

HOUSING AND HOPES: MOWBRAY'S ELDERLY WHITES AND THE EFFECTS
OF REFORMS IN SOUTH AFRICAN PROPERTY LEGISLATION

by
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ABSTRACT

My aim in the thesis is to look at how elderly White Mowbray residents have responded to the effects of reforms in South African Property legislation. In order to reach this objective I have used Gregory Bateson's notion of the double bind, as describing no win situations, as a structural framework for analysis.

Firstly, recognising Bateson's injunction that double binds can only be understood contextually, I provide three contexts which give rise to elderly White Mowbray residents' responses. These are: (i) the research process; (ii) a history of 'winning' for Whites in terms of access to housing; and (iii) elderly White Mowbray residents' experiences of, and their strategies for, securing accommodation in a context of change.

Secondly, I document the responses of elderly White Mowbray residents to changes in their housing situation by discussing: (i) their construction and selective use of history as a political tool; (ii) their use of a local support and lobby group as an avenue of response; and (iii) their construction of opposed images of self and others. In the process I tease out levels of differentiation and complexity and show how the double bind comes about and is reinforced in relation to each response to the changing housing situation.

Bateson's notion of a double bind, as describing no win situations, has proved a useful tool for analysis for two reasons. It helps in understanding the relationship between elderly White Mowbray residents' perceptions of their experiencing a 'housing crisis' and their responses to it. It has also proved useful to understand the range of different responses of elderly White Mowbray residents to the 'housing crisis'. Recognition of these different responses leads to a critique of two traps into which other social scientists have fallen when discussing White South Africans: (i) a tendency to over-generalise; and (ii) a tendency play down the importance of responses of Whites to the process of political reform in the 1980s and 1990s. As such, Bateson's notion of the double bind proves a valuable tool for understanding the complex manner in which some White South Africans have responded to a changing context which they perceive as being to their disadvantage.

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Introduction

It is a late Spring afternoon in 1991. I am in the lounge of a large flat in Mowbray, Cape Town, overlooking a spacious courtyard and parking lot. Looking up through the windows I can see buck running on the windswept grass on the slopes of Devil's Peak and in the far distance the churned-up sea in Table Bay. While the usual 'Cape Doctor' blows across this corner of the Cape Peninsula, I sit and chat to Mr and Mrs Thomas (Case 3.15) in their cosy sitting-room.

We have just had a discussion about housing in general and the housing options available to elderly people. They are interested to hear that I became interested in elderly people when I was working at one of the local Church of the Province parishes in the area. They are also "Anglicans" and draw me into a debate on the role of the church in politics. Yes, they agree with me, the church should be involved in political discussions; but the church needs to set limits on what it is willing to do. They begin to relate with horror an incident when the Dean of Cape Town permitted a group of toyi-toying protestors to go into the Cathedral, in order to escape the police, with their "communist flags" and "ANC banners".

Mrs Thomas had been so horrified by the event that she had telephoned the Dean to complain. He responded by asking her why she was so offended by the African National Congress banners being in the church if she was not offended by the multitude of colonial military banners on display. She explained to me that she found his question and attitude troublesome and went on to respond that it was what the banners symbolised which made the difference.

For her, the ANC's symbols and the "communist flag" represented a world of social upheaval and everything that was opposed to "Christian" and "Civilised norms". By contrast the British regimental flags represented "civilisation" and good social norms. To her it was the British colonialists who had "brought light to Africa".

This type of response was common in many of my interviews with White elderly¹ people in Mowbray. In responding to the effects in the suburb of what they saw as a growing 'housing crisis', they drew on similar imagery, notions and symbols. At times, possibly when they thought they had offended this 'lefty from the University of Cape Town', they would justify their position by explaining that this "was how they were brought up to think". Their own socialisation was their last line of defence.

What is striking is the way elderly White Mowbray residents' conservative responses paralleled those described in other studies of White South Africans. This is particularly true for studies that have investigated how Whites have responded to political change in South Africa since the early 1980s (Crapanzano, 1985), the implications of the removal of the Group Areas Act on White suburbs (Davies, 1989; Pickard-Cambridge, 1988), and housing reform in general (Ferreira & Rip, 1990; Ferreira and Lamont, 1990; Theunissen, 1983).

In examining this literature for insights to understand how elderly White Mowbray residents face pressure on their access to housing, I have identified two themes that both

1. In referring to people as White, Black or Coloured I am referring to them in terms of their categorization under the Population Registration Act. This is to demonstrate the connection between these categories and their socio-political effects. In referring to people as 'black', 'coloured' or 'white' I am using an emic definition of the 'self' and 'others' in common usage in the suburb where I worked. Where I refer to people as elderly it is to suggest my imposition of an age category for the purposes of this research; whereas referring to them as 'elderly' suggests self definition and emic usage. Throughout the thesis pseudonyms are used unless the person concerned has appeared in print or is a recognised public figure.

demand questioning. The first is the tendency by some authors to over-generalize about people classified as White. Crapanzano (1985) provides a good example when he projects one attitude, "waiting", onto the entire population of South African Whites. In doing so he fails to contextualise adequately the response that he describes. Similarly, Pickard-Cambridge (1988), while admitting that 'poor whites' may find themselves homeless as a result of housing reform in South Africa, assumes that Whites will almost all respond in a similar manner to removal of the Group Areas Act. In the process of assuming such uniformity she both homogenises the White population and simply disregards conservative responses as undeserving of analysis because she sees them as having no socio-economic foundation.

In contrast to Crapanzano's (1985) and Pickard-Cambridge's (1988) tendency to over-generalise, Ferreira and Rip (1990) recognise that age is a major determinant of how people respond to political reform in South Africa. But in doing so they fail to develop their analysis by looking at the relationship between the context and the responses they describe. Thus they conclude, after reflecting on elderly White Johannesburg residents' descriptions of crime in central suburbs of that city, that " in its present state of transition the area (of Johannesburg) can be regarded as a deleterious life-setting for white old people who find it difficult to adjust to the socio-political changes in the country." In doing so they accept their elderly informants' stereotype of blacks as criminal at face value without

developing an analysis that attempts to locate that stereotype within a conflict over access to resources.

The above tendency relates to the analysis of ethnicity. As Webster (1990) has so clearly demonstrated, ethnicity cannot be taken as a given but needs to be understood in terms of its instrumental use. Thus, as he demonstrates, notions of 'Tsonga' and 'Zuluness' in KwaZulu need to be located in gender struggles over the control of resources and labour. Tajfel (1981) makes a similar point about racial stereotypes by suggesting that one needs to understand them in terms of their social function.

