipho's (6) unmarried mother left her mother and sister

(Nosipho's mother's mother and mother's sister). When Nosipho was a little girl her mother went to Johannesburg and only returned once during the intervening years for a short visit. Lydia's (7) mother continued to see her daughter, but due to her own mother's death sent Lydia to live with her grandfather in the same street so that Lydia could look after him. Zolile's (11) mother got married in 1990 and left Zolile, to whom she gave birth before being married, with her brother.

Specific household formations different from those in which both parents resided or where a mother on her own was the primary head need to be highlighted from Table 1.1. In 1993, Boniwe's (4) mother's household comprised three sisters and their offspring. Zolile's (11) household comprised two mother's brothers, a mother's brother's girlfriend and two offspring, and four of his mother's sisters' children. His mother's mother's sister took care of the children after his own mother's marriage and departure. Thandi's (3) father lived with his eight children and five lodgers - a couple and their three children. The adult lodgers took on putative care-giving roles for all children within the household and the entire household "ate out of one pot". Thandi's household contrasted with four other households where lodgers were present. In the latter households, lodgers had separate commensal arrangements. In Lelezi's (8) household the lodgers were distantly related to her father. In the other three households the lodgers were unrelated. In James' (12) home, a lodger formed a working relationship with his father in his taxi business. All lodgers paid a boarding fee ranging between R15 to R20 a month per room. All sixteen families paid rent to the state for the houses in which they lived on a ninety-nine year lease system established by the *apartheid* state.

- With regard to educational status within households, the educational level attained by parents was relatively low. The average standard attained by fathers was standard four, and for mothers, between standard five and six. The lowest educational level attained by a father was standard one, and the highest, standard six. None of the children's fathers had completed more than one year of high school education. The lowest educational level for mothers was no formal education at all, and the highest was standard ten. Only one mother had completed matriculation as an adult through night school. (In South Africa, matriculation refers to the highest year of education in secondary school, namely, standard ten.) The children's mothers completed higher levels of education than their fathers except for one mother who had a year less education than the father. If we compare the level of education attained thus far by children with that of their parents, we see that children are securing more schooling than their parents were able to do. In 1995, only three out

of the sixteen children appeared to have abandoned further school education. All three were boys: Monga (16), Vusumzi (13) and James (12). That they dropped out of school can in part be explained by the fact that they were old relative to their achieved educational level. In 1995, Monga at nineteen years had completed standard four; Vusumzi at eighteen years had completed standard six; and James at the same age had also completed standard six. In addition, Monga and Vusumzi had been enticed into an alternative world involving theft. Amongst the girls, only Boniwe struggled a great deal with school. She has learning difficulties.

### **Economic status of households**

In establishing the economic status of the sixteen households in New Crossroads the 1993 World Bank/SALDRU survey definition of poverty in South Africa is used as a bench mark against which to place the sixteen households.<sup>1</sup>

There is no official South African poverty datum line. A definition of "poor" in the World Bank/SALDRU survey resulted in a cut-off expenditure of R301 a month per "adult equivalent".<sup>2</sup> For purposes of analysis "poor" was defined as the poorest 40 per cent of households and "ultra poor" the poorest 20 per cent of households. In establishing the economic status of households, the World Bank/SALDRU survey, in part, sought to examine expenditure and consumption of households as opposed to income. In the survey, consumption is not related to actual consumption in households over time but is calculated according to consumption needs linked with age and sex, established by an outside medical authority. The writers argued that these indicators were more reliable than poverty rates established through wage remuneration since respondents were often reluctant to divulge income. It is my view that a medical conception of consumption needs when linked to conceptions of poverty may reflect a general shortfall in consumption in poor households, yet it is unable to show particular shortfalls articulated with gender and differential status within households.

<sup>1</sup> In the analysis of data from the World Bank/SALDRU survey of 9 000 households where applicable, were compared with the 1994 Household Survey carried out by the national Central Statistical Services (CSS). Broadly similar results were established where the two surveys overlapped.

<sup>2</sup> I give the average rand/dollar exchange rates for the years, 1991 to 1995, for the interpretation of data appearing in discussion concerning the economic standing of households in new Crossroads. In 1991, 1 United States Dollar (USD) = R2.7612; in 1992, 1 USD = R2.8522; in 1993, 1 USD = 3.2675; in 1994, 1 USD = R3.5515 and in 1995, 1USD = R3.6272.

During research in New Crossroads it was not possible to chart actual consumption within households with any accuracy as I did not live in the households and household members were unable to keep accurate records. Rather, income surveys of the families relied on particular records of their families in the initial 1991 survey and two separate interviews conducted in 1992 and 1993. The initial New Crossroads' survey provided a base for the long-term research into which my work slotted. Repeated visits to households alerted me to new economic developments and various casual commercial ventures in which household members engaged. Income earners in New Crossroads could discuss wages earned and remuneration from disability grants and pensions with certainty. The amounts pertaining to grants and pensions were verified against data provided for the relevant years from the Department of Welfare and Population Development. Income from casual self-employment, for example from sewing projects and building projects, was more difficult to ascertain. None of the families was able to give accurate records of what it spent each month. Most families, however, demarcated categories of expenditure including schooling, rent, food, transport, and in some cases, electricity. In contrast, clothing and medical expenses were occasional categories of expenditure.

I have estimated gross income for the sixteen households over a three-year period from 1991 to 1993. It must be stressed that the figures are not accurate in any absolute sense, as income from casual employment could not be ascertained with certainty. There were periods when wage earners changed or lost employment or were retrenched for a while, or, for example, where a taxi owner's taxis were burnt in the taxi-war of 1992. I have estimated losses due to incidents like the above where possible. Mobility of residents also affected the income of several households. For example, great changes occurred in one household's economic status in February 1993 when Zolile's (11) uncle (mb), his uncle's girlfriend and her two children left the house. Their departure was serious, as Zolile's uncle was the major breadwinner for his brothers and his sister's offspring, including Zolile. After 1993, changes in Vusumzi's (13) house due to crises in relationships between the parents led to the dispersal of the entire family group and consequently brought changes in the economic welfare of each individual.

In Table 1.2 I have tabulated information concerning a number of variables pertinent to establishing the economic status of households from 1991 to 1993. The variables include: household composition (in terms of a ratio between income earners and dependents), the names of income earners, the relationship of income earners with each child, the type of employment of

income earners, additional non-commensal contributors to household income, gross estimated earnings over a three year period for the sixteen households, the average male earnings and female earnings per household,<sup>3</sup> the average income per month over the three year period per household and the average per capita income per month per household.

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<sup>3</sup> Average male and female earnings per month were calculated by adding wages for months worked and then dividing the total wages by the number of months worked. The average monthly income per household in rands per month is spread over the three-year period and therefore is sometimes less than the combined male and female wage per month.

TABLE 1.2 : Economic Status of Sixteen Households (1991-3)

Child's name	Household Composition Earner's/Dependents			Name of income earners	Relationship to child (year/s as income earner specified if less than the three years, 1991-3)	Type of employment	Additional non-comensal contributors to household income	Gross earnings over three years 1991-3 in rands	Average male earnings in rands p/m when earning *	Average female earnings in rands p/m when earning *	Average income per household in rands p/m	Income p/c/i, in rands p/m	Saldru pov/datum line 1994 p/a/e, p/m in rands
	1991	1992	1993										
1. Siphokazi	2/4	2/4	2/3	Dumasile Mildred	f m	Labr at fishery Domt, Sif-emp food		45 948	782.73	493.60	1 276.33	227.91	301.00
2. Sindiswa	2/7	1/4	1/3	Nokhaya David	m mzh 1991	Domt, Sif-emp food Labr		40 800	700.00	866.00	1 100.00	183.33	
3. Thandi	1/14	3/12	3/12	Butterworth Mabandla Nosipho	f ldg oz 1992	Labr rub remv Labr Domt	1 ldg 1992-1993	28 800	700.00	unknown	800.00	53.33	
4. Boniwe	1/12	3/12	2/12	Nomachule Eric	m mb 1991	Cleanr fac Labr cement. fac	mzh 1993 2 ldgs 1992-1993	9 156	116.00	139.00	254.33	17.74	
5. Nozuko	2/4	2/4	2/4	Eric Cordelia	f m	Salspn Cleanr hotel		45 360	1 260.00	1 200.00	1 260.00	210.00	
6. Nosipho	4/9	2/10	2/10	Elsie Nomonde Elliot Zolile	mm mz mmbs 1991 mmbs 1991	Domt Wrk clean comp Labr Labr		49 104	500.00	515.16	1 364.00	110.62	
7. Lydia	2/2	1/2	1/2	Philip Daisy	mf mm 1991	Pens Pens	3 ldgs 1993	9 840	215.00	175.00	273.33	82.08	
8. Lelezi	2/4	2/5	2/5	Vuyani Nokhanyiso	f m	Wrk fac Sif-emp, sewr	1 ldg 1993	31 200	773.33	800.00	866.66	131.31	
9. Themba	3/5	3/7	2/7	Aderus Nolusapho Ruth	f m fm 1991-2	Wrk fac Wrk chlds hm Pens		45 600	800.00	466.66	1 266.66	140.74	
10. Mzovuyo	2/6	1/6	1/4	Evelyn Florence	m z 1991	Domt Domt		12 180		338.66	338.33	51.62	
11. Zolile	1/12	2/11	1/10	Vini Manci'	mb mmz	Wrk, constr comp Domt		26 540	940.00	200.00	737.22	59.93	
12. James	2/6	2/6	2/6	Eric Lydia	f m	Sif-emp, taxi ownr Domt	1 ldg 1991-1993	72 000	1 660.66	400.00	2 000.00	250.00	
13. Vusumzi	2/8	2/7	2/7	Lulama Nombulelo	f m	Labr Domt	1 ldg 1993	40 224	686.66	430.66	1 117.33	120.14	
14. Thulani	2/11	1/13	2/10	Isaac Joyce	f m	Disb grnt, Labr Com Hlth Wrk		33 180	245.00	693.00	836.66	64.35	
15. Eric	1/2	1/2	1/2	Nokuzola	m	Salspn		41 400		1 000.00	1 150.00	383.33	
16. Monga	5/14	2/13	2/12	Wilcox Evelyn Vuyelwa Boniwe Zanoxolo	f m z 1991 z 1991 b	Pens, Sif-emp Bld Pens, Sif-emp, sewr Clnr Wrk Disb grnt		30 120	245.00	304.00	921.66	52.29	
<b>TOTAL</b>								<b>561 452.00</b>	<b>9 624.38</b>	<b>8 021.74</b>			
<b>AVERAGE</b>								<b>35 090.75</b>	<b>687.45</b>	<b>534.78</b>			
<b>AVERAGE P/A</b>								<b>11 696.92</b>					
<b>AVERAGE P/M</b>								<b>974.58</b>					

KEY: For income earners (all relatives) standard kinship terms are used (see Appendix 1); Ldg = Lodger, Ldgs = lodgers. Under the column, "Type of employment": Cleanr hotel = cleaner in hotel; Com hlth Wrk = community health worker; Domt = domestic worker; Disb Grnt = recipient of disability grant from the state; Labr = labourer; Labr, cement fac = labourer in a cement factory; Labr rub remv = labourer in rubbish removal service; Pens = pensioner; Salspn = sales person; Sif-emp = self-employed; Sif-emp Bld = self-employed as a builder; Sif-emp food = self-employed in selling food; Sif-emp sewr = self-employed as a sewer; Sif-emp taxi ownr = self-employed as a taxi owner; Wrk clean comp = worker in a cleaning company; Wrk Chlds Hm = worker in a children's home; Wrk constr comp = worker in construction company; Wrk fac = factory worker; p/a/e = per adult equivalent; p/c/i = per capita income; p/m = per month. \* Discrepancies between combined average male and female income per month, and average income per household in rands per month are due to breadwinners losing or changing employment for periods of time.

In January to February 1993, the average number of wage earners per household for the sixteen families was 1.6. The average per capita income per month for adults and children for the same period was R152. The estimated average income per month per household over the three-year period at R974.58. Pensions and disability grants played an important role in sustaining four out of the sixteen families: namely, Lydia's (7), Themba's (9), Thulani's (14) and Monga's (16) families (see Table 1.2).

I reproduce Table 1.3 from the World Bank/SALDRU (1995:17) report that separates household monthly wage by race in terms of five quintile (20 percent brackets) ranging from the poorest to the richest. Poverty in South Africa has much to do with differential access to different kinds of work and skewed remuneration along erstwhile demarcations of race.

**TABLE 1.3: Average Household Total Monthly Wage by Race and Expenditure Quintile (in Rand)**  
Households ranked by consumption groups of 20% (quintiles)

	All South Africa *	Quintile 1, poorest 20% of population	Quintile 2, next 20% of population	Combined Quintile 1 and 2, poorest 40% of population	Quintile 3	Quintile 4	Quintile 5, richest 20% of population
<b>African</b>	757	281	519	397	859	1 254	2 652
<b>Coloured</b>	1 744	485	862	745	1 500	2 292	3 165
<b>Indian</b>	3 371	* *	1 081	1 081	1 148	2 496	5 055
<b>White</b>	4 695	* *	1 073	1 073	1 091	2 620	5 055
<b>All</b>	1 598	287	546	417	930	1 611	4 689

\*\* Too few observations in these cells to calculate reliable rates.

\* The CSS 1994 October Household Survey found very similar results on all these items.

From Table 1.3 we see that amongst Africans the average monthly wage per household is R281.00 for the poorest 20 per cent of the population and that the average monthly wage per household for the next 20 per cent of the population is R519.00. Reading Table 1.2 we see that Boniwe's (4), Lydia's (7) and Mzovuyo's households fall within the poorest twenty per cent grouping for Africans. Zolile's (11), Thulani's (14) and Thandi's (3) households fall within quintile two, with monthly wage incomes of less than R859.00. Sindiswa's (2), Lelezi's (3), Vusumzi's (13), Monga's (16) and Eric's (15) households may be ranked in quintile three, with wage incomes of less

than R1 254 per month. Siphokazi's (1), Nozuko's (5), Nosipho's (6), Themba's (9) and James' (12) households receive monthly wage incomes of less than R2 652 and so fall within quintile four for Africans.

In Table 1.4 I have ranked households according to two different methods. On the left-hand side of the page, households are ranked according to the average monthly wage per household from 1991 to 1993 divided by what the World Bank/SALDRU survey described as the average adult equivalent per household. As I have mentioned above, the World Bank/SALDRU survey used a formula to convert children and adults of different ages into what they term "adult equivalents" by taking into consideration differing consumption needs defined medically and correlating them with age and gender. The process, in my view, creates "virtual" adults out of the children for the sake of statistical calculation (more on the notion of adult equivalent below). I used the statistical formula for calculating adult equivalents (see Appendix 2) only in order to place the sixteen households within the World Bank/SALDRU demarcation of poverty in South Africa: i.e. R301 per month per adult equivalent.

On the right hand side of the page, I have divided the average monthly wage per household equally across the average number of adults and children within households. I do so simply to counter the notion that children are partial adults. In itself however, the approach is equally inadequate in capturing the ways in which resources are differentially allocated between individuals within households as the tables represent per capita income is in this case divided equally between children and adults, boys and girls, men and women.

**TABLE 1.4 Ranking of Households in Terms of Average Monthly Wage**

**per Adult Equivalent**

No of household from table 1.1	Name of child	Average income, per adult equivalent p/m in rands, 1991-3
12	James	392.15
15	Eric	368.58
1	Siphokazi	313.59
5	Nozuko	259.79
2	Sindiswa	244.44
9	Themba	205.62
8	Lelezi	181.30
6	Nosipho	163.94
13	Vusumzi	161.93
14	Thulani	129.99
11	Zolile	105.77
3	Thandi	103.05
7	Lydia	98.36
16	Monga	91.68
10	Mzovuyo	79.42
4	Boniwe	26.49

**per Capita Income**

No of household from table 1.1	Name of child	Average per capita income p/m for children and adults in rands, 1991-3
15	Eric	383.33
12	James	250.00
1	Siphokazi	227.91
5	Nozuko	210.00
2	Sindiswa	183.33
9	Themba	140.74
8	Lelezi	131.31
13	Vusumzi	120.14
6	Nosipho	110.62
7	Lydia	82.08
14	Thulani	64.35
11	Zolile	59.93
3	Thandi	53.33
16	Monga	52.29
10	Mzovuyo	51.62
4	Boniwe	17.74

If households are ranked in terms of wage divided by adult equivalent for the sixteen households, all but three fall below the cut-off rate of R301 per adult equivalent for establishing poverty suggested by the World Bank/SALDRU report. The latter point is an important one to recall in the subsequent more ethnographic chapters as it describes an extreme degree of poverty and provides one of the social contours around which fragility may be explored.

The income figures for the three poorest households in table 1.4 could be modified slightly with additional information. More precisely we need to take into account that the remuneration from occasional beer brewing in Boniwe's (4) household could not be established with any accuracy. Mzovuyo's (10) mother also received undisclosed donations from members of her congregation for her work as a faith-healer. The figures pertaining to Monga's (16) family need to be increased somewhat because his father's building activities for which he received remuneration over and above his pension pay-out could not be calculated.

The two desperately poor households - Boniwe's (4) and Mzovuyo's (10) - were both headed by women. Of interest is that Eric's (15) family, although female-headed, ranks above the cut-off point for poverty. His mother was a sales-person for Joshua Doore, a furniture business. In contrast, all other working women from the sixteen families who received a wage, were domestic workers and workers in factories. Women who were self-employed were involved in informal activities including crocheting and sewing, faith-healing, the selling of clothing, shoes and items of consumption including cigarettes and ice-cream, home brewed beer and meat. The majority of male breadwinners were labourers and factory workers. Nozuko's (5) father was a salesman in a hardware store. James' (12) father was a taxi owner and driver (see Table 1.2).

I elaborate descriptively below on the economic status of the poorest household in the above rankings by way of critiquing statistical analyses of household economic status as they now stand. A much larger time frame will form the backdrop of the exploration and will show, through example, how the economic status of a household changes over time and is intimately tied up with social relationships between members of the household. Social relationships within households affect the access of individuals to resources. Different kinds of persons have differential access to household resources (Moore, 1994a: 92-93; see Gillian Hart, 1993: 111-29 for a critique of the way in which "the household" is constructed in economic theory).

### Boniwe's household

In Boniwe's (4) household, the poorest household, her mother, Nomachule, worked for two-and-a-half hours a day in a factory washing up cups, wiping tables and sweeping the floor. When Nomachule was fourteen years old she married a young man from a neighbouring village in the Transkei. After marriage, she came to Cape Town for the first time to live with her husband who worked in the city. Her husband deserted her in New Crossroads after her third child was born and went to live with another woman in Khayelitsha. Nomachule retained the house in New Crossroads. After her husband left, there were days when she had no food to give her children. She relied on provisions donated by neighbours. She had little education and managed only to get a part-time job.

During the research period, she was reliant on her two sisters to provide most of the sustenance for the household. In 1993, there were fourteen people including Nomachule, her two sisters and some of their children living in the household (see Table 1.1). Nomachule's older sister received regular remittances of R320 a month from her husband, a builder in the Transkei. (The reasons for her stay in Cape Town were unclear.) Her younger sister had a boyfriend who contributed money from a part-time labouring job at a concrete works. A lodger living in a shack dwelling in the back-yard contributed R15 a month in rent.

Nomachule's younger sister's boyfriend stabbed her during the Christmas holidays of 1993 with the consequence that the sister, her children and boyfriend moved out of the house and set up a shack-dwelling in KTC. In 1994, her elder sister became increasingly angry about supporting the entire household and tried to displace Nomachule and her children from the house. Nomachule, on the other hand, felt that, as they were relatives, her sister should not complain about distributing resources between all members of the household. The sisters subsequently came to blows over issues of control of the house. The Street Committee<sup>4</sup> ruled in favour of Nomachule as being the legitimate head of the household because she and her husband had set up house here when New Crossroads was first established.

Boniwe, Nomachule's eldest child and one of the sixteen children, asked her mother if she could go and live with her aunt, Nomachule's younger sister, in KTC. She left her mother's house in

<sup>4</sup> Street Committees comprise leaders in each street. The structures are common to most urban African residential areas.

1995 and went to live with her aunt because she missed one of her aunt's children and because of the scarcity she experienced in her mother's home.

When all three sisters lived in the household together, of their collective children, only the older boys had a definite place for sleeping at night in the kitchen. Boniwe and all the other girls of the household slept on chairs in the lounge. Two of their mothers shared a bed. Nomachule had her own bed that she shared with her youngest child when a boyfriend was not visiting. When the research period ended, Nomachule's oldest sister continued to live with her under strained circumstances. While all three sisters lived together, they occasionally brewed beer to sell as a way of increasing their income. There was an open-air *shebeen* (place where people gather to drink alcohol and homemade beer) next-door to Nomachule's house, and Nomachule and her sisters brewed for the *shebeen*.

On most of my visits to their house, Nomachule, a slightly built woman with a delicately sad sense of humour in relation to her economic plight, would ask me as I was leaving whether I or anyone I knew had a job for her as a domestic worker. The economic instability in her household, as well as the unequal financial contribution of the three sisters, resulted in painful inter-personal fights between family members and in the physical dispersion of members.

### **Asking questions concerning surveys**

The above description of Boniwe's family reveals the inadequacy of once-off surveys in establishing the economic status of households with any accuracy. Abstract concepts, like adult equivalent and per capita income utilised in demographic data collection, have little to do with individuals differentiated in terms of age, gender and cultural or social status. They have little to do with the ways in which scarce resources are commandeered and withheld in webs of negotiated social relationship. As many feminist writers have pointed out, the family cannot be perceived as a seamless social grouping without antagonisms and conflicting interests. It follows, therefore, that distribution of resources within families is not equal. Where social relationships are fluid and where it is difficult to calculate spasmodic and casual income, establishing household incomes can only be relatively accurate.

Boniwe's family was one in which scarcity became the norm. Whatever resources came into the family were quickly absorbed. All three sisters depended in various ways on male partners to

sustain them. Nomachule's younger sister's partner was a labourer and his income was spasmodic. Her older sister's husband was an established builder in the Transkei and sent her regular remittances. Nomachule herself earned a pittance and relied on casual boyfriends and her sisters to keep the family afloat. Scarcity in the household was symbolically manifest in the way in which children had no regular sleeping places and in Nomachule's sisters being forced to share a bed. The house became a bulwark against day to day uncertainty. Who would retain control over it became a central area of contestation. Appeals to ideals around the mutual obligations of kin served in some ways to repair relationships but were also the fissures along which relationships broke. In fighting for control of the house, Nomachule's older sister attempted to create a secure base for herself and her immediate family in the city. Nomachule's younger sister moved out to a shack-dwelling to ease the tensions between her spouse and Nomachule. Nomachule retained nominal control of the brick house in New Crossroads and yet her position was by far the most precarious of all the sisters. In the end her eldest daughter, Boniwe, chose to live with her young aunt where there was slightly more income. On many occasions when I visited Nomachule and her sisters they drank beer together, perhaps a way of temporarily obscuring the numbing reality of scarcity.

Although the description of Boniwe's household points to conflicts over resource allocation<sup>5</sup> in her particular family configuration, it fails to map in any way the resources accessed by children except in Boniwe's active decision to live with her aunt. Further research into the details of the disregarded spaces of resource allocation needs to be undertaken.

### **Children's economic activity**

Seven of the sixteen children were directly involved in economic pursuits of one kind or another. The monetary value of the children's economic pursuits could not be calculated and therefore are not included in Table 1.2. Sindiswa (2) assisted her mother in selling meat after school and on weekends at the Nyanga taxi rank bordering New Crossroads. She often sold the meat on her own. She claimed that buyers sometimes tried to short-change her but that if it happened she would inform her mother who, with the assistance of other traders, would beat the offenders when

<sup>5</sup> Another event I was told about illustrated the way in which allocation of household resources could be contested between adults and children. Lydia received R50.00 from her mother's boyfriend to help her with school expenses, particularly with transport to a school in the "white" suburb of Mowbray. Her mother took the money and bought

they saw them again. Both her older brothers and the girlfriend of one of her brothers were involved in helping with the meat-selling business. Her older brother was frequently in jail and so did not take part in these activities continuously. Sindiswa knew her business well and conducted it with skill and serenity. She was able to describe in detail the preparation of *amaqhina* or sheep hooves and forelegs.

Thandi (3) helped the household in collecting second hand clothes by asking "door-to-door" in white suburbs on some Saturdays. Her acquisitions were very important for her household as there was not enough money to buy clothes for the children living there. Themba (9) looked after his father's goats every weekend. He looked after them very early in the morning before going to school, with the result that he often slept through class at Rhodes High School, Mowbray. His father kept cattle in Khayelitsha, and Themba sometimes went to assist an uncle with them. Vusumzi (13) set up a stand for selling meat on the weekends with his mother at the migrant hostels near the Strand (a town on the east Cape coast adjacent to Somerset West. See Map 1.). He later became involved in theft and was arrested for two housebreaking incidents. Eric (16) occasionally worked as a gardener on weekends to subsidise his bus-fare to school in Mowbray. From 1994, Lydia (7) worked for a small wage at the youth centre in New Crossroads on weekends and evenings assisting with an environmental group and running the library. Monga (16) begged for money at traffic lights in Claremont. He, together with friends, occasionally helped people in New Crossroads move furniture and clean their yards for money. He became involved in several housebreaking incidents and a theft of a bicycle. He also stole the purse of a woman church-goer at the youth centre one Sunday.

Eric (15), Lydia (7), and Monga (16) were involved in income generating activities that were specifically aimed at addressing some of their own personal needs as individuals and that did not contribute to general household income. If pressing needs are not being met within the overall economy of the household children living in situations of scarcity have to actively pursue economic ventures of their own. The three children all engaged in economic pursuits to supply funds for transport, and, in Monga's case, for drugs and food.

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groceries with it. Lydia was extremely angry. She felt that she had gained a degree of control over her schooling. Her mother's action necessitated further strategising on Lydia's part to simply get to school every day.

**Children's work in the home:**

As I show in Chapter Two, many of the sixteen children moved frequently between homes located in rural settings and city dwellings. Of pertinence here is that children in both rural and urban settings contributed to the functioning of households with the work they performed. Table 1.5 records the work done by each of the sixteen children in different localities. The information supplied was gained from interviews with the sixteen children conducted in 1992. Gaps in the table indicate that children either did not speak of work undertaken in rural areas or that they had not spent significant periods of time there.

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TABLE 1.5: Children's Delineation of Work Undertaken in Households in the Transkei/Ciskei and in New Crossroads

	Transkei/ Ciskei	New Crossroads
<b>GIRLS</b>		
1. Siphokazi	(Seven years old.) In early morning made tea for father's mother and others. Washed her mother's sister's two-year-old baby. Helped to clean the house. After school fetched water with a bucket from the communal tap. Washed glass lamp shades for paraffin lamps and prepared these at night.	(Eleven years old.) Washed younger sister and took her to crèche in Nyanga - a neighbouring township. Cleaned the house before 12.30 p.m. when she went to school. After school fetched her sister from the crèche.
2. Sindiswa		(Twelve years old.) She washed dishes, swept the floor. Older brother cooked and cleaned the house.
3. Thandi	(Five to seven years old.) Made tea for her father's mother. Fetched water from river. Older siblings helped with cleaning and cooking.	
4. Boniwe	(Twelve years old.) Made coffee in the morning for her mother's mother. Accompanied her mother's mother to pension pay-out. Older children did the cleaning.	(Twelve years old.) She accompanied her mother's sister's daughter, a girl of eight, to school in KTC. She did not want the child to be knocked down by a car as she had been. Her older cousin, a teenage girl, did the cooking. Boniwe's mother also cooked.
5. Nozuko		(Thirteen years old.) Helped clean the house, washed school clothes and other washing. Her older sister and mother cooked.
6. Nosipho		(Thirteen years old.) Cleaned the house, washed the dishes, washed her own clothes. Accompanied aunt's daughters to pay accounts for her mother's mother.
7. Lydia		(Fourteen years old.) Made porridge for mother's father. Cleaned dining-room and kitchen. Her sister cleaned their bedroom and their mother's father's room.
8. Lelezi	(Twelve years old.) In the week woke up early and made porridge for mother's mother and mother. After school fetched water from river. Gathered wood. Lelezi and her older sister helped mother to clean the house.	(Fifteen years old.) Cleaned house, washed clothes.
<b>BOYS</b>		
9. Themba	(Four to six years old.) Went to the shop for his father's mother. Collected water after school. No cattle to look after. His father's mother and older sisters did the cooking.	(Twelve years old.) Cooked at home, cleaned the house after school, looked after his baby brother. Helped uncle look after his father's goats and cattle on the weekend and during school holidays. Helped sweep the yard.
10. Mzovuyo		(Twelve years old.) Cleaned the yard at home. Helped his friends sweep and clean their yards.
11. Zolile		(Thirteen years old.) Helped with the dishes sometimes. Cleaned the yard. Went to buy milk, sugar and other items.
12. James	(Six to ten years old.) Looked after father's mother's sheep, helped in small spinach garden. Picked up papers. Sometimes helped to fetch water.	(Fourteen years old.) Cleaned the yard.
13. Vusumzi		(Sixteen years old.) Helped younger children put on school uniforms early in the morning. Dished up porridge for them. Took the youngest children to the crèche. After school, gave the children tea and bread and then tidied the dining-room. Helped friends clean yards at their homes. Cleaned his own yard.
14. Thulani	(Nine to eleven years old.) Fetched water after school for mother's mother and father's mother. On the days cattle were dipped, Thulani and other boys did not go to school. They helped with the dipping.	
15. Eric		(Sixteen years old.) Cleaned the house after school. Cooked with his brother.
16. Monga		(Sixteen years old.) Cleaned the yard. Sometimes cleaned the house, washed clothes, fetched wood from Port-Jackson plantations next to the N2 highway.

There was not a clear division of labour between the tasks undertaken by boys and girls apart from the sweeping of yards. Cleaning yards seemed to be the province of young boys who often helped one another complete the task collectively at friends' houses. Both older boys and girls took care of younger siblings by feeding them, overseeing their ablutions and dress and accompanying them to school or crèche. Both boys and girls were involved in cleaning houses (though boys to a lesser extent). Older children of both sexes were involved in cooking. Sometimes boys explained their involvement in cooking activities by stating that a suitable sister or older female relative was not present to undertake this task: both Thulani (14) and Themba (9) explained their cooking thus.

In rural settings, both young boys and girls helped to fetch water and wood for their households from an early age. Boys tended livestock.

### **Injuries and accidents, exposure to danger**

One aspect of New Crossroads life that I became particularly aware of was the degree to which people were physically injured and disabled. I list here types of injuries and deaths, firstly, as related in the life histories of children and mothers and secondly, actual occurrences that I witnessed or heard about from 1992 to 1995.

Siphokazi's (1) grandfather (mf) was born blind. In the 1980s her male cousin (mzs), who was living with her family, was stabbed to death in New Crossroads by a girlfriend who lives in the same street. Sindiswa's (2) father died in a car accident in 1987. Lydia's (7) father was disabled at work in an accident at a bus company and he was unable to walk for some years after the accident. In 1991, Daisy, Lydia's (7) grandmother (mm), died at home in New Crossroads. Isaac, Thulani's (14) father, a labourer injured his lumber-spine gradually over time by carrying heavy weights. Eventually he underwent an operation from which he never fully recovered. He became disabled and was unable to work for most of the research period. In 1994, he began a casual<sup>6</sup> labouring job. Monga's (16) older brother, Zanoxolo, was disabled from birth. Nomachule, Boniwe's (4) mother, described how her husband beat her many times before leaving her for good. She also described an attempted rape in the 1980s in New Crossroads. Boniwe was knocked down by a car in the early 1980s when she was younger than eight years old. Eric (15) was knocked down twice. He was two-

<sup>6</sup> Casual work is without a contract and is often undertaken for a short period of time.

and-a-half years old when the first accident happened. The second accident resulted in a badly fractured skull. Eric's father died shortly after his birth in 1976. His grandmother (mm) was shot through the hand by police in Old Crossroads during the years of squatter resistance and, as a consequence, cannot use her hand effectively. Eric's cousin (mbs), to whom he referred as "brother", was a *comrade*<sup>7</sup> who fought in the wars "against the fathers" (when young men and women challenged the authority of older men in Old Crossroads and throughout the squatter communities of Cape Town). He was killed by police in New Crossroads when Eric was eight years old. As little girls living in Old Crossroads, Nozuko (5) and her older sister, Pamela, were knocked down by cars. Nozuko's mother did not like to beat her because she claimed that Nozuko cried and cried as a result of the accident if she did. Pamela bore the scar of her injury on the top of her head. Vusumzi's mother described how she beat her eldest daughter repeatedly to try to control her sexuality. Mzovuyo's (10) father died in 1991.

Events that happened during the research period are related here. Thulani's (14) father beat his mother at the end of 1995. Thulani retaliated by attacking his father to defend his mother. After the incident, Thulani's father left the house for some time. Monga (16) was beaten by fellow prisoners and guards at the Worcester Reformatory in the early months of 1995. Nomachule, Boniwe's (4) mother, was stabbed by her sister's boyfriend at the end of 1993. Thandi's (3) older brother, Mzovuyo, was stabbed to death on Christmas day, 1992. Themba (9) received severe beatings from his father in 1992, 1993 and 1994. He had sjambok scars across his back and on his face because of the beatings. In 1993, his mother was beaten by his father. She had to have twelve stitches across her face. In 1995, James (12) was stabbed twice in the face by friends fighting over a girl. In 1993, Vusumzi's (13) mother was stabbed and beaten by her husband. He, like Thulani (14), defended his mother by attacking his father. Nosipho (6) was beaten by her aunt and grandmother for not washing pots, "for sleeping out", and for drinking liquor in 1993 and 1994. Nosipho's aunt assaulted her mother for not beating Nosipho hard enough. A neighbour beat Lelezi's father, damaging his face and shattering his glasses. The attack was in retaliation after Lelezi and her sister had beaten a neighbour's wife. In 1995, Sindiswa's (2) grandmother (mm) died at Groote Schuur Hospital, Cape Town.

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<sup>7</sup> *Comrade* is a term used for individuals who took part in mass mobilisation campaigns against the apartheid state and who aligned themselves with the United Democratic Front (UDF), the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC).

An enumeration of the incidences of physical injury and death in the families of the sixteen children yields: 6 car accidents, 4 stabbings, 12 beatings, 2 work related injuries, 2 people disabled at birth, and 8 deaths.

Disciplinary beatings of children by parents, teachers and others when reported directly to researchers or witnessed by them during the research period are included in the above figures. Apart from recorded incidents of beating, children frequently spoke about the prevalence of corporal punishment. Their experience of beatings in homes and in schools constituted a regular topic of conversation. In addition to injury and violence, children were sometimes exposed to dangers from conditions of living. The dangers included fire (see Chapter Two), gang-related activity (see Chapter Three) and sexual violence (see Chapter Four).

Of note is the high level of car accidents and beatings. In 1995, a study on violence and injury mortality in the Cape Town Metropole (the second of its kind) found that motor vehicle-pedestrian collisions were the main cause of death for children (Medical Research Council (MRC), 1995: ii). The bulk of fatal transport accidents (60 per cent) involved motor vehicle and pedestrian collisions. African and Coloured populations had the highest figures for vehicle-pedestrian fatalities (MRC, 1995: 19). Homicide and transport fatalities were the major causes of death amongst the African and Coloured populations of Cape Town. Motor vehicle-pedestrian accidents and fire-related deaths were the most common cause of mortality for children between the ages of one and five-years-old (19 per cent). Drownings and homicide each accounted for 14 per cent of deaths. Motor vehicle-pedestrian accidents and fire-related deaths were the most common cause of mortality for children between the ages of six and nine years. Within the ten to fourteen year age-category, 27 per cent of deaths were attributable to pedestrian accidents. Homicide accounted for 13 per cent of the same age group (MRC, 1995: 32). The MRC report confirms the dangers to which children in South Africa are exposed.

### **Conclusions and overview**

The chapter has sketched demographic details in relation to the sixteen children and their families. I have provided background information for the exploration of the major theme of the thesis - tracing the ways in which children live with fragility in New Crossroads. Intimations of fragility have been suggested in a body of data that documents the poor educational standing of

care-givers and children, a diversity of household configurations, the scarcity and unreliability of employment within households, children's work, violence and injury. The theme of violence is further developed in Chapter Three.

In creating a backdrop for ethnographic explorations of fragility it is important to register extreme poverty of thirteen of the households and the relative poverty of the remaining three (recall that thirteen of the households fell below the poverty demarcation line established by the World Bank / SALDRU survey). Poverty is likely to exacerbate conflicts within families, because hard decisions about the distribution of scarce resources have to be made and it may increase the damaging effects of other crises on individuals as networks of relationship may disintegrate more easily. It is strongly argued that demographic surveys need to be complimented by detailed ethnographic data as they often fail to capture differential experience within families. The chapters that follow explore ethnographic subtleties that are often obscured by the findings of broad-based surveys. The ways in which persons, in this case, children, may be constructed for the purposes of statistical analysis often by-pass the ways in which they variously inhabit their particular worlds.

CHAPTER TWO

TRACING FRAGILITY IN FAMILIES: CHILDREN'S REFLECTIONS ON  
MOBILITY



Girls at a planning workshop for the New Crossroads Youth Centre

Martha Nussbaum (1996) in her book, The Fragility of Goodness: Luck and Ethics in Greek Tragedy and Philosophy, explores the relationship between, on the one hand, luck, *tuche*, or external contingency, and, on the other, reason and the ability to make considered choices regarding actions upon and within the world. In a passage where she quotes the Greek poet, Pindar, Nussbaum writes:

The excellence of the good person...is like a young plant: something growing in the world, slender, fragile, in constant need of food from without. A vine must be of good stock if it is to grow well. And even if it has a good heritage, it needs fostering weather (gentle dew and rain, the absence of sudden frosts and harsh winds), as well as the care of concerned and intelligent keepers, for its continued health and full perfection. So, the poet suggests, do we. We need to be born with adequate capacities, to live in fostering natural and social circumstances, to stay clear of abrupt catastrophe, to develop confirming associations with other human beings...The vine-tree image...confronts us with the deep dilemma in the poet's situation, which is ours. It displays the thorough intermingling of what is ours and what belongs to the world, of ambition and vulnerability, of making and being made, that are present in this and in any human life (Nussbaum, 1996: 1-2).

I begin outlining whether families in New Crossroads can foster natural and social circumstances, protect children from abrupt catastrophe, and develop within them confirming associations with other human beings. Children may not be adequately cared for within the institutions through which they move, including the family.

I preface a detailed exploration of children's mobility within families by giving a brief outline of historical antecedents, or to use Nussbaum's phrase, of external contingencies, that frame children's experience of breakage, severance and the reconstitution of family ties. Children's mobility emerges from a political economy based on an established migratory labour system. The evolution of migrant labour patterns in the last century in South Africa began to lay the foundations for changes in the intimate spaces of relationship within families long before the legislated interventions of the *apartheid* state. *Apartheid* legislation - including the imposition of influx control regulations, the forced relocation of thousands of people to rural "homelands", and the mass jailing of children during the 1980s<sup>1</sup> - had the effect of entrenching the separation of family members and further constraining their nurturing capacities.

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<sup>1</sup> In terms of the former state's forced removal policy, Laurine Platzky and Cheryl Walker (1985: 372) noted that from 1960, 3.5 million people were forcibly removed from their homes by the South African state and that a further two million were under threat of removal. With regard to the detention of children, Gill Straker (1992: 6) shows that in 1986, for example, the Detainees Support Committee estimated that approximately 10 000 children, some as young as ten and eleven years, were detained by the state. Between 1984 and 1986, figures showed that 300

Pamela Reynolds has written that the majority of families in South Africa "bear the residues of state policies and action" (Reynolds, forthcoming: 1). She is in agreement with many writers who articulate the effects of *apartheid* legislation and the state on family life for Africans in South Africa. Drawing on Marc Auge,'s (1995: 56) reflections on the formation of identity and the importance of ties with place, Reynolds remarks, "There has been for most South Africans this century no minimal stability for children in families, for families in relation to place. The idea of place that inhabitants have of their relations with the territory, with their families and with others offers and imposes a set of references 'whose absence, when they disappear, is not easily filled'" (Reynolds, forthcoming: 3).