The above discussion is important because it helps to contextualise my own difficulty in analysing the responses of elderly White Mowbray residents to their loss of access to accommodation. While I realise that the behaviour I have observed in Mowbray reflects a form of conservatism, some of its elements clearly differ from those described in the above literature on White South Africans. One extra layer of complexity is the fact that many of these apparently conservative Mowbray residents simultaneously demonstrated progressive attitudes. Thus the same elderly White Mowbray residents whom I thought of as conservative, referred to and saw themselves as 'white liberals' residing in a liberal constituency. They openly stated that they voted for the Democratic Party candidate in the 1989 General Election, even if they developed serious reservations about her subsequently. In addition they openly opposed *apartheid* and

its evil implications for those who were 'black', and I observed some of them demonstrating strong support for the 'Yes vote' in the 1992 referendum about continuing negotiations.

It became clear to me that these seemingly conflicting behaviours needed to be located in a specific context in which they arose in order to be adequately analysed. What emerged as important was that all of them were aimed at addressing the 'housing crisis' which elderly White Mowbray residents saw as a direct result of the state's policy towards housing and the process of reform in South Africa. The political tide had been turned, and, they seemed to say, it could no longer be held back. At one time they had tried to turn the tide, and in small ways continued to do so. This thesis is about that tide of change, as it was reflected in the effects of reforms in South African property legislation, and how elderly residents of Mowbray responded to it.

The primary aim of this thesis is to look at how elderly White Mowbray residents have responded to reforms in South African property legislation. As such, it depicts a story about the lives of people who feel their accommodational interests have been forgotten in the process of reform. Having once been important social players and contributors to society, many now feel they are in the way of change and pawns in other players' hands.

For many of these elderly White Mowbray residents the 'housing crisis' in Mowbray was a turning point in local politics. The way they responded to it both reflected their own values and interests, and revealed the values and interests of other political players. Through their involvement in the process they realised that they were no longer a primary concern on the national political agenda.

I will demonstrate that as elderly people responded to the 'housing crisis' they drew on previous images, sentiments and symbols only to find them no longer acceptable in political debate. In thus drawing on previously dominant ideas they found themselves pushed to society's ideological margins. Yet, even when they borrowed contemporary ideas about political action and threatened to use them, they could still not achieve their objectives. Indeed, their story of failure provides a good illustration of what Gregory Bateson (1973; c.f. Black 1973) describes as a "double bind".

Bateson (1973:173) defined a "double bind" as a "situation in which no matter what a person does, he (sic) can't win". He argues that such situations can produce negative effects, for example schizophrenia, or can produce creativity in the individual. For example he argues that trainers can utilize it to force dolphins to be creative and to learn new tricks. In addition it can be used in a therapy situation to confront schizophrenics to alter their behaviour. My intention is not to take Bateson this far, nor to suggest

that, in the case of elderly residents of Mowbray, the double bind they have found themselves in will produce a specific end. I am not a social prophet nor a social therapist.

I am also aware that there are limitations in the way that the theory was developed and used by others. While the approach emphasizes contexts, theorists such as Bateson did not give sufficient emphasis to history as a context. My contention is that history provides a valuable context which cannot be ignored, and can in itself be part of the response which leads to the double bind. I will demonstrate this below.

In addition, those who have used the notion of the double bind (Garfinkel 1967; Goffman 1961 and 1963; Bateson 1973) have tended to assume that the societies which they describe are homogeneous. For example, Garfinkel (1967) suggests homogeneity when he discusses 'common sense knowledge'. Goffman (1961; 1963), when looking at social conflict in relation to prisons and those in society who are stigmatised, suggests that categories of people have the same cultural values. At the other extreme, when looking at social pathology in terms of mental illness (Bateson 1973), the individual is assumed to represent 'the culture' of any given 'society'.

This relates directly to my comments about how White South Africans are assumed to respond to reform in South Africa in a singular fashion. Using the double bind idea as a tool for understanding the variety of responses of elderly White Mowbray residents to the 'housing crisis, I shall demonstrate that homogeneity of responses cannot be assumed. My assumption then is that culture, while shared, is contested within any given context.

My intention therefore is to use Bateson's theory as an analytic tool to facilitate understanding of a particular situation of social change. In order to do this I will borrow the two formative ideas of the theory, namely: (i) the idea that double binds occur/arise as a result of their contexts; and (ii) that they produce specific 'no win' situations.

Contexts

This weaving of contexts and the messages which propose contexts - but which, like all messages whatsoever, have meaning only by virtue of the context - is the subject matter of the so called double bind theory Bateson (1973:246).

The first half of my thesis borrows this injunction to observe contexts in order to understand responses which lead to the double bind. In order to do this I will deal with three contexts of understanding.

The first of these (Chapter One) is methodological and deals with the study itself as a context for understanding the responses of elderly White Mowbray residents to the 'housing crisis'. I argue that the structure and approach adopted in the study, as determined by both myself and my research participants, to some degree determines the types of responses that will emerge. The researcher, as social participant, cannot be divorced from the research findings. In addition, those who are willing or unwilling to participate in the research provide the 'raw data' which is woven into a tapestry of meaning in the process of analysis and in the construction of an ethnography.

The second context is a historical one. Chapter Two deals with the history of Mowbray and the process of historical construction on the part of the researcher. It includes information from both primary and secondary sources and deals with the history of housing in Mowbray by focusing on the 'development' of privileged access to housing for people classified as White until the early 1980s. I thus demonstrate that the past provides a context in which elderly White Mowbray residents were on the winning side of a battle for access to housing. In many senses this constructed history is my response to the history which informants provided and which I deal with in Chapter Four.

The third context is the continuing debate over housing in the 1980s and 1990s, both nationally and locally. Chapter Three focuses on seven factors which have resulted in a

perceived 'housing crisis' in the southern suburbs of Cape Town. Relating these factors to housing type, I argue that even though, on paper, there is a statistical excess of housing for people classified White, in real terms there is a marked shortage of housing for some categories of people within that 'privileged' category. The complexity of this context makes elderly people both winners and losers when it comes to securing accommodation. My informants' responses to this changing and volatile context, are the focus of the second half of the thesis.

Producing 'No Win' Situations

Bateson's second idea is that double binds produce no win situations. Here Bateson suggests that just as people respond to particular contexts in ways they perceive as appropriate, so the game rules change to such an extent that their responses are no longer appropriate and thus do not produce the desired effects. In the second half of this thesis I apply this idea when discussing three responses, on the part of elderly residents of Mowbray, to the multi-layered context described in the first half. All three responses seem to produce no win situations.