People living in New Crossroads have moved, and continue to move, between rural and urban homes. Recent political struggles have added violent dimensions to the mobility within and of families. In the Introduction, I referred to the burning of shack dwellings in Cape Town in the 1970s. In recounting two of the children's mothers' experiences of the late 1970s in New Crossroads, we begin to see how individuals are both made by and make their worlds as Nussbaum has suggested. Cordelia, Nozuko's mother recalls bringing up children in the midst of the destruction of shack dwellings in Old Crossroads, and her eventual move to New Crossroads. Her descriptions (below) provide a sense of the urgency that African women and men felt in establishing an urban home of minimal stability. Cordelia's description is followed by an account offered by Evelyn, Mzovuyo's mother that describes getting a house in New Crossroads. The "journey" she evokes, in finally acquiring a home, suggests the dexterity required in negotiating a past characterised by multiple changes of residence. I do not claim that Cordelia's and Evelyn's recollections are representative of the experiences of all the mothers of the sixteen children with whom I worked. However, the themes of dislocation and strength that inhabit their stories are common to all the women's tales of arrival in New Crossroads. The stories suggest how determined defiance may come to meet obdurate circumstances.

### **Cordelia: Nozuko's mother<sup>2</sup>**

In 1977, my husband fetched me [from the Transkei]. I got married. We stayed in Old Crossroads with *tatomncinci*, my husband's father's younger brother. (*Tatomncinci* literally means, little father.) By the way, at Crossroads

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children were killed by police and the military, 1 000 were wounded, 18 000 arrested on charges relating to political protests and 173 000 held in police cells awaiting trial (Swartz & Levett, 1989).

<sup>2</sup> Interviews in New Crossroads were conducted in Xhosa and translated into English. In repeating the stories told here, I retain specific words in Xhosa. Where individuals have spoken in English, I have represented their words in italics.

there were things like *izibonda* (leaders). The leaders looked after the *amatyotyombe* (shanties). (*Amatyotyombe* literally means chicken houses.) They spoke for the people so that we could get taps. We enjoyed the fact that there were people in charge who could talk for us to get our rights. So, while we stayed in Crossroads waiting for our rights, the *amabhulu* (the *boers* - an Afrikaans word meaning farmers, but appropriated by Africans to mean, oppressors) said that we should move away completely because they wanted the bush. *Be!* (an expression of disgust and defiance) Meanwhile, we stayed. We said we were not going anywhere. The *boers* came with dogs. They chased the people. I remember at the time I was pregnant with Pamela (Nozuko's older sister) I said, "*Hayi!* (an expression of defiance) I am struggling sleeping outside always". I remember we slept in the bush, pregnant as I was. We built our *tenti* (tent-like structure made of plastic bags and sticks that could be easily dismantled) in the bush. The *boers* chased us at night. We were beaten, and if a *boer* met you hiding he would kick you and pass by and chase the men. It went on like that without us sleeping deeply. I gave birth to Pamela in the sixth month. I thought it was a miscarriage because I was not expecting her at that time. My husband and I walked to Somerset Hospital [a distance of twenty kilometres from Old Crossroads] where Pamela grew. She grew up in the premature ward. A needle was inserted in her head. *As a result* (Cordelia used English here), you can still see the spot, although it is covered in hair because she is older. We took her home after two months.

As time went on it became evident that the people who were looking after us or leading us were divided in the middle of the table. The *boer's* war ended and we started our own. The table was cracked in the middle. Some supported Memani, others Ngxobongwana.<sup>3</sup>

When we discovered that there were two parties, we did not know what was happening at the table. We found that the two groups were really fighting one another. We joined the larger group. Section Four [in Old Crossroads] was Ngxobongwana's, and Section Two and One were Memani's. There was a lot of beating. You did not know when it would be your turn to be beaten. We beat each other. There was fighting in Crossroads and it was very painful. People ran away and left their houses. The shacks were on fire. Memani's group was responsible for the fire.

Right, when we arrived in [Old] Crossroads we built a new *tenti* in Section Four. It was unfortunate that we had three children [including Nozuko] under those conditions. On the 28th of February, on a Saturday, our shack was burnt. We did not know what had caused the fire. As a result, our children were saved because I was there. A person died inside. I took the children out through the window because it was burning in the kitchen. There was no way we could get out through the door. The children were in their nighties. I threw them out of the window and I followed...Pamela was nervous. She went back inside the house. She did not know what she was doing...Luckily in the light of the fire I saw her inside the house running around. I threw myself inside. While I was inside, Nozuko cried that I should

<sup>3</sup> Recall the historical background given of New Crossroads in the Introduction where the conflict between leaders was briefly outlined.

hold her, and Phumlani (Nozuko's younger brother) was only six months old. I managed to get the three of them. I sat down and then my mind came back. "That is my shack burning", and I realised that my children were in front of me and my husband was not there because he was the first person who got out. Luckily he thought of us and found us safe.

We came back and went to the *nontsumpa's* (township superintendent's) office on a Monday. We wanted a house in New Crossroads because I wouldn't build in Old Crossroads anymore. That was number three of the shacks that were burnt, and that had to be the last because a person had died there. It was sad because we did not have a place to bury the person...

Dasoyi (the name given by local residents to the township superintendent) refused to give us a house. He said that he did not have any houses. I said that I would not build a shack anywhere again. I only wanted a house in New Crossroads. Dasoyi said, "There are no houses in New Crossroads". I said, "There are"! He said, "Do you want to do my job for me? Come and sit at my desk and do my job because I am telling you that there are no houses and you say there are", and I kept quiet. I saw [what I had said] worked on Dasoyi's mind. Later he gave me a key and a house number. We stayed in that empty house with nothing. So, I was attacked by nerves because I thought that everything I was doing was going wrong. I wasn't working. My husband was working alone. The people gave us things, children's clothes. Eventually I found a job. We stayed in that hall [the image of a hall, Cordelia explained, suggests a large empty space]. We did not have a thing (Interview, 9 June 1992).

Cordelia's nuanced account demonstrates her determination to find a way out of repeated danger for herself and her children. Her experiences of dislocations within the world are mirrored by an inner dislocation, an attack of nerves. Yet, she moves through a literally imploding world to find an "empty hall", a house of ambivalence, where scarcity and new beginnings "cohabit".

Mzovuyo's mother, Evelyn, was born in Cape Town. As an infant Evelyn accompanied her mother and siblings to live in the Transkei after her parent's divorce. By the end of 1995, she had moved her place of residence eleven times between Cape Town, the Transkei, Johannesburg and residential areas within Cape Town. Evelyn, in recalling a dream, charts the importance of acquiring a house as well as the importance of ritual in "stitching" together fluid and fragile experience, a theme that will be further elaborated in other parts of the thesis.

#### **Evelyn: Mzovuyo's mother**

Yes, *isiko* (ritual) really works. It is so with me because I do many things through my ancestors, even things like struggling for a house. I dreamt of my grandmother (father's mother). Even before I left KTC (where she lived prior to New Crossroads), my grandmother told me that I should mix

[medicines] to get a house. One time when I was sleeping, she came to me and said, "You are going to get a house". I saw a very big river. She was on the other side of the river. She said to me, "Come to me." I said, "No, *makhulu* (grandmother), I cannot come because I am afraid. The river looks deep." My *makhulu* said, "Forget how deep the river is and come to me." I went to her and the water went away. When I arrived she said to me, "Don't worry about the water. It won't do you any harm. Look in front of you." I saw a stone and a big rock. "Take the two [stones]." And I took them. She said, "It is alright, *Ngconde!* (Evelyn's clan name). Go, and don't look back again. Use the stones and go to the office (the municipal offices in Nyanga)." It seemed as if my father (deceased) was also there. There was something that they were going to do for me but I did not know what. When I woke up I said, "Oh, thank God! My grandmother will help me with a new house I want in New Crossroads."

I took my older girl and we went straight to the office because I was not working and she was working. It would be difficult to give a house to someone who was not working because it would be difficult to pay the rent. There was a lot of mischief happening with regard to the [New Crossroads] houses. Sometimes you would find that a person working in the office had two girlfriends. Each of them would get a house. Then, when we arrived there, the white man said, "Oh, she is your daughter? Well, I am going to give you the house". And the white man said to my daughter, "The house is your mother's house. It is not your house. The only reason why I let you sign is because you are working and she is not working." That is how I got the house in New Crossroads! (Interview, 30 July 1992).

Evelyn affirms the role of her ancestors in assisting her to transcend the difficulties of her everyday world, a world to which she attaches the image of a dangerous river. In appealing to relationships across the boundary of death, she is able to weave together the fabric of a fragmented world. Cultural frameworks of coherence and order are brought to bear in similar ways upon incoherent experiences.

Cordelia's and Evelyn's accounts provide a frame for the ways in which each of the sixteen children's families managed to secure the rights (to rent) a brick house in New Crossroads in the early 1980s. Through the acquisition of a brick house, the families are differentiated from the millions of South Africans who still reside in informal housing.

### **Children's mobility between care-givers**

I reflect on the security that the sixteen children received or failed to receive from care-givers over the first fourteen to nineteen years of their lives by tracing the children's mobility between different care-givers. At the end of 1995, the children ranged in age between fourteen

and nineteen years of age. A residential and care-giving history of the sixteen children is tabulated in Table 2.1.

From Table 2.1, we see that three of the sixteen children - Mzovuyo, Nosipho and Zolile - moved once in their lives. The move, for all three children, marked a passage from living in a squatter area - subject to the political turmoil Cordelia has described - to living in a permanent

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**TABLE 2.1: Residential and Care-giving History**

Name of child	Year of birth	Marital status of parents	Places lived; in sequence	No of changes in places of residence	Age of child in years at which moves were made	No of bonds broken with care-giving adults	Years spent in the nuclear family	Years spent living with father	Years spent living with mother	Years spent with father's and mother's kin	Reasons for changes in residence	Child's age at the end of 1995
Siphokazi	1981	M	Old Crossroads New Crossroads Sada, Queenstown New Crossroads	3	Born 2 7 8	3	13	13	13	1 fm	AH POL SCH	14
Sindiswa	1981	WD	Old Crossroads New Crossroads Sada, Queenstown New Crossroads	3	Born 1 7 10	3	6	6	12	3 mm moz	AH ECO ILL/INJ CCP AH	14
Mzovuyo	1980	SEP WD	KTC New Crossroads	1	Born 2	3	5	5	15	0	AH	15
Boniwe	1980	SEP	Ngcizele, Gatyana, Transkei Old Crossroads New Crossroads KTC	3	Born -1 2 15	4	2	3	14.5	.5 myz	CCP AH ECO	15
Thandi	1980	SEP	Entseleni, Umtata Transkei Old Crossroads Entseleni New Crossroads Entseleni New Crossroads	6	Born -1 2 4 5 9	3	3.5	8	3.5	6.5 fz 7 lgd	CCP SCH	15
Themba	1980	M	Old Crossroads Lady Frere, Transkei New Crossroads	2	Born -1 7	3	8	8	8.6	7 fm	AH CCP SCH	15
Nozuko	1979	M	Old Crossroads Old Crossroads New Crossroads	2	Born 1+ 2	1	15.5	16	15.5	0	AH	16
Nosipho	1979	S	Old Crossroads New Crossroads	1	Born 3	1	0	0	4	16 mm moz	AH	16
Zolile	1978	S	Old Crossroads New Crossroads	1	Born 3	2	0	0	11	5 mmz 14 mb	AH	17

**TABLE 2.1: Residential and Care-giving History (continued)**

Name of child	Year of birth	Marital status of parents	Places lived; in sequence	No of changes in places of residence	Age of child in years at which moves were made	No of bonds broken with care-giving adults	Years spent in the nuclear family	Years spent living with father	Years spent living with mother	Years spent with father's and mother's kin	Reasons for changes in residence	Child's age at the end of 1995
James	1978	M	Old Crossroads Takastad, Transkei Sada, Queenstown New Crossroads Sada New Crossroads	5	Born -1 7 7 12 12	4	7.5	7.5	7.5	7 mm 5 mf	AH CCP ECO POL	17
Vusumzi	1977	SEP	Old Crossroads New Crossroads Paarl	2	0 5 17	2	17	17	17	1 fb	AH F TNS SEP VIOL	18
Lydia	1977	SEP	Gugulethu New Crossroads New Crossroads Langa New Crossroads	4	Born 5 14 17 17	4	7	6	14	5 mf	AH DETH	18
Lelezi	1977	M	Old Crossroads Ngcele, Tsolo, Transkei New Crossroads Ngcele New Crossroads	4	Born -1 13 18 18	3	5	5.5	17.5	13 fm	CCP SCH TE	18
Thulani	1976	M	Old Crossroads Lady Frere, Transkei New Crossroads Lady Frere Ciskei New Crossroads	5	Born -1 9 9 10 11	5	8.5	8.5	9	9.5 fm 1 mm mb	CCP SCH POL ECO	19
Eric	1976	S	Ekwezi, Umtata, Transkei Old Crossroads New Crossroads	2	Born -1 7	2	0	0	18.5	9.5 mm	AH CCP	19
Monga	1976	M	Old Crossroads Nyanga New Crossroads Siyakathala Zingisa Reformatory, Worcester New Crossroads	5	Born -1 6 18 19 19	2	18	18	18		FRMV AH INCN	19

**KEY:** Under the column, "Marital status of parents": M = married, SEP = separated, S = single, WD = widowed. Kinship symbols appearing in the column, "Years spent with father's and mother's kin" follow standard anthropological symbols for relatives (see Appendix 1). Under the column, "Reasons for changes in residence": AH = acquisition of a formal house, CCP = child care practice, ECO = economic difficulties, Deth = a death in the family, FRMV = forced removal by the state or others, F TNS = family tensions, ILL/INJ = illness or injury, INCN = incarceration, POL = political reasons, for example school boycotts, SEP = separation of parents, SCH = school, TE = tertiary education, VIOL = violent altercations in the family.

brick house in New Crossroads. Themba, Nozuko, Vusumzi and Eric moved twice; Siphokazi, Sindiswa and Boniwe moved three times; Lydia and Lelezi moved four times; James, Monga and Thulani moved five times and Thandi moved six times.

Eight of the sixteen children - Nosipho, Zolile, Mzovuyo, Nozuko, Vusumzi, Lydia, Monga and Eric - never lived for any length of time in a rural home. Apart from Lydia, however, all the children had ties with rural areas even though in some instances the ties were infrequently activated. Most of the children who had not lived in rural places spent holidays with relatives there.

Of the children who had not lived in rural areas, Mzovuyo and Nosipho had been once to the Transkei. In 1987, Mzovuyo visited his father's sister in Dyoki village, and Nosipho visited her mother's mother's natal home for a few days. Zolile visited his mother's oldest brother at Molteno in the Eastern Cape on several occasions. Monga visited his father's father in the Transkei, and in 1992 spent a holiday with his father's sister in Paarl. Lydia was the only child within the group of sixteen children who had no contact with relatives in a rural place. She did however have relatives in Mdantsani, an African suburb in East London, a town in the Eastern Cape. She sometimes spent holidays with relatives there.

Up until the end of 1995, the other eight children - Siphokazi, Sindiswa, Boniwe, Thandi, Themba, James, Lelezi, and Thulani - spent an average of 7.6 years, ranging from a few months to twelve years, living with relatives other than their biological parents in the Transkei and Ciskei. In addition to living with relatives in rural places, they spent holidays there. Altogether, the eight children spent 54 years living with relatives in rural areas out of a possible 129,<sup>4</sup> that is, an average of 42 per cent of their lives.

The average number of years lived with biological mothers for all sixteen children was twelve, and with biological fathers, seven. The sixteen children lived away from biological parents for an average of six years, that is, one third of their lives. The findings confirm the data of other researchers (see Reynolds, 1993; forthcoming; World Bank/SALDRU, 1995).

Children lived with mothers for longer periods than with fathers. Separation from fathers had to do with the entrenched migrant labour system where fathers often worked in urban areas leaving their wives and children in rural places. In addition, children's separation from fathers had to do with the way in which men have increasingly been unable to fulfil their perceived roles as breadwinners for their families (Reynolds, 1984: 26; Campbell, 1992; 1996: 206-209;

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<sup>4</sup> The 129 years are calculated by adding all the ages of the eight children at the end of the study, i.e. at the end of 1995.

Ramphela, 1993). Men often break bonds with the mothers of their children. A number of mothers in the study have also broken bonds with their children and with their children's fathers.

The average number of years children lived in the nuclear family was 7.2, ranging from nought to eighteen. Pamela Reynolds' (1993; forthcoming) data on the mobility between caregivers of young activists as children yields a similar figure and is confirmed in the World Bank/SALDRU data.

Contrary to predominant western notions, long periods of time within a nuclear family do not necessarily indicate stability or a consistently nurturing environment. In Monga's family, for example, by the end of 1995, although he had lived with both parents for eighteen of his nineteen years, he complained bitterly of frequent corporal punishment at home and lack of food. By the end of 1995, he had spent some time in Siyakhatala, a "safe-holding" institution for young criminals, and had escaped from Zingisa, the Worcester reformatory where he was sentenced to a two-year term of imprisonment.<sup>5</sup> He was the only child in the group who claimed that his closest relationship was with his father.

In contrast to dominant ideas concerning family coherence, some of the sixteen families who had more successfully maintained the viability of a rural base provided more consistent nurturing environments for their children - Thulani's and Lelezi's families are examples. By the end of 1995, in two families where clear links with a rural home were retained, Thulani and Lelezi had spent long periods living there. Thulani, at nineteen, had lived for ten years in rural homes. Lelezi, at eighteen, had spent thirteen years living with her father's mother at Tsolo in the Transkei. Her mother spent much of the time with her.

The viability of a rural base is constituted by the presence of significant relatives, access to certain resources including fields and migrant remunerations, and the investment of resources from the city in the development of housing, furniture and livestock, where possible. A rural home is also given meaning by city dwellers travelling to perform important family rituals there. Through the performance of ritual, the rural home receives "cultural capital". Viability of a rural home does not imply independence from connections with city environments where wages are accrued. Even when ties with rural homes are infrequently activated, they are often fondly remembered (see the conversation of five of the children on the significance of their rural homes in Appendix 3).

Neither the urban nor the rural nodes of families' journeying can be sustained in isolation. Each node is inadequate to the task of meeting the material and cultural needs of those

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<sup>5</sup> Worcester is a small town in the Western Cape northeast of Cape Town.

who live in different places and move between them. Both are strategically used in times of crisis. Andrew Spiegel and Anthony Mehlwana studied the status of families in Makhaza, a squatter area in Khayelitsha, the largest African suburb in Cape Town (Spiegel & Mehlwana, 1996). They coined the phrase, "stretched households", to describe the importance of connections between both rural and urban homes (1996: 15; see Spiegel, 1995). They write that for families in Khayelitsha, rural and urban homes would be best conceived as an interrelated "whole" and that urban living did not necessarily imply the demise of a rural home (Spiegel & Mehlwana, 1996: 16).

The strength and viability of rural homes vary. Nozuko's family built a house in a rural area and was able to invest resources there due to their relatively secure economic standing in town. In contrast, Themba's father's mother's home in a rural area was impoverished in the extreme. She had one small house and no further assets in terms of livestock or large fields. Themba's siblings and his mother lived with his father's mother in abject poverty for many years depending on his grandmother's pension and the charity of neighbours. His father's contributions to the household were intermittent (see Themba's statement concerning his poverty below).

Children's bonds with care-giving adults were broken frequently. The breakages ranged between one and five. By a broken bond with a care-giving adult, I mean the first severing of a major relationship with a care-giving adult through change of residence and/or estrangement or death. Children were repeatedly separated many more times from parents, grandparents and other relatives than is indicated by the notion of broken bonds.

In thirteen families the children moved because a permanent house had been acquired in New Crossroads. Children ranged in age between under one year and six years when the move to New Crossroads was made. In line with established child-care practices, seven children were sent as small children to relatives living in rural homes to be cared for by mother's mothers and/or father's mothers.

Three moves were undertaken by children for what I have narrowly termed "political reasons". For example, in 1988, when Siphokazi was seven years old, her father sent her to school in Sada, Queenstown, to avoid her losing a year of schooling in New Crossroads due to a school boycott in Cape Town. James and Thulani both moved to the Transkei and Ciskei for the same reasons.

In two families, a child moved because of a death. Lydia, at the age of thirteen, went to live with and care for her grandfather in the same street as her mother after her grandmother died. After Sindiswa's father was killed in a car crash in 1987, she left New Crossroads and

went to live with her mother's older sister and her mother's mother in Sada, Queenstown. Sindiswa's father's death changed the economic standing of her home and her mother was forced to send Sindiswa to live with relatives.

In four families, children, including Sindiswa, moved because of economic reasons. Boniwe left her mother's house to live with her aunt and her aunt's boyfriend in KTC because they had more resources than her mother. In 1985, Thulani came to Cape Town from the Transkei having lived with his father's mother for many years. He came to New Crossroads to begin school. He returned to his father's mother the same year because his parents lacked funds for school fees in Cape Town. In 1985, when James was seven years old, he left his mother's mother's home to go to school at his mother's father's home (his grandparents had separated). His grandfather had the money to send him to school at Sada in Queenstown.

Four children moved specifically to go to school. Lydia, for example, moved from her grandfather's home in New Crossroads to stay with her uncle in Langa, a suburb closer to central Cape Town, where she attended Rhodes High School. In 1987, Themba came to Cape Town to school. He had previously lived with his father's mother at Lady Frere in the Transkei.

Two of Sindiswa's moves were caused by illness in the family. After her father's death, she lived with her mother's older sister in the Transkei. After her aunt had a stroke, Sindiswa's mother thought that she would lessen the burden on her sister by calling Sindiswa to come and live with her in Cape Town.

In 1994, Lelezi completed her last year of secondary schooling. Her applications to teachers training colleges in Cape Town were too late and so she travelled to the Transkei in search of training. She had no success in entering colleges there either for the same reason, and so returned to do a business correspondence course in Cape Town until applications to other institutions were successful.

Monga moved from Old Crossroads to Nyanga as a small baby because his family were forcibly removed from Old Crossroads. Monga moved twice from his home in New Crossroads when he was incarcerated in institutions for young criminals. In 1995, Vusumzi undertook a journey because his parents had separated. There were extreme family tensions and violence in the family (as I describe below).

It is important to consider the effect of the research on the mobility of the sixteen children. It is my view that because the children were involved in a research project, their parents might not have sent them to the Transkei during the period in which I interacted with them. The children derived tangible benefits from the research, namely: going out on weekends and on outings, receiving walking boots, receiving the ongoing attention and concern of the

researchers, and, in the case of a few children, receiving bursaries to attend Rhodes High school in Mowbray.<sup>6</sup> During the research period, Vusumzi, James, and Themba were threatened by parents with being sent back to the Transkei to modify what was thought of as their bad behaviour. On the 29th of September 1992, Vusumzi told me, "My mother says she will send me *emaXhoseni*, to the Transkei, next year because she doesn't want me to be naughty (*akafuni ndigeze*). I am not happy about that because I am used to New Crossroads. There is starvation in the Transkei, (*kuyalanjwa emaXhoseni*). It is not nice in the Transkei." None of the threats were carried out but they were used by parents in the hope that their children would modify their behaviour.

In summing up, what has emerged in tracing sixteen children's mobility between caregivers, is that fifteen were cared for by a range of relatives throughout their childhoods. The relatives included grandmothers, grandfathers, mothers, fathers, mother's brothers, mother's sisters, siblings and, in one instance, a person who was not a relative - a lodger. Many writers, for example, Larissa Lomnitz, Jane Guyer and Sara Berry have articulated the importance of activating kinship ties in sustaining poor and marginalised people (Lomnitz, 1977; Guyer, 1981; Berry 1983). The idea of kinship becomes a resource that individuals use not only to sustain themselves in conditions of poverty but to give social weight to reciprocal relationships that might not have an actual kinship basis (Liebow, 1967; Stack, 1974; Strathern, 1992; Ross, 1995; Weismantel, 1995; Spiegel and Mehlwana, 1996).

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<sup>6</sup> The project, *Adolescence – a Time for Reflection* encouraged six of the sixteen children to attend Rhodes High School, a school in Mowbray, a white suburb. Rhodes was previously a white school and education at the school was of a better standard than that offered in African suburbs. The six children who schooled there were, Lydia, Siphokazi, Nozuko, Themba, Thulani and Eric. Of the six, Nozuko decided to return to a school in an African area very early on because of what she perceived as racism in the school. Themba and Siphokazi were also due to leave the school at the end of the research period because they were struggling with their studies there. Lydia, Eric and Thulani, however, remained at the school.

### Children's affective ties with care-givers

Thus far I have traced the mobility of children between different care-givers throughout their lives. I now explore children's responses to separation from adult care-givers, as well as their experience of relationships with various care-givers. Just as the mobility of children has moulded their affective ties with care-givers, so the mobility of care-givers has created experiences of absence for some children (refer to Figure 1 in Chapter One showing the absence of some fathers and some mothers from children's homes in New Crossroads). A number of parents have literally absented themselves from children's lives. Absence is also created when close bonds with early care-givers are interrupted as children grow and depart elsewhere.

As a little girl Thandi lived with her father's mother, and although she lived with her own mother for a brief period at the age of four, she only discovered who her mother was at the age of nine. As a little girl Thandi understood her father's sister to be her mother. The failure on the part of her early care-giver in clarifying who Thandi's mother was, may have to do with the expressed norm in New Crossroads that the functions of mothering should not be limited to biological mothers but are potentially distributed between adults. In the best of all possible worlds, all adults are presumed to position themselves as parents in relation to children. Thandi's disorientation in coming to know her real mother is explicitly expressed in her conversation with me. She had loved her father's mother as a mother and felt unable to transfer her feelings to her own mother. The omission on the part of her early care-giver in clarifying her relationship with her mother indicates how children are positioned within society by adults and how adults demarcate what is appropriate for children to know.

As a little girl Thandi's brother visited her in a rural home bringing welcome money from her parents. Her parents did not visit her. As I showed in Chapter One, Thandi was largely cared for during the research period by a lodger who, within the context of the family, was given the fictive name, *Sis' Makoti*, or "sister young bride". The lodger was symbolically incorporated as fictive kin within Thandi's family, although she was not biologically related to them. Thandi's mother left her and her seven siblings after having lived with Thandi for only three years.

**Thandi:** [When I began living with my mother], I did not know then that she was my mother. I was not used to her. I was told by her that she gave birth to me. Because I was brought up by *dadobawo*, father's sister and I said, "*mama*" [mother] to her, I knew my mother as *dadobawo*. When I learnt that my aunt was not my real mother, my heart felt pain. My mother told me,

"That is not your mother, she is your father's sister."...*Dadobawo* was the one who brought me up. I did not know my mother very well. [When I came to New Crossroads] my mother worked *emakitshini* (in the kitchens, meaning as a domestic worker). She left us for Mosselbay (a town on the east Cape coast). She sold *iintloko* (sheep heads), but now she is selling *inyama yegusha* (*mutton*). She is selling. She is not working (Interview, 22 July 1992).<sup>7</sup>

The distance between children and parents that Thulani expressed is the result of years of separation from his parents and the creation of loving bonds with two grandmothers. The articulation of distance between parents and children also intersects with the expression of a cultural value - an appropriate avoidance and behavioural distance between adjacent generations.

**Thulani:** At Lady Frere [in the Transkei], my father's mother looked after me and in the Ciskei, it was my mother's mother. [For many years I stayed with my father's mother]. So much so, that I called my *makhulu* (grandmother), "mama" (mother) and my mother, "Sisi" (sister). When I came to Cape Town I was afraid to ask anything from [my parents], and money. I was so used to my father's mother that even if my parents were there for the holidays I felt I could not go to them to ask them for something. I would go to my *makhulu* and ask for something. I was about ten years old when I came to live in Cape Town. My *makhulu* from Lady Frere is afraid to come this side [to New Crossroads]. She only came once to the town (Interview, 20 May 1992).

In tracing their affective worlds in relation to adults, children described the hardships they endured living in rural communities. Themba and Sindiswa, for example, described the lack of food. The distance of fathers from their children is suggested in Themba's words. It is a distance created by his father's few visits to his children, wife and mother at their rural home, and by his failure to provide regular remittances for his dependents there. It is a distance created by Themba's father's particular cruelty towards his son. During the research period, Themba was scarred by the beatings he received from his father.

**Themba:** I was born in Cape Town in 1980. As a small baby I was sent to the Transkei where I spent most of my childhood. I started school in the Transkei and in 1987 came back to Cape Town from Lady Frere. I lived with my *makhulu*, father's mother, and all the children except Sithetha and Thembinkosi (Themba's sister's sons). There was Tengiswa who is the eldest, then Fundiswa, then Tombozonke (Themba's older sisters), then me and then

<sup>7</sup> People in New Crossroads make a distinction between working for themselves and working for others. Working for oneself is expressed using the word, *ukupangela*, and has higher value than working for someone else, expressed by using the word, *ukusebenza*.

Nonthando (Themba's younger sister). Mother was there quite often and when she came she would stay a long time, but father seldom came. My *makhulu* brought me up but I did not see my father often. We lived on [my grandmother's] pension. She bought food with her pension money. We had one village house in the Transkei. My father used to stay a long time away before visiting us. He did not send money, but when he came he brought groceries and money. He brought mealie meal, soups, paraffin and fruits. Sometimes we stayed without food. We ate *umngqusho*, pounded maize and beans, and mealie meal. We ate *imifino*, wild spinach. We hardly ate meat. When my *makhulu* got her pension money we bought pork.

The person I feel close to is my mother, especially in difficult times. My father is very cruel and strict because sometimes he gives me a beating. My mother is understanding when I need comfort (Interview, 27 May 1992).

Sindiswa's conversation about living with her mother's mother in the Transkei after the death of her father in New Crossroads echoes the experience of scarcity in Themba's account. Sindiswa identified her older brother and her mother's younger sister as looking after her as a little girl in Cape Town. Her mother, although present during Sindiswa's early years, was away at work during the day. Of the two years Sindiswa spent living with her mother's mother in the Transkei, she said,

I loved her. She was good to me. Sometimes when she went to the pension place - there was a little baby of Makazi's (Sindiswa's mother's younger sister). The baby was sleeping with *makhulu*. *Makhulu* had to hide herself from the baby when she woke up [to go to the pension place] because if that baby saw *makhulu* [leaving] it would cry for her. Even when *makhulu* is in Site-B (an informal housing area in Khayelitsha, Cape Town). I go and visit her. My *makhulu* helped us. If we did not have money she would go next door and she would borrow food. When my parents sent money we would buy food and give the neighbours their food back. We had only a little garden, a mealie garden (Interview, 3 July 1992).

Distance between fathers and children occurs when fathers leave their children and partners to live elsewhere. Lydia's account expresses the incomprehension of a child faced with the disappearance of a father after having lived consistently with him before his departure. She recalls the hardship of scarcity due to the abrupt end in financial support from her father. She voices an understanding of her mother's poverty.

**Lydia:** *Sisi*, I grew up very nicely. We had a shop at home [in New Crossroads]. We got everything we wanted. One year my father was involved in an accident. He stayed for a year in hospital and then he came home sitting in a wheel chair. The accident happened when he was at work. So, every month my mother and my father went to the lawyer to receive his

compensation. One day, when my mother and father went to fetch the money, my mother came back alone. She told us that our father said that he did not want to stay with us. He wanted to stay with his family (his parents). We were too young to understand, but we tried to understand. We did not see any reason why our father should divorce our mother. The shop was closed. Things changed. We started to struggle. My mother is not educated. She did not go to school. It was hard for her to get a job. But we survived. And we try to understand if my mother doesn't have something because my mother is trying her best. She tries because she does not want us to feel that our father is gone (Interview, 14 September 1992).

In addition to sometimes expressing distance between fathers and children, a number of the children whose mothers had left them, referred to their mothers' absence in painful ways. Children's lack of a mother became an area of silence for Nosipho, Vusumzi, and Thandi. All three children spoke rarely about their mothers having left them. Nosipho's and Zolile's comments around the departure of their mothers are given.

**Nosipho:** I was born in Old Crossroads on a Tuesday, the 19th of June, 1979. My *makhulu*, mother's mother, was the one who brought me up. My mother left when I was four years and went to *Rhawutini*, Johannesburg (literally, the place of gold). We were three at home - two are dead and I am the only one left from my mother. My mother's mother and my aunt (mz), Nomonde, are the people who look after me. My father also died when I was a little child... A thing that confuses [the youth] in New Crossroads is that parents are very *rough*. Like *Sis'* Nomonde is very *rough*. (Nosipho used the English word here.) You don't know whether you are right or wrong because you are always beaten and being shouted at. *Sis'* Nomonde must stop shouting at us. She must speak nicely with us (Interview, 26 August 1992).

Zolile described his integration into his mother's side of the family through his relationship with his mother's brother after his mother had left to be married. The integration was precarious, as will be seen in the detailed rendering of the layering of fragility in Zolile's family at the end of the chapter.

**Zolile:** My mother stays in Paarl working at Edgars (a clothing chain store). She left here (New Crossroads) in 1990. I was told that she got married and that she now had a new family. My uncle (mother's brother) told me not to worry because he would do everything for me. He did that even while my mother stayed with us. I would go to my uncle. My uncle explained to me the reason I did not go with my mother...I belonged here (Interview, 16 September 1992).

Although many children experienced a sense of distance between themselves and their parents, many appreciated their parents' efforts in sustaining them. Nozuko clearly expressed appreciation in relation to their mothers.

**Nozuko:** My name is Nozuko. I live here in New Crossroads at number 1456.<sup>8</sup> At home, it is good, because mother has given us all the things that we need. She has done things for us. She has really tried so that we can be like other children, even at school. But we are not rich people, *asizizo izityebi* (meaning, "we are not the fat ones"). We are the same as other children. She really tries to get things for us that we need because outside [in the street] there are often many things [to distract us and endanger us]. She tells us to learn so that we can also do something for her. She always says, if we want something, she will first see our positions in class. She wants to see how one is doing so that she can give everything that one needs. If you have done well you will get what you want (Interview, 1 July 1992).

### **Layering of fragility in children's families**

Comprehending the internal attributes of contemporary South African families requires demarcating lines of crisis within them in detailed ethnographic ways. I wish to extend an exploration of discontinuities within the lives of individual children that in some respects have been traced through the above records of children's mobility between care-givers. I do so by placing the mobility of individual children within the context of the mobility of other household members. I seek an understanding of what I term the layering of fragility within the families I describe. I have pieced together the layering of fragility in Zolile's and Vusumzi's families through incorporating information from house visits, interviews and life histories that document changes during the research period but that also refer to prior events.

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<sup>8</sup> The number of Nozuko's house has been changed.

## Zolile's family

When I met Zolile he was thirteen years old. He lived in a household comprising four of his mother's sister's children and two of his mother's brothers. Zolile's mother's mother's sister was also present. Vini, his mother's oldest brother, was the head of the household. Vini had a girlfriend, Nomaphelo, who lived with him. She had brought a child of her own into the household and had another child with Vini. In 1990, Zolile's unmarried mother, Jane, left the house to get married. Like many children born before marriage in New Crossroads, Zolile remained with his mother's relatives after her departure.<sup>9</sup> Before Jane left for Paarl where she was married, she asked her mother's younger sister, Mancini' (meaning "little mother"), to come from a farm owned by white people where she lived, to look after the children in the household and to help them with cooking and washing.

In 1992, Mancini' described the financial burden experienced by Vini, Zolile's uncle, in looking after a household of twelve dependents:

When I came to Cape Town I had to look for a job to help Vini because he was the only one working, and even his sisters have children, and they leave the children with Vini to feed. I didn't find a job. Instead I got only a half-day job a week [as a domestic worker]. But that didn't help because everything is expensive. Vini had to pay for the furniture, food, rent, clothes for the children. Even myself, if I want something, I go to Vini... Vini's [sisters] do not fetch their children. They only visit during weekends and they don't bring any money because they are not working. So, I really feel for Vini. Otherwise, there is nothing that we can do. Vinini (Vini's younger brother) also tried to get a job but he couldn't get one (Interview, 23 September 1992).

Vini bravely attempted to look after all twelve dependents in the household. His own parents died when he was a young boy, and, as the eldest son, he took it upon himself to maintain the family. He ably analysed the social realities that created such conditions:

At the end of the month we all gather and they (Mancini' and Nomaphelo) say what is needed and I give them the money. Then they go and buy the groceries. I cannot help it because there are no jobs. If you go to every corner of the street you will find a group of men looking for work. The men have families. They have children and wives to maintain. So, I don't blame them when they don't get jobs because I know it is hard to find work. I was also lucky to get my job. Last week they were retrenching at our firm and I

<sup>9</sup> A child belongs to his or her mother's relatives if no marriage has taken place between the parents. In the above circumstances mother's relatives are responsible for providing the ritual integration of the child into a particular ancestral line, and for various other rituals that the child may require.

wasn't retrenched. So I really work hard to keep my job. Look what would happen if I lost my job! How could they survive here? At the moment, I say that I am fortunate (Interview, 23 September 1992).

Vini's younger brother, Vinini, was doing standard nine when his girlfriend became pregnant. Vini paid damages<sup>10</sup> for the girl's pregnancy and insisted that Vinini look for a job to support his child. Vinini was unsuccessful in finding work, and Vini told him to go back to school.

In relation to Zolile, Vini reflected:

We notice that Zolile is naturally a gifted child (*unesipho sendalo*). I don't know if you have noticed, but when Zolile is talking to someone he always smiles...And when you send Zolile to the shop he will come with the right change. He won't take a cent. Zolile is a little shy. Sometimes when he wants something he won't say that he wants something - he will keep quiet. Like, one day, [his school mates] were touring the Ciskei and the Transkei and Zolile did not tell me that. Zolile told me afterwards and he said that he didn't want to bother me because they charged a lot of money [to go] and I would not have the money. I told him, "Zolile, I'm your parent. Don't feel shy or bad no matter how much the thing is you want. If I don't have the money I will tell you, but tell me." (Interview, 23 September 1992).

On the 18th of January 1993, Vini said that he found it very difficult looking after the entire household. He said that he could not get married because of the financial burden of sustaining all his relatives. No woman would be able to tolerate all his commitments, and he was not in a position to offer *lobola* (bride-wealth) for Nomaphelo, his girlfriend. He "felt pain" because, "Even God will punish me for being so good. My sisters just give birth and leave their children with me to bring up without knowing who the fathers are" (Interview, 18 January 1993).

On the 17th of February, 1993, Elizabeth and I visited Zolile's home. When we arrived at the house we saw that Vinini's (Vini's younger brother's) wooden shack at the back of the house had been burnt to ashes. All his clothes and those of the children were burnt. The clothes were stored in Vinini's outside room because there was not sufficient room for them in the house. Vinini's iron bedstead lay distorted on a pile of collapsed wooden beams. It transpired that Vini had had a physical fight with Vinini because Vinini had fathered yet another child. The shack was burnt down shortly afterwards. It was unclear who exactly was responsible for the fire. After viewing the burnt out shack, we entered the house with Manci'. Standing at the

door of an inside room, we gazed into what had become an empty shell - the green enamel paint of the walls of the room glinted in the afternoon light. Vini, his girlfriend and her two children had left the house the previous day with all the contents of the room. They had given no reasons for their departure to other household members. Vini moved to Site-B in Khayelitsha.