In Chapter Four I show that elderly people, in responding to the context of the 'housing crisis', utilize a manipulated and selective history as a political tool. That history is a very particular description of Mowbray, and at times contrasts with, and sometimes complements, the history constructed in Chapter Two. It is a history which draws

upon notions of 'civilisation' and 'reasonableness', and suggests that some elderly people - as the 'holders of history' - constitute a link to the past and a resource for political response.

There are, however, competing conceptions of what constitutes Mowbray's past. While some present a picture that reflects the earlier dominant ideology of *apartheid*, others reflect a different perspective. This is put forward by some elderly White residents and by present and former Coloured residents. Although their histories constitute locally suppressed texts they are nonetheless important in a broader political context where they are used to challenge the local 'idyllic history of civilisation' and its use as a political lever. In this regard they play a part in producing a double bind situation through contradicting claims to an idyllic history for the suburb.

Chapter Five considers how elderly White residents of Mowbray used a lobby and support group, the Southern Suburbs Action Network (SSAN), as an avenue of response to the 'housing crisis'. Some elderly residents of Mowbray participated in the group through signing a petition that was sent to Parliament, while others attempted to use the group as a means of support during housing disputes. In addition some elderly White Mowbray residents attempted to bring to fruition the SSAN's threat to use 'protest politics' in order to force the state to meet its demands. But as the participants soon learned, even this avenue of

response could be lost in the political bureaucracy and counteracted by other powerful local agents. Once again their double bind was demonstrated in that the most potent means of demonstrating their concerns was seen to be incompatible with their own self-image.

Chapter Six then turns to consider a somewhat hidden response to the 'housing crisis' that, for reasons of political expedience, was not given full public voice. Although it constituted part of a limited public face, it was only given full expression in private discussion and behind closed doors. The fact that people could respond in private, in the framework of anonymous interviews, meant they could respond with a degree of latitude which was seen as inappropriate in the public domain. In so doing they were willing to use racial stereotypes, and images of the 'self' and 'other' that were grounded in racism and reflected commitments to perpetual ethnic distinctions.

The very fact that respondents felt obliged to a conspiracy of whispering these feelings, brings us full circle to Bateson's notion of the double bind. At the end of the day none of the ways White elderly residents of Mowbray responded to the 'housing crisis' could raise sufficient public support and government intervention to maintain their position as 'the privileged'. At worst, they gave rise to a sense of revulsion; at best they generated sympathy, but without support. This then is these elderly people's double bind: It did not matter how they responded to the pressures

they felt on them, for their concerns did not make it onto the political agendas of the day. For those in political office, the interests of elderly White Mowbray residents were not seen as politically crucial and they gained little support for their concerns. They thus experienced a sense of increased marginalisation and frustration.

SECTION ONE: CONTEXTS

Chapter One
Methodology

I. Parameters of the Study

Research was undertaken in the Cape Town suburb of Mowbray (Map 1.1), during the periods July 1991-March 1992 and August 1992-October 1992, in three broad phases. At first a survey was done in the 'dorp'¹ section of Mowbray which is bounded on four sides by Liesbeeck Parkway, the N2 or Settlers Way, the M3 or Rhodes Drive, and Wolmunster, Rose and Bridge Streets (Map 1.2). Within this section of the suburb three areas were chosen for the generation of a random sample based on housing type². These were: (i) an area of 177 flats; (ii) an area of 152 terraced and semi-detached houses; and (iii) an area of 93 free-standing houses. Using random tables (Stoker 1974), a random sample of 30 dwellings was generated from each of these three areas. 10 dwellings were added to the sample from personal contacts and requests for interviews. This gave a total of 100 dwellings. All 100 dwellings were visited, but only 59 units were successfully surveyed. These comprised 33 flats,

1. The word 'dorp' is Afrikaans and usually refers to a small rural village. In the context of Mowbray it is an emic term for the older, more 'established' section of the suburb.

2. The idea of dividing the area on the basis of dwelling type was a result of my findings for my honours dissertation on Maitland where housing type was an important criterion in relation to the types of occupants (Bell 1990).

14 free-standing houses, and 16 semi-detached and terraced houses. The remaining 41 units were excluded from the survey because the residents did not want to participate in the study or were not home on the repeated occasions when the dwellings were visited.

The second phase of research involved selection of primary informants from among the 62 residents of the dwellings surveyed who were in the age category 60 and older or who self-defined themselves as 'elderly' (I will discuss the issue of age in more detail below). 38 of them were willing to participate in in-depth interviews which focussed on the 'housing crisis', housing alternatives and strategies for securing housing.