To Elizabeth and I, it was obvious that Vini had left the household because he could no longer endure the financial burden of looking after all of his relatives. Mancini' described his disappearance in more personal terms revealing conflicting interests within the household. She said that Vini's girlfriend, Nomaphelo, had come to the house in 1991 as a lodger. She had lived in a shack at the back of the house. She later formed a relationship with Vini and became pregnant. She then moved into the main house to share Vini's room. Her shack was demolished. She began to behave like Vini's wife and exerted her influence on how resources within the household were allocated. She started to discriminate between the children of the household and to lock food in her room. While some children would cry for bread she would give bread to her own children. She worked in a restaurant in town and brought food home that she shared with Vini and her own children. One day, Mancini' came home drunk and saw that there was no plate of food for her. She asked Nomaphelo where her food was, and Nomaphelo told her to find her own. Mancini' told her that the food was bought with her nephew's money and that therefore, she was entitled to it. Mancini' hit Nomaphelo across the face. Vini told Nomaphelo to hit Mancini' back. He told his girlfriend that there was no food and she could not turn herself into food. Nomaphelo asked Mancini' why Mancini's boyfriend was not supplying her with money. Mancini' cried as she explained the story to me and said that she brought Vini up when he was a little boy and was angered that he now sided with his girlfriend whom Mancini' hardly knew. The day that Vini and Nomaphelo moved out of the house, Nomaphelo emptied all the food out of the cupboards and the fridge and took it with them. Food that remained in the pots at home was given to neighbours rather than leaving any food at all in the house (Interview, 17 February 1993.)

Mancini' had objected very strongly when Nomaphelo wanted her own relatives to come and stay in the house. Two of Nomaphelo's brothers had come to find schooling in Cape Town earlier in the year and had lived briefly in the household. One of Nomaphelo's reasons for persuading Vini to move out of the house was that she could not comfortably have any of her own relatives coming to stay there. When Vini left, the family was in arrears with their rent for a whole year (Interview, 17 February 1993).

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<sup>10</sup> In New Crossroads, if a young girl becomes pregnant before marriage, the child's father is expected to pay a fee in compensation for the pregnancy.

When Elizabeth met Vini a little while after his flight, he said that he left because it was time for him to get his life in order. He wanted a wife. He could not have a wife whilst staying with his family. He wanted to start paying *lobola* to Nomaphelo's family. He felt Manci's boyfriend should help to support the children. Manci's boyfriend had a full-time job but only came to the house with "his empty stomach". The mothers of all the children contributed very little and Vini was tired of children coming to him to ask for things. He felt distressed that he could not offer help.

Vinini, Vini's younger brother, later built himself another shack in the back-yard after the burning of his shack, but he would not speak with his older brother, Vini, when he visited. In March 1993, Vinini said that his new girlfriend had given birth to a baby boy. He wanted to return to Molteno in the Eastern Cape to set up a business there as he could not look after all his sister's children.

Monwabisi, another brother of Vini and Vinini, began to take care of the household. He lived in the coloured area of Kraaifontein near Stellenbosch with a coloured wife and returned to the household in New Crossroads. He left shortly afterwards returning to his wife in Kraaifontein, saying that the mothers and the fathers of the children of household members should support them. The burden was too heavy for him.

When Monwabisi visited the family a year later, he beat up a one-year-old baby whom Manci' had been paid to look after. He proceeded to beat many family members, including Zolile, because they questioned his behaviour towards the little child. Matters were made worse by Vinini insisting that Monwabisi call him by the respectful title, "older brother" even though Vinini was younger than Monwabisi. Vinini was able to insist because he had undergone initiation into manhood, whereas Monwabisi refused to do so, identifying himself more with coloured communities. Manci' said that Monwabisi was beating family members because he was bewitched. Family members had purposely avoided retaliating due to their conviction that he was bewitched, but their withdrawal had not prevented Monwabisi from hitting many of them, after which he had passed out on Zolile's bed. He had developed a drinking problem over the years (Information based on a house visit, 17 May 1995).

I asked Zolile why he did not go and stay with his mother in Paarl, given the circumstances of his home. He said that his step-father did not like him and did not want him to visit his mother. He did not want to cause problems by going there. He hoped that his mother would visit him occasionally on her own and that she would leave some money behind. Zolile, on his own initiative, now made contact with his biological father, Gabriel. Gabriel worked in a bottle store in Sea Point. Zolile's father began to give him a little money. In December 1994,

Monwabisi was retrenched from his job. Consequently, he was unable to make any further contribution to the household in New Crossroads (information gleaned from house visits in March and April 1994).

By the end of the year, Zolile's step-father had forbidden his mother from having contact with him or from giving him money. In 1994, Zolile failed standard six. His uncle, Vinini, hinted that Zolile might have a gun. Zolile said that one needed a gun to protect oneself from older youth who stole one's girlfriends in the street and at beauty competitions at the youth centre. Zolile's life had utterly changed from the time in 1992 when he described with confidence and affection how his uncle, Vini, looked after him after his mother's departure due to marriage.

Pamela Reynolds (forthcoming) in her article, *The Ground of all Making: State Violence, The Family and Political Activists*, has challenged researchers to delineate the particular experience of different children. She has suggested that children, like Zolile, who are born out of official marriages and who are left with mother's kin, are liable to "fall into the vacuum between convention and actuality in terms of adults' recognition of their rights to care and their value as members of kin groups" (Reynolds, forthcoming: 4). Zolile generally faced the world with good will, a social conscience and an appreciation for what adult care-givers were able to give to him. However, his social location was precarious in the extreme. Care-givers who were supposed to look after him after his mother's departure into marriage, namely, his mother's brothers, were all unable to fulfil their obligations with any continuity. Vini, Zolile's oldest uncle, clearly expressed the desire to fulfil his responsibilities regarding his nephew, but the responsibilities conflicted with his own desire to become a married man and to set up his own household. The financial burden of supporting twelve people became impossible. Zolile was also abandoned by his uncle, Monwabisi, an alcoholic, who had attempted symbolically to extract himself from the family by desiring a coloured identity. Zolile clearly loved his oldest uncle, Vini, and expressed confidence in his ability as a provider and head of the family. Vini failed him in this confidence. Zolile's mother gradually lost contact with him due to his step-father's intervention. Zolile, on his own initiative, approached his biological father who had thus far failed to play any role in his up-bringing. At the end of 1995, Zolile's father, whom he hardly knew, provided him with some money as a contribution to his household.

## Vusumzi's family

When I first met Vusumzi's family, it seemed to be strongly united. The physical environment of his home was the most well organised of all sixteen families. His parents had a beautiful garden with tended grass and shrubs and a flourishing vegetable patch cordoned off from the house by a fence. There was a fig tree in the corner of the yard. A wooden bungalow - a sophisticated version of many back-yard shacks - stood behind the vegetable garden. Behind the house Vusumzi's father built a wooden dove-cot for his pigeons. His tools were carefully stowed beneath the structure.

Vusumzi's family belonged to the Universal Church of Christ, described by Vusumzi as an *evangeli inkonzo yomoya* (evangelical spiritual church). All the children spent much of their spare time at choir practice and in home-based church activities. Vusumzi described the activities thus,

I go to church every day at night and on Sundays we go to Sunday school. My parents are the ones who tell us to go to church every day. They say that we must go to church so that we are unable to do ugly things, *izinto ezimbi* here in the street (Interview, 29 September 1992).

Vusumzi's mother, Nombulelo, dissociated herself from politics in the community altogether. She said,

The only thing I can tell you about is *uThixo* (God). You know, even here in our street I don't go to their meetings (street committee meetings) because they don't have God, and the Civic meeting also... So, where there is no God I distance myself (Interview, 7 September 1992).

Distancing herself from the affairs of others and life around her did not, in the end, prevent Nombulelo's family from dispersing.

Eight of the nine children in Vusumzi's family shared a biological father. Princess, the first born, was the exception. Her mother, Nombulelo, gave birth to Princess before setting up a long term relationship with Lulama, Vusumzi's father. Vusumzi's mother claimed that Princess was always badly treated by Lulama. She came to live with her mother and step-father when she was thirteen years old, having previously lived with her mother's relatives in a rural area. After she came to live with her mother, it is said that she was sexually molested by Vusumzi's father's brother. When Nombulelo complained to her husband about the molestation, his family insisted

that the girl rather than the brother should leave. Princess stayed and the sexual abuse continued. She began sleeping out of the house at the age of fourteen and bore two children when she was fifteen and sixteen years. Her mother attempted to control her daughter's sexual life by beating her frequently. Princess developed *amafufunyana*, a culturally specific mental affliction, as had her mother in her youth (Interview, Nombulelo, Princess' mother, 20 August 1993. I elaborate on the illness and its effects in Chapter Five). She was sent to her mother's brother in Paarl who attempted to cure her. Princess then left her mother's home leaving her two sons for her mother to look after. She lived in informal housing areas with other young women in similar circumstances in Khayelitsha and Philippi. Her mother did not always know where she was living and, even when she did, her daughter would not always speak with her. Princess felt that her mother hated her and had never looked after her.

In order to ensure that their next daughter, Nomvuzo, did not have children out of wedlock, Vusumzi's parents married her to an older man within their church. It was customary in their church that marriage partners did not know one another and were simply married after the church leaders had arranged partnerships for them. Vusumzi's mother described how Nomvuzo's boyfriend cried bitterly when she was married off to a stranger she did not know. Nombulelo recounted the boy's grief:

I was so heartbroken for my child's boyfriend because he was crying and saying, "Why did you let your daughter get married to somebody she hardly knows?" It was maybe because I thought he did not have money for *lobola* (bride-wealth). I said [to him], "No, [you can't have my daughter] because God has decided everything. You must not worry. You will meet another girl. You are still young" (Interview, 7 September 1992).

In August 1993, I visited Vusumzi's home. Vusumzi's father had stabbed his mother, accusing her of having an affair. Vusumzi and his sister, Ntombizonke, claimed that they watched their father through the curtains of the sitting room visiting the house opposite theirs where he had a relationship with another woman. In an interview with Elizabeth, Nombulelo said that she had not told Elizabeth the truth about their family situation. She was angry with Lulama, because she claimed he did not contribute to the welfare of the household. He had not paid *lobola* for her. She was indeed having an affair and wanted Vusumzi's father to leave the house. She showed me how Vusumzi's father had torn up all her clothes. Shortly afterwards, the family was reconciled through a ritual in which Lulama paid damages to Nombulelo. However, the beatings continued. The street committee ruled in favour of Lulama because Nombulelo was having an affair and said that if anyone should leave the house it would have to be her. Vusumzi

tried to protect his mother by physically attacking his father when he stabbed her (House visit, 20 August 1993).

Nombulelo left the house and went to live in Khayelitsha with her lover, leaving all six remaining children and her two grandchildren with Lulama in New Crossroads. Lulama insisted that all his children leave the house with the exception of one daughter, Ntombizonke. He was particularly keen for Vusumzi to leave because Vusumzi had physically attacked him.

Vusumzi's brothers and sisters dispersed. Most of the children went to live with Vusumzi's oldest sister, Nomvuzo, now married and living in Khayelitsha. Vusumzi went to live with his mother's brother in Paarl. In the midst of family upheavals, Vusumzi was convicted on two accounts of theft. He failed standard six for the third time, aged eighteen.

When Vusumzi informed me about the developments in his family on the last bush outing to Kwazulu-Natal, he could hardly speak of his experiences because of the pain he felt. After the bush outing, we lost touch with Vusumzi as his younger sister who remained with her father could not tell us the address at which he was staying in Paarl. We visited Ntombizonke, his younger sister, in the home of her father in New Crossroads. The garden around the house had withered and died. The fig tree at the back of the yard had been cut down to counter presumed witchcraft within the family. Princess's two little boys, clothed in rags, and visibly weak from hunger, played in a desultory fashion with an emaciated puppy in the yard. Ntombizonke cried when she saw us and told us a pitiful tale about herself, her mother and father and her oldest sister's child. She said that her father gave her money to buy groceries but that he had no idea of how much they cost. He would shout at her whenever she brought cash slips to him to explain how the money had been spent. She said that her mother had arrived one day at the house and had screamed at her asking her whether she was now the wife of her father. Why had she decorated the sitting room with embroidered cloths her mother had made and kept aside in a trunk? Ntombizonke said that she felt at ease speaking to us and really wanted to tell us what was happening in her family. She said that her mother had told her not to speak to us about the family because she thought "we were from the law". Ntombizonke said she hated living alone with her father as she had to do all the work in the house. Princess's two little boys were left with her and they were starving. She sat with a numb expression on her face as she told her tale - her body limp and without vitality (House visit, 17 May 1995).

Neighbours found it very strange that a man was living alone with his a fifteen year old daughter. Many of them hinted at incest. One woman said that Vusumzi's father, "had closed himself up here (pointing to her head) and opened himself down here" (pointing to her genitalia). Ntombizonke herself told us that she could no longer endure living with her father

and would run away as soon as the school term was over. She said that she wanted to run away to Molteno where Princess was living. She told us Nomvuzo had a baby girl. Ntombizonke said of the little girl, " Her urine is bloody. The child is weak. There is something wrong underneath. She cries when she goes to the loo. Her vagina is big". Nomvuzo had taken the two-year-old girl to the Day Hospital in Gugulethu and then to the Red Cross Children's Hospital in Mowbray where doctors had told her that the baby was being sexually abused. Ntombizonke said that Nomvuzo explained her daughter's symptoms as the result of someone bewitching her family and sending a snake to interfere with her daughter at night. She said that her husband refused to allow her to consult a traditional healer for her daughter. Nomvuzo thought that even if she consulted a traditional healer in secret, her husband would discover her having done so by finding medicines in the house. Nomvuzo herself worked during the day and left her daughter in the care of the father who was an old man. Much evidence pointed to the father being the abuser.

The stories of Zolile's and Vusumzi's families reveal a complex layering of broken bonds and the accumulation of betrayals of trust. Martha Nussbaum examines what happens to Hecuba in Euripides' play, of the same name, when Hecuba's two surviving children, Polydorus and Polyxena are murdered: Polydorus, murdered treacherously by a family friend to whom Hecuba had entrusted him for safe keeping, and Polyxena, by the state (Nussbaum, 1996: 397-421). Euripides' play opens with a prologue spoken by what appears to be a child, but is rather, Polydorus' ghost. The dead child - repeating the metaphor of the growth of children being likened to the growth of a plant with which I opened the chapter - declares that he "grew like a shoot" under the nurture of his parents' "guest-friend". Imagery to do with growth, resonant with hope in the mouth of a dead child is strangely chilling. Nussbaum writes:

Put in the mouth of a murdered child, the image [of a growing plant] makes us recall that our possibilities for goodness depend on the good faith of others, who are not always faithful. And even when a plant comes to maturity and flourishes, it is still, after all, nothing harder or tougher than a plant. Even healthy plants can be blasted from without by storms, disease, betrayal (Nussbaum, 1996: 397).

Hecuba withstood exile from Troy, the death of her husband and most of her children, and her own and her surviving daughter's enslavement under Greek conquerors. She was able to accommodate the death of her remaining daughter, Polyxena, when she was sacrificed by Odysseus - as a ghost bride for the slain Achilles - only because Polyxena died nobly with her

trust in socially created values as well as her own sense of worthiness intact. However, when Hecuba discovered that, Polymestor the Thracian king - someone whom she trusted implicitly with the well-being of her son - had betrayed her trust by murdering Polydorus for his money, the basis of her ethical world was shattered. Nussbaum writes:

We are confronted here with the total disintegration of a moral community, the slippage and corruption of an entire moral language. The ethical community changes its character. It functions as function the agents within it; no external law intervenes to halt or correct this organic process of change. (Divine *nomos* [or convention] is mentioned only as that which is disregarded or no longer believed in.) Worst of all, even formerly good agents are blighted when betrayal and violation take root. Nothing protects them (Nussbaum, 1989: 404-405).

Hecuba changes from defining value - in the Aristotelian sense - as arising through the individual's location in a social world where values are collectively generated, to an isolated condition, a deliberate removal of herself from society and her dedication to a sole aim, revenge against Polymestor. It is suggested that in doing so, Hecuba relinquishes her humanity and becomes beast-like.<sup>11</sup>

In juxtaposing Hecuba's extreme tale as related by Nussbaum with the stories of Zolile and Vusumzi, I do not intend to suggest the moral corrosion of either child. Rather, I seek to suggest parallels between Euripides' play and the children's lives as I have related them in terms of repeated "betrayal" of expectations of care between children and care-givers. In confronting the layering of fragility in both children's lives I pose the question: What are the consequences of the multiplicity of ways in which children experience disruption and betrayal within networks of care-giving kin? The children may be likened to plants exposed to adverse environmental conditions to highlight the ways in which care-givers are unable to sustain care. However, children possess agency in their fractured worlds. Despite the distance between local convention or ideal notions of family and the actuality of children's lived experience, many of them are at pains to excuse the failings of parents and others in terms of consistent care. They live in worlds where they share cultural explanations for misfortune like bewitchment, or are familiar with embodied reactions and expressions of social fracturing through afflictions like *amafufunyana*. At what point, however, do children cease to appeal to social norms regarding ideal relationship that are so patently undermined in social life?

<sup>11</sup> Martha Nussbaum's (1996:397-421) chapter examining the fragility of the Greek ethical framework, is entitled, "The Betrayal of Convention: Euripides' Hecuba". The rendition of Hecuba's tale that I have given here is based on my reading of the chapter.

## Conclusions

In the chapter I have outlined fragility within families by tracing the mobility of the sixteen children between care-givers from birth to the end of 1995. Reasons for mobility within families were suggested in terms of severance of economic support; the impact of political upheavals; already established patterns of child-care that straddle urban and rural environments; the sexual politics of households; and attempts to sustain both rural and urban homes.

I have examined the children's own explanations of the effects of mobility on their affective ties with adult care-givers. In doing so, I have shown how mobility can disrupt the trustworthiness and continuity of affective relationships. The stories of Zolile's and Vusumzi's families have outlined the layering of fragility within families by tracing the multiple levels at which fracturing of familial relationships can take place. The points along which fracturing takes place, and where strategies are juggled, are the results of the effects of state policies on the intimate surfaces of the domestic ground.

The bravery and strength of children in the face of their experiences of a layering of fragility within their families inverts the patronising and popular icon of a child as the embodiment of innocence and passivity.

CHAPTER THREE  
DISAGGREGATING VIOLENCE



The mask of a boy's face

[V]iolence when examined at close range, interrupts the coherence of a master narrative. But to deny the coherence of violence is not the same thing as appreciating the challenge posed by its congruence with time, with semeiosis, and with our responsibility of writing an anthropology (Valentine Daniel, 1996: 133).

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If there exists a border-line surface between...inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides (Bachelard, 1969: 218).

Analysts are often mesmerised by the prospect of violence or rendered silent and helpless confronting its essentialised face. Violent acts, as they are reported in the media, are distilled from the particularities of the social grounds from which they emerge, and that they, in turn, aim to modify through power. Reports tend to fetishise violence, restricting its location to forced incursions into and the mutilation of bodies. It is perhaps the case that traces of violence are most easily relegated to or fixed in injured bodies. The beginnings and endings of violent circumstances and their meanings for individuals are much more intangible and wide ranging. The rupture that unsanctioned violence<sup>1</sup> constitutes to ideal configurations of social relationship creates ongoing reverberations for individuals and groups. Reverberations of violence turn around questions of identity. Through the ongoing reworking of violent experience, memories change, as do apprehensions of time.<sup>2</sup> The narrations of individuals concerning their experience of violence is informed by their adoption of specific social locations. The attempt to fix violence and its aftermath to injured bodies in everyday talk implies that historical residues of social engineering go unmarked, as does the relation of violent acts to the failure of institutions.<sup>3</sup> It therefore does not promote new understandings to totalise violence, to fix one's

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<sup>1</sup> Some would argue that violence is part of all social organisation. Changes in the social order are accompanied by de-legitimising forms of violence that are embedded within that order (see Foucault, 1977). Rene Girard (1989) in his book, *Violence and the Sacred*, suggests that violence is an implicit part of human society and, therefore, cannot be conceived as an external source of evil. For that matter, William Blake's (1972: 148) ideas concerning the energising potential of violence in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* point to the way in which the legitimacy and illegitimacy of forms of violence are inverted when what has become oppressive legitimacy is scrutinised and challenged. I mention the above ideas since social groupings often fail to see their own investment in forms of violence and sometimes externalise violence as an aberration.

<sup>2</sup> E. Valentine Daniel (1996), writing of the dislocation occasioned by the experience of extreme violence by Tamil tea plantation workers in the highlands of Sri Lanka, suggests that people may remain fixed to, or imprisoned within their experiences of trauma, thus altering their apprehensions of time. He writes, "The repeated use of or drift into the present tense among my informants and friends who have undergone the trauma of violence I take to be an indication of the persistence of the effects of the presence of violence in their lives, an indication that the foaming, eddying presence of the past has yet to be fully delivered from the present into the flow of the future" (1966:127).

attention on the abstraction of violence. Rather, analysts are challenged to outline the particularities of the social location of violence in specific places. In *New Crossroads*, for example, some kinds of violence are spoken of in the narratives of individual children and others are not. Experiences of violence outlined in words and in silence have to do with how children place themselves differentially in webs of social relationship. Certain kinds of violence are publicly acknowledged as injury whereas others become obscured. Although in *New Crossroads*, multiple kinds of violence traduce all the domains in which children live from homes to the streets and within schools, children choose to inhabit locations in different ways, and as a consequence, tend to express different sorts of violence as painful.

In the last chapter, I explored the layering of fragility within families. I now follow the stories of two boys, Monga and Thulani - both sixteen years of age - outlining their specific relation to locations branching out beyond the houses in which they lived. The outline of Monga's social location beyond and including the family is presented in one piece, whereas that of Thulani evolves through the latter part of the chapter. The social locations of the boys are linked to different possibilities in terms of available discourses to which they had recourse in expressing certain forms of violence as painful. The respective discourses revolve around gangs and *comrades* (youth affiliated to political organisations). In the chapter I begin to broach issues to do with children's movement and moulding, through and of different locations beyond their families that intersect with various forms of violence. I draw inspiration from Azaro, the spirit child of Ben Okri's (1991) novel, *The Famished Road*, whose journeying into the world from the modest room marked by hunger (a more intangible form of violence) in which he lived with his parents opened him to the experience and creation of multiple geographies - geographies both physical and imaginary, that immersed him in the harsh realities of his material existence, but that simultaneously set him apart. The kaleidoscopic ways in which Azaro passed through veils between worlds, blurring their boundaries, is well suited to exploring situations of social dislocation since his facility in crossing worlds suggests not only fracturing, but the simultaneous coexistence of different kinds of meaning, or the possibility of vacating one framework of meaning to enter another. In showing children's movement out of, and beyond their homes, I thus follow, to an extent, Anthony Giddens' (1984: 13) formulation that "locales"

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<sup>3</sup> The social engineering or structural violence of the *apartheid* state is marked in the separation of families through erstwhile influx control laws and migratory labour systems, through deliberate strategies to curtail the educational standing of Africans, through the limitation of economic opportunities for Africans, and through forced removals. The strategies were exacerbated by mass detentions including the detention of children who were inflicted with torture, beatings and sometimes death.

are invested with contested and conflicting values, meanings, and activities, and in being so, constitute sites of shifting power relations.<sup>4</sup>

In his poetic essay, "Walking in the City", Michel De Certeau (1993) challenges the panoptic gaze of architects and planners who view a towering city from above by contrasting their view with the infinitely varied ways in which pedestrians walk, see and mark the city at ground level. Although De Certeau's musings on the postmodern city concern a city-scape very different from New Crossroads, in the chapter I purposely foreground the very different and individuated ways in which Monga and Thulani inhabited localities beyond their homes. In doing so, I wish to challenge many outsiders' attempts to flatten the experience of children in what they might perceive as a uniform landscape shaped by *apartheid*. I explore the ways in which Monga's and Thulani's lives beyond their homes were nevertheless linked to their experience of families. The linking of home and other places suggests a blurring of boundaries between them. It is in the linking of violent disruptions of the home and of locales beyond the home that Gaston Bachelard's phrase - "[i]f there exists a border-line surface between inside and outside, this surface is painful on both sides" - becomes pertinent (1969: 218).

### **Monga's social location**

At the beginning of 1993, three court cases were pending against Monga. One involved his alleged theft of a bicycle, and the other two, instances of housebreaking. He had stopped going to school and spent days in Claremont and Mowbray ("white" suburbs in Cape Town) begging for money from drivers of passing cars. He wandered far afield, sometimes catching joy-rides on the train (without paying the fare) with friends to Strandfontein Beach on False Bay.<sup>5</sup> One of Monga's favourite places was a shebeen neighbouring New Crossroads in KTC called *KwaBabes*, the place of Babe. Two of Monga's older sisters, whom he often visited, lived

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<sup>4</sup> In his conception of locale, Anthony Giddens (1984: 13) underscores the interrelationship between differing dimensions of space, including, in his terms, ideological, physical and historical dimensions. Locales provide the settings of interaction that assist analysts to contextualise interaction (Giddens, 1984: 118). Edward Soja (1989: 149) suggests that locales are both social constructs and a "vital part of being-in-the-world", an idea that echoes Giddens' notion that locales are both enabling and constraining. Understanding geographies in terms of their social meanings, their constraining and enabling potentialities, adds new dimensions to historiography – historiography that has tended to conceive of space as emptiness (Soja, 1989: 14). Emile Durkheim (1915: 23), Henri Lefebvre (1970; 1976: 31; 1994) and Michel Foucault (1980: 70; 1986) among others, have alerted us to the creative possibilities of foregrounding spatial concerns in social analysis. (For an early exploration of the meanings of space in new crossroads, see Henderson, 1995.)

<sup>5</sup> The False Bay coast is where the towns Simonstown and the Strand are marked (see Map 1.).

in KTC with some of their children. Monga smoked marijuana (*dagga*), telling me that it made him feel "grand" (the English word, grand has been incorporated into local slang).

Although Monga later experienced violence within reformatories, at the hands of police, and on the streets of New Crossroads, he down-played his own experience of violence in the street, in schools, and in relation to theft and house-breaking in the outside world. Rather, he consistently stressed the pain caused by the beatings he received at home from his mother. He remained guarded concerning his life outside the family where he sometimes acted purposefully to accrue money and objects through theft. His mother described him as living "on the side". (She used the phrase, *Uphum' ecaleni*, meaning literally, "he has gone out on the side".) The phrase implied that Monga lived in ways that were not generally sanctioned by parents, ways that were described as ugly or bad, *imbi*, or worlds in which other children were said to teach one's child to have an unclean spirit, *umoya omdaka*.<sup>6</sup>

Monga was not expansive about his life of petty theft, drug usage, and his decision to leave school when speaking with me. In leaving school he was not unlike many other young boys of sixteen who found themselves still in primary school. In 1993, Monga, aged seventeen, attended Standard Four classes for a brief period. He left school for good shortly afterwards with the explanation that his mother continuously accused him of truancy. Although Monga bitterly expressed his mother's lack of faith in him, his silent exodus into a life apart from school suggested the pull of another kind of life outside the strictures of family and school. Monga spoke of theft, drugs and truancy from school only in reply to direct questions. Although he was often silent regarding many of his activities, he always welcomed me warmly. He looked for me in the streets of New Crossroads if he knew I was present and participated in unique ways in workshops I conducted. In the dramatic improvisations and in drawings of New Crossroads life created by the sixteen children, Monga lost his reserve. His drawing of family contained the most expressive human figures out of all of the sixteen children. In improvisations he took on the serpentine walk of a gangster and led the drinking song, "*Hamba, Bekile!*"

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<sup>6</sup> The terms *imbi* and *umoya omdaka*, were used by most mothers of the sixteen children in relation to streets as locales, and to what they described as aberrant behaviour on the part of children in New Crossroads. They were concerned that their own children would not learn the "ugly" ways of the street from other children. We see here how children were construed as conduits of undesirable aspects of life that parents sought to keep from their own houses. For example, Lelezi's mother, Nokhanyiso, said in relation to gangsters, "[One] might say [the cause of gangsterism] is a lack of discipline at home, but sometimes you discipline your child. When your child goes outside they will get a different kind of "discipline" in the streets, whereas at home you have given your child the law (*umthetho*), that, "This thing I don't like". When your child meets other children outside they will teach your child to have an unclean spirit (*umoya omdaka*). That unclean spirit gets easily into the child. You end up fighting with your child and your thoughts do not meet anymore. The only advice I can give is, let's keep on disciplining them (Interview, 23 September, 1992),

*Sukuhlala ndawomye*" (Go, Drinking vessel! Do not stay in one place) (a reference to the way in which drinking containers are passed from person to person at drinking parties).

Monga's silence was not devoid of pain. He came to trust Elizabeth and I as intermittent friends who did not judge his activities. We continued to include him in all undertakings with the other children. In 1994, we heard of his incarceration in Siyakhatala, a holding institution for under-age criminals near the Western Cape town of Stellenbosch. We visited him there, attending a concert in which boy inmates of the institution and young orphaned girls from the neighbouring orphanage sang. Siyakhatala is a disturbing place. Hundreds of boys, aged sixteen years and younger, spend most of their day in a sun-drenched courtyard strewn with sand. On the day I visited Siyakhatala, two young warders walked around the courtyard carrying rubber truncheons. The school-room, a small room that could not possibly accommodate all the boys incarcerated in Siyakhatala, looked unused with chairs piled up on top of desks. After his sojourn at Siyakhatala, Monga was sentenced to a two year stint in the Zingisa Reformatory near Worcester, having been convicted of housebreaking in the affluent suburb of Claremont in Cape Town. Within a few months of Monga's incarceration in the reformatory he escaped and thereafter we continued to visit him in New Crossroads.<sup>7</sup>

While Monga was held in the Zingisa Reformatory in the early months of 1994, he telephoned his mother to complain of the treatment he received there. Monga spoke to me of how the older boys beat the younger boys, made them sing and do many "small jobs" for them. No one in the prison listened to the boys' complaints. They were told, "You are prisoners" (*Ningamabanjwa*).

Throughout the period of my interaction with Monga, he described his frequent absences from home as being due to his mother's beatings and a lack of food. During my research Monga's parents sustained themselves on state pensions and through casual self-employment (see Table 1.2 in Chapter One). Wilcox, Monga's father, worked from time to time as a builder helping people to upgrade their homes in surrounding areas. He would plaster and extend the cement block houses that the state had built in New Crossroads sometimes altering them by putting in new doors and windows. He helped to improve informal houses in surrounding areas that were made of corrugated iron sheets and board. Monga's mother, Evelyn, did a little

<sup>7</sup> According to South African law (LAWSA, 1996, vol. 6, paragraphs 75-76:61-62; Hoffman & Zeffert, 1988), children under seven years old are excluded from criminal culpability. For children between seven and fifteen years of age there is the legal presumption that they are not culpable for criminal actions subject, however, to the possible rebuttal of the state. Children between the ages of seven and fifteen can, therefore, be released back into the community after charges against them have been investigated, or they may be held in so-called safe-holding institutions like Siyakhatala, and in reformatories. There is no stated age at which children over fifteen can be sent to prison. The imprisonment of children between fifteen and eighteen years is at the discretion of the courts.

sewing. His brother, Zanoxolo, received a disability grant, and two of his sisters brought in occasional income - in the one case, through work as a cleaner, and in the other, through running a hair extension business from home. (Hair extensions are false braids attached to a person's hair and often arranged in complex styles.) Monga, his parents, three siblings and seven small children - Monga's sister's children - lived off the pensions and disability grants. Evelyn, Monga's mother, also spoke of the lack of food in her household but she explained Monga's actions and absences from home as being the result of witchcraft and the bad influence of boys whom he met outside of home who no longer went to school.<sup>8</sup> Monga declared his love for his father, Wilcox, who stated that he never wanted to abandon his son.

Monga's parents took him to a healer in his father's church who treated him with *iziwasho*, holy water.<sup>9</sup> The healer declared that someone had bewitched Monga, resulting in his "bad" behaviour. He told Monga and his parents that Monga would be killed: if he did not stop thieving, Monga would become a corpse on an unknown street. His parents would not be able to find his body, and he would be denied a proper burial. I learnt that the above sanction was common in New Crossroads and was sometimes used by parents in an attempt to control unruly sons.<sup>10</sup> Not receiving a proper burial would ensure that one was not integrated into the lineage of one's ancestors, a serious plight for an individual, particularly given the role of ancestors in rituals to repair a fragmented social body.

In addition to the healer's harsh pronouncement as to Monga's projected fate, his mother stated that she wished her arm was still powerful enough to beat him into conformity.

Monga's father related how at one time he had refused to go to Monga's court case appearances because he thought that his absencing himself as a form of punishment would discipline his child into changing his ways. Monga's mother argued that a stint in a reformatory would possibly transform her son. All the above ideas of punishment contain the assumption that tough measures were required to transform anti-social behaviour in Monga. They suggest that procedures within institutions apart from the family - the process of the law and incarceration in a reformatory - would possibly effect change in Monga's ways of being where

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<sup>8</sup> Situations that adversely affected family life in New Crossroads were frequently explained through the framework of witchcraft accusations leveled at neighbours and sometimes at family members. It is my view that the prevalence of witchcraft accusations reflected residents' ongoing experience of multiple discontinuities. A particularly evocative conversation involving Nosipho's aunt, Nomonde, is reiterated in Appendix 4.

<sup>9</sup> In many Africanist churches in New Crossroads, water as opposed to herbal medicines was used in healing ceremonies.

<sup>10</sup> In Sindiswa's family, for example, Ncinci, her mother used the same sanction against her eldest son, Maboeti, telling him that he would be killed and never found for burial. Maboeti was a famous car thief in New Crossroads.

family discipline failed to do so. The splitting of disciplinary functions between families and other institutions suggests a tacit acknowledgement of a sometimes bewildered inability within families to contain children.

In November 1994, Monga's father was elected as the chairman of all the street committees in New Crossroads (bodies created by residents that frequently were appealed to, to resolve conflicts within families). His particular task was to investigate gangster-like activities on the part of some young boys and men in the area. The Civic Association decided that a form of rapprochement between gang members and community organisations was needed where gangsters could be included in talks within community structures. The Civic Association clearly saw that the phenomenon of boys preying on their own community was endemic. Due to the failure of state institutions, like the police, to contain the problem, and the lack of opportunities for young boys on the brink of adulthood, residents in New Crossroads strove in various ways to contain the gangs, as I show below. After Monga's father became the chairperson of all the street committees in New Crossroads, he began to reflect on his previous harsh responses to Monga's arrests. Instead of meting out harsh punishment, he began to ask Monga to speak of his versions of events in relation to his thieving. In Monga's father's view, however, his son's tales of being framed by police were dubious and far-fetched. Monga's silence concerning his activities, in relation not only to me but to his parents, protected his occupation of liminal positions that challenged the dominant discourses on child-parent relations and notions of socially acceptable behaviour in New Crossroads.

The attributes of actual and proposed sanctions against Monga allow us to begin to ponder the nature of adult conceptions of children in relation to a state of adulthood in New Crossroads. Despite Monga's behaviour being attributed to the external influence of witchcraft, the methods used in attempts to control him - beatings, threats of death without burial, the refusal of his parents to attend his court appearances - on one level located "badness" in the child as opposed to within the larger social context. The sanctions have a further symbolic significance, suggesting social withdrawal from Monga. They contain the idea that punitive lessons are best learnt through marginalisation. In parental discourse in New Crossroads, children were thought of as unformed, requiring shaping through adult and parental discipline. Children's attributes were regarded as fluid. The state of childhood could therefore be construed as morally dubious because it was open to the influence of other children and the socially corrosive intent of alleged witchcraft activities.

When I asked Monga in 1992, "Won't you tell us about a situation where you felt really free, felt happy", he replied, "Not with me. I have never experienced that situation". Monga's

reply suggests the pain of his social marginalisation in terms of dominant discourses on social good in New Crossroads, a marginalisation underscored not only by the approach of his parents, but by his experience in the Worcester Reformatory where complaints about his treatment were ignored. His status as a prisoner pushed him to the margins of social life where attempts to speak and be heard were purposely discouraged. Monga's social location was also marginal in relation to other possible locations, as will become clear in Thulani's story.

### **Thulani's social location: a beginning**

In contrast to Monga, Thulani asserted his disquiet at violence in all social places. His experiences of violent admonition at home and in school were equally painful to him.<sup>11</sup> Thulani, who, as a child, spent many years in the Transkei and Ciskei with his paternal and maternal grandmothers, was diplomatic with other children during the research period. He would often resolve conflicts between the sixteen children during excursions or explain patiently what was required at workshops. He took his studies seriously and tried to help other neighbouring students who had difficulties with mathematics. Eric, who lived a few houses away from him, was one. Thulani encouraged children to accompany him to church on Sundays. He had a highly developed sense of community and aligned himself with the African National Congress. He often encapsulated his perception of general social suffering in his drawing of Africa turned into an adult African woman's face, her head swathed in a scarf. The tears running down her face expressed anguish at Africa's plight. Thulani's sense of social responsibility is born out in many of his conversations recorded in the chapter.

Despite his commitment to learning, the stark realities of a legacy of inadequate schooling (a form of structural violence) are underscored in examining some of Thulani's school results as well as the results of a few other New Crossroads' children. In June, 1995, Thulani

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<sup>11</sup> All sixteen children, without solicitation, referred to teachers beating pupils. (More recently in 1996, the South African state made corporal punishment in schools illegal. See Republic of South Africa, November 1996.) On several occasions, I saw the headmaster of Sithembele Matiso High School in New Crossroads *sjambokking* (beating with a rubber whip) latecomers to school at the school gate. While visiting schools I was struck by the way in which many teachers carried switches to and from classrooms. In 1992, at the request of a particular teacher, Nozuko (a girl) described how she and her fellow Standard Five pupils wrote down complaints regarding teachers' treatment of children at school. The children complained about the degree of corporal punishment in school, suggesting a maximum of three lashes be given to a pupil (implying that they could not imagine a school without some degree of corporal punishment, or if they could, they did not feel it appropriate to make the suggestion). The pupils complained that they were often beaten for telling a teacher that they did not understand what was being taught, or for asking questions in class. In response to the children's attempt at communicating their grievances, the headmaster of the school told them that they would all be beaten on their return from the June vacation (Interview, Nozuko, 1 July, 1992) (for a more detailed exploration of corporal punishment in New Crossroads, see Henderson, 1996).

failed his mid-year Standard Nine exams at Rhodes High School, a former "white" school in the Cape Town suburb of Mowbray. He received 33 per cent for English, 28 per cent for Afrikaans, 55 per cent for mathematics, 40 per cent for physical science, 38 per cent for biology, and 54 per cent for metal work. Thulani received an average aggregate of 40.05 per cent. Others among the sixteen children who attended Rhodes High School obtained similar results: Lydia barely passed the mid-year Standard Nine exams without exemption with 41.62 per cent (41 per cent constitutes a pass in South African schools. However it is a pass without exemption, i.e. without sufficient marks to proceed to the next standard). Themba and Siphokazi failed mid-year Standard Six exams with 35.36 per cent and 40.36 per cent respectively. Despite the inadequate schooling that all children received in New Crossroads schools, Thulani was able to pass mathematics at a so-called white school. In contrast to the 55 per cent that he received for mathematics, Themba and Siphokazi received 37 per cent and 44 per cent respectively for the same subject. Thulani was known to be particularly good at mathematics in New Crossroads. It was predominantly his poor results in Afrikaans that had resulted in his failing the mid-year exams. His poor Afrikaans results need to be seen in the context of longstanding student political activism. Resistance to Afrikaans instruction in African schools was embedded in the 1976 student uprising in Soweto where hundreds of children lost their lives in protesting against the language as the medium of instruction in African schools for all school subjects. Afrikaans, in the above context, was seen as "the language of the oppressor" as well as a parochial language that denied students access to information generated in other parts of the world. Thulani was educated as a young child in the Transkei and Ciskei and, although he was officially expected to begin Afrikaans in Standard Two, he said that at times he went without tuition in Afrikaans. Despite his failure in the June exams, Thulani's class teacher acknowledged his efforts at school. She wrote in his report, "Thulani continues to render satisfactory, consistent work. Unfortunately he fails due to his Afrikaans. He should make an earnest attempt to speak, read and write Afrikaans - a pass mark is well within his capabilities". The teachers' remark, although well intentioned, elides the devastating effects of the *apartheid* state's Bantu Education Policy on the educational standing of young Africans.