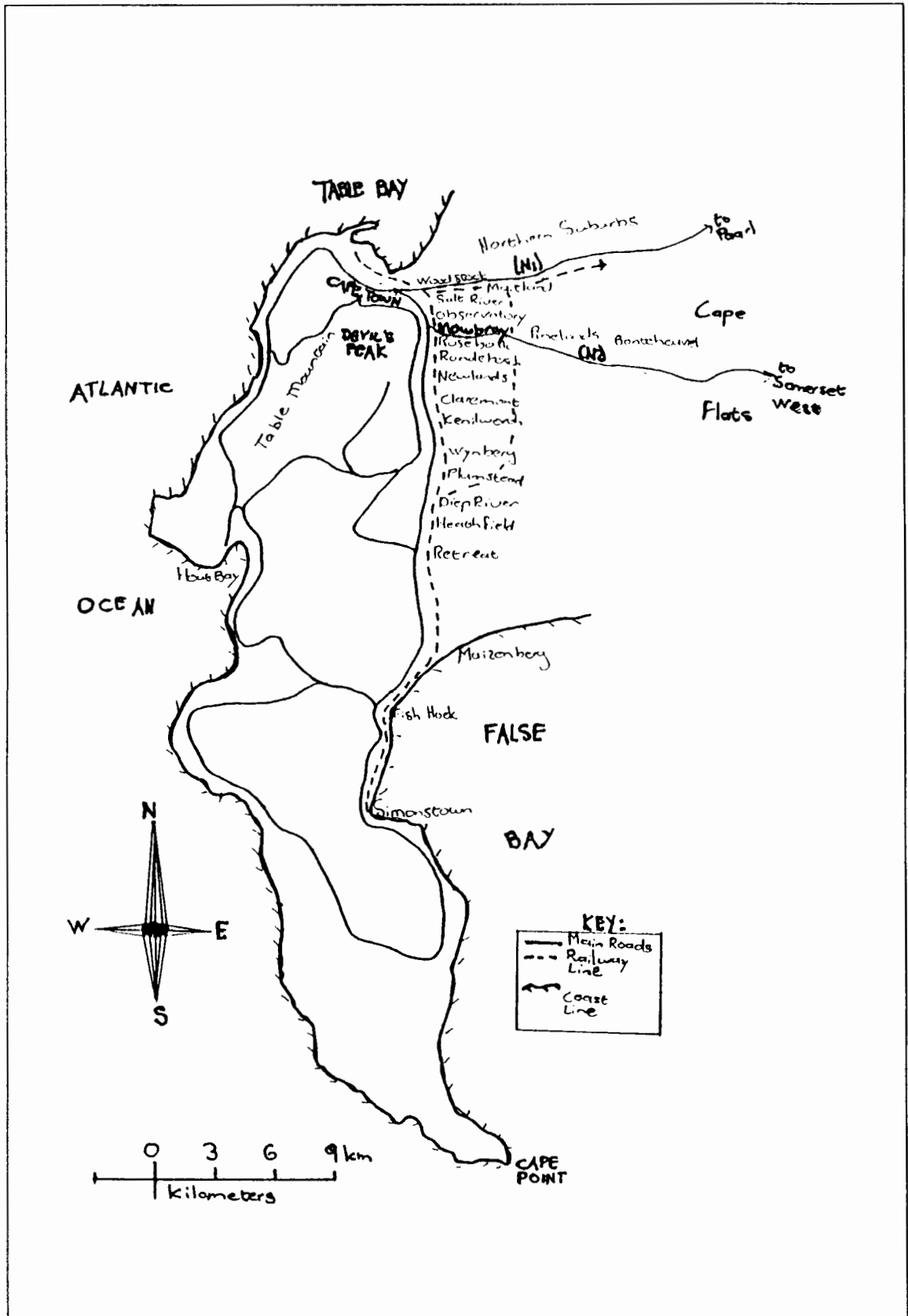
For the third phase of the research 25 of these 38 primary informants were asked to participate in life history studies and to keep diaries. The life history studies focussed on their previous housing options, the positive and negative aspects of these options, and reasons for selecting Mowbray as a residential suburb. The diaries were aimed at gaining some idea of the daily activities of elderly residents in the suburb and as a tool for understanding the social and kinship networks of informants.

The use of interviews and diaries, techniques which required verbalised responses, was complemented by participant observation in formal and informal settings (This is discussed further later in the chapter). Those settings

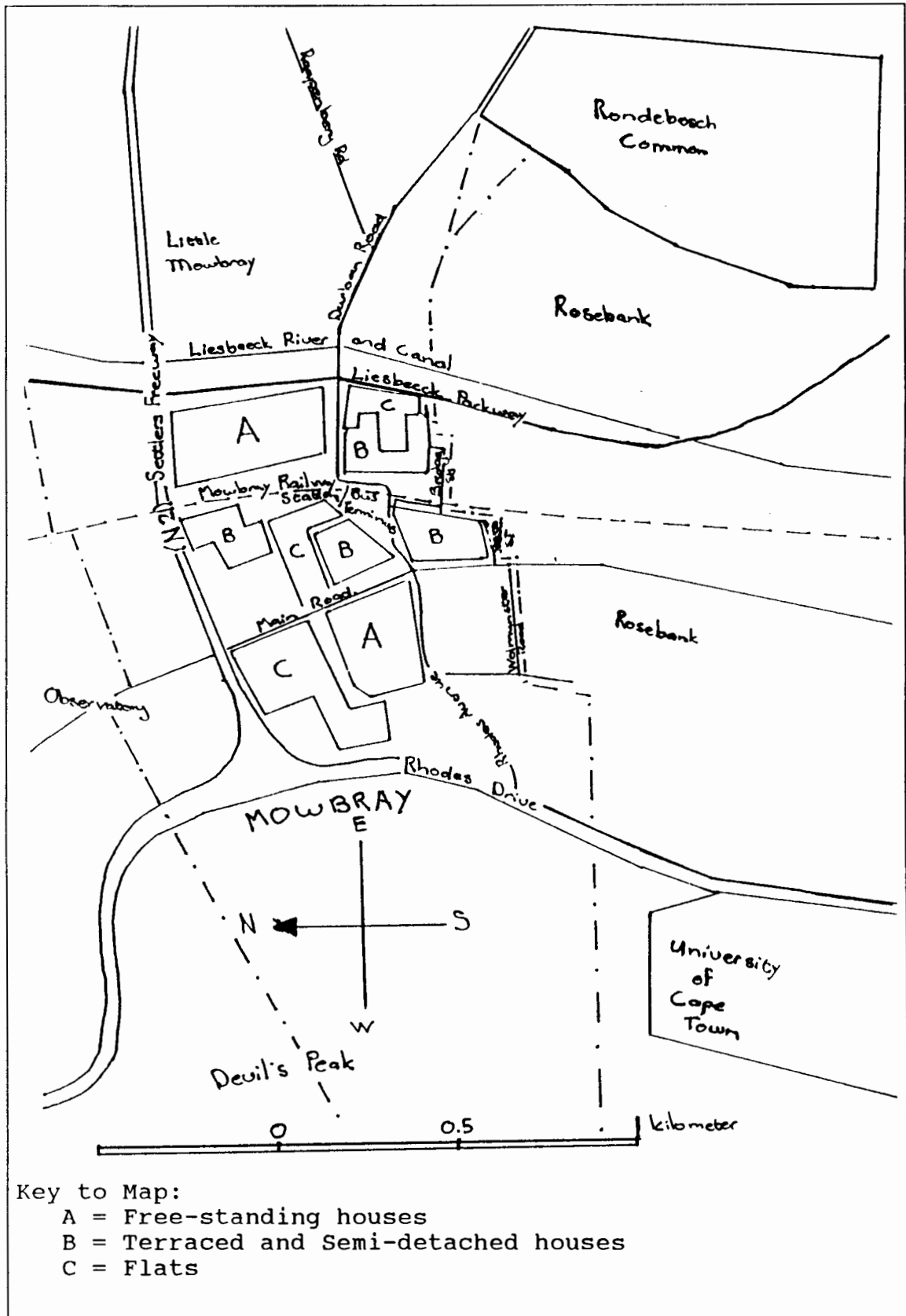
which I have defined as formal, meetings of political and religious organisations, involved getting permission from gatekeepers in order to attend. Informal settings were those where I was free to observe or participate, for example the public library, shops, the streets and parks.

In addition, interviews were conducted with a wide range of interested persons who lived and worked in Mowbray or had a direct interest in the lives of elderly people in the suburb. These ranged from doctors to an optician, policemen, shopkeepers, the janitor of the public toilets, "vagrants", two local historians, ministers of religion, government and city council officials, the director of the local Abbeyfield Society and the organizers of a housing lobby group, the Southern Suburbs Action Network. Interviews focussed on elderly people as a category, services offered to them, their utilization of Mowbray as a suburb, and the 'housing crisis'.

Another important element of the research process was the collection of newspaper articles that provided information on local issues, housing trends, and the cost and sales of property. Archival work was done on the history of the suburb. Time was also spent in the Deeds Office in Cape Town for the creation of the random sample of dwellings for the survey, and to collect information on the history of property transactions and housing trends over time in the suburb.



Map 1.1 The Cape Peninsula



Map 1.2 Map of Area of Mowbray Included in the Study
 [Adapted from two orthophoto maps from the Chief
 Director of Surveys and Mapping (1984)]

II. A Theoretical Consideration: Definition of 'The Elderly'

The primary aim of this project was to study how 'elderly' people responded to a perceived shortage of housing. One of the primary 'problems' of the research was to define and thereby select a sample of 'elderly people'. It is clear that the category can be defined in various ways and that the types of definitions assumed will impact directly upon the research process.

A. Definition of 'the elderly': Gerontology and Anthropology

The gerontological literature is full of assumptions about who the 'elderly' are. Its definitions are based on criteria of chronological age and a distinction between the 'aged' in 'industrial' and 'traditional' societies. For example Cowgill (1972), when speaking of 'the aged' in countries such as the United States of America [which he perceives to be "the most modernised of all contemporary societies" (1972:243)], defines the category as people who are 65 years of age or older and have retired from work. Crandall (1980:376) assumes the same, even while criticising other gerontologists for representing "the aged as a homogeneous group". While endeavouring to introduce variables of race or ethnicity, he assumes that one can simply define elderly people by imposing age categories.

What is common to such definitions of 'the elderly' is the assumption that chronological age is the primary variable in determining who 'the aged' are in 'industrial' and 'modern'

societies. Agedness, in terms of this definition, is assumed to be 'natural' and a given. The only new variable occasionally introduced is that of function in terms of a biomedical model, which, I would argue, further reinforces the definition and adds to its 'scientific' legitimation. These definitions are not surprising, considering the history of gerontology with its roots in the study by sociologists and social psychologists of the impact of forced retirement and its association with geriatric developments (Laslett 1978).

By the late 1960s and early 1970s anthropological endeavours began to understand how age could be conceptualised in various societies and what such conceptualisations meant in terms of social structure. Much of this work was done in age-grade societies (Wilson 1967) and gerontocracies (Hamer 1972). In addition, comparative methods were used to describe the differences between the age structures of 'industrial' and 'traditional' societies (Goody 1976). What is evident from much of this work is that emphasis was placed upon social structure, roles and statuses, rather than upon formulating definitions of agedness.

The comparative method also raised some serious questions about the romantic idealisation of 'the aged' in 'non-industrial societies'. Harlan (1968:469) showed for example that elderly Indians, in a 'traditional society', can be treated in the same manner as elderly people in 'industrial society' in that they do not have the "high prestige, power,

authority, and security" which they are "presumed to have"³. The value of Harlan's analysis is that it began to question the idyllic image of agedness in 'traditional societies'. But it is limited in that he has imposed a chronological definition of agedness.

Part of the justification for use of a chronological definition of agedness in 'industrial' societies was the assumption that retirement was a rite of passage defining the cut-off point between the 'economically active' and those defined as elderly. It was then assumed that elderly people in such societies, in contrast to 'traditional' societies, would be treated with little respect. Harlan refutes such a claim, yet continues to play the game in terms of the chronological parameters.

By the late 1970s and early 1980s there was growing dissatisfaction among anthropologists with a definition of agedness solely in terms of chronology and at the expense of emic views. For example, Williams (1980:107) argued that in some contexts elderly Indians were defined as 'elderly' in terms of their social function as they were "utilized once again for their knowledge of past historical events and traditional cultural values". In other contexts, particularly in dealing with the American government's

3. Turnbull (1972) suggested similarities in the treatment of the aged in 'industrial' and 'traditional' societies. But he came under serious fire from other anthropologists for his 'popular' approach. In defending his book (1975) he admits that he had made some broad generalisations which needed further study; but I would suggest that he was involved in the worthwhile endeavour of unpacking a range of anthropology's 'sacred cows'.

welfare departments, a chronological definition of agedness was utilized. Despite problems with his terminology, Williams' argument is useful for the point that people utilize various definitions of agedness which are context specific.

An assertion that definitions of agedness are context specific should hardly surprise anthropologists. As Fry (1980:5) points out, "age is in the cultural domain" and not in a "neat, tightly organised, well bounded and unambiguous domain"⁴. I would therefore agree with Williams's (1980) assertion that we need to look for emic definitions of agedness which will take us beyond the limited definition of agedness in terms of chronology. People may accept these imposed definitions of agedness when it is expedient to do so. But this does not necessarily mean that it is appropriate for us to utilize them in every piece of research we do on 'the aged'. We must not assume that imposed social categories actually represent social reality and self definitions.

B. South African Gerontology and My Research: a Debate over Definitions

In line with its American predecessors, South African gerontology has also assumed chronological definitions of agedness. For example Grobbelaar (1986:1), when speaking of

4. Note that Fry (1980:12) is defining culture as "the symbolic dimension through which we comprehend order and predictability in our world", "something humans use in negotiating each other and their environment".

the implications of aging for businesses, defines gerontology as the "science of aging" and distinguishes it from geriatrics which is the "medical treatment of older persons"; and he assumes a chronological definition of agedness. Ferreira & Lamont (1990:5), in a workshop report on housing provision for elderly people, break the chronologically-defined category of 'the elderly' into three sub-divisions: (i) "the young elderly (65-74 years); (ii) the "old-elderly (75-80 years); and the "very old (80+ years)". Unlike Grobbelaar (1986), they introduce a 'medical' definition of function in order to justify these sub-divisions; thus they argue that the "very old are likely to be less active, more frail and less able to live independently than the young-elderly" (Ferreira & Lamont 1990:5).

Part of my initial difficulty in doing this research was in imposing an age cut-off point for defining who were elderly people living in Mowbray. I soon discovered that some of those I included in the study balked at being labelled 'elderly' simply because of their chronological age, while others, whom I excluded, readily identified with that label or were categorised as 'elderly' by other residents of the area. An added complexity was that the state's terms of defining elderly people, 60 for women and 65 for men, simultaneously impinge upon people's life experiences and serve as a term of reference.