Thulani's story evolves further on in the text since it is linked with conversations with other boys to do with school boycotts and gangs as well as the boys' recognition of ubiquitous violence traducing all the domains in which they lived.

### Some reflections on Monga's and Thulani's social locations

Just as words are slippery (Bataille, 1988) and as writers wielding words are hard pressed to generate understandings of areas of social life that elude attempts at explication, so too, collectively held evaluations of children's ways of being in locales beyond homes in New Crossroads placed certain children, as it were, in shadow. In all the conversations I had with children's mothers and with children themselves, the ways of the street were seen to be potentially dangerous and sometimes unethical. Schools, in contrast, were seen not only as sites of education - despite their shortcomings - but as alternative loci where children could be supervised by adults. Schools, in the latter sense, could be endowed with care-giving functions. Nozuko's mother, for example, explained how she successfully enrolled her children into school before the official age of admittance (six years). She, as did many others, accomplished the early enrollment of her children because she desperately wanted them to be in the care of responsible adults. It was imperative for her family's survival that she work. Monga, in having rejected school, not only rejected education - a pursuit highly valued by parents and many children - but also rejected the "care-giving" of adults in school and chose a liminal social position separate from the intermittent surveillance of adults at home and school. As a consequence of his activities, Monga was nevertheless under the surveillance of police, courts and reformatories.

In some respects, aspects of the lives of children who occupied social margins, like Monga, resist easy explication. It is difficult to follow a child through ways of living that were unaffirmed in both adults' and children's discourses on acceptable life. Children who "inhabited shadows" tended to be silent concerning their lived experience. Speaking became untrustworthy as outlining their actions and motivations implied or invited condemnation or punishment. On the other hand, in exiting themselves from the linguistic currency of what was generally acceptable, or that often went unquestioned in dominant discourses, they were perhaps diminishing their ability to speak across boundaries. Could it be that language begins to drop off, to recede, if one is increasingly trapped in a marginal position, one in which Monga perhaps found himself, a place where he could say that he did not recall a time that he felt free and at ease?

Monga did not reveal his "marginal" activities to me in words. However, my most immediate sense of who he was was conveyed through his physical style. In the short piece that I wrote about Monga in the introduction to the thesis, I described the way in which he once placed a porcupine quill in his hair and how I encountered him bedecked in a woman's leather

jacket and fake gold jewelry, rings on his fingers and a number of necklaces snaking their way through the opening in his jacket. Whether his clothes were the spoils of a theft or loaned by a girl-friend, I did not choose to enquire, as our relationship depended on a chivalrous lack of curiosity on my part as to the details of his thefts. So, although Monga flaunted himself and his notoriety at times through dress, the details of his "transgressive" acts were only "known" to participants. His dress conveyed his transgressive charm.

Due to Monga's silence and hence my lack of involvement in important aspects of his life, I consider briefly as a heuristic device the French writer's Jean Genet's musings on the French underworld. In his semi-autobiographical novel, The Miracle of the Rose, that which is deemed in the outside world to be socially acceptable is inverted in Genet's appropriations of reformatories, prisons, prisoners and transgressive acts. In places of restriction, of incarceration, where a hierarchy of transgressive acts is "sanctified" by Genet, the murderer is eulogised and assumes the pinnacle position as king or saint. Genet traces, in his terms, the beauty of transgression, the aesthetics of betrayal, by bedecking Harcamone, the young murderer in the Miracle of the Rose, in chains that double as white roses (1971: 17). Before his execution, Harcamone, in Genet's imaginings, becomes a colossus of the underworld, clothed in silk and lace, the judge and lawyer transformed into tiny beings who climb his body in search of his heart, a heart that reveals itself to be a monstrous red rose (1971: 272-74). Genet thus brings together style and transgression in ways not unlike Monga.

The aura of thief tended to attach itself much more readily to Monga than to the other seven boys. Monga decided not to reform despite the harsh responses of his parents, the healer, and his jailers and fellow prisoners. He stole to compensate for his experience of scarcity within his home. The street and the wider places where Monga roamed freely without informing his parents, suggest too, the attraction of a potentially dangerous life of spontaneity and improvisation outside of the bounds of parental sanction. Monga's marginality emerges in a limiting environment where economic strictures excluded the possibilities of formal employment for most young people - and all the more so for individuals with limited education.

We are able to see that on one level Thulani occupied a different social location to that of Monga. His orientation in life suggested that his search for understandings was linked to a sense of responsibility for transforming social relations and institutions. Personhood is not only confined to the personalised individual but emerges in relation to others (a notion born out in the Xhosa saying, a person is a person because of other people, *umntu ngumntu ngabantu*). How one defines oneself can become intertwined with collective goals and longings, goals and longings embodied in organisational culture or within language and actions emerging within

political movements. In so far as Thulani identified himself with a popular liberation movement and partook in collective action aimed at bettering schooling, he was able to draw on a discourse that had wide credence and legitimacy, a discourse that turned around the merits of the struggle against *apartheid*, the merits of resistance and the merits of actively striving to reshape institutions like the schools, for the betterment of all pupils. Thulani's appeal to a framework of political transformation, however, takes on a sad caste, given the current climate in South Africa where youth have largely been pushed aside in transformatory processes (see Appendix 6). Although Thulani expressed pain at corporal punishment in schools and in his home as well as violence encountered in different ways on the streets of New Crossroads, he upheld a longing for other possibilities for social life. Collective actions undertaken with the goal of transforming society for the better nevertheless often resulted in ambiguous outcomes. For example, boycotting of schools aimed at improving school conditions was not always unproblematically constructive. Although I do not wish to imply that school boycotts are necessarily violent, their enforcement has often been accompanied by acts that have sometimes carried in their wake particular kinds of "excess" as is born out in the following conversation between Thulani and Eric.

**Thulani:** Although school boycotts waste time, we can understand the reasons for them. (*Nangona iischool boycotts zilimosha ixesha kodwa siyavakala izizathu zazo.*) We don't have books and there are not enough desks. The problem is that you sit uncomfortably in the class the whole day. It affects your ability to listen. And the other thing, a teacher will teach you and will then say, "Read this book from page so-and-so to page so-and-so at home", and you don't have the book. It wastes time, and you cannot blame your parents for not having money to buy that book because most of our parents do not work. Some parents work for only a little money. So, it is not enough for books because you will find some books are expensive. So, I do not blame school boycotts.

**Eric:** From the start, you like to boycott even if there are books. You can study without textbooks from the teacher's notes. You don't see that time is important. I know because I went to school at Andile (a primary school in New Crossroads). I passed without text books. The other thing I see about children is that there is no respect among them because they do not respect their teachers. Some make a noise. Some are busy smoking. Most of the teachers decide to leave the class because nobody shows any respect for them. So the thing of boycotting is something that people do for fun. Although there are good reasons, boycotting is not the answer.

**Thulani:** It's a good thing to boycott but we are not doing it in the right way. Even if I have that exam fee now, what will happen to other students next year who don't have it? (In 1992, African students protested

against an imposed exam fee that the educational authorities required before they could write final secondary school exams.) I must pave the way for other children coming after me. I hear people saying, "Let us not boycott because the people who say we must boycott have finished their studies a long time ago and they are wasting our time". That is not true. They do not waste our time. [Boycotts help us] to fix things for ourselves so that things will be better for our children. The only thing that I complain about (*into ndiyikhalazeliyo*) with the thing of boycotting is the way we do it. We are entitled to complain about education and we should do it in an appropriate way (*ephucukileyo*). Like, there is a way. I have seen it - Another man saw a fly on the Boss's forehead and this man wanted to remove the fly and he beat his boss - that was bad. So we mustn't say we are solving the education crisis and yet we are destroying all education by taking away everything... The only problem with the boycott thing is the time, and the way we do it because we are getting older. The bad part of it is the results. We don't get what we want. In 1991 we were promised books and only a few arrived, and the other thing is that there are many students in our classes. I don't think the teacher can manage to teach us all. We are not the same; some are clever and some are not clever, like myself. (Thulani, in fact, did relatively better in school than most of the other sixteen children. The poor nature of his results is a sad indictment on the state of South African education rather than on his abilities.) So, I think that is it.

**Eric:** School boycotts don't only mean boycotting school, but other people's lives are threatened because cars are stoned as if children enjoy it. And some take food from vans. A poor person will go to a wholesale depot to buy things to sell in his shop, and he will meet a group of students who will take everything out of his van. They are not going to sell the things to buy the books they are crying about. They will eat the things and sell them to buy cigarettes. And the other thing is, they won't go out of school and study. They will stand on every corner of the street in *mobs* (Eric used the English word) until late. Their parents don't know what is happening concerning the boycotts, because one parent was at work and then she had a telephone call in which she learnt that her son was in jail because of throwing stones at a police van. It is difficult for a poor mother because she must have money to get her son out of jail. If we could look at these things and the way they affect our parents, then we would know that boycotting is not good. I mean, we have seen the people in factories on the television, striking, and then some of the people get retrenched and they lose the little money they have - if we can only say that we don't like a certain thing and that we want it addressed. We must go to school and to work rather than sitting down and saying, "Tools down! or "Pens down!", because at this time we really need education. We need to be examples. (Conversation at workshop, 7 July 1993).

Both Thulani and Eric refer to a time "out of joint", a time in which actions do not necessarily produce outcomes that are commensurate with their aims. In the above sense, boycotts "waste" time on a level, and thus contribute to the erosion of education. However I would argue that implicit in Thulani's views is the idea that boycotts take place within a larger social framework in which time is generally out of joint - a time in which concerted action

becomes a necessity to affect transformation. Thulani's analogy of the possibility of killing the boss by hitting the fly on his forehead aptly suggests that certain actions undertaken for the improvement of education may have unwittingly contributed to its further demise, that actions that did not necessarily contribute to the students' cause attached themselves to activities undertaken with a positive goal in mind. However, concentrating on social disruption of various kinds that has accompanied school boycotting diverts attention from the deliberate strategy of the erstwhile state to undercut the educational standing of Africans.<sup>12</sup>

Returning to Monga's social location and the exclusionary lines of propriety that seem to mark his marginalisation, I suggest that many boys in New Crossroads, although not totalised as thieves in the same way as Monga, nevertheless crossed lines of propriety. That lines of propriety were sometimes crossed not only in school boycotts but in other sorts of intermittent collectivities involving young people is born out, for example, in Thulani physically attacking his father to protect his mother from being beaten by his father (see Chapter One). It is born out in the spasmodic incorporation of boys in confrontation or alliance with gangs.

Among the sixteen children in 1992, Sindiswa's two brothers belonged to rival gangs, the *Badboys* and the *Ntsaras* (the *Badboys* were mainly based in New Crossroads, and the *Ntsaras* were largely based in Gugulethu, Nyanga and Heideveld). Sindiswa, who was eleven years old, would sometimes call neighbours to separate her brothers who fought each other in her home when her older brother - a known car thief - occasionally visited (he was in hiding and was later imprisoned in Pollsmoor Prison for car theft). In the same year, Siphokazi's parents sent her half-brother to the Transkei after repeated attempts had been made by local boys to force him to join a gang.

In 1991-2, the Civic Association of New Crossroads and adult males from the community threatened with eviction families that would not send their children who were known gang members out of the area. Collective action in New Crossroads, as has been described in the Introduction, had its roots in the political mobilisation of people against the state throughout the late 1970s and 1980s as well as in the confrontation of different leaders and their followers. The action of the Civic Association and adult members of the community seemed to end the large scale operation of gangs in New Crossroads. However, in 1995, territory was still marked out by boys who tried to prevent children crossing certain streets in

<sup>12</sup> The former south African Prime Minister, Hendrik Verwoed (1995 cited in Christie, 1988: 12), as an "architect" of apartheid, is renowned for saying, "There is no place for the Bantu in the European Community above the level of certain forms of labour". In 1953, before Verwoed (1953 cited in Christie, 1988: 12) became Minister of Bantu Education, he said, "When I have control over native education I will reform it so that natives will be taught that equality with Europeans is not for them".

New Crossroads. Most of the sixteen children who lived below Koornhof Street (see Map 3.) explained that the reason they did not frequently visit the youth centre - built in a part of New Crossroads known as Section 16, a few blocks behind "Jericho", the community centre on Koornhof Street - was that older boys tried to stop them. Lydia was the only child who crossed the street with confidence, sometimes daily, to visit and work at the youth centre. She said that she was not afraid of the boys on the street since they were her neighbours, and she "took them as brothers". As late as 1997, adults in New Crossroads, who frequently attended mass meetings called by the Civic Association to deal with local concerns, made concerted efforts to maintain the boundaries of New Crossroads in relation to gangster activities and to provide their own solutions to community problems. Howard Mackenzie, a boy attending Sithembele Matiso High School in New Crossroads, was shot and killed in his classroom on the 26th of August, 1997 by gangsters from surrounding areas who had forced their way into the school (Argus, 26 August 1997; Cape Times, 27 August 1997). Following Howard's death, pupils from Sithembele Matiso Secondary School and other secondary schools in the surrounding areas marched against the presence of gangs in their schools (Argus 30/31 1997). Adults in New Crossroads, Gugulethu and Nyanga - with the help of the Cape Amalgamated Taxi Association (CATA) - showed their displeasure with the operation of gangs in their communities by rounding up 80 suspected gangsters and handing them over to the police (Cape Times, 29 August 1997, 4 September 1997). Adults from New Crossroads later refused permission for People Against Gangsterism and Drugs (PAGAD) to hold a meeting on gangsterism in New Crossroads (Argus, 3 September, 1997).<sup>13</sup> In doing so, they sought to isolate New Crossroads from broader based conflicts between PAGAD and known gangsters throughout the Cape Flats. In 1991-2, action against gangs by adult males in New Crossroads showed how collective goals set in consultation with the adult population of New Crossroads by community leaders could override the interests of individual families by insisting the children belonging to gangs exit the community. As we have seen from Monga's father's position as head of the local street committees in 1995, where he was called upon to mediate with gang members, the problem of gang-like activities in New Crossroads was not completely solved by collective action undertaken against gangs in 1992.

Boys who usually did not consider themselves as gangsters nevertheless came to tell situated stories in which they temporarily "joined" or became gangsters. Explanations for their

<sup>13</sup> PAGAD, an organisation consisting in the main of coloured members, emerged in attempts to stop drug trafficking and entrenched gang activities in coloured suburbs in Cape Town. The organisation quickly became

lapses into occasional identifications with gangs, identifications to which they chose not to give coherence over time, had to do with what they described as force of circumstance.

The following conversation held at a workshop in 1993 between Thulani and Eric and two younger boys, Themba and Mzovuyo (aged thirteen), indicates a slippage between conceding that gangster activities were destructive at a local level and their own spasmodic incorporation within polarised groupings in the street. The conversation introduces another layer of violence, the violence of older men against boys, and comrades (youth affiliated with political organisations) against gangsters in a bid to control gangs in New Crossroads, and hence the meanings given to locales like the streets. The layering and ubiquitous nature of violent acts as born out in the conversation begin to undermine the legitimacy in dominant discourses of some forms of violence in relation to others. Common tropes around which people attempted to fix claims to legitimacy in utilising violent action included distinctions with regard to age, gender hierarchies and political affiliation. Many repertoires for change in New Crossroads thus turned around various forms of violence. Although Thulani defined himself as a comrade, he like Eric, felt obliged to fight on the side of gangs in New Crossroads when attacked by boys from neighbouring suburbs. In the context of defence of territory, gangs were not necessarily associated solely with theft but came to fix places to which a boy could belong and beyond which he would be unsafe.

**Eric:** The Civic and the residents took the initiative in [solving the problem of gangs] - everybody here in New Crossroads. First of all there was a very big meeting for everybody, called by Mpama (the Civic Association leader at the time). I can say that *tata ka* Lawrence (a respectful way of naming the same man by calling him the father of his son) was the person who worked very hard to solve [the problem of gangs]. Everybody was called, and strict measures were taken because most gangs stay in New Crossroads. Their parents are residents. The parents whose children were involved were warned that if they let the children back into their houses, they would have to leave New Crossroads. They should not give them food or anything. *Tata* Mpama, is the person who went from side to side to solve the problem. We introduced a new slogan, *Kwavuka* (the place of being awake), *umtshayelo nenkwenkwe* (a broom and a boy). That meant that everybody who was a man should go into the streets and beat the boys. All the boys who were involved in the gangs were told that they must not come back to New Crossroads. They would have to go and sleep in the bush. For the boys who were not involved in gangs there was a law that said they should not be found on the street after nine p.m.. If you were two [boys], or four, or eight, you would be beaten. The *comrades* helped to enforce the curfew. They knew the

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associated with the use of pipe bombs in many places within the metropolitan boundaries of Cape Town, and the assassination of individuals associated with gangs and drug dealing.

places where the *Badboys* were, and they beat them. And there was a war between gangs and *comrades* that went on for a long time. It was a difficult problem to solve on the part of the residents but the residents of New Crossroads told themselves that they were going to fight. No boys were going to rule in New Crossroads.

**Question:** Did any of you find yourself in a situation where gangs were involved or were any of you a member?

**Eric:** The reason why I was a member was that one day I came home from the dentist and usually we used the Nyanga taxi and I got off at Nomtshongwana (a shop). I was called by a group of five boys, *amadoda*, (literally, men). They asked me where I stayed. I said, "New Crossroads". They asked, "Where"? I said, "At [Section] 3". I said that innocently. I did not know that there was something happening. I could see from their faces that these people were angry. *Zintswelo mbeko*, they did not have respect. One started to kick me. Another said I was the person they were looking for. When I asked what was happening, they said, "Are you still asking?", and I had to defend myself against a knife because one of them had a knife. I managed to run towards the houses. So, I managed to get away, and I was so angry because I was in pain because I had just come from the dentist. I did not ask, I just took off my clothes and I put on some funny clothes and I was on the street also. I hate to carry a knife but I am very good at throwing a brick and I had to be on the side of the *Badboys* because they were from New Crossroads. Because of what had happened to me, I helped them. And I hated Nyanga East groups, and from that day onwards I have seen that innocent people are stabbed but I didn't stab anyone and I don't carry a knife with me. The only thing I use is the brick. So, what everybody did to stop the gangs in New Crossroads, it was a very big job. There are no gangs in New Crossroads now except some little boys who fight but they don't call themselves gangs. The other thing that is still in New Crossroads is that you cannot walk in certain places. People from that side at [Section] 16 where Mzovuyo, Monga, and Themba live, are not free to go to the other side of New Crossroads. That is why we don't want the centre to be built there although it is quiet at the moment. Not long ago, Mr X shot somebody. There is always something happening at 16, and there is KTC again. The five youths who were shot in KTC recently were from that side of New Crossroads. (They were shot in gang related conflict.) It is not a safe area.

**Thulani:** I found myself being a member of gangs without noticing. My story is the same as Eric's. One day I went to Nyanga. I met a group of people. I was in a bad situation in Nyanga because they said I was a *Badboy* from New Crossroads. I didn't want to get involved in a fight, I didn't want to do anything but the people can make you fight when you are not prepared. It took me a long time to go to Nyanga again. The only thing was that if someone from Nyanga or Gugulethu was in New Crossroads, I would help to beat them. Even in the other places, in Gugulethu and Nyanga, when you come from New Crossroads they beat you and they say you are a *Badboy*.

**Themba:** I was not a member, but if somebody got beaten I helped the side of New Crossroads.

**Mzovuyo:** We used to have catapults (*iiketi*), and we would climb on top to the roofs of our homes, and we would shoot the person who was passing if he was a member of a gang. But the [gang members] would not see us. They would just hear the sound of the stones, and we would hide ourselves (Conversation at Workshop, 7 July 1993).

### Towards interpreting children's occupation of street and school

The boys' conversation and the ways in which the residents of New Crossroads tried to deal with gang members suggest a complex layering of competing forms of violence carried out by men and boys in the ambivalent locale of the street. The practitioners of different forms of violence jostled for claims to streets and attempted to fix particular kinds of relations of power within them. I have shown how, amongst differing and conflicting claims to the street, some were seen to be more legitimate than others. Men, for example, were seen to occupy the streets legitimately in violently attempting to control gang activities through the imposition of a curfew for all boys on the streets of New Crossroads, through patrolling the streets nightly and *sjambokking* (beating with a rubber whip) young boys whom they found there after nine p.m.. The violence carried out by *comrades* against individuals known as gangsters was also tacitly accepted by older men in New Crossroads. Children habituated streets in part because of the failures of schooling in New Crossroads.

In addition to their pedagogic functions, schools provided alternative loci for child-care aimed at keeping children off the streets while some care-givers were away at work. However, institutional incoherence within schools due to intermittent school attendance and the poor standard of education in general resulted in children claiming the streets of New Crossroads, not only in mass protest against keenly felt shortcomings in their schooling environments, but in individual acts of truancy. In addition, children were at times prevented from going to school since other forms of social conflict, like the taxi-wars that raged in New Crossroads between 1991 and 1993, dictated that it was unsafe for children to walk to school.<sup>14</sup> In 1992, I estimated

<sup>14</sup> The taxi-war in New Crossroads and in surrounding areas are waged between members of The Western Cape Black Taxi Association (WEBTA) and the Langa Gugulethu, Nyanga Taxi Association (Lagunya). Children in New Crossroads often imply that the state was backing one of the taxi associations. According to the TRCSAR, evidence in the Western Cape suggested that WEBTA was aligned with councillors, squatter leaders and police. Lagunya, on the other hand, was seen to be ANC-aligned (TRCSAR, 1998, vol. 3: 498). A number of the sixteen children described in detail experiences of the taxi-war. They included James whose father's two taxis were burnt where they had been hidden in KTC, and Siphokazi and Zolile who both hid in shacks under gun-fire between the rival taxi associations. In 1992, Thulani and Nozuko took me to the site of a burnt out home belonging to a

that children in New Crossroads attended approximately four months of schooling due to taxi-wars and student and teacher boycotts.

For both Monga and Thulani the boundaries of houses and schools extended into the streets. The "illegitimate" ways in which Monga occupied the street slipped past dominant discourses concerning occupation of places, whereas Thulani's occupation of the street as a site of struggle, and the active role that *comrades* played in combatting gang activities in the area, had a degree of acceptance in prevalent discourses in New Crossroads. Monga's appropriation of the street was unaccompanied by an overt affirmatory discourse. Despite differences in each boy's social location, repertoires of violence across all social domains tended towards excess breaching notions of propriety for both boys.

In the chapter I have thus far examined the social location of two boys in relation to their occupation of streets and school and the articulation of these locales with forms of violence. I have not articulated the possible ways in which girls occupied and gave meaning to locales beyond their homes. The eight girls in contrast to the boys, distanced themselves from violence in the outside world and from large scale occupation of the streets, for example, during school boycotts. Girls, as did boys, pinpointed the prevalence of beatings in schools. Girls tended to trace the effects of violence within homes and between homes, speaking abstractly of whether parents should or should not intervene in children's fights with other children in the streets. They focussed on domestic areas of conflict involving, for example, alcohol abuse, or the ways in which children attempted to maintain contact with fathers after they had divorced their mothers. Girls clarified their gendered experience of beatings received from parents. In all cases in their conversations, parents said they beat girls because they associated their absence from home, or their lateness in returning home, with the supposition that they were with boyfriends. In contrast, none of the boys mentioned that they were beaten at home for alleged sexual expression (Children's sexuality in New Crossroads and the particular position of girls is the subject of Chapter Four.) Lelezi was the only girl who described how she initiated a fight with a woman in her street (see Chapter Five). She placed herself, as did the boys, as an agent within particular fields of violence. The other girls, in contrast, tended to speak in generalised terms around ethical considerations to do with violence. Although boys and girls were separated in the workshop on violence, girls' particular experiences of violence were not publicly disclosed in the workshop. Silence surrounding the sexual violation of girls is dealt with in Chapter Four.

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WEBTA member in New Crossroads. The man's home had been attacked three days prior to my visit. The street was littered with dead chickens, a burnt mattress and a burnt stove. Thulani and Nozuko described to me how the man's few cattle had been hacked to death on the street of New Crossroads.

### **Violence traducing all domains in which children lived**

In a conversation that included Thulani, Monga and four other boys, they spoke of the ways in which violence of various kinds traduced all their worlds. Their tracing of acts of violence from public spaces to the domestic ground is particularly poignant. The boys acknowledge their own internalisation of the capacity for violent action. Their talk ranges in tone from a distanced appraisal of the state and status of South African youth to a declaration of their own entrapment in violent experience in the eroded places of home and street. Monga and Thulani, whose stories form a pivot for the chapter, specifically demarcate their experience of violence in their homes as painful.

University of Cape Town

**Thulani:** At home I am beaten so that sometimes I think I am not these people's child. I feel like going far away, the way they treat me at home. You get beaten at school. You get beaten at home. You see, things like that affect you. The other thing is that when they shout at you at home they will tell you that what you have done is wrong and you feel angry. They won't say what you have done is wrong and this is right. You won't be shown the right thing.

**Mzovuyo:** When I get beaten at home my cousins joke saying that I come from baboons - "You are from the baboons, I am from the hospital". So when I get beaten I think that it is true; I am from baboons. (Children in New Crossroads suggest that being born in a hospital shows a degree of "civilisation". Referring to people as baboons, in contrast, denotes its opposite.)

**Zolile:** People shouting at you and being insulting is also violence. My heart feels painful.

**Monga:** The only way I have been affected by the violence is from my mother. She likes to make other people struggle (*uyathanda ukusokolisa*).

**Thulani:** You must give us the assurance that our parents won't hear what we say in the workshop.<sup>15</sup>

**Eric:** The other thing I can say is that youth cannot stay without violence. It is in their heads. Although they try to change, it is difficult. And it is not only boys who are affected but girls are also part of it. It will not change over a few days because every day we sleep with violence. The other thing is that our parents are part of the violence. When they are angry, they say things that they should not say and it makes a child behave differently. It is difficult to grow up as a black child because you see things you should not see and you hear things you should not hear. Language is also part of violence. You know what a policeman looks like. You have seen a person being stabbed in front of you lying dead. You know what a dead person looks like. A white child could not grow up under such conditions. (Conversation at workshop, 7 July 1993).

## Conclusions

Violent actions that take place in all the institutional domains through which children moved in New Crossroads mark what I term institutional incoherence. Due to the erosion of institutions that served children and adults alike, collective actions, often blurring into violence,

<sup>15</sup> Although I have complied to a degree with Thulani's request for confidentiality through changing all the names of the children, I have included the boys' expression of pain within the domestic domain as well as Thulani's comment as, in my view, it is important to mark children's creation of a place of independence from parents where

were employed in an attempt to secure specific outcomes, whether the outcomes were in the form of commandeering scarce resources or the creation of new configurations of power. It is unwise to subsume all violent acts under a totalising conception of violence. Violent acts registered dissatisfaction and frustration with the failures of institutions and the relationships contained within them. They were employed to re-mould temporarily social situations. Despite empowering aspects of violence in the face of institutional incoherence, children clearly showed their ambivalence towards ubiquitous violence, marking the effects of its excess. Collective actions undertaken to secure generally condoned collective goals - for example, the supply of books to all school pupils - could become satisfying in their own right. Here violence temporarily opened spaces in which configurations of power that were not widely sanctioned could be exerted - for example, in the form of rape, or the consumption of goods taken from delivery vehicles during school boycotts. Because repertoires of violence, whether perceived as legitimate or illegitimate, were circulated repeatedly in New Crossroads to rearrange local configurations of power and to make up for the shortfalls in institutional support, they came to mirror one another. Mirroring had to do with the reality that violent actions could not secure long term solutions for anyone. The analogy of a hall of mirrors, in which the same images are infinitely reflected, captures my sense of the entrapping and suffocating qualities of circulated violence in New Crossroads.<sup>16</sup> The mirroring of forms of violence becomes a marker of the fragility of the social body beyond and including families.

In addition, violent acts marked conflict in identities of self. Henrietta Moore (1994a; 1994b; 1994c) has convincingly shown how an individual's identities of self are intersubjective, in that they depend on certain types of behaviour on the part of others that confirm the individual's senses of self. Senses of self are also related to desires for particular configurations of power in relation to others (Moore, 1994a: 67). Moore demonstrates that when others behave in ways that challenge the individual's fantasies of self-identity, interpersonal violence may erupt (Moore, 1994a: 68-69). In relation to New Crossroads, the attempt of older men to control gangs by beating any young man they found in the streets at night is interwoven with an attempt at re-establishing a generational hierarchy of authority that is constantly undermined by the organisational structures of gangs outside of families and by some forms of political mobilisations on the part of the youth. It might be argued that the men's violent action repaired, if only temporarily, fractured masculinities that on one level were challenged by a decline in men's capacities to fulfil the ideal of being consistent bread winners for their families or to

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they speak of contentious issues. Thulani's comment marks both a bid for independence and an outlining of alienation and pain.

consistently retain their authority.<sup>17</sup> In New Crossroads in more recent times, men's attempts to re-establish a generational hierarchy acceptable in their terms is evoked in the phrases, "The place of being awake; a broom for a boy". Just as men might have used violence to re-establish what they perceived to be more legitimate hierarchies of power within New Crossroads, youth - who found themselves living, or who chose to live, on what some may describe as the margins of society - may have employed violence to form collective identities outside the family or the confines of the home.

I have suggested that Monga and Thulani were equally situated in a world suffused with violent experience, but that each occupied different social locations within New Crossroads, bringing forward different kinds of violence for reflection. Thulani's social location gave him access to a particular discourse that was well established and had wide acceptance in New Crossroads - a discourse drawing on notions of "the struggle". Because Monga's intermittent activities as a thief were not generally condoned within New Crossroads, he was less able than Thulani to make public statements concerning the intersections of violence and his activities in moulding or dismantling the world. It is in the restriction of his ability to speak that his social marginalisation is located. Despite the differing locations of Monga and Thulani in relation to locales beyond their families, violence as excess in the end, blurred some of the differences between the two boys. Although it may seem that Monga crossed lines of propriety in a more obvious sense than did Thulani, Thulani's interest in a particular kind of social transformation was not without its own transgressions. The "transgressions" of both boys must be placed within the context of an institutional incoherence located within and beyond the immediate sites of home and school, localities that register the broader and corrosive policies of the state - its deliberate omissions in terms of failing to provide education of an acceptable standard for African children, and its violent incursions into African communities, withdrawing protection through the erosion of effective legal procedure and policing. Economic realities, the result of corrosive state policy and global trends, have exacerbated unemployment, and hence the opportunities for boys like Monga and Thulani who have responded to the dislocations within their lives by appropriating objects of desire and by upholding a vision of a transformed society.

Language (recall Zolile's words) and actions in New Crossroads are at times traduced by violence, violence that in its particularities may be disaggregated as I have shown. Yet, the repetitions of repertoires of violence in different locales in New Crossroads suggest a lack of resolution within a field of discontinuities. E. Valentine Daniel (1996) approaches a similar lack of resolution of violence, and hence its propensity to disturb and disorientate. He suggests that

although anthropologists strive to explicate the particularities of violence in specific locations, there are levels at which a preponderance of violence eludes explications. He writes,

[T]here is a danger in finding meaning before the full effects of discordance are appreciated. For while meanings grow, they are also predisposed to sink into petrified habits, into thinking that the job has been done and questions answered, into solving and forgetting (Daniel, 1996: 131).

Valentine Daniel's views echo in some respects the views of Lawrence Langer (1991) who cautions writers not to obscure the dislocations and fragmentations occasioned by violence through overlaying them prematurely with heroicising narratives. My views differ slightly from Langer's in that, although the stories of Monga and Thulani have shown their relationship to a lack of resolution within a field of discontinuities, they simultaneously chart each boy's bravery, reflective abilities, frustrations and social knowledge.

## CHAPTER FOUR

### SILENCE: SEXUALITY OF CHILDREN IN NEW CROSSROADS



A girl emerging from a plaster-of-paris mould in preparation for making a mask of her face

[The] cultural construction of the "public" and the sayable in turn creates zones of privatized, inadmissible memory and experience that operate as spaces of amnesia and anaesthesia. Yet, what is experienced as a background of organic, continuous time is in fact a political-cultural creation. As the zones of amnesia and the unsaid expand in tandem with the increasingly formulaic and selective reproduction of public memory, the issue of narrativity becomes a zone of increasing political and cultural tension.

The split between the public and private memory, the narrated and unnarrated, inadvertently reveals the extent to which everyday experience is organized around the reproduction of inattention, and therefore the extent to which a good deal of historical experience is relegated to forgetfulness. The senses as the bearers and record-keepers of involuntary and pervasive material experience, and therefore as potential sources of alternative memory and temporality are precisely that which is frequently subjected to social forgetfulness and thereby constitute the sphere of hidden historical otherness (Seremetakis, 1994: 19-20).

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What remains "unthinkable" and "unsayable" within the terms of an existing cultural form is not necessarily what is excluded from the matrix of intelligibility within that form; on the contrary, it is the marginalised, not the excluded, the cultural possibility that calls for dread or, minimally the loss of sanctions. The "unthinkable" is thus fully within culture, but fully excluded from dominant culture (Butler, 1990: 77).

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To learn how, when and where, and by whom emotions ought to be enacted is to learn a set of body techniques including facial expressions, postures and gestures. For example, rather than thinking or speaking the respect (*gabarog*) that helps reproduce a gender hierarchy on Ifaluk Atoll in Micronesia, girls follow the curve of their mother's backs in embodying the bent-over posture of respect (Lutz and Abu-Lughod, 1990: 12).

My writing thus far has addressed issues of social fragility within and beyond families that are linked to institutional incoherence. I have traced violence traducing all the worlds in which children live from the domestic ground of particular families to children's movements beyond families into the streets and schools of New Crossroads. I have touched on ritual practice in several chapters as a contingent set of actions employed by parents sometimes to sanction children's ways of being, and, on the other hand, to provide a gateway to reorder the world by repairing and recreating social relations within families, if only for a time (see Lelezi's story in Chapter Five for a further example of ritual as repair). Rituals become practices through which individual children transform their personhood to challenge experiences of severance and discontinuity.<sup>1</sup> I now choose to unravel, in part, the uneven effects of social fragility for boys

<sup>1</sup> Hylton White (1998) writing of ritual in Zululand suggests that rituals are not (pto)

and girls. Some of the themes of the thesis to which I have alluded, are now focussed through the prism of children's sexuality.

Sexual practice and discourse can only be researched obliquely. Talk of children's sexuality and the responses of women to their children's sexuality emerged spontaneously in their life history narratives at the beginning of the study.<sup>2</sup> Subsequently, the theme of young girls' and boys' sexuality was expressed without any solicitation on my part, in dramatic performances created by eight of the children in a workshop on social networks. All three sketches had to do with the sexual expression of young girls and boys, courting patterns between boys and girls, and skewed parental responses to the discovery that their young daughters were sexually active. The consistency with which children addressed the theme of their sexuality, in relation to the responses of adults in their improvisations, led me to consider more carefully what children's sexuality could reveal about the intersection of generational hierarchies and the acquisition of gendered identities for boys and girls in New Crossroads.

On the 7th of July 1993, after a year and a half of building relationships with the children, I decided to run a workshop on sexuality where some of the spontaneous discourse I had already witnessed in the form of improvisations and the life narratives of mothers could be self-consciously drawn out. Boys and girls were separated during the workshop.

In addition, I have drawn on information to do with sexuality that I encountered in New Crossroads but that did not directly involve the sixteen children with whom I interacted most closely. I have done so to set a broader context for the issues of silence and sexual violence. I argue that it is important to place the playfully aggressive courting styles of boys in New Crossroads, so to speak, on the one end of a continuum of increasing sexual violence towards women and girls.

I use the metaphor of incursion into the bodies of young girls by boys and men in New Crossroads to foreground the fragility of emerging femininities and masculinities of boys and girls. The violation of many girls within homes and on the streets of New Crossroads points to how both domestic and public space may fail girls. (The ways in which domestic and public space may have failed boys have been suggested in Monga's and Thulani's stories in the

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"performances" or "ethereal phantasms". He insists that ritual reopens possibilities to the past and creates its own horizons and is thus transformatory for participants and their relationships.

<sup>2</sup> During the research period I interviewed predominantly the mothers of the children. Because I did not live in New Crossroads but visited families during the day, women who were unemployed, self-employed, or flexible in their hours of work, could more readily speak with me. Most fathers who remained with their families were employed and only returned home at night. I spoke in depth with two fathers concerning their families during the research period and met three others.

previous chapter.) The disruption of a demarcation between public and private domains effected by the *apartheid* state's incursion into families has been voiced in the public realm. Issues of girls' sexuality, although problematising girls' affective occupation of both domestic and public space in ways that parallel the incursions of *apartheid* legislation and violence, are, in contrast, sometimes invisible, or viewed dismissively in dominant discourses. Sexual assault of girls is predominantly "erased" in the public realm in specific local ways. Local erasure is compounded by an overarching invisibility in the wider society. The ways in which girls' sexual experience slips into silence is a concern of the chapter.

Silences in relating sexual experience and desire take on differing inflections in relation to girls and boys. Although boys have a predatory language with which to express their pursuit of girls, girls are far less voluble concerning their relations with boys. A more general silence in communicating sexual matters between parents and their children marks respectful avoidance between adjoining generations. However, non-communication of sexual matters between generations, placed in juxtaposition with increasing sexual violence towards young children and girls, issues "spaces of amnesia and anaesthesia" into the world (Seremetakis, 1994: 19).

Masculinities and femininities emerge within a worn social fabric where the wider world has undercut the capacity of many individuals to fulfil gendered expectations. A socially recognised transformation for girls from embodying the state of girlhood to that of womanhood is collectively unmarked in New Crossroads. It seems that girls may slip uncomfortably between girlhood and womanhood, since the onset of menstruation announces their physical entry into womanhood, yet their place within families continues to emphasise their girlhood. When mothers, or other older female relatives discover that girls are menstruating, they often relate a set of verbal injunctions that underscore the ambivalence of girls' status - they are young girls to whom appeals are made not to actualise their fertility prematurely. They are told by older women - sometimes their mothers - not to sleep with boys and in most instances, not to use contraception. Yet the reality is that girls are pressurised by boys into sex at school and in the streets.<sup>3</sup> Even when some girls marry, their status as young brides may draw out for many years a position of deference and restriction in relation to their husband's relatives. Physically and verbally, their behaviour becomes circumscribed. To use a metaphor, girls bleed into

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<sup>3</sup> Eleanor Preston-Whyte and Maria Zondi (1992: 227-246) note the high value of fertility amongst Zulu speaking women in the Durban area of KwaZulu-Natal. They argue that although parents are angry when young girls become pregnant, they are not thrown out of their homes, as fertility is valued over and above legitimacy. Although fertility is highly valued in New Crossroads, some girls are not necessarily re-incorporated into their families after having had children early on in life as we have seen for Princess, Vusumzi's oldest sister (see Chapter Two), as well as for Themba's older sister.

womanhood until such time as they marry, after which their status is confirmed. Their passage into womanhood is much more an uncertain, private journey where each must fight with increasing age for a sense of their own power - a power often accumulated through transgression of dominant norms and with the acquisition of pivotal positions in households. In contrast to girls, boys anticipate their publicly acknowledged ritual transformation from the status of boyhood to manhood. A very clear distinction is made between behaviour expected of a boy and of a man even if the individual is unable to fulfil expectations. It is as if the ritual into manhood creates a spectral masculinity that is held up insistently against the erosion of the social ground.<sup>4</sup> Spectral masculinities, where many men are unable to care for their families in the long term, foster openings for sometimes violent insistence on what it is to be a man. An attempt to fix masculinities may be combined with sexual prowess and in some instances, the violent imposition of male on female bodies.