During the first phase of the research a dialogue emerged between me and informants who fitted into the state's category of 'the elderly', but who rejected the state's definition and its implications. For example some women I interviewed, identifying themselves as housewives, complained that they had never retired. They would protest at being defined as elderly on the basis that it implied that they were no longer capable of looking after themselves or capable of being independent. Yet in contexts of spousal disputes, as occasionally occurred during my interviews, some housewives protested that they should be retired, in terms of age, and should be permitted to gain the benefits of such a status. In addition, some informants, particularly women who had been in employment, argued that there was a strong gender bias in the state's categories. To them it seemed logical that women should be permitted to retire later in life, simply because they actually live far longer than men. Finally, some women and men I interviewed objected to being obliged to retire at 60 or 65 because it suggested that they were incapable of working any longer and were simply a burden to society. Some continued to try and find employment on a full-time or part-time basis.

On the other hand, there were informants who did not fit into the state's or my own chronological definition of 'the elderly' but who wanted to be included and were included by other local residents. They were younger than 60, were retired, and participated in social events for 'elderly people'. They had spouses who had retired or they

themselves had gone on 'early retirement' in order to benefit from good pension packages, particularly if they had been able to participate in government pension buy-back schemes. In their participation in events for elderly people, particularly in churches, they were recognised by others as being 'elderly'. One of my informants, who was younger than 60, was getting her driver's licence at the time of the research and members of her church would refer to her to prove how independent and capable 'elderly' people were.

My point here is to argue that a chronological definition of agedness is appropriate to use under certain circumstances which the researcher needs to demonstrate. I would argue that such a definition was in part appropriate to my research in that retirement can mean a major reduction of income, which directly affects access to housing. In addition, many institutions who care for 'the aged' have now adopted a phased approach to defining elderly people, similar to Ferreira & Lamont's (1990). Finally, the state has used chronological categories in order to define 'protected tenants' in both the Rent Control Act and the Sectional Title Act. But part of the problem of accepting this definition of agedness is that it hides social complexities and emic definitions.

These considerations of the definition of 'the elderly' had direct implications for research. Part of my difficulty was in attempting to balance the state's purely chronological

definition with an emic definition which took chronology as one criteria among others. Of primary concern was the effect these definitions would have on selection of primary informants. In order to achieve my objective I selected people in the age category 60+ from the residential units sampled as primary informants, but was careful not to exclude anybody who was younger than 60 who was regarded as 'elderly' either by themselves or by local residents. The implications of this selection process are worth noting.

In terms of the state's categories, in 7,8% of South Africa's population in 1980 was 'elderly'⁵, which in terms of United Nations estimates is high (Grobelaar 1986). According to the government censuses for 1970, 1980, 1985, 1991 Mowbray's percentages are even higher than the national average (Table 1.2).

Table 1.1 The Proportion of Mowbray's population 65 years of age or older in terms of over-all numbers and percentages.

Year	Total Pop.	No. of Aged (65 and over)	% of Pop
1970	2159	365	17%
1980	5223	701	13%
1985	4347	610	14%
1991	3706	689	18.5%

(Population Census 1970; 1980; 1985; 1991).

For this study, 50.4% of all the residents in the 59 surveyed sample dwellings were selected as being elderly and thus were treated as potential primary informants. In

5. It is not clear if this statistic includes the 'homelands' or not.

contrast with averages of 'elderly' people nationally and for Mowbray, in terms of the state's criteria, the section of Mowbray where the fieldwork was done is exceptional. This is a result of the facts that I made my definition of 'elderly' people broad and that the area selected for the study has a concentration of 'elderly' people because of the types of accommodation available. The other significant category of people from the dwellings sampled were aged between 18 and 30: most were students or young professionals. This again is in part a reflection of the types of accommodation available.

Table 1.2 Age Profile of Residents of all the 59 Surveyed Sample Dwellings

Age: 1-17	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-59	60 and older
No.: 7	36	8	5	8	59
% : 5.6	29.2	6.5	4	6.5	47.9

C. Age and Sex Profile of the Primary Informants Selected

For the category of primary informants who participated in the study it needs to be noted that the ratio of males to females is more marked than in the state's statistics. For Whites, in the age category 65+ in South Africa in 1980, there was a ratio of 1.37 females to every male (Grobbelaar 1986:17). In the Government Census for Mowbray for 1991 this ratio is 1.72:1. In contrast, for this study, there is a female to male ratio, for the category 60+, of 2.68:1. This is compounded by the fact that I included among my primary informants 3 women under the age of 60 but regarded

as 'elderly'. This resulted in a female to male ratio of 2.87:1 in the sample of 'elderly' people.

Table 1.3 Age and Sex of Residents of Dwellings Sampled

Age:	1-17	18-30	31-40	41-50	51-59	60+
no. male:	4	14	5	3	2	16
female:	3	22	3	2	6	43

Including the 3 primary informants aged less than 60, 20 of the elderly women interviewed were widows, 10 were spinsters and 2 were divorcees. In contrast no men were widowers or divorcees and only 2 were bachelors. The remainder of elderly informants constituted 14 married couples, numbering 28 people.

III. Fieldworker's Status and the Fieldwork Process

During the period of the fieldwork I was a 27/28 year old White male student at the University of Cape Town (hereafter UCT). I realise that who I was, in terms of this definition of myself, had consequences for the research itself. In order to demonstrate this, it is worthwhile to take each aspect of my status to see what effect it had.

Firstly, I would suggest that being White, and being perceived of as such by informants, suited me well during the initial survey. People would occasionally ask to see my Identity Document, but on the whole assumed my status as 'white' and worthy of trust. On reflection I have realised

that, in light of elderly residents' tendencies to define 'black' and 'coloured' as 'criminal' (Chapter Six), my status permitted me access to people's houses and lives. In addition they were willing to assume that I understood and agreed with their stereotypes and maps of social reality. In doing so they were fairly unreserved in discussing the changing nature of Mowbray.

But it was clear that my status as 'student' undermined that trust. Once people had actually offered to talk to me they would question me further about my own political persuasions and my level of affiliation to UCT. On one occasion an elderly couple refused to speak to me because I was from UCT, and on a number of occasions people would copy the number off my student card. Once these formalities had been dealt with, however, most people were willing to start a positive relationship with me.

My age became an issue once I started in-depth interviewing. Some elderly informants felt it difficult to believe that a person as "young" as I could actually understand their situation. In addition, some questioned whether I was going to be responsible enough to handle the intricate details of their lives. At the same time, their view of me, as a naive young man who was willing to sit for hours and chat, meant that some informants took on the role of 'instructors' and 'holders of history' (See Chapter Four). They then spent hours 'unloading' information onto me.

When it came to participant observation my age served as both a help and a hindrance, particularly in formal settings. At meetings of the Rosebank Mowbray and Observatory Civic Association (hereafter RMOCA), whose membership is mostly 'elderly', I was initially treated as an ill-informed intruder who had little knowledge of details of local politics. I had to prove myself, particularly to the gatekeepers of the Association, both in terms of my intentions and my 'maturity'.

At the other end of the spectrum, particularly at church meetings for 'elderly people', I was treated as a novelty. I was adopted by various elderly people, treated as a child, and subjected to being introduced as a special guest. People would react to me by suggesting it was "nice" having a "young person" who was interested in "us oldies". They would then bombard me with questions and opinions.

I believe it was also the difference in age between myself and my primary informants which stimulated me to notice small details in their lives. I think there is a danger in doing fieldwork on people who are too close to oneself in that one loses perspective and takes much of what is happening for granted. That danger existed for me, but I feel it was countered by my age and my own awe of how much life experience my informants had.

Finally, most of my informants were women (Table 1.3). For the types of questions I was asking I doubt that my gender

was overly problematic. Where I do feel this was a limit was in terms of hidden detail, to do with sexuality, which informants would have been reluctant to make explicit. While it is clear from both the literature (Eckley 1990) and my informants that rape and sexual abuse of the elderly are important considerations, women informants were reluctant to give details of those fears or experiences. Only in one case was there openness: when a husband described his wife's experience of indecent exposure.

IV. Participant Observation: Dependency, Political Legitimation and Alliances

A major emphasis in anthropology is upon the method of participant observation. Here I consider both the strengths and weaknesses of such an approach by looking at the issues of dependency, political legitimation and alliances.

PTO / 32 A. Participant Observation and Dependency

A. Participant Observation and Dependency

Living in Mowbray enabled me to observe and participate in local neighbourhood life and activities. I attempted to get involved in elderly peoples' lives at their points of need: for example I offered my services as a handyman, gardener and 'taxi-driver'. In addition I attempted to provide legal advice and direction for elderly tenants in housing disputes. This level of involvement gave me a window into the daily life and struggles of some of the elderly people in Mowbray.

But this level of involvement had a major set-back: dependency. Some elderly informants, particularly widows and spinsters, came to rely on me to provide practical help. They expressed fear of "getting somebody off the street" to do odd jobs or favours for them, or of "bothering" distant relatives to help them. They found it easier to ask me, but in doing so they also expressed a concern that I would not be able to assist them in the future. They refused to treat me as a source of charity and insisted on giving me gifts for my help, thereby attempting to establish a reciprocal relationship that would suggest continued obligation.

For example, when I first interviewed Mrs Philips (Case 3.1) I asked her if she knew any other 'elderly' people in her part of the suburb. She responded in the negative. She told me how lonely she was because her husband had died and there were no elderly people left in her area. She went to great lengths to tell me that nobody visited her or helped

her in any way. I noticed that her house and garden had become neglected and, as an act of friendship and to develop rapport, I offered to do some small jobs for her.

As the fieldwork period progressed I realised more and more that she was part of a network of friendships which involved a number of other elderly people I interviewed (See Chapter Three where Mrs Philips' name comes up repeatedly). I discovered through other elderly people at one of the local churches that she was visited on a regular basis, and that a niece and nephew of hers did help her.

Final realisation came to me one Friday morning when I was mowing her lawn. Mid-way through the task she invited me in for a cup of tea and I noticed that she was baking some cupcakes. She told me that she baked them every Friday for Mr James (Case 3.9) when he came over for tea. After I had finished my tea I went back to work. After a couple of minutes I was interrupted by an 'elderly' woman who wanted to know if Mrs Philips was in. I had never met her before, but I gathered that she also visited on a regular basis.

This type of experience illustrates the double-edged nature of participant observation in relation to dependency. On the one hand my involvement permitted me to cross-check verbal information by giving me the opportunity to be with elderly people for extended periods of time in their own homes and in public. While I must admit that the realisation that Mrs Philips had 'lied' to me came as a

shock, and that my initial reaction was one of anger, I now realise that it was a valuable experience which gave me the opportunity to corroborate verbal information.

On the other hand I still feel a degree of obligation to informants with whom I had developed a caring relationship. I experienced difficulty in balancing my concern for my elderly informants and the task of completing my research in a limited time. I often had to attempt to control my own emotional involvement and to limit the degree to which elderly people became dependent upon me in augmenting former strategies for coping. In this regard I realised that I was shaping my field of study and becoming an integral part of it.

B. Participant Observation, Political Legitimation and Affiliation

As an anthropologist in southern Africa who has attempted to see his role as representing the marginalised, I have found my position in Mowbray very difficult. In working with elderly people who presented themselves as marginalised, I found myself siding with their concerns and interests. At the same time I found myself angered at their conservative views. In addition, doing research among people who are morally and politically conservative, I found myself constantly attempting to negotiate my way around their expectations in order to develop rapport. This was further complicated by my participant observation in the

conservative RMOCA at one extreme and sitting in the park with 'vagrants' at the other.

Firstly, my involvement with the RMOCA was problematic. While this avenue of participation proved valuable for developing personal contacts and as a window into the local politics of housing, I often felt uncomfortable with the way that many of its meetings involved derogatory and racist discussions. On one level I felt a need simply to observe in order to develop my understanding of local politics. On another level I felt compelled to participate and challenge their stereotypes. But as a person who lacked power in this context, I was wary of sacrificing my research through intervening. In addition, my involvement was constantly under question (See Chapter Six), so I attempted, when called on to do so, to make as positive a contribution as possible.

Initially I had been invited to attend meetings of the RMOCA by elderly informants whom I had contacted through the survey. From them I had gained the impression that meetings were open to all. As fieldwork progressed, however, I realised that my regular attendance had become a point of contention. I was told in no uncertain terms by the leaders that the meetings were limited to members of the Association and that discussions were not for publication. This raised serious ethical questions for me over the nature of private information and consent in relation to research. For purposes of this research I have therefore chosen not to use

information gathered during the meetings of the RMOCA. When I do refer to them in the thesis the information comes from sources other than the meetings of the RMOCA, and I would regard it as public knowledge.

Secondly, by attempting to observe and participate in a broad range of activities in the suburb, I came to know and be associated with many individuals who were treated as social misfits. This level of involvement raised questions about my intentions, both among conservative residents in the suburb and among the misfits. This was brought home to me by one particular experience.