#### **Menstruation, a private crossing; circumcision a public crossing**

**Elsie, Nosipho's grandmother:** *Yho* (an expression of surprise)!

Leave me like that! Those who kiss their boyfriends in front of me! Do you think that I have anything to say to that? They know things I don't know.

**Nomonde, Nosipho's aunt:** She is speaking the truth. Do you see

Vuyelwa (Nomonde's daughter)? Once it was late and I wondered where she was. I opened the door and she was kissing her boyfriend in front of the gate. You know the children are not shy.

The other thing that hurts me is that I saw Vuyelwa was menstruating without telling me. I was very hurt because I think about when I first started to menstruate. I took my *panty* to my father. My father was on a short visit from Cape Town. It was *emaXhoseni*, in the Transkei. I was stupid, stupid. I did not know what that blood was for. My father felt a little bit embarrassed and looked for his mother. I said, "Father, I am hurt, and what is funny is that I do not feel anything hurting me. I think maybe something like a gogo (insect) has eaten me inside because I'm bleeding". Father went to look for his mother.

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<sup>4</sup> In Zolile's family (see Chapter Two), for example, his uncle Vini, after his ritual initiation into manhood, repeatedly provoked his older brother, Monwabisi, because Monwabisi refused to be circumcised. Vini had assumed a spectral masculinity since, in reality, he did not fulfil common expectations regarding the duties of a man: he was unemployed and did not provide any financial support for his own children; he was not in a position to marry any one of his girlfriends because of lack of money for bridewealth; and he instigated a physical fight with his elder brother that went against the expected moderation and tempering of wild aggression in manly behaviour.

His mother called me and put me in an isolated house. It was only the two of us. And she said, "No, nothing is eating you and you are not hurt. I can say that now you are hurt because you are entering another part of your life. The blood is a warning that you should not play near boys". And my grandmother told me that I was a woman. I should not sleep with a man. I should not drink milk or anything made from milk, like cheese, or eggs, or sour milk, and I should not wander about. I should stay in one place. She said that if I ate things like that I would not be able to stop. I should not go out because I would make the cattle, and sheep, and goats weak. I should not go near any cattle enclosure. I stayed in that house for seven days. My grandmother gave me white cloth that I had to wash everyday and I had to hang it on the line.

On the eighth day, I was finished, and my grandmother brought a jug with milk and she sipped it once and said I should sip as well and I should not gulp, and I should spit it outside. Then I did that. After that she said now after my eighth day I could drink milk. And I was told not to play with younger girls because I was now a woman ready to get married. So that's why I was hurt when my own daughter was menstruating without telling me. Who gave her the teaching because there are teachings that one should receive like the ones I have just explained when you get your first menstruation?

**Elsie, Nosipho's grandmother:** Nomonde is right because in our time you used to love yourself as a girl. But today, the girls, by the time they are sixteen, are already grannies. They know more than their grannies.

**Nomonde, Nosipho's aunt:** You know, I started to sleep with a man when I was twenty-two. I was already old and I was already out of school. I don't know why the children behave like they do.

**Elsie, Nosipho's grandmother:** Maybe it is because of the times. Things that were done in our time are no longer done now. So with us, we don't sit [and talk] with them, because they already know.

**Nomonde, Nosipho's aunt:** The only thing I have done with them is to take them to family planning. I told them the second time they must take their cards straight to the family planning (Interview, 27 August 1992).

Nomonde contrasts her own experience of menstruation with that of her daughter, Vuyelwa (Vuyelwa is Nosipho's cousin (mzd)). Whereas her father's mother taught her what was perceived as an appropriate withdrawal from the everyday world during menstruation, the potential baleful influence of her blood for the masculine domain of cattle, and the ideal actualisation of her fertility in marriage, Nomonde is unable to give her own daughter the teachings concerning menstruation. She is unable to do so because her daughter has not only failed to communicate the onset of menstruation to her mother, but she has already, in her mother's and grandmother's eyes, surpassed their worldliness with regard to sex. The times are

anybody. I took a second pad and she told me that I should change it at night and I should wash myself before putting on the pad.

The next morning I did not tell anybody here at home, not even my sister. I washed myself. I threw the second pad away because I thought that it was something that happened only for a day and that it was finished now. And we were having a match with another school. I play netball. Before we began our match, my teacher saw something at the back of my dress. I told her I was a hundred percent well. "I am going to play. I want to play". That is when she showed me. She told me to go home because I was menstruating. When I arrived home my mother was surprised that I was home so early. That is when I told her for the first time what had happened. She told me, "Now, you must not sleep with any boy and you mustn't use the needle (contraceptive injection)." (In 1991, Lelezi was thirteen years old. When she related the above story, she was sixteen years old.)

Thulani's and Eric's description of the importance of male circumcision contrasts dramatically with that of Lelezi's experience of bewilderment concerning the onset of her first menstruation. Whereas girls' entrance into womanhood marked by menstruation, in contemporary circumstances, is circumscribed, contained, individualised, a moment that atomises a girl and severs her from sociality, the circumcision of boys opens a place of collective identification, an expansive sense of a connection to a history, even if the history is fictive. Whereas it is possible for boys to constitute themselves as persons, to take part in a transformatory practice in which they become men, the same cannot be said of girls. Girls are unable to change their *humanity* in the same way as boys.<sup>6</sup>

**Q:** Tell me why circumcision is important?

**Thulani:** *Ukoluka lisiko lidala. Linenkayi.* The practise is old. It is bald. Our forefathers were circumcised. Our fathers were circumcised and we too will be circumcised and our children's children. We cannot throw that away. It is very, very important because you change in the process from being a boy to being a man.

**Eric:** It is to change your humanity, *ubuntu bakho*. Things that you did when you were a boy you leave behind and you will do things that a man must do...(a description of circumcision rituals follows).

**Thulani:** Not all of them change. The reason is that there are those who "go to the bush" and they are not ready to be men. There are stages of development a person must go through. Because you have not gone through

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<sup>6</sup> I use the notion of humanity in a local sense with reference to the concept, *ubuntu*, since as will be seen in the conversation that follows, boys claim their ability to change their "humanity" through circumcision.

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all the stages you jump to the stage of being a man. You do things that you are not supposed to do, things of childhood, whereas you are now a man.

None of the boys in the study had undergone circumcision at the time of the above conversation. However, as they explained, some knew the lineaments of circumcision rites since they had played the role of assistants, *iiqadi*, to young men undergoing initiation in the Transkei. When we asked boys why they were telling us about male circumcision, as matters pertaining to it are taboo to women, they said that our friendship and research opened a space in which they were able to speak of many matters that could not be spoken of in New Crossroads. In their words, "It is interesting to share views". They also added their own injunction that we should not let their fathers know what we had discussed in the workshop or they would be "beaten".

Although boys spoke to us concerning circumcision in a place removed from New Crossroads, male silence surrounding circumcision in relation to girls and women in New Crossroads is of another order to the silence of girls. It is a silence chosen from an assumption of power, a silence that draws a boundary between men and women and attempts to impress upon women and girls the mystique of the public and contested domestic power of men, especially as currently girls no longer undergo any formal rite of passage into womanhood in New Crossroads.<sup>7</sup>

Let me then attempt to draw together the contradictions that are linked to the bodies of girls. Referring back to the discussion between Nosipho's aunt and grandmother: a "good" girl is one who "saves" herself, has "pride" in her body, "loves herself". Pride, in the way it is evoked here, erases the possibility of expressive sexuality.

It is boys who voice a language of sexual desire and pleasure and who ask questions as to how they might satisfy a girl. Their talk contains metaphors of consumption concerning sex that at times places them as the ones who eat, and girls as the ones who are eaten. Girls are said to be "tasty". A reversal of who "eats" whom, although again expressed by a boy, is an objection to the use of condoms: "In Xhosa they say you cannot eat a banana that has its skin. Children (meaning girls, a term of endearment used by boys to refer to their girlfriends) say they don't 'taste' sex properly with a condom".

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<sup>7</sup> Monica Wilson (1979: 165-74) describes rites of initiation for girls in Pondoland during the 1930s. Initiation included a girl's seclusion in a house where she sat behind a screen. Young men and girls visited her, singing and dancing while she remained behind the screen. A girl when first menstruating was said to *ukuthombisa*, meaning to put forth shoots, to sprout.

Ideas of self-love and pride, with respect to girls, imply their containment, the idea of the preciousness of their fertility, a fertility that ideally should be deployed in an approved manner, i.e. through approved forms of marriage. Yet degrees of force become part of girls' initiation into sex. Girls are pressurised into sex by their boyfriends or sometimes raped within and outside of their families. When mothers tell their daughters to abstain from sex and to preserve their fertility by not using contraception, boys are not told to abstain in the same way. A boy's sexual prowess is tacitly celebrated.<sup>8</sup> When girls do succumb, they are blamed. A girl who becomes sexually involved may seek to mask her sexual activities through the use of contraception. Yet because contraception is in most cases viewed as impairing the fertility of girls, a girl who succumbs to the needle - an apt choice since it is invisible to parents and boys - must hold fears that she may be responsible for impairing her own future fertility, something of immense seriousness since her status as a woman is marked by her capacity to bring children into the world.<sup>9</sup> Girls' silence begins to take on attributes of disguise.

The following story of Thoko, a young girl of fourteen years, who initially took part in the study, but who, in the latter part of 1992, returned to the Transkei because of prolific sexual relations with boys, underscores how girls, through the actualisation of their sexuality, come to carry blame for the failure of social relations that are played out beyond their persons. Thoko wrote a secret letter to her mother to ask her adoptive mother to return her to the Transkei for ritual purposes. Nomathemba, Thoko's adoptive mother in New Crossroads relates her story:

When I was in the Transkei looking at Thoko's future, I saw that the child's future was misty, *imifiliba*. She didn't have any future at all. As a child of school going age, she was not going to school. She used to do little jobs for people being paid twenty five rand a month. I came back to Cape Town and I thought about her. I said, "Although I am struggling, I will take Thoko". I wrote a letter to Thoko's mother asking that she allow me to have Thoko so that I could educate her.

In 1990, Thoko arrived in Cape Town and we struggled to get her into school because she had been out of school for a long time. She didn't have

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<sup>8</sup> The talk of mothers, girls, and boys, emphasised that use of contraception by girls led to their infertility and the birth of deformed children. Boys expressed the view that contraception was a white aberration that damaged the health of both boys and girls and interfered with an "authentic" sexuality that had been practised by their forefathers, a sexuality that celebrated multiple partners for men and the fruit of sexuality, children.

<sup>9</sup> One of the girls referred to injectable contraceptives as contraception for teenagers. I think her words are telling in that girls, in many cases, seek to hide their use of contraception from their parents and from their boyfriends. They try to hide their use of contraception from boyfriends because boys often state that the use of contraception by their girlfriends is an indication that they may be involved with other boys.

papers or proof that she had once been at school... I enrolled her at Walter Theka Primary School in Nyanga, in Standard Two.

In June, Thoko did not come with a report. I asked her where her report was. Instead she gave me a letter from the teacher saying that I must come immediately to the school... The teacher showed me the house opposite the school. Thoko was found in that house sleeping with a boy. I was very disappointed. I did not even deny it because Thoko did not deny it. The teacher said, "It is very serious", and he told me that there was no other punishment other than to expel the child. I pleaded with him and I said that I was going to talk to Thoko at home, please. When we got home, I beat her. She promised that it would not happen again.

In December I was called by the street committee and they said that their boys were not going to be stabbed because of Thoko. One boy, from another township, came to stab another boy from our street because that boy was in love with Thoko. Thoko was in love with several boys in the same street and also in other places. The street committee said I must stop it. The women in the street came out and shouted at me (Interview, 28 August 1992).

In Thoko's story, boys involved in fighting over her are not blamed for their actions. Thoko, as love object, is blamed. A significant aspect of her story is that a boy from another area came to fight boys in New Crossroads over her. As has been alluded to in the previous chapter, boys often mark territory through the formation of gangs, and girls within territories are perceived by boys living there as "belonging" to them. When boys from other areas come to claim a girl, fights frequently ensue. The control of girls within acknowledged territories denotes a certain contour of what it is to be a boy. It is an ambivalent attribute of power since it may be construed as benevolent protection of girls in one's area. It is not unusual, however, for boys from other areas to lay claim to a boy's girlfriend even as they walk the streets together. As was mentioned in Chapter Two, Zolile, for example, described how he would never go to a beauty competition at the New Crossroads youth centre again, as his girlfriend had been snatched from him outside the centre by a group of boys armed with guns. His uncle hinted that the boy had in turn armed himself with a gun since the uncle reported that he had seen cartridges in his nephew's shirt pocket.

I now address the ends of the continuum I have constructed between playful predatory courting styles of some boys and the pressure they exert on girls to enter sexual relations, and at the other end, extreme forms of sexual assault. Suggesting a link between courting styles and forms of sexual assault constitutes a moral incursion on my part, yet, I do so because I wish the

experience of girls to receive serious consideration.<sup>10</sup> The suggestion of the above continuum raises serious questions about social fragility within spaces of intimacy.

A transcription from a tape recording of one of the children's performances is reproduced here. The character, flavour, and style of street and family encounters are reflected in language use and bodily gestures in the performance. Children were less self-conscious about conveying their experiences through performance than within the often stilted parameters of an interview. The medium of improvisations provided a playful and incisive way for children to reflect on their experiences, and to critique the family relations in which they lived.

Johannes Fabian (1990), in addition to outlining performance as an epistemological approach to anthropological knowledge, points, on a more concrete level, to the inadequacy of the anthropologist as an inveigler of information. He suggests that for certain areas of social life, questions yield little valuable data. The kind of social knowledge that is inaccessible through the posing of questions, and that cannot be revealed in discursive statements, "can be made present only through action, enactment or performance" (Fabian, 1990: 6). Fabian goes on to describe how for Zaireans in Shaba, integration into a world system in a postcolonial context is accompanied by increasing pauperisation and humiliation. Performance, in a postcolonial world, presents a way of setting self-respect against humiliation, artistic creativity against poverty (1990: 19). The characteristics of the children's improvisations in New Crossroads do not skirt the painful ways in which their parents are beleaguered by circumstances. Neither do they skirt the harshness of interpersonal relationships and their combative parameters. However, in playing up the sometimes violent interior of familial interactions, the children introduce a distance between themselves and the roles they play. It is in the gap that distance allows that humour is born: an incisive humour that brings forth knowledge in which both laughter and pain are present, in which critique is possible. Just as the performers of Shaba, as evoked by Fabian, place artistic creativity and self-respect against poverty and humiliation, so children in New Crossroads juxtapose humour and the seeding of specific bodily movements and style against knowledge of fractured gender relations between adults, and between adults and children, and indeed, between boys and girls.

The play examines the interaction between Thandi, a young girl, her mother, Madlomo, her father, and her boyfriend, Bra' Stompie. The young girl, Thandi, was enacted by Thandi (a

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<sup>10</sup> The writer, Michelle Moody-Adams (1997: 188-89) has recently criticised notions of moral relativism in some social anthropological approaches. She argues that "[W]hile [moral enquiry] often takes place within specific cultures, the boundaries between those cultures are not morally penetrable walls".

girl of fourteen years), the father, by Themba (a boy of thirteen years), the mother, by Nosipho (a girl of fifteen years) and the boyfriend, by Monga (a boy of seventeen years).

## The Play

### Opening statement -

**Eric:** Our play shows problems and difficulties between parents and the youth.

The mother, calls her daughter.

**Madlomo:** Thandi?

**Thandi:** Mama?

**Madlomo:** Come here, my child. Can you quickly go to the shop for me and buy sugar because I want a cup of tea? You must run.

**Thandi:** OK, Mama.

She takes the money from her mother and runs to the shop. On her way to the shop she meets Bra' Stompie. (Bra', is a shortened, slang version of brother. Stompie is an Afrikaans word meaning cigarette-butt.) Bra' Stompie walks in the engaging way of a street-wise young man, dragging one hip and making interesting hand movements. His language and movements are expansive, and of the street, and aimed at impressing the girl on whom he has his eye.

**Bra' Stompie:** *Shoo! Eyih!* (exclamations) Hallo Love. Come here.

What is your name?

Thandi ignores him.

**Bra' Stompie:** Look man, I'm talking to you. Why don't you answer me? Why are you being clever (He uses the English word here)? I just want to know your name. Mine is Bra' Stompie.

Thandi decides to stop.

**Thandi:** My name is Thandi.

**Bra' Stompie:** (impressing her with his serpentine walk and rapid hand movements) What do you say, love? You look as if you've hit a stone. I love you. What do you think I should do? Bra' Stompie loves you. If you get him, you will fly sitting down. I want to go with you.

**Thandi:** You are going with me? Where are you going?

**Bra' Stompie:** We are going to my *hokkie* (a back-yard shack, meaning chicken enclosure).

**Thandi:** Your, and who else's *hokkie*?

**Bra' Stompie:** Look, we are going to come back.

**Thandi:** Look, I've been sent to the shop to buy sugar.

**Bra' Stompie:** Look *man* (the way in which "man" is pronounced, elongates the "a". It is an amalgamation of Afrikaans and Rastafarian pronunciation), don't rush so when you're talking with me. I want to see you immediately after you have taken the sugar to your home.

Thandi goes to her home and says to her mother.

**Thandi:** Mama, here is the sugar. They have called me to go next door.

**Madlomo:** Thandi, Why are you in a hurry? Start making tea for me.

Thandi makes the tea in a surly manner.

**Thandi:** *Ag!* (An expression of disdain from Afrikaans). Here's the tea.

Thandi meets Bra' Stompie outside, they both go to Bra' Stompie's place. She spends the night there. The following morning Madlomo wakes up and says,

**Madlomo:** Oh, it's a beautiful day!

**Father:** Where is Thandi? I haven't seen her this morning. Can you tell me, Madlomo, what is happening here? Give me my *sjambok* (rubber whip). I am going to beat her when she comes back.

The father searches in all the rooms. Thandi comes home creeping into the house and to her room. She finds her mother in the room.

**Father:** Where have you come from? (As he asks his daughter, he beats her and Thandi screams).

**Madlomo:** No, father of Thandi, we mustn't just beat a child before we have heard from her. There might be a problem. Thandi, my child, can you tell us what has happened, because it is for the first time that this is happening?

**Thandi:** (cries) *Yhu! Yhu! Yhu!*

**Madlomo:** (to the father) I think the best punishment is to lock her inside the house for the whole week. If she repeats this again then we can beat her.

After the parents have locked Thandi up, she jumps out of the window and goes to visit Bra' Stompie. Thandi does not emerge from her bedroom by 10 a.m. the next morning so her mother goes to the bedroom and finds that she is not there.

**Madlomo:** Oh Lord, what has entered the child?

Thandi comes in through the door. Her mother is very angry.

**Madlomo:** Where have you been?

**Thandi:** I slept outside.

**Madlomo:** Thandi, what do you think the people will say about you? I can see that you have a boyfriend. Why? (To her husband) Thandi is back.

The father gets his *sjambok*.

**Madlomo:** I think we must sit down with this child and tell her that what she is doing is not right and show her the right thing. Thandi, your father and I want to speak with you.

Thandi comes in.

**Madlomo:** Sit down. Thandi, look at your face. You have marks on your face because you jumped out of the window. How old are you, Thandi, to do things like this? You are still growing. When it is time to get married what will you look like? That *skollie* (gangster) of yours is taking you by force.

**Father:** Yes. You must stop what you are doing. The boy is going to throw you away. Talk, my wife. Thandi, stop the nonsense you are doing. I am going to kill you! I am not just going to beat you, I am going to kill you!

**Madlomo:** Your father is right. We never did what you are doing now.

**Father:** Yes, we didn't.

**Madlomo:** Thandi, my child. I am saying this to you because I have experience. At home I grew up as a little girl until I got married with a white dress.

**Thandi:** Times have changed, mama. That was then and now is now. The times are not the same.

**Madlomo:** I am aware of that, my child. If your parents say "No!" to you, listen to their words. When things go wrong for you, you will say, "I should have listened to my parents." You must persevere with the way we treat you (the English word, treat, is used). We love you.

**Thandi:** It's alright.

**Madlomo:** Look at those children who come from disciplined homes. You must not go about with children who are not disciplined.

**Father:** Thandi, one thing you must know, I am tired of beating you.

## THE END

Thandi does not speak with her parents about her sexuality. She reveals, or makes "visible", her sexual involvement with a boy by spending the night away from home. Her father immediately apprehends the meaning of her absence. When she returns home, he beats her. As further punishment, she is confined to the house for a week. Thandi acts by slipping out of the house. When she returns, her mother appeals to her to submit to her parents' injunction that she is too young for sexual involvement. Her mother is conscious of the harshness of parental discipline because she asks her daughter to persevere patiently with their treatment of her. The value of being disciplined, of coming from a disciplined family, of self-restriction, is emphasised. Thandi's mother argues that although the treatment is harsh, it is for her own good. Implicit within the notion of treatment is the idea of cure. The way in which the word is used,

evokes the idea of a parent's "natural" authority over their child. Beating, confinement, hierarchical legitimacy and concern come together in complex ways to inhabit the idea of cure. In dominant discourse, young girls and their bodies become sites of societal illness.

The conviction that the girl is still growing and is not "ready" for sex is expressed. There is a sense in which her parents perceive her as unformed, and that in actualising her sexuality prematurely, she will be spoilt. Thandi's mother asks, "What will you look like when you get married?", and her father states, "The boy is going to throw you away". The implication is that young girls are marked negatively by experience of sex. Boys do not carry the mark of sexual experience in their bodies in the same way. Thoko's story that framed the chapter shows the way in which many people: a male teacher, male members of the street committee and women in Thoko's street blamed her for her promiscuities. The promiscuities of boys were not visible in the same way.

In the play, we are introduced to the nature of courting styles in New Crossroads. Humorous pressure on the girl in Bra' Stompie's approach forms, I suggest, a playful end to a continuum in which varying degrees of force are utilised in actualising sexual relations. Menace creates the parameters of desire for young girls moving potentially from a playfulness to more overt violence. Bra' Stompie calls Thandi in the street on her way to the shop to buy sugar for her mother. Thandi is less interactive in the encounter than Bra' Stompie. She ignores him initially and does not look his way. Bra' Stompie attempts to impress Thandi with his physically expansive style. He asserts his overt dominance by setting the pace of their interaction. He promises her an exciting sexual experience - "You will fly sitting down". He tells her to go with him to his hokkie. He admonishes her for being clever, a word that has been incorporated in English into local speech, to mean shifty, or devious. The word retains elements of its meaning in English, and the boy expresses the view that a girl should not be overtly clever or flashy. He castigates Thandi for the style in which she speaks to him and "orders" her to meet him immediately after she has taken the sugar to her mother. Thandi echoes his authoritative statements in a playful, challenging manner by repeating his words, and by transforming them into questions through use of tone. She does not use words of her own choosing apart from stating that her purpose in being in the street is to buy sugar for her family. Her presence on the street when Bra' Stompie speaks with her is legitimated by her statement that she is going to the shops on behalf of her parents. Later, when she has decided to accept Bra' Stompie's suit, she manages to leave her mother's house by telling her that the neighbours have asked her to do something for them. In both situations, Thandi appeals to tasks that are legitimate for a young

girl. Her sexuality, her desires, are neither expressed in words to her parents, nor to her prospective boyfriend. It is her physical actions that mark her entrance into sexual life.

It is useful to place the themes of Thandi's silence, her punishment for marking sexual activities by staying away from home and the courting style evoked in Bra' Stompie's approach to her, in juxtaposition with other talk of the sixteen children. Creating a collage of themes between the play and children's talk in other contexts suggests how the themes held within the play are consistent with the lived experiences of children.

Themes that emerged from conversations were that the streets of New Crossroads become a common location where boys are able to approach girls, as are schools. For example, Monga (seventeen years old) said, "We meet when she is sent to the shop. I will walk with her to the shop. If she doesn't want me she won't allow me to walk with her. If she agrees, we chat."

From the point of view of boys, their talk picked up on the desirability of girls not showing their interest overtly, in showing "respect" to the boy by not looking him in the eyes. Eric, seventeen at the time, said, "The other thing, when you look directly at a girl, the girl must look down. She mustn't look directly at you. That shows respect". The silence of girls was seen by boys as ambivalent since it might mark their rejection of the boy concerned.

Once an agreement has been made between boys and girls, liaisons are arranged at backyard *hokkies* that older boys tend to occupy, or in parent's houses when adults are not present. In Thulani's words, "we steal time". Although both girls and boys are in most cases discouraged by parents from meeting their boyfriends and girlfriends at one another's homes when parents are present, as doing so is regarded as a form of disrespect towards parents, girls, as opposed to boys, pay the consequences for staying a night out. Boys refuse to accompany girls home after a night out because doing so would "add to the girl's problems" by showing oneself as a boy to the girl's father. The conversation underscores the frequency of young girls being beaten for spending the night out. Thulani's tale of a girl who was "smuggled" into a boy's home to spend the night with him and who had to hide in the house the following day because of the presence of adults underscored the link between girls being punished for sexual expression as well as a fear of being discovered by adults.

## Rape

In 1997, the following statistics to do with rape were presented to members of parliament by the ANC Women's Caucus (1997, ANC Women's Caucus Campaign to End

Violence Against Women and Children et al. see Shifman, Madlala-Routledge & Smith, 1997: 25).

- \* The National Research Council claimed that one in three girl children and one in eight boy children are sexually assaulted before the age of eighteen.
- \* In a recent study in Khayelitsha, involving 24 pregnant teenage women (average age 16.4 years), 23 out of the 24 women interviewed described assault as a regular feature of their sexual relationships.
- \* The South African Police Services (SAPS) have estimated that a woman is raped in South Africa every 35 seconds.
- \* The number of reported rapes that are prosecuted have diminished dramatically in recent years from 62 percent in 1986 to 16 percent in 1993. Rape has the lowest conviction rate of all crimes of assault.

According to the Second Women's Budget, the South African Police Services' thirteen national crime priorities do not include violence against women.<sup>11</sup> No resources will be allocated for special policing and prevention units to do with violence against women. Interpol and the United Nations have reported that, among countries that have recorded incidents of rape, South Africa has the invidious distinction of the highest reported rapes in the world (Haysom, 1997: 3).

When I asked the girls with whom I worked about rape in New Crossroads, most remained silent. Linda said that there was no problem with rape because the skollies or gangsters in her area knew her and would not attack her. Some of the girls suggested that the area around the youth centre that we had built was dangerous, and that they had heard that girls were sometimes raped there. Although none of the girls directly referred to rape, I address the issue of violent sexual assault in New Crossroads as silence surrounding rape must be explored in order to come to some understanding of other silences surrounding children's sexuality. In some respects I wish to challenge notions prevalent in feminist discourse, for example, in organisations like Rape Crisis.<sup>12</sup> Many organisations that assist women and children after sexual assault insist that rape has to do with power and not with sexuality. They suggest that power and sexuality can be heuristically separated. They suggest that by exposing the fallacy of

<sup>11</sup> The Second Women's Budget grew out of the *Women's Budget* (Budlender, 1997). Both Budgets were a summation of the percentages of the South African national budget that was allocated to women in terms of different governmental departments. The project was initiated by The Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA) and covers the years, 1995/1996 and 1997/1998.

<sup>12</sup> Rape Crisis is a nation-wide, non-governmental organisation established by women to assist women and girls who have been raped.

internalised myths concerning rape, a woman or child is able to attribute culpability for rape to the person or persons who have assaulted her.

The predatory nature of courting styles in New Crossroads, the common experience of assault being part of many sexual relationships, even the way in which certain forms of marriage, for example, abduction, have come, in some instances, to legitimise the imposition of both sex and marriage on girls whose consent is not viewed as important, complicate the neat separations within feminist discourse between consensual sexuality and assault.<sup>13</sup>

Because I felt that for ethical reasons I could not probe further into the experience of the children whom I worked around issues of rape, I draw on other data gleaned during the research period. In May 1995, I wrote a report concerning the youth centre. I noted that four girls and women had recently been raped near the centre. A little girl of four was among them. She was raped in the middle of the day in a house close to the centre. The man responsible was caught by men in the area and beaten severely. A seventeen year old girl from KTC (a shanty-town adjacent to New Crossroads) was raped in an open lot opposite the centre. It was claimed that one night, thirty men raped a woman in her twenties on the pathway next to the crèche around the corner from the youth centre. Some of the men were arrested but were subsequently released on bail.

Zuziwe, a girl of sixteen, who regularly attended sexuality workshops run by the Planned Parenthood Association (PPA) at the youth centre, was raped by a boy who visited the centre. She was a confident, talkative person who had planned to launch her own sexuality information group at the centre before being raped. Being raped was Zuziwe's first experience of penetrative sex. Prior to the event she had recently moved from Gugulethu to New Crossroads. Siphos, the boy who raped her, invited nine of his friends to do the same, saying "Come and join the train". One other boy raped Zuziwe before neighbours heard her screaming for help in an open lot next to their house. Siphos was the son of a Street Committee chairman and his father's position in New Crossroads prevented any action from being taken against him.

<sup>13</sup> Mzovuyo's mother, Evelyn, described to me how her father arranged a marriage for her at fifteen to a much older man although she had not lived with her father from the age of four. Her father did not inform Evelyn of the marriage. Although Evelyn's father had severed his relationship with her, he brought her to Cape Town for mercenary reasons. He received bride-wealth from the older man. On the pretext of bringing her on a holiday to Cape Town to buy her some clothes, her father locked her into a room with the man who then raped her. When she tried to run away on many subsequent occasions, the man's relatives would catch her. After her husband deserted her several years later, Evelyn declared that she would never marry again and preferred to have children "on the side, on the street" with casual lovers. Masixole was one of the children "on the side". Evelyn's experience shows how a relatively old practice, ukuthwala, marriage through abduction (Wilson, 1979: 187) has taken on more exploitative dimensions within a context of severed families, and migrancy. For a contemporary study that explores the degree to which girls in the Transkei are forced into sex, see Buga *et al.* (1996: 523-527).

Two meetings convened by the Community Policing Forum (CPF) in the area concerning the rape were cancelled. The general aim of the youth centre, to provide a safe space for children, and the more specific aim of providing girls and boys with sexual education from a bio-medical point of view, were eroded by the transposition of patterns of dominance in the streets of New Crossroads into the centre. It is not inconceivable that the utopian wish to provide a seemingly neutral space for both boys and girls to learn together, among other things, the parameters of fertility and its control from a bio-medical point of view, may have broken the taboo of girls overtly speaking of sexual matters in front of boys. Siphon may have seen Zuziwe's active participation in the sexual education workshops as an opening for violation. Overhearing an adult male employee at the youth centre saying that parts of Zuziwe's body had invited violation made me recoil into my own painful silence. Any words I might have uttered could not find a way of bridging incommensurable bodily experience.

Zuziwe did not want to go back to school after being raped because she felt assaulted by children's requests to tell them what had happened. She was able to speak about being raped with older women at the youth centre. After the rape, she was accompanied for some days on walks through New Crossroads by other young girls, including Lydia (one of the sixteen children). However, when I asked Lydia how Zuziwe was, she insisted that she was alright. Lydia implied that it was not a good idea to speak of Zuziwe's experience. She said that the girls who accompanied Zuziwe had not encouraged her to speak and that she would quickly recover if people did not constantly talk about what had happened to her.

Zuziwe's story reveals how girls are marked negatively in a public arena by their experience of rape and carry with them the identity of one who has been raped. Siphon was able to elude having the identity of rapist fixed to him in the same way.

A thirty-two year old woman in New Crossroads was raped shortly after Zuziwe. She was abducted one evening by a man while she walked the street with her husband. The man threatened the couple with a gun and the husband ran away. The man who abducted the woman had for a long time told her that he would "get [her] one day". She fought the man physically, but he injured her badly, beating her and cutting her with a broken bottle-neck.

She reported the rape to the New Crossroads Youth Centre. A group of mature women from the centre, together with a group of male youth, found the rapist asleep in his house and beat him repeatedly, demanding that he confess his crimes. The man said he was a member of a group of men who planned rapes of various women and girls. He admitted to having raped seven women in New Crossroads. The women picked up other men that he had named as rapists with the help of the Community Policing Forum. When the women handed the men over to the

South African Police, they were asked why they had beaten the man. The women said that nothing was done about rape in their area and it was time they took action for themselves. The women insisted that no bail be paid for the men, as in many cases of rape, perpetrators were either not arrested or were released on bail immediately.<sup>14</sup>

The police released the men in Mitchell's Plain (a coloured suburb in Cape Town) without writing up any charges against them. Only the man who had been beaten by the women and youths and who was the rapist of the thirty two year old woman was charged.

In threading together the stories of girls it may be suggested that in the same way that girls' passage into womanhood is gradual and undercut with ambivalence, so too, the nature of girls' and women's silence with regard to their experience of sexual violation may change with age. Very young children like Vusumzi's sister's two year old daughter, altogether lack words with which to delineate their experience (see Chapter Two). Rather, Vusumzi's niece wailed her despair. Her mother attributed the suppuration between the child's legs to her having been bewitched, to a snake sent to interfere with her daughter every night. She was not prepared to lay culpability at the feet of her own husband. Zuziwe, as a young girl of sixteen, embracing life with confidence and an eagerness to learn, is silent since she tries to avoid other children's questions that call upon her to relate her experience of rape. She falls back into silence, because speaking turns her into an object of curiosity, an object of titillation. The amplification of her experience through speech amplifies her own sense of shame. Her friends who accompany her walking through the streets of New Crossroads do not encourage her to talk of her experience. They protect her through their presence. They insist that her recovery will be effected through silence, through forgetfulness. Both the little girl, Vusumzi's sister's child, and Zuziwe have low social status in New Crossroads because of their young age and it is easier for the violations they experience to be ignored. The older woman who directly confronted her rapist could do so because her age afforded her a certain social status, the ability to commandeer others in her defence. The accumulation of her life experience assisted her in unleashing rage, a rage that transgressed and shattered gendered expectations, but the result was not much different. In a social context where reparation for violations of all kinds cannot be accessed through state bodies such as the police, and in turn, where communities' collective organisational initiatives reflect an uneven responsiveness to differing kinds of violation, physical violence becomes a

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<sup>14</sup> In July 1998, the *Cape Times* (27 July 1998, p. 6) reported that under a new law effective from May the 1st of the same year, gang rapists were liable to receive life sentences in a High Court rather than 10 years or less in a Regional Court. The article noted that while activists were pleased that gang rapists were now sent to the High Court, they expressed concern for the low conviction rate for rape related crimes.

way of reshaping social relations - as has been shown in the previous chapter - if only for short periods of time and in ways that cannot achieve conclusive justice.<sup>15</sup>

However, physical violence in retaliation for violence brings no long term solutions. People's bodies become jagged maps that embody discontinuous time, that are marked by violations buried in forgetfulness because of successive layering of further violations. Filip de Boeck, describing the severance of social relations due to war and extortion along the western border areas of the Congo/Zaire, suggests that people are left with their "bodies as locales of culture (re)production and (political) power, and of sites of remembering and generating meaning" (de Boeck, 1998: 18). I am in agreement that bodies become locales of culture creation and power due to the erosion of continuous social relationships. Yet, the silence surrounding female bodies and their violation creates an invisibility that both protects and subjugates girls and women.<sup>16</sup>

Elaine Scarry (1985) has argued that a body's ability to extend itself out into the world diminishes as the body is subjected to torture. Referring to Sophocles's Oedipus, Shakespeare's Lear and Beckett's Winnie, and the struggle against the diminishing social ground to which they have access, she writes: "[T]he voice becomes a final source of self-extension; so long as one is speaking, the self extends out beyond the boundaries of the body, occupies a space much larger than the body" (1985: 33).

Areas of linguistic silence are difficult to approach since they are further obscured by too hasty an explication through language. The terms that we may apply to illuminate areas of silence too quickly take on the character of unsatisfying speech, speech that slips past what we attempt to explore or communicate. Yet, it is areas of silence that are not readily explicated and that circumscribe painful areas of social limitation for particular groupings of people that need to be addressed by the social sciences.

[The] study of social suffering must contain a study of a society's silence towards it (or say, the degree of its incapacity to acknowledge it), and that the study of that suffering and that silence must contain an awareness of

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<sup>15</sup> I argue the same point in an article on corporal punishment in *New Crossroads* (Henderson, 1996: 61-87).

<sup>16</sup> In September/October 1997, Achille Mbembe delivered a series of lectures to post-graduate students in the Social Anthropology Department at the University of Cape Town. Through examining contemporary African literature, he argued that in post-colonial Africa, in "raw life" (a phrase coined by the writer, Labou Tansi) the boundaries of life and death are blurred through genocide. He suggested that a self may be delegated to represent another self, willingly or unwillingly. My conception of disavowal and a blurring of bodies in relation to violent sexuality and conceptions of masculinity coheres with Mbembe's ideas.

its own dangers in mimicking the social silence that perpetrates the suffering (Cavell, 1996: 95).

Veena Das (1996: 88) suggests that "[i]t is often considered the task of historiography to break the silences that announce the zones of taboo". Breaking zones of silence is perceived heroically as "giving voice to the voiceless". However, bringing narratives of violence into language often constitutes further violence to people who are called upon to articulate their experience. Bringing pain forward into the terrain of spoken language may grotesquely mirror the disappearance of collective acknowledgement and witnessing of certain kinds of pain. The paradox exists, as people who speak in any social context speak in languages of power that are far from neutral. Lack of neutrality in all forms of communication, including the verbal, further entrenches areas of obscurity in social life.

Veena Das (1996), for example, shows that women and men in India have access to different kinds of languages. Women participate in collective displays of grief when family members die; men do not. However, when a woman is raped, she becomes socially dead, as she is symbolic of family honour. Social death induced by rape is not collectively mourned.

In seeking to understand the silence of women in relation to being raped during the Partition between India and Pakistan, Das explores their silence as a form of agency. Whereas men describe the rapes as symbolically marking foreign territory through the violation of women's bodies, the women fight the surface reading of their bodies as territory and describe the rapes as pregnancies within the depths of their bodies that must never come to fruition. The rapes are seen as poison that has been swallowed and absorbed by women. Das suggests that with regard to the chosen silence of such women, "the relation between speech and silence are reversed in the act of witnessing" (1996: 85). In other words, silence becomes part of honouring women's pain.

Where habitual ways of explaining the experience of individuals who suffer fail, Das puts forward the imagination as being of great importance in transporting us beyond experiential limitations towards apprehending other people's suffering as a common concern (1996: 69; see also Castoriadis, 1987; Hastrup, 1993: 736).

Within the South African context, Thenjiwe Mtintso, a well-known ANC activist and head of the South African Gender Commission, said of her own thoughts concerning her experience of sexual torture prior to a special hearing for women at the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), "I could not sleep last night. I sat with the refusal to open these wounds. I have built armour around this pain, nursed it" (The Sunday Independent,

August 3, 1997). Her images of armour and nursing parallel the images described by Das in relation to women in India. Jesse Duarte, an ANC member of parliament at the time, argued at the same hearings that just as rape is seen as violation, talking of rape appears to add to the violation that women experienced at the hands of the state and their own cadres (Goldblatt & Meintjes, 1997: 7-18), a sentiment expressed by Zuziwe when she no longer wanted to go back to school because of the questions that pupils continuously asked her. Duarte suggested that exposure calls forth more disrespect from others. According to Beth Goldblatt and Sheila Meintjes (1997: 11), women involved in actions against the *apartheid* state were blamed by men and women in their communities for allowing authorities to rape them. Rape was seen as a form of capitulation to the enemy. Speaking out is seen to further diminish the standing of women and girls. If women who are in positions of power within the current dispensation find it necessary to cloak their sexual violation under torture from the public domain, how much more so is it the case for young girls in New Crossroads?

Rajeswari Sunder Rajan (1993) writes about how women are differentially placed within literary narratives of rape. She suggests that in the western literary tradition, rape is often the culmination of a heroine's narrative.<sup>17</sup> Placing the incidence of rape as an end point rigidly fixes to the heroine a totalising identity of one who has been raped. All other possibilities for transformation, of self-fashioning beyond the point of rape, are pushed aside. Rajan writes of such totalisation in relation to Samuel Richardson's novel, *Clarissa*:

Clarissa's cry, "I am but a cypher", expresses a raped woman's perception of a total annihilation of self following upon the physical subjugation, coercion of will and psychological humiliation that she has been subjected to. Questions of volition, choice and agency, so central to the constitution of the individualistic humanistic subject of the novel, are significantly in abeyance (Rajan, 1993: 71).

Rajan contrasts such placement of a woman as raped victim with other writers who place rape at the beginning of a narrative and show women's and girl's subsequent movement and development of selves beyond the point of rape (1993: 73).<sup>18</sup>

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<sup>17</sup> Rajan is referring to Samuel Richardson's novel, *Clarissa* (1748), to Thomas Hardy's, *Tess of the d'Urbervilles*, and to E. M. Forster's, *Passage to India* (1924).

<sup>18</sup> Rajan is referring to such works as, *The Color Purple* by Alice Walker and Maya Angelou's, *I Know When the Caged Bird Sings*.

I suggest that in much social service discourse, women and girls are located at the point of being raped. In public forums aimed at addressing rape, for example, the courts, women and girls become "cyphers" of violation that blur into titillation. Instead of rapists acknowledging guilt and shame, women and girls who have been assaulted come to carry shame, self-blame, guilt and a sense of their own bodies as defiled. We need to comprehend the tenacity of such an extraordinary allocation and internalisation of blame and culpability. Perpetrators in the majority of instances do not see their culpability (Vogelman, 1990: 169-172). The voices of the afflicted have no way of breaking through the barrier of collective denial. Instead, girls' voices are silenced and turn back upon themselves in self-beratement. One of the few public registers to which girls have recourse in New Crossroads in expressing the contradictions that come to reside within their bodies is the affliction of *amafufunyana* in which the restricted behaviour expected of a girl transforms into an expansiveness, an overt sexuality, an angry verbal acuity that discards the lacuna of girls' everyday speech (Lelezi's affliction with *amafufunyana* is explored in detail in Chapter Five).

It may be argued that despite the emphasis on discrete individuals in dominant world views, particular categories of people are able to disavow culpability for their actions and to locate them in the bodies of those whom they have afflicted; that in certain areas of social life, bodies blur into one another. Others' bodies may be seen as claimable territory, as extensions of self from whom no permission is needed to enter, use, or hurt. We may question how it is that girls when raped are seen as degraded, promiscuous, having lost face, having lost pride, having been spoilt: that the actions of men and boys who rape turn into an ugliness that they disavow and that is lodged in the bodies of women and girls.

Judith Butler (1997) in her book, Theories of Subjection: The Psychic Life of Power, re-explores Hegel's well known articulation of the relationship between the Lord and the bondsman. She addresses the question of subjection, of how the subject is formed in subordination. Even though the slave frees himself from the direct subordination of the master, he falls into what Hegel calls the "unhappy consciousness". The master, who at first appears to be "external" to the slave, reemerges as the slave's own conscience. The bondsman comes to berate himself - a turn that marks the incorporation of the Lord or master into what Butler names the bondsman's own "psychic reality" (1997: 3). The turning back of the bondsman on

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himself is the very way in which his subjectivity is created, or to use Butler's term, "inaugurated".<sup>19</sup> She writes:

The bondsman appears as an instrumental body whose labor provides for the material conditions of the lord's existence, and whose material products reflect both the subordination of the bondsman and the domination of the master. In a sense, the lord postures as a disembodied desire for self-reflection, one who not only requires the subordination of the bondsman in the status of an instrumental body, but who requires in effect that the bondsman *be* the lord's body, but in such a way that the lord forgets or disavows his own activity in producing the bondsman, a production which we will call a projection (Butler, 1997: 35. Italics in original).

It is my view that a similar form of disavowal and corporeal "projection" takes place in New Crossroads between men and boys who disavow their culpability for rape and place blame and shame within the bodies of girls and women. Girls are complicit in the disavowal as well by exercising forms of self-beratement.

### Conclusions

In writing the chapter, I have followed a precarious line between trying to open and close, to expose and protect. The word "expose" when applied archaeologically, for example, suggests the careful chipping away of ground to reveal bone: when applied to living children, it acquires an invasive harshness that might leave them "naked". I have steered clear of making what I knew of the sexual lives of the sixteen children with whom I worked most closely the predominant focus of the chapter, since my intent is not to perpetuate, in writing, a form of violation that children might experience in life. I have approached the children's lives through the testimonies of mothers and through the children's own improvisations and conversations. Yet, I have drawn on the stories of others. I have questioned my right to do so. I considered not naming (even with assumed names) any of the people whose stories appear here. Yet in doing so, I would be contributing to the ways in which even close family deny, punish, and erase the experience of many girls and boys. I have thought that in omitting all names I would also create a distance between the children and a reader's comprehension of sexual complexities. In places, therefore, I have left out the names of children, and in others, I have included them. The chapter

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<sup>19</sup> Butler re-explores theoretical links between part of Hegel's formulations of the self-imposed subjection of the Bondsman (Butler, 1997: 31-62), Foucault's notion of *assujettissement*, (Butler, 1997: 83-105), Nietzsche's conception of bad conscience (Butler, 1997: 63-82), and Althusser's idea of interpellation (Butler, 1997: 106-131).

thus illuminates the contradictions that anthropological work embodies - a blurring of explication and invasion that raises ethical questions to which there are no easy answers.

I began the thesis by emphasising that I would celebrate the children whom I met through attention to their individual experiences and qualities. In the current chapter I find myself asking questions concerning the ethics of differing approaches to the articulation of certain areas of social life. I therefore also walk a line of subjugation - in Butler's sense - since I recognise the difficulties of illuminating silence. Silence is the mark of subjugation but carries elusive possibilities for resistance and intimations of imagined territories of alterity, when one does not find oneself - to use a contentious idea promulgated by feminist writers like Julia Kristeva and Luce Irigaray - at home within the dominant symbolic order (Butler, 1993: 79-80, Kristeva, 1993; Irigaray, 1991 & Gatens, 1996: 72.)<sup>20</sup>

Moira Gatens (1996: 52) suggests that a space be opened to question the repressed in representations of political-ethical life. In questioning the imaginary, though consequential, ways in which female and male bodies were perceived in seventeenth century France, she challenges the neutrality of the modern subject that emerged out of the Enlightenment. Ideas pertaining to the Enlightenment excluded women from the rational, the political and the ethical. Drawing on Helene Cixous and Jean-Francois Lyotard, she writes,

[I]n so far as woman is socially 'initiated', she is initiated by decapitation, either metaphorically (mutism) or literally (recall the guillotining of Mme Roland and Olympe de Gouges). She has nothing to forfeit but her 'voice', her head, her reason. Her relation to the body politic will be limited to the corporeal and to her use as a natural resource. She will continue to function as the repressed term, "body", thus allowing the fantasy of the masculine body politic to live (Gatens, 1996: 54-55).

Although it is uncalled for to superimpose western feminist discourse on the lives of children in New Crossroads, Gatens' writing suggests parallels with some of the experience of girls in New Crossroads. Girls are often "mute" concerning their sexual experience. Some may "forfeit" their "reason" expressing their unease through an affliction like *amafufunyana*. Their silence contributes to the way in which a "masculine body politic" may live.

The chapter has examined silences concerning talk about sex. Silences, rather than denoting emptiness, mark lines of power and may become the symbolic means whereby respect

<sup>20</sup> Irigaray's and Kristeva's ideas are contentious in that they at times posit an essential ground outside symbolic discourse from which women may disrupt a patriarchal symbolic order through playful mirroring (Irigaray) and the disruptive power of poetic evocation (Kristeva).

is demonstrated by young girls and boys towards their parents. Lack of verbal expression concerning sexuality circumscribes the boundaries between generations and genders. Silence on the part of girls is interwoven with their relationships with boys.

Parents' attempts to circumscribe the sexuality of their daughters mark out the social domain that young girls are expected to occupy. The domain is inherently contradictory since injunctions given to girls are at odds with the social relations through which girls express themselves sexually. The physical person of a young girl becomes a site where contradictions within social discourse are perceived to meet. It is in focussing contradictions in the persons of young girls that they become objects of blame and punishment.

I concur with Elizabeth Grosz when she writes:

Bodies are never simply human bodies or social bodies. The sex assigned to the body (and bodies are assigned a single sex, however inappropriate this may be) makes a great deal of difference to the kind of social subject, and indeed the mode of corporeality assigned to the subject. It has been the task of the so-called "French Feminists", sometimes described as the "feminists of difference", to insist on recognition of the differences between sexes (and races and classes) and to question the assumed humanity and universality of prevailing models of subjectivity (Grosz, 1995: 84-85).

CHAPTER FIVE

EMERGING SENSES OF SELF: CHILDREN MOULDING THEIR WORLDS



Boys with a sense of style

However crucial the idea of the knowledgeable actor is to an emancipatory science, we must be wary of positing an actor as superhumanly knowledgeable. We are never fully aware of the conditions of our own construction (Moore, 1994a: 53).

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Both universality and the world lie at the core of individuality and the subject, and this will never be understood as long as the world is made into an object. It is understood immediately if the world is the field of our experience, and if we are nothing but a view of the world, for in that case it is seen that the most intimate vibration of our psycho-physical being already announces the world, the quality being the outline of a thing, and the thing the outline of the world (Merleau-Ponty, 1962: 406).

In seeking to draw together the threads of children's senses of self and their ability to mould their own worlds I do not suggest that children, as subjects, are free of the social ground in which they are embedded. Children juggle with existing possibilities in their social environment in different ways. We have seen in Chapters Three and Four how violence of many kinds traduces the lives of children. I have argued that children foreground and remain silent about various kinds of violence in their talk, thus placing themselves differentially in relation to forms of violence. I have argued that children's silence, with regard to particular forms of violence, is linked to their individual habitation of, and chosen emphases on, the localities of house and family, street, and school (By using the word habitation, I seek to evoke children's active and emotional investment in their relations within locations). Children's particular habitation of localities within New Crossroads demonstrates agency, and the emergence of particular subjectivities in relation to locality. In addition to juggling with possibilities in their environment, children reach imaginatively beyond the boundaries of their physical location.

Many writers with increasing sophistication and across disciplinary boundaries have undermined the notion of the "Cartesian cogito, the 'I' who authors experience of self and of the world, the essence at the core of identity" (Moore, 1994b: 132; see also Nietzsche, 1967; Hall & du Gay on Foucault, 1996: 10; Butler, 1997: 83-105). In contrast, some anthropologists have sought to uphold the rationality of the individual so that anthropological arguments are not used to undermine the standing of people whom they seek to describe. Their fears are that ethnographic accounts that reveal the unresolved multiplicity of the self could be used to reinforce the marginal status of, for example, women and children. Although anthropologists have been concerned with the rationality of individuals they have nevertheless outlined conceptions of self from differing cultural contexts that challenge dominant western notions concerning the discrete, bounded individual. Increasingly, anthropologists have shown the

multiplicity of senses of self within any one cultural context by highlighting marginal subject positions within social groups.

Henrietta Moore (1994b: 133) suggests that local conceptions of self may vary in the way in which agency and motivation are conceptualised as arising internally or externally to the self, in terms of whether a distinction is made between body and mind, or whether other sorts of beings are integral to the conception of the self, and even whether the body is the prime locality of the self.<sup>1</sup> In *New Crossroads*, for example, an intermittent re-activation of an individual's relationship with their ancestors may contribute to the anchoring of the self in a world of flux. It is a relationship that provides a thread to mend experiences of discontinuity and that allows individuals a sense of place.

Not only do local conceptions of self differ in different social contexts but individuals place themselves differentially in terms of multiple discourses concerning identity within any one social context. Although anthropologists have demonstrated cross-cultural variability in conceptions of self, Henrietta Moore, for example, has argued that anthropologists have largely ignored the idea of the internally differentiated subject (1994a: 54).

In exploring children's senses of self in *New Crossroads* I seek to show, not only how they challenge dominant western conceptions of the individual, but how they differ from one another. I explore Eric's (a boy of sixteen) and Lelezi's (a girl of sixteen) drawings of family to facilitate a discussion of the sixteen children's different ways of being, autonomous actions, and emerging senses of self in the context of *New Crossroads*.

In certain disciplines, great emphasis is placed on the significance of children's drawings, in and of themselves. Symbolic systems and assumptions about child psychology are sometimes used by analysts to extrapolate children's experience and senses of self from their drawings. Analysis may create distance between the analyst and the child by "translating" the images of the child into the terms of an accepted professional discourse. In language studies, the stories and drawings of children are often subjected to elaborate semiotic analysis without the acquisition of detailed back-ground or historical knowledge concerning each child.

Psychological and sexual theories that cannot be universalised, as well as assumptions about

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<sup>1</sup> Anthropologists who have challenged the western conception of the discrete individual are, for example, Maurice Leenhardt [1947] (1979), Jean Smith (1981) and Anne Straus (1982). Maurice Leenhardt argued that for the Canaque of New Caladonia, a person became a person through their connections with other persons who were human and animal, material and non-material. The body was perceived as a temporary locus of the self and not as a source of individual identity. Jean Smith suggested that for Maori people, sense organs were independent of the self so that experience was not central to the conception of self. Neither had the individual control over experience. Anne Straus, in a similar way to Maurice Leenhardt, argued that amongst Cheyenne people, sense of self was not independent of other selves including animals and landscapes.

visual literacy, have been imposed on drawings of children from differing social and cultural contexts.

In dominant global conceptions of the child, drawing by children is seen as an expressive register that on the one hand demonstrates biologically-based cognitive, perceptual and motor developmental stages. In theories of child development, accumulative skills in drawing are linked to biological age and are assumed to be universal. There is a presumption that drawings made by children, in addition to pinpointing stages of development, give access to hidden aspects of a child's experience that he or she is unable or unwilling to communicate through language. A child's drawings and games are seen as unguarded forms of expression that may enable service providers of various kinds to reach the inner "truths" of the child, for example, in revealing the details of trauma.

Drawing, (as opposed to singing and dance), is not a form of expression that children in New Crossroads have claimed as part of their everyday stylistic repertoires. I never saw a child drawing at home. In tandem with an educational culture in schools of mimicry and imitation, children in New Crossroads copied diagrammatic styles of representation in their drawings at school often directly from textbooks.<sup>2</sup> No art classes were available for children in New Crossroads. Nevertheless, asking children to draw their families provided a medium that contributed to other forms of gathering data.

My claims about what may be read from a child's drawings are qualified in relation to some of the above approaches. Rather than using drawings as texts sufficient unto themselves in rendering interpretation solely through the scrutiny of lines, words, and their spatial relations on a page, interpretation of Eric's and Lelezi's drawings emerge in conjunction with what I came to know of each child in different ways throughout the research period. In using drawings as an entry point to a discussion of subjectivities, I do not claim interpretative closure for the drawings or for the senses of self of the children concerned. Neither do I imply that children's senses of self were entirely encapsulated within their drawings or that their occupation of the world was static, resolved or lacking in conflict and contradiction. In all likelihood, if children

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<sup>2</sup> Themba, for example, visited me at the University of Cape Town and drew a map of South Africa and the structure of an egg for me from memory. He learnt these from images his teachers had drawn from text books onto the black-board of the classroom. While he sat with me, he copied a giraffe off a poster on the wall of my office. Many of the sixteen children described how they learnt portions of text at school off by heart even when they did not understand aspects of what they were learning. They were discouraged from asking questions in class, as asking questions was often construed as questioning the teacher's authority. The following quotation appears in the Draft White Paper for Education and Training of 1994. It emphasises limitations in educational culture perpetuated by the apartheid regime: "Official policies on examinations and teaching methods have encouraged the memorisation of large amounts of information and discourage both teachers and students from developing their initiative or critical thinking" (Republic of South Africa, 1994: 9).

had drawn pictures of their families at different intervals, the information that they emphasised would have changed.

Terry Eagleton, writes of a poem analysed within the framework of New Criticism, the dominant literary trend of the 1930s to 1950s that,

New critics' attitudes... were closely bound up with their urge to convert the poem into a self-sufficient object, as solid and material as an urn or icon. The poem became a spatial figure rather than a temporal process. Rescuing the text from author and reader, [in terms of their intentions and responses], went hand in hand with disentangling it from any social or historical context (Eagleton, [1983] 1994: 48).

In looking at children's drawings I seek to oppose approaches that in some respects mirror the requirements of New Criticism, by restoring a context to each drawing, by inquiring into the intentions of each child and by bringing my own qualified interpretations, as "reader", to bear on each drawing.

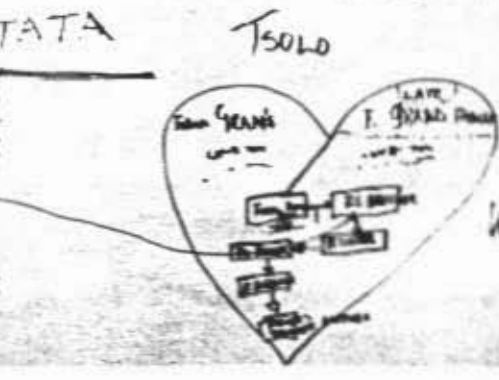
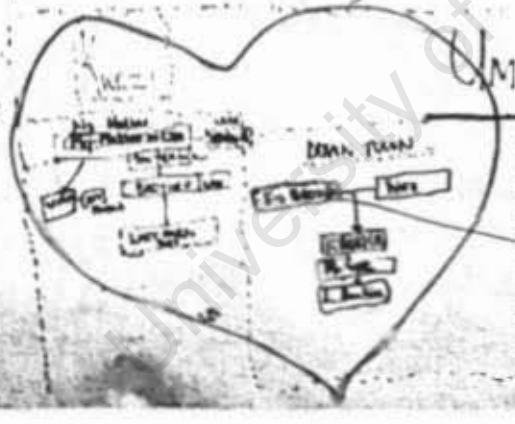
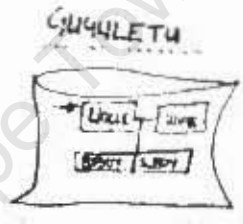
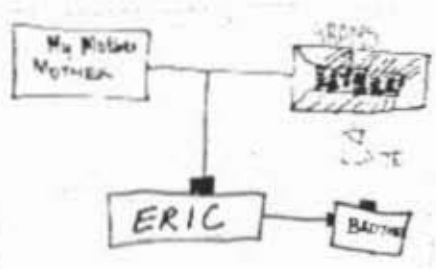
Eric's and Lelezi's drawings of their families are part of a set of drawings made by fifteen of the children (Nomaphelo was absent from the workshop), seven and eight of whom took part in two social network workshops on the 7th of April and the 8th of July, 1993. On both occasions the workshops began with my asking the children to draw their extended families. I suggested they separate families who were living in different localities by placing them in different circles. I asked children to comment on particular bonds with individuals and to suggest the frequency with which they saw various relatives.

### **Temporalities, place and the imagination: Eric's emerging senses of self**

In Eric's drawing (see following page), groupings of families are sometimes surrounded by the traces of the idea of dwellings reminiscent of house-plans. Other families are surrounded by images of containers; in particular, a jug and a bowl. Named geographic areas are enclosed within diagrammatic hearts. For example, the top left-hand heart represents New Crossroads; the top right-hand heart, other areas of Cape Town, namely: Gugulethu, Khayelitsha, Langa and Zinyoka (an informal housing area in Philippi).

In the top heart on the left-hand-side of the page, Eric depicts himself living with his mother, his deceased father (see the rectangular shape in which "father" is written. The

# SOCIAL NETWORK By ERIC



Very special to ME

Eric's drawing of family

shape is repeatedly scored through with wavy lines indicating that his father is no longer alive), his mother's mother, whom he calls Grams, and his brother.

Eric depicts his father three times in the drawing - in Eric's current home, in his mother's natal village in the Transkei, and in his father's father's home in Tsolo as one of Eric's grandfather's children. It is clear from the drawing and from comments Eric made in different contexts that, even though his father died when Eric was a young baby, he and the position within a family that he provided for him, formed an important part of Eric's sense of self.

Eric's grandmother did not live with him although she is marked as doing so. Rather, she lived with a son and his girlfriend in another house in New Crossroads. She spent a lot of time in Eric's house, often eating there.

In the drawing, Eric describes his mother's brother and his girlfriend who lived with his grandmother, as being, "outside the border" of his immediate family. As Eric explained, he was showing his mother's disapproval of her brother bringing his girlfriend home and living openly with her in front of their mother, a disapproval that was reinforced by his uncle's intermittent financial contribution to the household. His grandmother, in contrast, is placed inside "the border" of close affective ties within his immediate family.

The term, "outside the border", Eric continued, made reference to South Africa's borders with neighbouring states. The term is part of a resonant South African vocabulary shared across the population with differing significances. In the 1970s and 1980s the border etched itself into the imaginations of all South Africans either as the place beyond which young white men, subjected to compulsory conscription, were sent to fight off the so-called communist peril, or, beyond which young people of both sexes, and, to a small extent, beyond racial categorisations, disappeared to become freedom fighters against the *apartheid* state. Eric appropriated such terminology in his drawing in an individual and playful way to separate himself and his mother symbolically from his mother's brother and his girlfriend.

Eric shows the pregnancy of the same mother's brother's girlfriend by depicting her stomach as a basketball. He wrote of the couple that they were not married. In explaining the drawing to me, he likened his uncle to a basketball-player who had successfully aimed a basketball at the net of his girlfriend's stomach where it had got stuck. Another young woman, a cousin, is portrayed in the same way (see the area of the drawing labeled, 'Skum, in Langa). In addition to verbally describing his cousin at 'Skum as a basketball, Eric wrote of her that she was an "unknown noun". As he explained, the term referred to his cousin's family not knowing who the father of her child was.

Eric's use of words like basketball, outside the border, unknown noun, and common noun (see in the drawing, a male cousin described as a common noun in the area marked, 'Skum, Langa), show a playful transportation and transformation of both a South Africanism and school vocabulary into a personal context of idiosyncratic meaning. Some of the words show a particular gendered inflection to Eric's talk and use of imagery. The use of "unknown noun", and "basketball", to describe the state and status of two pregnant girls in his family casts the girls as passive recipients of active male sexuality. The girls are unmarked in their own right but their relationship to the undisclosed fathers of their unborn children is emphasised.

In the bottom right-hand heart, Eric drew his father's immediate lineage. He indicates his father's mother whom he called, Grams, and his grandfather. He singles out both his father's father (who is shown as deceased) and father's mother declaring, "I love you". He traces the order of birth of his grandfather's children from the first born girl whom he describes as "late" - a colloquialism meaning deceased - to his father's youngest brother. He marks out the particular locality where his grandfather set up a home as well his grandfather's offspring - the living and the dead - as, "very special to me".

In the bottom left-hand heart, Eric drew the place of his mother's natal home in Kwezi, a village in the Umtata district of the Transkei. Eric was born in Kwezi while his mother attended school there (see Chapter One). In the drawing he includes his mother and her siblings as well as his deceased father.

On the right hand side of the same heart, and in the top right-hand-side heart Eric's drew the urban location of both his father's siblings and their offspring and his mother's siblings. "Down-town" Umtata is the current home of one of his father's brothers, his wife and their offspring. He depicts both his mother's brothers and his father's additional brothers as living with their families in Cape Town in Zinyoka, Khayelitsha, Gugulethu and 'Skum, in Langa at the time of the drawing.

Eric's drawing of his own imagined future family lies outside of the boundaries of his main drawing and tilts at an oblique angle to his depiction of the other families, both of the past and the present. He was the only young person to include in his drawing an image of his own wished for future family. He entitles the drawing of his imaginary future family, "My Dream". He draws a caricature of his face with a cigarette in his mouth (he did not smoke during the research period) and writes underneath his depiction of himself, "Me as a fathe" (his spelling). From his head, a stream of thought bubbles leads the eye onto a depiction of his wished for wife whom he describes as, "my girl". She, like himself is caricatured, but voluptuous, nonetheless. She appears to be running away from him. He emphasises in his dream that he and his girl live

in a big house, and have a boy and girl child. Although the portrayal of Eric's ideal family uses the playful and ironic conventions of caricature and cartoon, as a wished for dream, it shares the fictive attributes of nuclear families as sentimentally portrayed in the media. In addition, the use of caricature might suggest the distance between dreams and lived experience.

In 1994, on a visit to Kwazulu-Natal, Eric showed me a poem he wrote for a school magazine produced by standard nine pupils. The poem expressed the desire to find a girlfriend. He wrote that although he had a great deal of love to give, no girl had accepted him. In the drawing, the longing for a girlfriend - suggested in the line of thought bubbles leading on to an imagined girl - parallels the sentiments expressed in his poem.

Eric attached his father's family to Tsolo, in the Transkei, even though, at the time of the drawing, none of Eric's father's siblings remained in Tsolo. In the drawing his ties with his father's family are emphasised as well as his legitimate access to, and potential re-activation of a rural home. Both Eric's grandfather and his own father, who were long deceased, are depicted in the rendering of a patrilineal line in Tsolo. In actuality Loyisile lived for most of his life with his mother and his mother's mother in an urban environment. Eric's particular attention to his own father's relatives, despite his having no personal memory of his father, despite his very occasional visits to Tsolo and to his father's kin in Cape Town, speaks of a specific importance placed in Xhosa worldviews on one's father's relatives, and particularly in Eric's case, on the construction of an imaginary home, an identity born out of lack, of loss, and dislocation; an identity threaded together through an appeal to remnants of past coherence.

In using the term imaginary, I do not wish to impute a dismissive irrationality to Eric's constructions of family but at the same time need to assert the affective, and conflicting aspects of his emerging senses of self. In doing so I follow the lead of anthropological theorists like Henrietta Moore who show the necessity of imagination and fantasy in the construction of self (Moore, 1994a: 66, Kapferer, 1995: 140-141).<sup>3</sup>

In many conversations, Eric chose to distance himself from life in New Crossroads (cf. for example, his talk on school boycotts in Chapter Three and on friends in New Crossroads in Appendix 5). His immense desire to succeed at the erstwhile "white" school where his mother had found a place for him, sometimes lead to bouts of aggression and frustration that tipped

<sup>3</sup> Moore (1994a: 66) draws attention to Wendy Holloway's (1984: 239) conception of "investment" in particular subject positions. Holloway's conception of investment by the individual in various and sometimes contradictory subject positions, points towards what I have already referred to as the emotional and often unconscious underpinnings of senses of self. Moore connects Holloway's notion of investment to the importance of fantasy in imagining what kind of person one would like to be and how one would like to be perceived by others (Moore, 1994a: 66) the implication being, that people invest a great deal, not only in their senses of self as actualised in the

over into a mental affliction, an affliction that marked the painful gap between his desires and his lived experience. Although Loyisile did not name his particular affliction to me, he wore a small pouch of herbs around his neck as protection. Neighbours described him as "mad" from studying too much and said that he might benefit from leaving his books aside from time to time. His head-master discussed Eric's anger and frustration a number of times with me. He said that Eric's wish to succeed in certain subjects was not always commensurate with his abilities. A double tension was created in Eric's life: a feeling of unease both within New Crossroads and within the school environment outside of New Crossroads.

Eric's desire to identify with the culture of an erstwhile "white" school placed him in opposition to many of his contemporaries who attended local schools in African suburbs. His experience of a school outside the suburb in which he lived enabled him to critique school culture within African areas and was one contributing factor in his positing a potential life outside his own suburb (see Chapter Three where he argues with Thulani against the use of school boycotts as a means of changing school culture).

Eric not only displayed a diagram of his family in his drawing, but multiple temporalities and senses of self stretching beyond the place, New Crossroads, reaching across societal boundaries to seize on the possibility of a future defined by difference.

I asked Eric why he had placed his imagined and future family outside the boundaries of his depiction of past and present and re-imagined family relations (see the dotted line that clearly separates Eric's drawing of family from his dreamt of future family). He said, "My dream is to live outside New Crossroads. Sometimes life of New Crossroads drags me back. I have friends here. All the boys and girls of New Crossroads are my friends but I do not trust anybody in the world. You can say, only the people I live with are my friends (his mother and brother)". Eric's comment suggests his sense of apartness from street life in New Crossroads, an apartness reflected in boys calling him an *Ivy* (a disparaging term for a homosexual) because of his liking for smart attire. (In a conversation concerning gangs in Chapter Three, Eric recalls how boys who attacked him called him an *Ivy*.) Eric partially cast himself as a person who, beyond the parameters of his own home, had grown apart from aspects of life in New Crossroads. The aggression he often expressed in his frustration with succeeding at school, a school that for him suggested possibilities for another kind of life, suggests another form of dislocation. Eric's sense of otherness across the areas in which he habitually lived were repaired through an appeal to a coherent shaping of his father's family and his place within it, an appeal

that was seldom acted upon but that suggested the possibility of home, of place. He said that whenever he felt he was "mad", he could rely on his father's kin to assist in healing him (a number of his father's brothers lived in Cape Town). He claimed that the memory of his sitting amongst his "father's" cattle on a visit to Tsolo years before created a sense of equilibrium for him.

### **Coherence and dislocation: Lelezi's emerging senses of self**

In Lelezi's drawing (see the following page), her sense of connection with a wide group of relatives is conveyed. It is a careful drawing in which adult male relatives are marked in terms of their particular senior or junior status in relation to each of her own parents. They and their wives are given appropriate names in Xhosa to show the distinctions. For example, in the circle marked "My relatives in N.X.R." (New Crossroads), Lelezi wrote, *Tatomkhulu*, older father, and, *Mhomkhulu* (her spelling), older mother, to refer to her father's older brother and his wife. She also used the terms *malume*, mother's brother, and *malumekhazi*, mother's brother's wife, to refer to her mother's brother and his wife. The children of each couple are shown by name and in order of birth. Lelezi added comments in English that clarify the order of birth of her father's and mother's older and younger siblings. For example, Lelezi wrote that her mother was born after her *malume* (see the bottom circle labeled, Brown's farm).<sup>4</sup>

On the left hand side of the page Lelezi drew relatives living in Cape Town in New Crossroads, Brown's farm, Gugulethu and Nyanga. On the right hand side of the page, she drew relatives in the Transkei, the Eastern Cape and Johannesburg. Lelezi's comments on her own qualitative relationships with different relatives are written in Xhosa. To name a few, she wrote of her parents, "They teach me". Of the children in her mother's brother's family, she wrote, "The children, I love them, because we carry the load together. Like (she uses the English word), if one is having problems [we] will hold together until the problem is solved". Lelezi wrote of her father's oldest brother's family (see circle named Brown's farm), "They give me money for a perm (for her hair), or for relaxer (a hair product), or for other things". In the circle denoting Maclear, Lelezi showed her mother's cousins. She was unsure of their precise relation to her mother. She wrote of them, "They are very kind. They are proud of me because I inherited from their mother my love of education". Lelezi thus emphasised her connections with various family members through the remembrance of financial support and the presents that

<sup>4</sup> Brown's Farm is another name for Zinyoka.

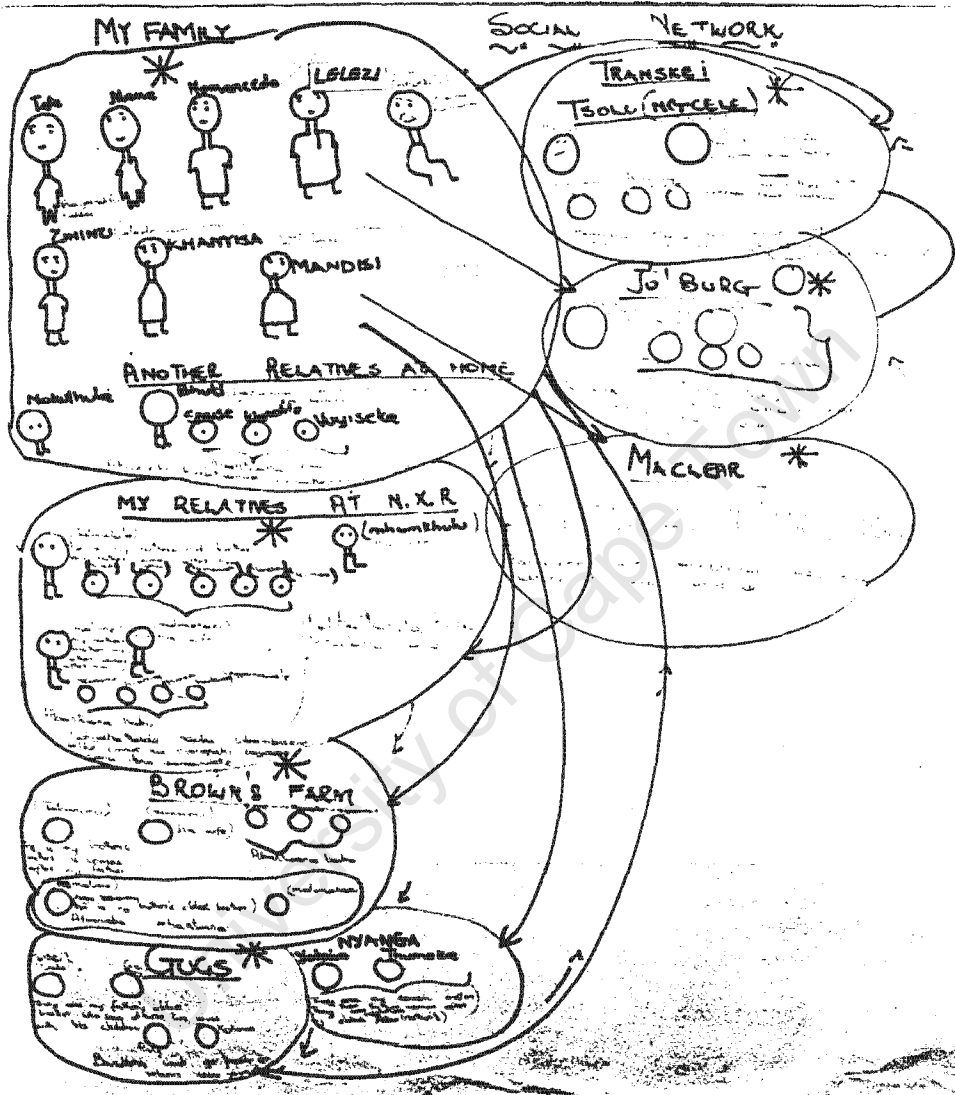
they have given her, and, in the last instance, an appreciation of her qualities. (In some children's drawings, ordering of family in terms of senior and junior status, consistent naming of individuals and comments of ties were absent as was the case in Monga's drawing.)<sup>5</sup>

In the circle marked, Ngcele, the village in the Tsolo area where her father's family claim a home, Lelezi wrote of her father's oldest brother and his family that, "They look after my home in case something goes wrong". The comment underscored the importance that Lelezi and her family gave to their rural home, a home to which they returned in the holidays and where important family rituals took place. (Their frequent journeying to a rural home contrasted with Eric's sole visit.)

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<sup>5</sup> Some of the children wrote similar comments on their drawings. Mzovuyo wrote of his mother, "She buys me everything". Of relatives in Gugulethu, he wrote, "He gives me everything", "She gives me money", "She gave me a bicycle", "The person does not give me anything", Zuzeka gives me money". Of his mother's sister in Khayelitsha, he wrote, "She gives my mother things".



Lelezi's drawing of family

Despite the coherence of Lelezi's drawing and the sense of family that it conveys, I draw on another aspect of her life that suggested a period of dislocation and perhaps - to use Ardener's phrase - a form of "muted" resistance to her lived experience in New Crossroads (Ardener, 1975: 21 ff.). Although Eric's senses of self were largely expressed within his drawing and corroborated with what I came to know of him in other contexts, the same could not be said for Lelezi. Aspects of her life were not portrayed within the drawing and in fact were in sharp contradistinction to the contents of the drawing.

During the research period, Lelezi contracted what she termed *amafufunyana*, or *ufufunyana*, a form of spirit possession common throughout southern Africa (Ngubane, 1977: 144-150).<sup>6</sup> Lelezi's forceful presence became undercut by the severe affliction that rendered her unbounded and that challenged what was generally perceived as good behaviour in a girl. The affliction challenged Lelezi's presentation of self in everyday life as responsible, hardworking, courageous, as part of a relatively coherent family that managed to sustain both urban and rural homes, and as a person who was unafraid of standing up for herself where she perceived other's disrespect.

In the early months of 1992, Lelezi and her sister initiated a physical fight with a woman living in the same street. Lelezi attacked the woman for having taunted her repeatedly prior to the attack. The taunts pointed to her family's poverty, her own lack of dress sense, and her "rural" ways (the precise terms used to describe her family were *izilambi*, the hungry ones, and, *ningamaqabakazi*, you are female country bumpkins, or uneducated ones). Lelezi described how the sound of her slipslops (thonged sandals) against her heels as she walked past the woman's house had provoked the comment, "The sound of your shoes is ugly. It is a sound belonging to a poor person. Why don't your parents buy you proper shoes?" The comment enraged Lelezi and she fetched her sister so that together they could attack the woman. The fight led to the polarisation of the entire street with families siding with Lelezi's family or with the women whom she had attacked. It was a fight that could not be resolved within the families but required the intervention of the street committee and the local Civic Association.

For months after Lelezi's attack on the neighbouring woman, children at the local shops continued to taunt her remarking on her clothes and saying that she did not belong in Cape

<sup>6</sup> Patrick Harries (1994: 163) describes the existence of *ndiki* spirit possession in Mozambique, Swaziland, and northern Zululand at the turn of the century. Based on a reading of Junod's writings, he shows how *ndiki* spirit possession affected mainly women who became possessed with spirits of deceased migrant workers on South African mines who had not received proper burial from their relatives and who had traveled back to Mozambique with women's male relatives. *Ufufunyane* spirit possession shares some characteristics with *ndiki*, as people who are possessed, are possessed by spirits of men who have not received proper burial. Mainly women are afflicted

Town, but in the rural areas. Lelezi's aggression towards her neighbour was perceived by her parents as a possible sign of the onset of *amafufunyana*.

When Lelezi began to hear voices some months after the attack, she told her mother that she was indeed afflicted with *amafufunyana* and she was taken to her father's church where treatment took the form of the priest forcing the voices within her to speak in front of the congregation. Nokhanyiso, Lelezi's mother told me that she recorded the voices on a tape. Although she was not prepared to share the tape with me, her references to the tape constituted a way of assuring me of the seriousness of her daughter's affliction. She described Lelezi's voices as being aggressive, disrespectful and "rough". She said, "Lelezi became very wild. She began to shout and speak badly to people in the family and outside in the street. She did not care about neatness and clothes. I was afraid that she would hit a lot of people. My child was no longer like the child I knew".<sup>7</sup>

Lelezi said that the voices located in her stomach were the voices of ants that demanded various kinds of food and that called her name. The cause of *amafufunyana* in New Crossroads was sometimes attributed to witchcraft, although the affliction could lead on to a position as healer.

In November, 1993, many other difficulties began to assail Gcobisa's family. Lelezi's older sister, who was studying for her standard nine year at secondary school, ran away from school and home before the end of year exams. At the same time Lelezi's father had a fight with the lodgers in his house and told them to leave. With their departure, Lelezi's family was deprived of some household income. Lelezi's mother left for the Transkei because there was nobody at the time to look after their rural home at Tsolo. Lelezi, who at the end of 1993, was studying for her standard nine exams at secondary school and who was determined to do well so that she would "one day help to finish" her parents' poverty, was expected to cook, shop and clean the house on behalf of her father and other siblings. She expressed anger at having to do the house work, cooking and the shopping as she said that her schooling was the priority.

In the beginning of 1994, Lelezi's father took part in a strike at a textile factory in Epping at which he worked. He was retrenched. Lelezi's mother returned to New Crossroads and the family, being without remuneration, "sat without bread". Nomampondo, Lelezi's older sister, continued to stay away from home.

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with *ufufunyane* and their behaviour during possession is similar to people possessed with *ndiki* (Harries, 1994: 163; Ngubane, 1977: 144).

<sup>7</sup> Lelezi's mother's description of the manifestations of her illness are similar to the symptoms of *ufufunyane* described by Ngubane (1977: 144).

Lelezi would never speak in detail to me about the nature of the voices that spoke through her. Rather she expressed her fears of the illness to myself and Elizabeth and complained about the harsh treatment for *amafufunyana* experienced in her father's church where she was beaten in an attempt to get the voices to speak out. Lelezi said that the treatment took the form of the priest arguing against the claims of each voice and getting them to agree to leave her body once they had been defeated.

Lelezi was afraid of the voices and refused after some time to go to her father's church for treatment. She distinguished her father's church, The Church of the Assembly of God, from her own church, The Church of Scotland. She attended her own church because treatment there was more gentle and she claimed that she no longer heard voices. She said that she experienced "miracles" there through the priest laying hands on her. As a consequence, she was able to write exams at the end of 1993 without hearing voices. In October, 1993 she began to visit a psychologist at the Child Guidance Clinic at the University of Cape Town (UCT) (Dr Ramphele, the director of the research project suggested that she do so). For most of the five months after being treated in the church of her choice, Lelezi did not hear voices. The voices only emerged when her father forced her periodically to go to his church.

In March, 1994, Lelezi experienced a resurgence of *amafufunyana*. She met a man, a stranger on the Nyanga taxi-rank who told her that he could see that *amafufunyana* were eating her inside. He also disturbed her by accurately describing the problems that her family were having at home (her father's retrenchment). She was very unnerved by the encounter and asked us, "How did that person know that I had *amafufunyana*? It must mean that they are still inside". She was upset that her faith in her own church and her prayers did not seem to work.

She asked if she could revisit the Child Guidance Clinic at UCT. She included the conversations with me and Elizabeth as well as the psychologist at the Child Guidance Clinic as having contributed to her healing. The Psychologist at the Child Guidance Clinic, an African psychologist working within a western model of mental health, attributed Lelezi's anxieties to the many problems she faced at home. She insisted that Lelezi was not, in her terms, psychotic.

The way in which Lelezi preferred to deal with her *amafufunyana* was that every time she heard voices, she "knelt down to pray". She described being assailed by them as being like "Job from the bible who suffered in the wilderness but never turned his back on God" (interview, January, 1995).

Lelezi told of her affliction in the context of a retrospective gaze into her own childhood, a gaze facilitated by her mother who gave her hope while she struggled with

*amafufunyana* by recalling how her ritual introduction to her ancestors healed her of an early "madness". She said,

My mother told me a story that when I was a child I was very sick and my grandfather's father told him in his dreams that he had to do *imbeleko* (the ritual to introduce a Xhosa child to her patrilineal ancestors) for me. Both my mother and father did [the ritual] and I no longer cried at night or pointed at things they could not see. Every black child must do *imbeleko* because if they don't they become sick and even go mad. My Mother told me the story [of my *imbeleko*] when I said that I was possessed by *amafufunyana*.

I did not suffer [on account of the *amafufunyana*] or see myself as worthless, because I became like Job in the bible. I did not see the things that happened to me [with the *amafufunyana*] as meaning the end of my life. I decided to fight. When I hear somebody calling my name, like the *amafufunyana*, I kneel down and pray. My parents lost hope. They thought I was mad. But because of religion, I am here (Interview, February 1995).

Lelezi's story allows her to create a narrative within which to place her experience, to place a sense of self afflicted with *amafufunyana*. The narrative stresses her individual loving placement within a family and the potential healing that comes with the acknowledgement of a sense of place. "Madness", in contrast, is linked with the absence of a sense of place. Kristin Langellier and Eric Peterson (1993: 49-76) argue that, "story telling is a primary way that families are produced, maintained and perhaps transformed (1993: 50).<sup>8</sup> Kirsten Hastrup (1995: 181-197) expresses the ways in which experience emerges out of awareness and how awareness distills experience within narrative. She writes,

By telling we carve out units of experience and meaning from the continuity of life. An experience, therefore, has an explicit temporal dimension. In real life, there are no absolute beginnings or ends to particular events; there are antecedents and successors to every moment. Yet we cannot but punctuate this in narrative (Hastrup, 1995: 184).

By the end of 1994, Lelezi no longer felt afflicted by *amafufunyana*. Her parents planned a special ritual in which a beast was to be slaughtered at their rural home in Tsolo to thank her ancestors for healing her. The ritual was successfully completed on the site of her father's mother's grave. Nokhanyiso, Lelezi's mother, used the term *umsebenzi*, work, to refer to the serious nature of the activities. Relatives from both Cape Town and Johannesburg attended.

Lelezi's grandfather's sister (ffz), who was named by the family as being the person who had bewitched Lelezi causing her *amafufunyana*, apologised at the ritual and was welcomed back into the family.

Towards the end of 1994, after concerted trade union action, Lelezi's father was reinstated at the factory in Cape Town where he worked. At the end of 1994, Lelezi wrote her standard ten exams and passed. During the Christmas holidays at Tsolo where she had gone with her family she recalled anxiously waiting for her standard ten results.

I woke up every morning to buy a newspaper. I wanted to see my results first before anyone else. That was the main reason why I left Cape Town because all eyes would be on me. I wanted to be far from all my friends and neighbours. On the morning of the 29th of December I woke up early to check the paper as usual. The results were finally out. I saw my name and ran to wake up everybody shouting, "I have passed". I have never been more happy than the day when my results came out (Interview, January 1995).

My own reading of the biblical text, the Book of Job, is of heuristic value in enabling me to draw certain parallels between the affliction, *amafufunyana*, and Job's arguments with his friends. The parallels allow a deeper consideration of the relationship between gender and the illness, between particular subject locations and the assumption of the expressive register of such an illness.

In the Book of Job (the Holy Bible, 1991: 518-53), Satan suggests that Job, who is in all respects a God-faring and prosperous man, be put to a test of faith. God brings about the destruction and theft of all Job's animals, slaves and offspring and later afflicts his body with sores and boils. Job, reduced to a state of physical disintegration, ignored and derided by his erstwhile followers, is visited by friends who come to lament his plight. They begin an argument with him in which Job upholds his own righteousness. With skill and bitterness he suggests the distance between God and man and the arbitrary and awesome nature of God's power. He thus upholds God's right to afflict both evil and righteous men in similar ways. In doing so, Job describes an existential place of dislocation from the world, a place of astonishment at the vagaries of fortune and the vast distance between experience and acceptance.

Job's friends, on the other hand, suggest that he would not be so afflicted if he had not transgressed God's laws. They therefore try to persuade him to admit his faults and to appeal to

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<sup>8</sup> See also Elizabeth Stone's (1988) study on Family storytelling. She writes, "the family is always jerry-built and has to be reconstituted and reimagined every generation" (1988: 40), and "What blood does not provide, narrative

God's mercy. Job is unafraid to maintain his own singular position in the face of his friends' opposition. He insists on his righteousness and challenges God to appear before him to confirm his innocence.

The tale contains ambivalence. On the one hand, it shows a righteous man volubly expressing his despair at life's trials. The very expression of despair, however, opens the way for ideas that challenge the boundaries of orthodoxy. Job critiques God for punishing him when he is blameless.

According to her mother, Lelezi's voices gave vent to "unorthodox" ideas with regard to the status and position of a young girl in New Crossroads. A subversive reading of the voices within Lelezi coheres, on the one hand, with many analyses of women's forms of spirit possession (see Boddy: 1989; Ong, 1988: 28-46) and with explorations of some women's access to different expressive registers that create space for the exposure of sentiments avoided within ordinary social domains (Abu-Lughod, 1988; Seremetakis, 1991).

The argument between the priest in Lelezi's father's church and the voices within her may be seen, with some inversions, to parallel the argument between Job and his friends. The priest's attempts to outwit and displace "unorthodox" voices within Lelezi is equivalent to Job's friends attempting to overturn what they think are disrespectful ideas on the part of Job. In the story of Job, however, God confirms Job's righteousness and makes his friends, who have slandered him, atone for their misapprehensions. The priest's attempts to restore Lelezi to a state where she no longer exhibited "unorthodox" behaviour is an inversion of the story of Job in that, from the point of view of the congregation and Lelezi's parents, "truth" is seen to lie with the priest and not with Lelezi's voices whom he sought to outwit. However, if we read the story of Lelezi's affliction in tandem with the story of Job, as Lelezi herself suggests that we might, the juxtaposition of inversions in both stories creates ambivalence for the meaning of Lelezi's affliction. The space of Lelezi's affliction becomes a space of defiance, of exploration beyond the limits of girls' habitual ways of being.

Lelezi's choice in comparing her own affliction with that of Job's is apt since it contains a valiant insistence on her own self-worth across different manifestations of self. She states in the midst of her affliction, that she "did not take herself as worthless", suggesting that she might have done so. Certainly, the comments of her neighbour carried the intention of making Lelezi conscious of a worthlessness. Lelezi's insistence on her self-worth redeems the manifest periods of her affliction. Her agency is clear even in the midst of the affliction through her own choice

of a plethora of healing frameworks: her narrative concerning *imbeleko*, or the ritual introduction to her ancestors, the choice of her own church as an alternative place of healing, her request that she see once again the psychologist at the Child Guidance Clinic, and her relationships with Elizabeth and myself. Yet her choice of a wide variety of frameworks in which to cast a net for the possibility of healing suggests that healing itself, for Lelezi, contained ambivalence and teetered on the edge of becoming its opposite. Healing, like the emergence of senses of self in *New Crossroads*, becomes part of an ongoing process of reconstitution.

From Lelezi's statements, we see that she was afraid of the voices within her and sought through prayer to fight against their unhinging characteristics. It would therefore seem to suggest that their presence expressed a "muted" critique of the circumstances in which she found herself.<sup>9</sup> The expressive register of her affliction is a culturally recognised space where the cause is seen to lie outside of the person, therefore uncharacteristic behaviour in one who is afflicted is viewed sympathetically. Michel Foucault's (1978: 95-96, 152) theorisation of the subject as only emerging within a matrix of power relations and as having no prior or separate existence apart from such power relations incorporates the idea that the sites of limitation created through power are always ambiguous. As such, they enable possibilities for resistance and subversion. Janice Boddy (1989: 347), writing of *Zar* possession in northern Sudan, states:

Women's negotiation of their ideological subordination in the context of daily life is undoubtedly affected, reciprocally by their participation in the *zar*. In other words, it is impossible to separate levels of resistance except heuristically, for in reality strategic compliance and the perception of alternate arrangements creatively interpenetrate.

Boddy's remarks, together with Foucault's conceptions concerning power and limitation, are pertinent with regard to Gcobisa who strove with pride for the coherence of her family and who simultaneously experienced conflicts of interest within the family particularly in relation to what was expected of her as a young girl in her parents' house during her mother's absence. Her affliction also expressed outrage at "eyes" within the larger community that sought to undermine the status of her family and of herself.

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<sup>9</sup> Lelezi's position therefore differs, for example, from the position of women of Inner Mani as evoked by Nadia Seremetakis (1991). Seremetakis argues that the women of Inner Mani, through their death rituals, occupied a position of complete alterity with regard to male discourse. In death rituals, women mirrored within their bodies and with their words the extremity of death. Their symbolic crossing over into death, as it were, created a state of dangerous otherness amongst women, a state that challenged the very foundations of everyday life.

What is striking in both Eric's and Lelezi's reflections upon their experience is their consciousness of the malignant possibilities of other's scrutiny. It is hard to be within the public eye. Eyes search one for signs of difference, of failure, of affliction (recall the man at the Nyanga taxi rank, who could see that *amafufunyana* were consuming Lelezi) - signs that easily emerge within a context of social fluidity and ongoing crises. Both Eric and Lelezi were made conscious of their dress through the disparaging remarks of others. Gangsters who attacked Eric calling him an *Ivy* sought to dismiss his attempt at symbolically setting himself apart from some boys in his area in his choice of dress. The neighbour's many remarks about Lelezi's attire attacked her sense of self, a sense of self that included a defense of family coherence and a pride in a rural home. Lelezi, awaiting her final school results, was happy to be free of the eyes of friends and neighbours in New Crossroads. Both Eric and Lelezi strove hard to make a success of their schooling yet their strivings were not without periods of dissociation. Their concern with the effect of eyes in the public domain, nevertheless traced their links with the wider world and showed how their senses of self emerged in relation to the shifting, ambivalent gaze of others in their environment.

### **Children's senses of self within a context of social fragility**

Senses of self are not separate from possibilities for action within the social realm. A social situation characterised by fragile social relationships demands of children that they be dexterous, resourceful, adaptable, that they take responsibility. Such dexterity can however lead to a lack of focus, a mercurial adaptation to circumstance and a lack of future orientation. It can also lead to periods of dissociation where children demonstrate an embodied disaffection with, or challenge to the world.

Eric was one of the few young people who imagined a future set apart from his current life situation, as was Nozuko (a girl), who drew inspiration from Felicia Mabusa-Suttle, a returned exile, who hosts a discussion show on South African television. Nozuko wished to be a singer so that she could "earn a lot of money" and live outside of New Crossroads. As has been seen, Eric's longings outside the frame of his own experience were not without the expression of unease, frustration, anger and "madness". A sense of Eric's "madness" may be arrived at from suggesting the "political economies" of selves in a historical context where *apartheid* relations created enormous gaps between longings and possibility and where longings were sometimes perversely framed in terms of the imagined life style of a white, privileged elite.

Implicit within much of what I have written thus far of the sixteen children is their emergence as autonomous persons, having made many decisions on their own, having initiated their own activities, and through action, having created worlds in some respects separate from the worlds of parents.

When Zolile's (a boy) uncles were no longer able to give him consistent support he located his biological father and asked him for financial support (see Chapter Two). Lydia (a girl) down-played the poverty of her home and her mother's refusal to communicate for long periods. She became a leader in the environmental group at the youth centre, worked as an assistant at the youth centre to earn money for bus fare to her school in Mowbray. She derived great pleasure and confidence from singing in her church choir and on one occasion traveled to compete with other choirs. She sought out constructive activities within the broader community of New Crossroads.<sup>10</sup> Boniwe (a girl; see Chapter One) decided not to live with her mother but with her aunt. She insisted on accompanying her cousin to crèche every morning so that she would not experience a car accident as Boniwe had done as a little girl walking to school. Thulani (a boy) and Nozuko (a girl) analysed with political acumen, the disrespect and difficulties in the streets and in the schools of New Crossroads and suggested that children's action could make a difference (for Thulani's views, see Chapter Three). Some children made decisions contrary to adult wishes. Nosipho (a girl) became the girlfriend of a young gangster, sleeping away from home and drinking alcohol. Siphokazi (a girl), at fourteen years of age, formed a relationship with a worker who lived in the migrant hostel in Gugulethu who gave her a watch and clothes. Some children chose to develop collective identities with children outside the family as students attempting to reshape their schooling, or as gangsters who occupied a space of alterity (recall Monga's story in Chapter Three).

## Conclusions

From a detailed examination of both Eric's and Lelezi's senses of self, as well as from what I have written in previous Chapters concerning social relationships characterised by fragility within families and within the wider social contexts that children occupy, I suggest that for children, in relation to their senses of self in New Crossroads, there is seldom an end point, or the conviction of having arrived, if only for a while. Neither are children's senses of self

<sup>10</sup> During the research period, Lydia's mother would frequently lock herself in her room for up to a week at the time refusing to communicate with her children. She also took money from Lydia that had been given to her for schooling by her boyfriend.

accumulative since victories over particular challenges may be undercut by new difficulties. Both the stories of Eric and Lelezi have shown the possible conflictual attributes of senses of self. Constitution of the self, or selves, is a constant process of formation, loss and reconfiguration. In the narratives that children construct to reconfigure their senses of self, it seems that elements of experience are re-juggled, re-framed to meet the demands of the external world.

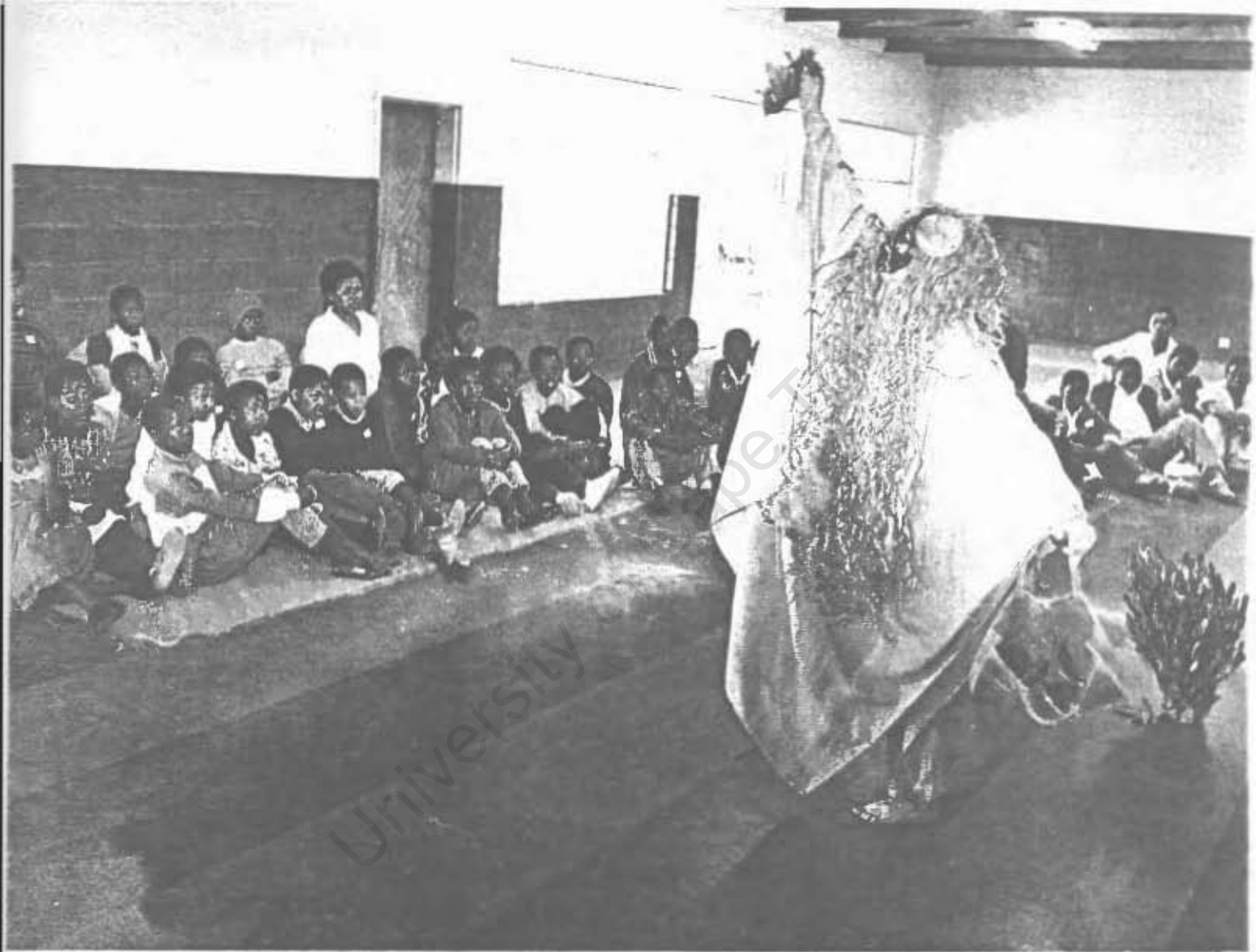
Henrietta Moore notes the gap that exists in anthropological work concerning the exploration of multiple subjectivities within individuals. The stories of Eric and Lelezi may find a place within the gap. Moore writes of the fractured subjectivities of an individual in ways that in some respects resonate with Merleau Ponty's remarks with which I opened the Chapter. Subjectivities of the individual reflect multiple facets of the world, or the commerce of existing discourses in the world. They, in turn, have consequences for the transformation of the world. Moore writes:

The post-structuralist concept of the subject which has emerged from recent debates is quite different from the unified, post-enlightenment subject which it seeks to deconstruct. The basic premise of post-structuralist thinking on the subject is that discourses and discursive practices provide subject positions, and that individuals take up a variety of subject positions within different discourses. Amongst other things, this means that a single subject can no longer be equated with a single individual. Individuals are multiply constituted subjects, and they can, and do, take up multiple subject positions within a range of discourses and social practices. Some of these subject positions will be contradictory and will conflict with each other. Thus, the subject in post-structuralist thinking is composed of, or exists as, a set of multiple and contradictory positionings and subjectivities. What holds these multiple subjectivities together so that they constitute agents in the world are such things as the subjective experience of identity, the physical fact of being an embodied subject and the historical continuity of the subject where past subject positions tend to overdetermine present subject positions (1994a: 55).

In contrast to Marcel Mauss' (1966: 306) much earlier recommendation that anthropologists locate "a typical individuality" that could reflect, unproblematically, a culture conceived as a totality, Marc Auge (1995: 20-21) argues:

[I]n the meantime we have learned to distrust, absolute, simple and substantive identities, on the collective as well as the individual level. Cultures 'work' like green timber, and (for extrinsic and intrinsic reasons) never constitute finished totalities; while individuals, however simple we imagine them to be, are never quite simple enough to become detached from the order that assigns them a position: they express its totality only from a

## CONCLUSION



The anthropologist in disguise, a mask performance for children.

Referring to lyric verses in Sophocles' *Antigone* (see below), Nussbaum outlines a model of learning that challenges a contrasting Platonic approach, the latter based on essential, ideal models of reality. In so far as her model encompasses complexity and particularity, and challenges universalities and generalisations, it is of value to the approach I have taken in the thesis, where I have attempted to chart the complexities of individual children's lives. Nussbaum in describing her method of reading Greek texts, refers to Heraclitus' image of *psuche*: a spider sitting in the middle of a web.

[The spider] advances its understanding of life and of itself not by a Platonic movement from the particular to the universal, from the perceived world to a simpler, clearer world, but by hovering in thought and imagination around the enigmatic complexities of the seen particular (as we, if we are good readers of this style, hover around the details of the text), seated in the middle of its web of connections, responsive to the pull of each separate thread. (This fact is signaled to us when the Chorus, seeing Antigone enter, a prisoner says... 'looking at this strange portent, I think on both sides'.) The image of learning expressed in this style, like the picture of reading required by it, stresses responsiveness and an attention to complexity; it discourages the search for the simple and, above all, for the reductive (Nussbaum, 1986: 69).

The dissertation, an ethnography of a number of children in New Crossroads, has come to reveal a layering of fragility within their lives. When thinking of fragility, an image that comes to mind is a scattering of bright shards of porcelain against a harsh ground. The image tends towards polarisation, towards an absolute distinction between that which is broken and the surface against which it breaks. The social fragility within which children live in New Crossroads is of another order. Although the dissertation illustrates fragility as severance and breakage of, for example, bonds within families, the "shardings" within children's experience are accompanied by attempts at reconstitution. Repertoires of reconstitution are carried out by children and their families in dexterous ways. Theirs is a series of reconstitutions, however, to which there is seldom a complete resolution.

The harsh ground against which the experience of children becomes discontinuous is a ground created in large measure by the state as *Deus ex machina*. As has been suggested in several chapters, the *apartheid* state intervened in the intimate spaces of families, precipitating separation between members, and between

places of work and places of domicile. Interwoven with the regulations that effected the above separations is a history of restriction of economic and educational opportunities for Africans. Violent interventions by the former state within families, culminating in the 1980s, contributed to an inversion of functions associated with a democratic state. Instead of protecting its citizens, the state construed of most South Africans as enemies and thus, attacked them. Despite the demise of *apartheid*, an inversion of institutional functions remains entrenched in the everyday lives of children of New Crossroads and is linked to what I have described as institutional incoherence (recall Chapter Three).<sup>1</sup> It is against the background of institutional incoherence and the failure of the current state to address problems to do with institutional support of its citizens in an effective manner, that repertoires of reconstitution to which children and their families make recourse must be examined. It is in the lack of completion of processes of re(con)stitution that what I have termed the layering of fragilities is located. The children, as creative agents – bright shards – are not able to completely separate from the “ground” against which they encounter severance and breakage. Within the ground of sociality, strewn as it is with forms of violence, lie cultural possibilities that draw upon notions of ideal relationship; notions of coherence; notions of healing; the intercession of ancestors; and the availability of discourses of political activism that envisage resolutions to current discontinuities. I have argued that the healing and ritual processes employed to restitch the social fabric, or to “glue” broken shards together, are ongoing and require repetition (recall the plethora of healing frameworks utilised by Lelezi and her family to encompass her affliction with *amafufunyana*). Processes of reconstitution may also be rejected (recall Monga’s refusal of reintegration, his lack of responsiveness to the healer who threatened him with death on an unknown street).

The ways in which children and their parents are called upon within situations of social discontinuity and institutional incoherence to repeat reconstitutive strategies are resonant with ideas contained within the poem, “Mending”, of South African poet, Ingrid de Kok. She writes:

In and out, behind, across.  
The formal gesture binds the cloth.

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<sup>1</sup> In Appendix 6, I critically examine an aspect of the current state’s policy regarding Child Support Grants for poor children. I use an examination of the policy to suggest the inadequacy of the state’s response to the welfare of poor children in South Africa.

The stitchery's a surgeon's rhyme,  
A Chinese stamp, a pantomime

Of print. Then spoor. Then trail of red. Scabs rise, stigmata from the thread. A  
cotton chronicle congealed. A histogram of welts and weals.

The woman plies her ancient art. Her needle sutures as it darts, scoring  
scripting, scarring stitching  
The invisible mending of the heart (de Kok, 1997: 35).

De Kok's image of reworking cloth, a cloth suffused with traces of the past, a stitching on top of old wounds that bleed afresh with new meanings, is an apt metaphor for children's and parents' jagged reconstitution of senses of self and of social relationships. It provides a metaphor for the layered and intimate ways in which I have attempted to write tales concerning children.

Gaps in healing repertoires as in repertoires utilised to establish particular configurations of power in New Crossroads mark a specific relationship in the individual's creation of and experience of time. In addition to the times being "out of joint" where processes of repair and social action do not fit the realities they seek to address in seamless ways, experience and actions are episodic. Time is cut up. Actions carefully layered, one upon the other, to effect particular outcomes remain unusual in the lives of children in New Crossroads. Where family members work doggedly towards a particular goal, for example the education of a child or the healing of a child, the process is not continuous. Rather, families, collectivities beyond the family and individuals walk paths along which attempts at control are likely to be interrupted and disrupted. The determination of individuals and families to attain particular goals in the light of disruptive processes is therefore all the more admirable.

In the thesis I have traced fragility in the intimate spaces of children's lives, in their placement and mobility on the domestic ground, in their wanderings beyond that ground, in their apprehension of fragility both within the home and within institutions outside of the home, in the intersections of their own bodies with forms of domestic, political, liminal and sexual violence. I have suggested that children are sensitive to the crises they face. They reflect on the historical, social and economic reasons for discontinuity and are, therefore, often forgiving of dislocations within families. However, they mark the pain of the fissures of life within families, within school and on the streets of New Crossroads in differing ways. Children locate themselves within various discourses that allow for the externalisation of certain kinds of pain and not of

others. Although children are responsive to the dislocations of their experience and act with strength to transform immediate crises, they themselves often experience discontinuities of self, as is born out, for example, in the afflictions experienced by Eric and Lelezi (see Chapter Five). Dissatisfaction with the textures of life result in imaginative flight, the idea that home lies elsewhere, a desire to be elsewhere, to create an elsewhere. Discontinuities of self should not, however, be read as marking individuals in *toto*. What is remarkable about the children of New Crossroads is their ability, in most cases, to confront their lives with strength and to challenge obdurate and limiting circumstance.

The use of varied methods in gathering data has contributed to the ways in which I have evoked the complexities of individual children's lives in New Crossroads. The words of children are not sufficient in rendering children's experience. Transcriptions of interviews, where they appear in the thesis, have been placed within the context of changes in social relationships within and beyond families over time. Words have been placed within the context of the unfolding acts of children and their families.

I have used children's drawings and performance pieces as methods to add richness to the data gathered and to the telling of children's tales. I have avoided imposing formal sets of analysis on the children's creative products and have attempted to write "from the data" using eclectic theoretical fragments where they resonate with my own findings. More generally, I have not attempted to generate ethnographic data for the thesis with a single existing theoretical framework in mind. Rather, ethnographic data have been used to criticise the ways in which, for example, children's drawings are sometimes analysed. My analyses are based on a background gleaned from the changes in family circumstances of children over time. (Assumptions to do with childhood prevalent in some disciplines issuing from industrialised western countries are critically examined in more detail in Appendix 6.) Performance enabled me to experience aspects of children's expressive bodily style and the flavour of local ways of speaking (for example, the language of street-wise boys) that children did not use with me in the more formal parameters of interviews. Whatever methods I have used in gathering data, therefore, have gained salience in terms of the duration of research and repeated visits to each child's home where the actions of children and their family members transformed and contextualised the interpretation of particular kinds of data linked to specific methods. It is in charting

changes within families that I have been able to suggest the constitutive elements of the layering of fragility in families as well as the effect of institutional incoherence on the agency and senses of self of children in New Crossroads.

Discontinuities within children's lives suggest that prognoses are difficult to make. I, therefore, end with a brief up-date as to what has happened to each child. (On a visit to New Crossroads at the time of completing the writing of the thesis, I learnt of new developments in the children's lives.) A year after I ended my research I discovered that Monga, at twenty years old, was shot dead in KTC trying to burgle a house. True to the healer's predictions, Monga became a corpse on a street. Monga's death marked with poignancy a final conclusion to his liminal position as a habitual thief. Themba, who was repeatedly beaten by his father, left Rhodes High School, the "white" school in Mowbray, having failed at the end of Standard Six. He was sent to the Transkei for a year by his father as a form of discipline (recall that several boys were told during the research period that they would be sent to the Transkei if they did not change their behaviour). Themba subsequently returned to New Crossroads and is attending secondary school in Gugulethu. Lydia married immediately after completing her last year at secondary school and found a well-paid job at the Old Mutual, a South African insurance company. Lelezi, having recovered from her affliction with *amafufunyana*, is studying nursing in the Transkei and is reputed to be doing well. Eric, who at times dreamt of a life at a distance from New Crossroads, appears to be fulfilling his dream. After completing school he went on to study engineering at the Cape Technikon. He has one year left before he completes his qualification. Mzovuyo still dances occasionally at the youth centre in New Crossroads and is attending school. Zolile, abandoned by a succession of uncles (see Chapter Two) has left New Crossroads and lives with his mother and step-father in Paarl where he goes to school. Zolile still does not get on with his step-father who was released over a year ago from jail after having been convicted for dealing in marijuana. Zolile has strengthened the bonds with his biological father whom he visited for the first time after his uncles had deserted him. He now visits his father frequently. He sells vegetables on weekends at Epping Market in Cape Town where his father secured a stand for him. James dropped out of school at the beginning of 1996 and began looking for employment without success. He enjoys smoking marijuana and "hanging out" with friends. He is considering going back to school. He is now 21. Thulani wrote a supplementary exam for his matriculation year at Rhodes

high School and thereafter went to the Transkei to undergo initiation into manhood. From February 1997, Vusumzi was jailed for seven months for housebreaking. After the dispersal of his household at the end of 1995 (see his story in Chapter Two), and after having lived with his uncle in Paarl for a short while, he lived with his older sister in Old Crossroads and eventually returned to the house in New Crossroads with his mother. His father, who had insisted on the dispersal of all the children with the exception of his youngest daughter, had left the house altogether. Thandi is still attending school. Her father continues to drink heavily, and she is still cared for by the lodger, *Sis' Makoti*. Nosipho attends school and was very shaken by an attempted rape at the end of 1996. She is beginning to recover her feistiness. Siphokazi left Rhodes High School having failed Standard Six for two consecutive years. She now attends school in Belhar, a coloured residential area in Cape Town. Sindiswa attends school and continues to assist her mother with the meat-selling business on the Nyanga taxi-rank. Boniwe, who lived in the poorest household of all the children, moved back to the Transkei with her mother at the end of 1996. Nozuko is still attending school and is as voluble as and as observant as ever about her neighbourhood and the relationships of people around her.

The brief up-dates on the young people, no longer children, bring out in very clear ways the coupling of strength and fragility in their lives. Despite multiple discontinuities within their experiences over time, they and their families have spared no effort in attempting to pursue goals that are valued. Zolile, for example, who seemed abandoned by his mother, father and uncles at the end of 1995, has gone to live with his mother in Paarl, and has built on the relationship with his father he had sought that year. Vusumzi, whose father threw him and most of his siblings out of the house in 1995, has returned to the house in New Crossroads and is reunited with his mother. A number of the children, despite failing at school, tenaciously continue to try and further their education. The coupling of strength and fragility that is born out in the stories of the children finds an echo in Nussbaum's image of the spider web with which I began to thread conclusions together. Spider webs are both delicate and tensile. The threads of the web trace metaphorical lines of relationship for the children that may be broken at times but that are often repaired through the reproduction of threads issuing from the spider's thorax or the skillful ways in which children pursue webs of relationship. As I write, on the wall of an exhibition at the Castle of Good Hope in Cape Town, Carlos Garaicoa, a contemporary Cuban artist, reflecting on the

corrosive consequences of prolonged war in Angola, has written, "My fragility is my grandeur". It has been the challenge of my work to show how fragility and "grandeur" intertwine in the subjectivities of children in New Crossroads.

The work I have written, although dedicated to all the children and parents with whom I worked, is particularly dedicated to the memory of Monga who lost his life on the streets of KTC and whose death illustrates a facet of the sometimes harsh unyielding "ground" against which children live their lives in New Crossroads.

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APPENDICES



Girls discussing wishes for the New Crossroads Youth Centre

## APPENDIX 1

### Anthropological symbols for relatives

m = mother

f = father

z = sister

b = brother

h = husband

w = wife

s = son

d = daughter

The symbols are combined in different ways to denote different kin. Thus, for example, mm = mother's mother, and fz = father's sister.

## APPENDIX 2

### Conversion to adult equivalents

#### Step 1)

Attach adult equivalent values to each family member in accordance with the table below.

#### Adult equivalents by age and gender:

<u>Age</u>	<u>F</u>	<u>M</u>
<2	0,40	0,40
3-4	0,48	0,48
5-6	0,56	0,56
7-8	0,64	0,64
9-10	0,76	0,76
11-12	0,88	0,88
13-14	1,00	1,00
15-18	1,00	1,20
19-59	0,88	1,00
60>	0,72	0,88

#### Step 2)

Add adult equivalent values to obtain the total number of adult equivalents in each household.

#### Step 3)

Count the number of individuals in each household who are 16 years old or older.

#### Step 4)

Multiply the sum you got under step 2) with the correct value below according to how many individuals 16 years or older live in the household.

<u>No. over 16</u>	<u>Multiplicator</u>
1	1,000
2	0,946
3	0,897
4	0,851
5	0,807
6	0,778
7	0,757
8	0,741
9	0,729
10<	0,719

## APPENDIX 3

### Conversation about children's rural homes

**Zolile:** I went to *emaXhoseni* in 1991. I don't like not going to *emaXhoseni* because my grandfather (mf) is still there and he looks after my fowls and pigeons. So I want to go there to visit him because I want to see how my things are doing. Even this year I wanted to go there and stay the year but my mother refused, and she said that I would go next year. The reason I wanted to go and stay at *emaXhoseni* is because there are many children where I stay in New Crossroads. So at *emaXhoseni* there are only eight people, including adults. Last year my uncle (mb) went to *emaXhoseni* and he asked permission from my mother for me to go, so my mother said I should undergo *imbeleko* (ritual introduction of a child to the ancestors). So, it was decided by my mother and my uncle that because it was only two weeks before going to school, I would be wasting money going to *emaXhoseni*. My grandmother died (mm). It's only my grandfather who is still alive. The year before last (1991) when I went to *emaXhoseni* we slaughtered two cows on our arrival for my grandmother who had died. And my mother bought two sheep. My uncle (mb) made beer containers (*iibekile*) and home brewed beer (*umqombothi*). And then we slaughtered all the things. And then we all went to the burial place. And then with the sheep and liquor (*utywala*) and *umqombothi*, older people spoke while they poured the *umqombothi* on the grave. We took the sheep back home. And again, before the sheep was slaughtered they spoke over the sheep. Then it was slaughtered. We all enjoyed the food. So, I miss going to *emaXhoseni* a lot, and grandfather is old now. He will be leaving work soon and people will have to send him money. That is why I want to go to *emaXhoseni*.

**Lydia:** I last saw my aunts last year. The one is from Mdantsani [in the Eastern Cape]. She came to spend the Christmas holidays with us [in New Crossroads]. The other one is the wife of my grandfather's brother. She is also from Mdantsani. I last saw my relatives in Mdantsani in 1986 when I was still young. I want to go to Mdantsani at the end of the year. I see the relatives around Cape Town.

**Thandi:** I last went to *emaXhoseni* in 1986 with father's sister (*udadobawo*). She passed away long ago and that is why I don't go to *emaXhoseni*. I saw other relatives in January [in New Crossroads] when it was my brother's funeral. That was the last time I saw relatives.

**Lelezi:** I often go to *emaXhoseni*, and my granny, my mother's mother is here at the moment. She is ill. My aunts are here in Cape Town and my *dadobawo*, is in *eRhawutini* (Johannesburg). All of them were at *emaXhoseni* in December. I was also there. The person who does not go to *emaXhoseni* is my brother, my mother's sister's son. He was just circumcised and after that he never put foot in *emaXhoseni* again. He stays in *eRhawutini*. In June last

year I visited *eRhawutini*. I stayed with his mother. I never saw him before because he is a silly person (*umntu osileyo*). He doesn't listen (*ongeviyo*).

**Eric:** I last saw my relatives at the beginning of this year. I went to my grandfather's funeral, my father's father. I think that's the best place for me [sentence in English]. I like that place very much at Umtata because I feel I am somebody who has changed when I am there. There are so many things that change, *Gqitha!* (an expression in Xhosa similar to the English expression, really!). So at least when I am there I become the person I once was. Sometimes I do not have time here [in New Crossroads]. I think its because it is always busy here in the township and there is always noise. But there, outside (*emaphandleni*), it's so quiet. You just take the cows and you sit somewhere quietly. It's very nice. It's only my grandmother [fm] who is alive now. Even now I was thinking of writing her a letter. And the other family that is around here, I see them. Perhaps two days will pass and I will see them [referring to his mother's mother and his mother's brothers].

**Zolile:** I just want to say I have never been to *emaXhoseni* to my father's place. I wanted to ask my father why he doesn't take me to his place or give me money to go on my own (Social network workshop, April 23 1993).

The five children speak of different relationships with a rural base. Zolile, whose story was outlined in Chapter Two, explores his relationship with his mother's kin at Molteno. His legitimate place there is touchingly conveyed in his reference to his grandfather looking after his pigeons and fowls on his behalf. Zolile's links with a particular rural place are solidified through his experience of a commemorative death ritual for his mother's mother, and the anticipation of his own ritual introduction to his mother's ancestors, the postponed *imbeleko*. He laments his biological father's failure to introduce him to his father's relatives and their rural home. Because he was born out of wedlock, Zolile generally had little to do with his father's relatives. At the time of the conversation Zolile had not yet been formally introduced to his mother's relatives at what is perceived to be the most appropriate site of ritual, their rural home. Yet, in the conversation Zolile keeps open the possibility of the ritual taking place there at some undisclosed future time. Despite his socially precarious position as a child born out of marriage, he is claiming a positive link with his mother's relatives as well as fixing his right to a place in their rural home.

In doing so, Zolile is similar to Eric who, although having lost his father, evokes his relationship with his father's rural home (see Chapter Five). Lelezi outlines the importance of her rural home in the conversation.

Although it is not directly apparent from what Thandi says in the conversation, she articulates her lack of relationship with a rural base. The lack was born out, for example, in the

location of her older brother's funeral that took place in New Crossroads in December, 1992.

Her family situation suggested that even symbolic ties with a rural base had been systematically eroded.

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## APPENDIX 4

### Conversation describing the experience of witchcraft as a framework for explaining discontinuity

Nomonde, Nosipho's aunt said,

"I've seen it with the meat of my eye (*ngamehlo enyama*). One time I was coming from work - You know the thing of us losing work in our home is because of the dirty spirit in the street - I met a man. The man told me that the people living in the street with us are jealous of us. And you must understand that I did not talk to the man and I do not know the man. The man told me that I must watch at night. I would see the people. I did. I watched TV till the end [of the transmission], and I stayed up past one [in the morning]. Then I heard a little noise outside. I peeped through the window. I saw four women, as they were born (*oko bazalwa*) [without any clothing], and I know the women. They stay in the same street. They were pouring something in our yard [medicines to bewitch the household inhabitants]...Afterwards, I woke my mother up. When she came to the window they were already gone. I told her who they were. I did not sleep that night. We woke up very early and we went to Khayelitsha to find someone who would take the dirty spirit away from our house and our yard. He charged us R100 for opening the box (*isivulangxowa*), and for cleaning and tightening (*ukuclean nokuqinisa*) the cloudy or dirty spirit (*omoya omdaka*), R500. Then, after that we decided to slaughter a beast for our ancestors thanking them for showing us the man who helped us in opening our eyes. After that things went better because I had a job. We also told the children to watch out". (Note, *isivulangxowa*, or opening the box, refers to a diviner identifying the cause of defilement within a house. *Ukuclean nokuqinisa* refers to cleaning and tightening the house against the influence of witchcraft.) (Interview, Nomonde, 27 August 1992).

## APPENDIX 5

### Conversation concerning friends

**Themba:** My friend, Zenzele, beats me. One day I broke a ring. It was somebody's ring. It was not his ring. I went to that person to explain that I had done that and to say I was sorry. Zenzele interrupted. He said I should pay ten cents immediately and he beat me for that because I didn't have ten cents. And it was not his ring but he wanted me to pay him ten cents for that ring. The other friends from the street play ball together.

**Lelezi:** My friend is Ntombentle. She stays at 421, New Crossroads. We used to stay together in Old Crossroads. Her parents are lodgers at our house there. Even at *emaXhoseni*, we are from the same village. My father helped them to get the house where they stay now in Old Crossroads. If I am hurt about something I go to her. If she gets hurt she comes to me. Like, she has a problem - her parents are getting divorced now. I try to help.

**Zolile:**...My friend is Malibongwe. The other is Nawe. We were friends from crèche. Even at school we are friends. Nawe and his parents moved to Khayelitsha. Malibongwe and I visit him. One day when we went to visit him we rode on a bicycle from New Crossroads to Khayelitsha. When we got to Khayelitsha, we met *skollies* (*iizikoli*, a term derived from Afrikaans, meaning gangsters). They took our bicycle and Malibongwe's watch. We walked to Nawe's home. We went to explain everything. And Nawe's father was so angry because the thing did not happen far from the house. Everybody was out looking for these people and we got them but they had already sold the bicycle and Nawe's father told them to bring it immediately and he warned us and he told us that the next time we came we should tell him. I do have friends who are *stout* (naughty) (*stout* is an Afrikaans word meaning naughty), like, Siphoh. He is stout. When he comes to visit you he will steal something and Manci' (little mother, referring to his mother's mother's sister) doesn't like that. She doesn't want him near the house. I do not like that because Manci' could find a way of stopping Siphoh from stealing instead of chucking him out the house. Even in Siphoh's place they chuck him out because he stole a purse that was on top of the table.

**Eric:** My friends are people from New Crossroads. They are girls and boys. Sometimes we have little fights, like little things, and I don't know the reasons. But my best friends are the people I stay with inside my house (his mother and brother). I have more than twenty friends outside. Sometimes I become confused because I like to be alone....Like, everybody who stays in New Crossroads is my friend.....

**Elizabeth:** Eric, you are right when you say that everybody is your friend, but there are people or a person when you are deeply hurt or when you have a problem and you go to that person to confide or to share that problem.

Sometimes its a problem you cannot share with your parents. So who is that person?

**Eric:** I do not trust anyone on this earth. Most of the time I want to be alone. I am not happy. I don't go to anyone when I have a problem because I can't identify what my problem is, so I don't know what it is. I don't seem to like anything I do. I don't know how to describe it, but I am not happy at all. Even when I am with friends I am happy for a short time, but I will start again, so I really don't know what my problem is. I like having friends but they don't help me with anything, so I don't think I am happy at all. That is why I like to be alone.

**Nozuko:** What Eric says is what really happens to me. I'm not interested in anything (*andinamdla waniks*) (Nozuko has incorporated in her talk, the word, *niks*, an Afrikaans word meaning, nothing). I like being alone and I'm not happy about that. At home we like fighting with Pamela and Toto (her sister and brother. Toto is the nick-name given to her brother, Philani))but, I don't fight a lot with Pamela. I fight with Toto everyday. If you ask him to do something, he doesn't do it. He always has an answer to what a person is saying, even with little things. Like, sometimes father phones and says, "Toto, clean the yard". When I answer the phone and I tell Toto to do that, he won't do it because I am telling him to do it. So, that is why I say that Eric is right. I like to be alone. Sometimes I read my books. Sometimes I get bored with story books. Then I read magazines and watch TV. But I am really alone. *Ndiyomwaba gqitha!* (I become very happy.)

**Lydia:** My best friends are my sisters and cousins because where we stay [in the street] there are little fights (*uchuku*). So, we decided to be our own best friends - my sisters and I. Like, we don't talk to other children in our street. We do not know the reason. Other people come to try and ask what is happening. Children will say we put ourselves above others, because many of the thing that children in our street do, we don't do. We don't go to many of the places they go to. We don't smoke, we don't drink. So, they separate themselves from us. In fact, we are not hurt (*asihetisheki*) (note that *hetisheki*, is the English word, hurt, transformed into a Xhosa rendition of the word], because at home we are many. We are four girls. So, we are all friends. If one of us has a problem - like we do have *teenager* problems (Lydia used the English word, teenager, here)- we help one another to overcome those problems before we go to mother. So, my real friends are my sisters. If I have a problem they won't go outside and talk about it.

**Thandi:** I don't have a friend. I play with my sister. I do have friends in the street but I don't have problems to share with them - even at school - and they don't share with me. Sometimes I go with friends to watch videos in the house in front of ours or sometimes we play calling cards (Thandi names a local children's game in New Crossroads that has been given an English name).

**Zolile:** I like my friends but Mancini, doesn't like them playing inside the house. And the other thing I don't like about Mancini is that she chucks my

friends out of the house. I told her, "Manci' I don't like that because I have my own bedroom. My friends are free to come to my bedroom. They are coming to see me". Manci' told me she doesn't talk with children. And my friends come here to watch TV and to play TV games. They don't spoil anything. Its nice playing a TV game with my friends, but Manci' doesn't understand. She keeps throwing them out. I prefer to stay at my home rather than going to other friends' homes. I can visit them but most of the time it's nice here at home.

**Mzovuyo:** My friends and I don't fight, but the only problem we have is Zenzele, the boy Themba mentioned earlier. He likes to rob children who are sent to the shops. He takes their money. When we ask him to stop that he insults us (*uyasithuka*). He likes to just beat without any reason and he makes himself the boss in our street (Mzovuyo uses the English word, boss) (Conversation at Social Network Workshop, 7 July 1993.)

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## APPENDIX 6

### South Africa: changes in state maintenance grants for children

#### I

The thesis demonstrates the fluidity of family composition over time in New Crossroads and shows that discontinuities within African families can only be understood within a larger societal framework that acknowledges the role of the state in creating fragility within the intimate domains of family. With the above points in mind, I am able to provide a critique of hegemonic notions of family and of assumptions to do with the healing of families that have been, in part, incorporated into South African Welfare discourses: namely ideas to do with the nuclear family as normative referent, and assumptions contained within psychological frameworks of healing for addressing disruptions within families.

Child-centred institutions in the industrialised countries of the west have all perpetuated a particular conception of family - the nuclear family - as being the ideal configuration of social relations for the creation and containment of ideal childhoods. Stressing the nuclear family ignores the diversity and fluidity of family forms in most parts of the world - a point starkly demonstrated in my own work in New Crossroads - and is itself a dwindling phenomenon in so-called western societies.<sup>1</sup> Diana Gittens, writing of families in Britain suggests that, "[t]here is no such thing as *the* family - only families"(1993: 8) and that families change over time (see also Hareven, 1982).

Disciplines that have developed around the interests of the child presume that psychological and social stability depend on the coherence of families. The multiple ways in which families no longer cohere are not perceived as historical developments and transformations of social, political and economic relationships both within families and within other networks of social relations. Rather, it is said that the changes demonstrate the failure of individuals within families to contribute to their cohesion successfully. Diana Gittens writes, "[W]hen concern about the 'crisis in the family' becomes a recurrent theme, what is more probably being expressed is a fear that society itself is in a state of crisis" (Gittens, 1985: 155). Various psychological approaches proffer the idea that children who have been abused are likely to perpetuate abuse in their adult lives, a view that locates the development of

<sup>1</sup> Through an historical review of Britain and Europe, Diana Gittens (1993: 6-34) argues that family forms have always been diverse. She shows, for example, that in Great Britain in 1989, 25 percent of households consisted of one adult, 34 percent of households consisted of two people (either adults, or an adult and a child), and 25 percent of households consisted of a married couple with one or two dependent children (Gittens, 1993: 7).

behavioural patterns firmly within the family. In terms of the above framework, remedial therapy is offered as the way to address problems within families. The aim of remedial therapy is thus to repair family relationships with the implicit assumption that the family is self-contained. It is presumed that a rupture has occurred in terms of ideal norms for family life. Therapeutic intervention holds within its frame the hope that the ideal can be restored. Although remedial therapy often achieves good results in terms of the well-being of individuals, in many instances it bears no relation to wider social and economic relations that directly affect the abilities of families to maintain coherence. I have linked the multiple reasons for mobility of family members in *New Crossroads* in Chapter Two, for example, with a history of state intervention in families as well as economic and political issues that are broader than individual families.

As Sharon Stephens remarks, the institutions that purport to support children largely demonstrate "the conservation of the existing social order" and contain "no concerted analysis of power relations within that order" (Stephens, 1995: 95). The latter remark carries a double meaning. On the one hand, it offers a critique of the notion of the conservation of a presumed existing social order. On the other, it suggests that most child-centred institutions neither provide a concerted analysis of power relations within presumed "whole" (wholesome) families, nor of power relations between the family "unit" and the world.

A concrete example of the above critique is given in Marilyn Ivy's (1995: 79-104) examination of the predominance of inner-child therapies in the United States. Inner-child therapy is modelled on repairing difficulties within a presumed nuclear family with specific notions concerning the role of mothers and fathers as nurturers of children. Within the framework, it is said that individuals are able to make good the errors of parental care in childhood by acting as compassionate parent to neglected parts of the self in adulthood. Ivy notes that inner-child therapies are often very successful in assisting individuals to heal inner "wounds", yet she insists that they do not challenge predominant notions of family. She writes:

The interlinked themes of abuse, addiction and recovery form a medicalized and desocialized triad of tropes that first shifts public awareness from systematic, society-wide mistreatment of children through class, race and gender exploitation to an imaginarily perceived scene of the nuclear family and then moves further into the interior reaches of a bourgeois subject that now consumes (and subsumes) the very possibility of the social (Ivy, 1995: 82-83).

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Ivy argues that societal abuse and the burden placed on families, as well as what she terms, the "familization of society", are largely responsible for a great proportion of violence against women and children. The term, "familization" implies that the family is perceived as a natural phenomenon and that dissonance within families provides an explanation for societal dissonance (Ivy, 1995: 83).

In the second half of Appendix 6, I examine transformations in the State Maintenance Grant system for children in South Africa, tracing a history in which the above assumptions to do with family and repair are prevalent. The current state's efforts in terms of social welfare policy take place within a global setting where welfare provision in western industrialised countries that began to provide substantial benefits for recipients after the Second World War is dwindling. The South African state's emphasis on the need for each person to take responsibility for his or her life and to "pull" himself or herself up by his or her "boot straps" - the idealisation of self-help - echoes a liberal individualism prevalent in wealthy countries.<sup>2</sup> It takes on a particularly pernicious quality, however, in the local context where the former state did so much to undermine the social coherence of the majority of South Africans. Changes in the legislation to do with child support in South Africa must be seen in terms of the above trends.

## II

The emergence of a welfare system in South Africa was initially linked to attempts to resolve "the poor white problem" and thus addressed the needs of a small minority of South Africans who had lost access to farm land and who had joined the ranks of the working class in South African cities.<sup>3</sup> The state began to address the poor white problem in a concerted way in the 1930s (Kotze, 1996). It was only much later that family support grants were extended, in a minimal sense, to coloured and Indian groups. In 1937, as a consequence of the Children's Act 31 of 1937 (Union of South Africa, 1937), a family allowance scheme, later referred to as the State Maintenance Grant, was made available to whites, coloureds and Indians, with whites being paid double the allowance of other groups (E. Harvey, 1994: 36). African children were excluded from the grants on the pretext that the so-called extended family would provide for their own and their mother's welfare needs (Bozalek, forthcoming). With the perception that the

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<sup>2</sup> The importance of encouraging self-reliance amongst the poor was first emphasised by the new South African state in the 1996, Draft White Paper for Social Welfare (Republic of South Africa, February 1996).

<sup>3</sup> The poor white problem involved mainly Afrikaans speaking South Africans who had lost rights to land after the Boer war as well as due to mechanisation of farming practices on white farms in South Africa. Many Afrikaans people were share-croppers on privately owned farms and, once having been displaced, sought work in South African cities. The 1930s' recession exacerbated the poverty of, among others, the Afrikaans working class.

African extended family could serve as a catch-all for African children, the state rationalised its position in being exempt from supplying grants for the majority of South Africans. The above notions may be read as an excuse to exclude African children from state assistance.

Although in more recent years all South African women have been theoretically eligible to receive the grant on behalf of their children, African women continued to be excluded because most of them were deemed to be citizens of the so-called independent "homeland" states. Homeland authorities neither administered the grant nor gave out any grant of their own. African women who had permanent rights of residence within urban areas in South Africa due to their spouses having worked for one employer for a period of fifteen years, qualified for the grant.

In terms of the State Maintenance Grant, between 1960 and 1990, out of 1 000 children in every demarcated population group, 50 Coloured, 40 Indian, 14 White and only two or three African children, received the grant (Naidoo & Bozalek, 1997: 26; see Liebenberg, 1997a for comparable figures for 1990).

The allocation of family support grants has thus been severely skewed in terms of racial demarcations. When the distribution of the grant was being reviewed in the 1990s, it was found to be skewed not only in racial terms but also geographically. Francie Lund (1996 quoted in Robinson & Biersteker, 1997a: 83), in an analysis of the state maintenance grant system, noted that the grants were "disproportionately taken up by Coloured women in the Western and Eastern Cape, by White women in Gauteng and by Indian women in KwaZulu-Natal".

Where state maintenance grants were allocated, they were only given to mothers after they had gone through the courts in an attempt to extract maintenance for their children from the children's biological fathers. Since the court proceedings were often protracted and inefficient, many care-givers did not apply for assistance in terms of the state maintenance grant. All four Departments of Welfare that reflected the four demarcated population groups established in terms of *apartheid* ideology (African, Indian, Coloured, White)<sup>4</sup> presumed that fathers were breadwinners and sought to insist on fathers shouldering responsibilities for maintenance - a typical assumption in terms of conceptions of roles within the nuclear family (Burman & Barrat, 1993: 31). When mothers did receive the grant, they were paid a maximum

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<sup>4</sup> Under the Tri-cameral Parliament instituted by the *apartheid* state in the 1980s, parliamentary representation was extended from the population group designated white, to the population groups demarcated as coloured and Asian (Indian). Most Africans were presumed to be citizens of the so-called independent homelands. A limited number of Africans retained rights of residence in so-called South Africa and received some services from the state, although they were disenfranchised.

of R700 a month, R430 of which comprised a care-giver's allowance, and R135 of which was allocated for each of up to two children (Naidoo & Bozalek, 1997: 27).

The allocation of state maintenance grants for mothers and children was prejudicial towards single mothers. Single mothers could receive the grant for one child only. A married mother, in contrast, was eligible to receive the grant, in most cases, for two children but in rare cases for up to four children (in which case the grant amounted to R940). Married mothers were entitled to the grant if they themselves and their husbands were unemployed or if their husbands were in jail or in a mental institution. Unmarried mothers who became recipients of the grant were often compelled to attend family planning lectures on how to curtail their fertility. Welfare personnel would insist on single mothers looking for work (Burman & Barrat, 1993: 51-52). When the grant was allocated, it provided for Coloured, Asian and White children up to the age of eighteen years, and for African children, up to the age of sixteen. In terms of apartheid ideology, African children were deemed to mature and to enter working life earlier than other children.

Simkins and Dlamini (1987, in Burman & Barrat, 1993: 4) found that the percentage of maintenance grants paid out for children of single mothers was very small. In 1987, of the total (percentage of) grants paid out to families, the percentages of single White, Asian, Coloured and African mothers who received the grant were respectively, 37 percent, 36 percent, 24 percent and 0.3 percent.

Sandra Burman (1991: 215) showed how for the years 1989-90 the medical officer of Health in Cape Town recorded that 68.2 percent of African children in the Western Cape were born to women who were neither married nor living with a man. My research, together with other detailed studies, has demonstrated the fluidity of family networks and a lack of stability in terms of consistent care-givers and bread-winners for children (cf. Jones, 1993; Reynolds, 1995a; Ross, 1995; Spiegel, 1995; Spiegel & Mehlwana 1996). In 1993, the Project for Statistics of Living Standards and Development Survey (PSLSD) found that approximately 20 percent of South African children were not living with either parent (SALDRU, 1993 in Lund, 1996: 17). In 1995, researchers in the KwaZulu-Natal Midlands found that one in three children under sixteen years lived away from their mothers (McKerrow & Verbeek, 1995).

Francie Lund, in her analysis of state maintenance grants, reveals the irony of the implicit family model prevalent within judicial frameworks:

The nuclear family is the model on which the State Maintenance Grant is based. Former South African governments preached family preservation as

a social policy, while their economic and political policies systematically disrupted family life for people who were not white. Thus some of the fragmentation of families in all population groups is part of a broader phenomenon, but the specific effects of apartheid policies affected the African population particularly severely. Those same policies locked the majority of people into poverty (Lund,

The idea that fathers were necessarily bread-winners placed judicial conceptions of family within the ambit of western assumptions concerning family structure that I have outlined in the introductory section of this appendix.

The differential treatment of single mothers in relation to the grant demonstrates that they were seen to be deviating from a norm of sanctioned partnership, a norm that did not, and does not reflect South African realities.

In 1996, the new South African state commissioned Francie Lund to compile a report in which suggestions for the revision of the State Maintenance Grant system would be presented. Recommendations emerging from the Report of the Lund Committee on Child and Family Support (Lund, 1996) put forward ways in which grants for children could be more fairly allocated across the South African population under the new dispensation. According to the Lund report (1996: i), from R5 billion to R20 billion per annum would be required to bring the grants to parity for all population groups: a considerable increase in terms of the R1.2 billion allocated for the purpose by the former state. The new South African state argued that it was left with the choice of abandoning the R1.2 billion allocation for child support that in the past assisted only 17 percent of eligible women and children (Fraser-Moleketi, Agenda panel discussion in Naidoo & Bozalek, 1997: 26) or spreading the grant. In line with Lund's proposals, the new system of child support that was initially put forward by the Minister of Welfare and Population Development, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi, relinquished the care-giving grant for mothers altogether (recall that the state maintenance grant allocated by the apartheid state included a care-giving grant and an additional allocation for each child) and depended on a flat rate of R75 a month per child from birth to six years, subject to a means test. There was no restriction placed on the number of children within a family who could apply for the new grant. The system was to be progressively introduced over a five year period targeting three million children, or 30 percent of South Africa's poorest children (Naidoo & Bozalek, 1997: 27). The old state maintenance grant was to be progressively phased out over a three year period by reducing the amount paid out to families in three stages.<sup>5</sup> The phasing out of the state

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<sup>5</sup> In terms of Regulation, No. R. 417 regarding the phasing out of state maintenance grants in terms of the Social Assistance Act, No. 59 of 1992, the grant will be reduced by a quarter in the first year, a third in the second year,

maintenance grants will adversely affect many poor coloured families who are largely dependent on the grant for survival (Bozalek & Parker, 1998).

Under public pressure, the new grant was increased from R75 to R100 per month. Sandy Liebenberg (1997a) has outlined critical responses to the initial proposal of an allocation of R75 per child in terms of the new Child Support Grant. Criticisms revolved around a critique of figures concerning household subsistence levels used to calculate the allocation. The exclusion of housing and transport costs from the allocation was criticised, as was the restrictive age-cohort stipulation (nought to six years old) for grant allocation, since it was argued that costs increased for care-givers in relation to older children of school going age. Given wide-spread poverty for most South Africans, commentators opposed the restricted allocation of the grant to only 30 percent of the population. They questioned the state's fiscal policies suggesting that it should rather ignore or write off its foreign debts, debts that were largely accrued by the apartheid regime.

A means test has been developed for the state by the researcher, Debbie Budlender, who argues that the test is an administrative necessity and is aimed at curtailing abuse of the system. In my view, the application of a means test to assess the poverty of a woman and her children before she is able to apply for family support, is ethically questionable given wide spread poverty in South Africa. It borders on the obscene when we consider that 87 percent of children in South Africa under twelve years old are malnourished (Naidoo & Bozalek, 1997: 26).

Lund's recommendations for a child support grant were ratified and modified by the state within a framework of fiscal constraint that adheres to the state's adopted macro-economic policy, the Growth, Employment and Redistribution strategy (GEAR). I briefly suggest some of the parameters of GEAR to place welfare policies within a context of fiscal policy formation and the availability of funding. In terms of GEAR, the state aims to maintain fiscal discipline in an attempt to honour international debts accrued by the apartheid state and hence to curb large increases in social spending. The policy accedes to the demands of the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF), and finds a place within global economic trends. It is well known that the demands of the above institutions are often not conducive to the well-being of the poor (Liebenberg, 1997a; Marais, 1997; South African National Non-Governmental Organisation coalition (SANGOCO), 1997). Measures adopted by GEAR, that in some respects

echo demands of structural adjustment programmes adopted by many countries, have not succeeded in attracting large scale international investment in South Africa, as was hoped.

### **Exploring models of the family in South African social welfare discourse and in the public domain**

Jackie Sunde and Vivienne Bozalek (1995) argue that an understanding of diverse family forms is important in South Africa if policy proposals are to be appropriate in meeting the needs of the country (1995: 63; see Spiegel, Watson & Wilkinson, 1994 for a critique of housing development where the nuclear family is presumed to be the norm). Sunde's and Bozalek's points are born out in the disparity between judicial notions of the family and the fluidity of families that render the state's approach to private maintenance enforcement in the courts ineffective.

The aim of judicial attempts to enforce private maintenance of children by fathers places the primary responsibility for children on parents before any responsibility of the state is considered. The insistence that individuals adhere to a particular model of the family has rendered the administration of the judicial maintenance system unwieldy and difficult to enforce. Even if a monthly monetary sum to be paid by fathers is stipulated by the courts, the courts are often unable to secure payments for mothers over time due to the mobility of fathers and hence a lack of success in tracing their changes in domicile. A climate of general job insecurity means that fathers who are willing to pay maintenance are not always in a position to do so. (As I write, unemployment figures in the country are over 29.3 percent, Mail & Guardian, July 31 - August 6, 1998: 2)

The United Nations Organisation, in relation to child development, has in recent years emphasised, on the one hand, child survival and, on the other, training of care-givers (see Burman E. 1994a; Myers 1992). The South African government's welfare policies include a very strong indication that they will incorporate aspects of training for welfare recipients. The rationale behind the idea in the long-term is to reduce welfare costs. In some respects, in embracing a policy that further seeks to reduce social spending in a country of great inequalities and poverty, the state is abdicating its responsibility for the poor.

Assumptions to which I referred in the introductory section of the appendix - that families are culpable for the positions in which they find themselves and that healing within "dysfunctional" families is best addressed within the framework of psychology - have found their way into South African welfare discourse. For example, Vivienne Bozalek (1994: 48-51)

reported on a Family and Democracy Conference hosted by the Department of Home Economics at the University of Stellenbosch on the eve of the first democratic elections in South Africa that, apart from one conference paper, "general social crises were presented [at the conference] as crises in the family" (1994: 49) and that marriage at a young age, polygamy, large families, divorce and single parenthood were presented as problems or deviations from the ideal family. No attempt was made to place families within an historical context or to acknowledge the effect of state policies on the intimate domains of families. Rather, social workers were urged by one participant "to drag African families out of the swamps", a primordial metaphor suggesting that African families were innately problematic (Bozalek, 1994: 49).

The convener of the conference, Frieda Francisco-La Grange, called on delegates to promote the family as the "smallest democracy", a slogan promulgated by the United Nations to launch the International Year of the Family. In her opening address, with respect to the internal dynamics of families, Francisco-La Grange stated, "Emphasis on individual rights [within families] generates individualism which in turn generates self-centredness. We, although delighted with the emphasis on human rights, should realise that family cohesiveness is our aim and individual rights should subsume this" (in Bozalek, 1994: 50). From her remarks it is easy to see how essentially conservative notions of family cohesiveness persist in South Africa despite numerous studies that reveal the lack of ongoing cohesiveness for the majority of South African families. Francisco-La Grange's conceptions obscure and dismiss the very real needs of children that families are unable to provide. The notion of the family as the smallest democracy hides the many ways in which families contain competing or combative interests, as well as dangers. The idea thus obscures issues of gender and hierarchical power relations within families.

In 1995, South Africa made a fundamental policy commitment to children by ratifying the United Nations Convention of the Rights of the child, indicating its intention to place children at the centre of its now defunct, Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP).<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> The Reconstruction and Development Programmes instituted by the new South African state was independent of existing government ministries. One of the main aims of the RDP was to involve poor people in reconstruction and development programmes within the country. The state could not find sufficient funds to back the RDP and came to the point of view that ministries, in the course of their work, could address some of the goals of the RDP. The RDP collapsed when the state officially adopted the Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR) economic strategy.

In 1996, the government launched a National Programme of Action (NPA) to outline goals for children in health, water and sanitation, nutrition, early childhood development and basic education, social welfare, child protection and leisure, and cultural activities.

In 1997, the Institute for Democracy in South Africa (IDASA), an independent non-governmental organisation (NGO), and the Youth Development Trust,<sup>7</sup> commissioned a document entitled, *First Call: The South African Children's Budget* (Robinson & Biersteker, 1997a). The aim of the document was to outline the amounts of money government was actually spending on children, and to question whether funding was being directed towards NPA goals.

The Children's Budget examined financial allocation for children in areas of health, education, welfare, police and justice. The report established that within the Department of Health, money was reallocated within the health sector budget to launch the new primary health care policy. In terms of new policy, the state provides free health care for pregnant women and children under six years. The state launched the Primary School Nutrition Programme. In many provinces, feeding schemes for children in primary schools were subsequently undermined through corruption where monies allocated for the purpose disappeared. Researchers for The Children's Budget noted that a substantial amount of money was also allocated for education. However, two areas prioritised by the NPA - early childhood development and special educational needs for children with learning disabilities - did not receive extra funding in the provinces. In the Western Cape, the budget for both areas was cut.

Over half of government expenditure currently goes to social services. In 1997/8, 26 percent of the government's budget went to education (one of the highest allocations to education in the world), 14 percent to health, and 11 percent to welfare (Budlender, 1998: 5). The above allocation for social services may seem impressive, yet if we disaggregate the figures to do with health, welfare and education in terms of their specific allocation for children, a different understanding emerges.

In terms of the overall Welfare Budget, Shirley Robinson and Linda Biersteker (1997b: 9) - the compilers of the Children's Budget - found that for 1997, 80 percent of the Welfare Budget was allocated to old-age pensions and disability grants. Children received only nine percent of the budget. Ten and a half percent of social security payments were spent on child maintenance grants. Police and Justice Child Protection Units took only 0.15 percent of the

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<sup>7</sup> The Youth Development Trust was established in 1987 and is a non-governmental intermediary support agency for youth development organisations in South Africa.

entire police budget (a disturbing figure given the prevalence of child abuse in South Africa). With regard to the education budget, most of the allocation went towards teachers' salaries and a small proportion to upgrading teachers' skills.

The proposals of the Lund Committee to widen the child maintenance grant were criticised within the Children's Budget report because the amount budgeted was thought to be too low, and the qualifying age range for receiving the grant (up to six years) was thought to be too narrow to provide adequate support (recall that the state maintenance grant provided for some children up to the age of 16, and for others, up to the age of 18).

Robinson and Biersteker made the important recommendation that children needed to be identified in budgeting and statistical services (1997b: 10) and that, although the government had committed itself to a First Call for Children, budgets did not reflect the commitment. Robinson and Biersteker acknowledged the fiscal constraints within which the state was trying to operate. Their recommendations suggested that limited budgets could "be stretched" by careful policy choices. They encouraged the state to concentrate on primary preventative services for children as the most efficient way of spending limited resources (a route that the state has already adopted). The Welfare Department's Flagship Programme for unemployed mothers of young children was given as a way forward.

The Flagship Programme attempts to link social welfare and community economic development by assisting mothers to acquire skills and to become economically active. In 1996, The Department of Welfare and Population Development set aside R3 million for nine projects, one in each province, with an allocation of approximately R2 000 per year per family (Lund, 1996: 43). It was argued in the Children's Budget that the above approach would gradually reduce dependency on social security (Biersteker & Robinson, 1997b: 9). However, the Flagship Programme reaches a negligible number of poor women.<sup>8</sup>

The expectation that the Department of Welfare institute income generating schemes for impoverished women in their Flagship Programme is criticised by Francie Lund. On the 24th of March 1997 at an Agenda forum held in Durban, entitled, "Poverty Alleviation and Lund

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<sup>8</sup> In the United States the Personal Responsibility and Work Opportunity Reconciliation Act (PRWRA) was signed by President Clinton in 1996. In terms of the Act, recipients of Aid for Families with Dependent Children (AFDC) are required to enter "workfare" programmes (McCrate & Smith, 1998: 61-62) that are comparable with the more limited South African Flagship Programmes. The dubious assumption behind both American and South African training programmes is that recipients will find jobs after having been participants, or will be able to generate income for themselves in other ways, thus lessening the social responsibilities of the state (see Gerdes, 1998; Miranne, 1998, for additional critical appraisal of PRWORA).

Committee Recommendations", Lund argued that existing welfare projects that engage in income generation may build confidence for participants and contribute to the social good.<sup>9</sup>

However, in the absence of broad economic support networks, small projects would not generate meaningful incomes. Lund remarked:

We can't see, for instance the Flagship Programme, as a substitute for alternative systems of support. I really do think it is the case that welfare cannot be primarily income generating (Lund, at Agenda panel discussion in Naidoo & Bozalek, 1997: 29).

Drawing on the work of Harold Wilensky and Charles Lebeaux (1958), as described by the South African social work academic, Brian McKendrick (1987), Jackie Sunde and Vivienne Bozalek (1995: 66) demarcate residual and institutional models of welfare. They argue that South Africa has adopted a residual approach to welfare where the state does not provide generalised welfare services for its citizens. Rather, welfare is sometimes provided when so-called normal institutions are seen to have failed.

Sunde and Bozalek recommend welfare as a right as opposed to a privilege and, therefore, a move from a residual to an institutional model of welfare in South Africa - an approach that takes the state to task for its adoption of GEAR (see Bozalek, 1998).

The emphasis in South Africa on residual welfare is in line with a shift in global trends where welfare as a right is being steadily eroded. In the 1980s, the Reagan and Thatcher administrations, for example, undercut many important aspects of the welfare state in the United States and in Great Britain by instituting harsh economic policies (see Murray, 1984, for an account to the erosion of welfare policies in America from 1950-1980). The Back to Basics campaign largely promulgated by conservative politicians in both America and Great Britain in recent years stresses a return to family values. Emphasis is increasingly placed on families and communities to take up issues of welfare and care expressed in the widely used phrase, self-reliance. Communities are appealed to, to care for children, the aged, and the mentally ill, while institutions that assisted families with care are progressively eroded. The conception of community, a vague and misleading one at best, disguises the ways in which already overburdened women, and sometimes children often have to juggle additional care without pay.

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<sup>9</sup> The Agenda collective have on several occasions hosted important debates concerning women's issues and rights in South Africa. The open Forum held on March 24, 1997, was attended, among others, by the Minister of Welfare and Population Development, Geraldine Fraser-Moleketi; Francie Lund, the convener of the Lund report; Seema Naran of the Black Sash Advice Office (Durban) and Sibongile Zulu, a practising community social worker. Fikile Mazibuko of the Black Social Workers' Association chaired the forum.

The views expressed by conservative politicians are a response to global economic trends where the state can no longer guarantee its citizens protection. Calls, like the above, advocate the dexterity of individuals to meet needs within families but often miss the particular ways in which individuals attempt to meet needs.

The model of the family implicit in discourse across the spectrum of South African Welfare policy from the old to the new South Africa - even where the diversity of family forms and fluidity through time is acknowledged - presumes the predominance of community care. The needs of women and children remain hidden in the model. Responsibility for family welfare is placed in the private domain on women, while financial survival is largely presumed to be the domain of men. The state does not accept responsibility for providing resources to ensure the welfare of families. In terms of existing child welfare legislation, it is the duty of parents to provide for their children. Only when they "fail" to do so, or when they are regarded as "unfit" or "unable" will the state assume responsibility (Republic of South Africa, 1983). Distinct dislocations exist between socioeconomic rights as expressed in the South African constitution and the model of residual welfare that has emerged in South Africa linked to a particular economic policy that insists on the curtailment of social spending. (See Liebenberg, 1997b, for an analysis of the dislocation between children's rights ratified by the South African state and the shortcomings of policy in relation to rights.)

## GLOSSARY \*

\* I have included individual Xhosa words and phrases that appear in the body of the dissertation in the glossary. I suggest the meaning of words and phrases as succinctly as possible. More elaborate explanations are to be found where words and phrases first appear in the written text.

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*akafuni ndigeze* = she does not want me to be naughty

*amabhulu* = the *boers* (a word denoting oppressors using the Afrikaans word for farmer, *boer*)

*amadoda* = men

*amafufunyana* = a form of spirit possession characterised by speaking in several voices

*amatyotyombe* = shanty houses (literally, chicken houses)

*amaqina* = sheep hooves and forelegs

*Andinamdla waniks* = I am not interested in anything (*Niks* is derived from the Afrikaans word, *niks*, meaning nothing.)

*asihetisheki* = we are not hurt (derived from the English word, hurt)

*asizizo izityebi* = we are not rich (literally, we are not the fat ones)

*barries* = a slang expression meaning ignorant people from the country

*dadobawo* = father's sister

*emakitshini* = in the kitchens (referring to domestic work "in the kitchens" of the employers)

*emaphandleni* = outside (often associated with the country)

*emaXhoseni* = the Transkei (literally, the place of the Xhosa)

*ephucukileyo* = appropriately

*eRhawutini* = in Johannesburg (literally, in the place of gold)

*evangeli inkonzo yomoya* = evangelical spiritual church

*gogo* = insect

*gqitha* = really (an emphatic phrase)

*Hamba, Bekile! Sukuhlala ndawonye.* = Go, Drinking vessel! Do not stay in one place.

*hayi* = an expression of defiance similar to the English word, no

into *ndiyikhalazeliyo* = the thing I complain about (from the word, *ukukhala* meaning, to cry)

*iibekile* = beer containers

*iiketi* = catapults derived from a shortened version of the English word.

*iintloko* = sheep heads (literally, heads)

*iiqadi* = young assistants for male initiates

*imbeleko* = the name of the ritual to introduce a child to their patrilineal ancestors (literally, a carrying skin, the skin of a sacrificial animal used to carry an infant on its mother's back)

*imbi* = ugly

*imifiliba* = misty

*imifino* = wild spinach

*inyama yegusha* = mutton (literally, meat of the sheep)

*isiko* = ritual

*isivulangxowa* = opening of the box (a ritual process to do with symbolic cleansing)

*izibonda* = leaders (literally, headmen)

*izilambi* = the hungry ones

*izinto ezimbi* = ugly things

*izikoli* = gangsters (derived from the Afrikaans word, *skollies*)

*Kwavuka* = the place of being awake

*kuyalanjwa emaXhoseni* = there is hunger (starvation) in the Transkei

*makhulu* = grandmother

*malume* = mother's brother

*malumekazi* = mother's brother's wife

*mama* = mother

*Ngconde* = a particular clan name

*Nangona iischool boycotts zilimsha ixesha kodwa siyavakala izizathu zazo* = Although school boycotts waste time, we can understand the reasons for them.

*Ndiyowaba gqitha.* I am really alone.

*ngamehlo enyama* = with the meat of my eye (referring to really having seen something)

*ningamabanjwa* = you are prisoners

*ningamaqabakazi* = you are female country bumpkins, or uneducated ones

*nontsumpa* = township superintendent (an apartheid official)

*ntombi* = girl (When used as a form of address, *ntombi* is spelt without the prefix, i. As a noun, the word is spelt, *intombi*.)

*oko bazalwa* = as they were born (nude)

*ongeviyo* = he/she does not listen

*smilies* = sheep skulls (derived from the English word, smile, on account of the exposed teeth of a skull)

*tata* = father

*tata kaLawrence* = Lawrence's father (a respectful way of referring to a man by calling him the father of his son)

*tatomkhulu* = grandfather

*tenti* = a word referring to a temporary dwelling made out of plastic bags and sticks from the English word, "tent"

*ubuntu* = humanity

*ubuntu bakho* = your humanity

*uchuku* = little fights

*udadobawo* = my father's sister

*Ukoluka lisiko lidala. Line nkayi.* = the ritual is old. It is bald.

*ukuclean nokuqinisa* = to clean and to tighten (referring to ritual processes. The word *ukuclean* is derived from English)

*ukuphangela* = to work for a wage

*ukusebenza* = to work (Denoting a wider sense of the notion of work than is expressed in the word, *ukuphangela*. *Ukusebenza* suggests valued activity or work associated with ritual and social repair.)

*ukuthombisa* = to sprout (refers to a girl's first menstruation)

*umngqusho* = cooked maize kernels (sometimes mixed with beans)

*umntu ngumntu ngabantu* = a person is a person because of other people

*umntu osileyo* = a silly person (derived from the English word, silly)

*umoya omdaka* = an unclean spirit

*umthetho* = law

*umtshayelo nenkwenkwe* = a broom and a boy (a slogan adopted by older men in new Crossroads when attempting to discipline boys who were viewed as involved in gang activities)

*umqombothi* = home brewed beer

*unesipho sendalo* = he/she is naturally gifted

*uphum' ecaleni* = he/she has gone out on the side (separating himself or herself from what is considered socially sanctioned behaviour)

*uyasithuka* = he/she insults us

*uyathanda ukusokolisa* = she/he likes to make others struggle

*uThixo* = God

*Yho* = an expression of surprise

*Zintswelo mbeko* = They did not have respect

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