It is a Tuesday at 12:15 p.m. I am sitting in my lounge reading Turnbull's (1975) defence of The Mountain People. The stillness is broken by a barrage of shouting: "Fuck, give me more dagga! I want more dagga. Hey you, come . . .". My two dogs are aroused from their sun-soaked slumber. I walk out into the street to see what is happening.

The street is deserted except for a lone figure. It is Peter, a White man in his early thirties. He is in the process of smashing his guitar and then his face on the road. By all accounts he has 'flipped'. I telephone the police to send two constables to help me restrain Peter and to call for professional help. I then decide to walk around the block to fetch the constables myself (The last time we had a similar incident it took them four hours to arrive).

I speak to Sergeant Viljoen whom I have befriended during my research. He suggests he must invite me to dinner some time, and walks out of the station with me and a constable. At the same time Mr Benjamin (Case 4.9), a 'coloured' caretaker at a local institution, walks past. He sees me chatting to Sergeant Viljoen, and avoids my gaze and greeting.

After following Peter through the streets and shops of Mowbray, where he now is pulling stock off the shelves, the constable and I 'herd' him towards his house. The constable swings his baton at Peter. Peter responds by punching him in the stomach and sending him flying across the street. At the same time two police cars

arrive. Two constables leap from the one, while Sergeant Viljoen and a plain-clothes detective climb out of the other. The two constables and I restrain Peter. In the process the plain-clothes detective runs over to us and begins kicking Peter in the ribs while shouting: "I'll fucking teach you not to hit a policeman." I then start arguing with the policeman about the rights of civilians and he steps back in surprise. Sergeant Viljoen simply leans against the patrol car and watches in a distant manner. Finally Peter is removed from the scene. The crowd clears and I am left standing in the street on my own.

Peter's home is still unlocked and his 'wife' is at work. I then take on the task of contacting her and looking after the house until she arrives home. Andrew, a neighbour and friend of Peter, arrives. It seems that Andrew locked himself in his house, while the remainder of his 'housemates' left, because they feared that Peter would hit them. In addition they were worried that Peter would have aroused police suspicion that they had been smoking 'dagga' (cannabis) in the 'digs'.

My social involvement in the neighbourhood constantly raised a problem of affiliation for me, and crises such as the above simply amplified it. My relationship with the police was a difficult one in that I knew them as neighbours and came to understand their fears and frustrations. Some, such as Sergeant Viljoen, trusted me at times but found my social role rather confusing. This was compounded by my having befriended many of the under-class of Mowbray: the "vagrants" (the homeless who consume large quantities of alcohol) and "dagga rookers" (who smoke cannabis and were largely self- or un-employed).

For those in the under-class my personal relationships with local police was also very problematic. In some ways I began to be treated as part of the establishment that was critical of, and against, them. For those like Peter and

Andrew there was a level of social distancing because they were involved in illegal activities and found it difficult to trust me. For others, like Mr Benjamin, the question of criminality was a major consideration. They would often be harassed by the police, particularly if they were seen to be 'loitering' and drinking, and on occasion became the objects of police brutality. On one occasion which I witnessed, six policemen set upon one such 'vagrant' and seriously assaulted him.

The problem of being seen with the police was compounded by the fact that I was 'white'. The "vagrants" would often refer to me as "baas" (boss) and attempted to develop patron-client relationships with me, even though I encouraged them to call me Simon. My attempts to break down these barriers, by chatting in the parks and streets, were in some regards successful; but one wrong move on my part would often terminate a developing relationship. Thus after the incident with Peter my relationship with Mr Benjamin deteriorated and I found it difficult to chat to him in my previously friendly manner.

Following this incident a friendship with an elderly man in the street was also terminated. He had been in the crowd watching what was happening. I can only presume he saw me shouting at the plain-clothes detective because he came up to me after the incident and suggested that Peter and his friends were a public nuisance and deserved to be beaten in that manner.

V. Conclusion

While this project was conceived in response to newspaper articles on the 'housing crisis' in the southern suburbs of Cape Town, it was formulated with the intention of recording the responses of elderly residents of Mowbray to that 'crisis'. In addition, the research exercise was designed to cope with the realities of an urban context where there is a degree to which individuals seem removed from each other and confined to limited social networks.

In light of the above considerations, I structured the research process as tightly as possible, while simultaneously attempting to remain open to informants' own views and intentions. A central feature of my approach was to recognise both an emic and etic view of the notion of 'the elderly' without undermining the former.

The limiting nature of using set interviews was compensated for through participant observation. But the use of such a method, while providing valuable insights into people's lives, created new questions and a range of new social dynamics that had to be dealt with. While participant observation resulted in a means of corroborating verbal statements and developing rapport, it also led to dependency. In addition, while the use of participant observation enabled me to gain insights into the very intricate details of people's responses, it placed me in a difficult position where my own political and moral views

were subjected to close scrutiny. This highlighted the fact that an anthropologist can be subjected to people's acceptance or rejection, and that my task could easily have been sabotaged by a clash of values.

Importantly, the research process itself provided informants with a context in which to respond. On one level it involved communicating their own experiences and hopes in a structured form. On another level it involved awareness that they were being observed and that their responses and opinions were being recorded. Some took the opportunity to give full vent to their views - a response in itself - while others took it as a formal opportunity to have their experiences recorded. But it is clear that my own intrusion and participation in their lives had some effect. Whether I assisted them in developing new strategies for coping, or heightened their sense of being in the kind of double bind I describe below, my status and presence were part of, and helped to shape, their context.

Chapter Two

A Short History of Mowbray: A Context of Winning

History is not neutral. Like religion, it serves a dual social function as legitimator of the *status quo* and as a means of questioning it. It is always written from a particular perspective and is an expression of the values of its author/s. In addition, as I demonstrate in Chapter Four, uses of history need to be historically contextualised. History is always written for a specific audience, to address issues at a specific point in time, and to speak to the present.

I would go so far as to argue that bias is inescapable and the participation of anthropologists in the use and construction of history requires a reflexive approach that admits the author's limits and intentions. We must endeavour to be objective and fair in our depictions and analysis of the past; but we need to be aware of both why we select issues as important and what our intentions are in participating in 'contests' over history.

Wolf (1982) has shown that the process of writing the history of colonialism has been biased in favour of the opinions and perspectives of colonizers rather than colonized. Similarly, attempts at writing histories of Mowbray are generally strongly biased in favour of the European settlers who colonized the area and their 'white' descendents (Armstrong 1977; Keen 1990/91; Pienaar 1957;

Simcox & Hallack 1990). And where the experience of those who were at the 'wrong end of history' is recorded, it is commonly in a very negative and degrading manner (Pienaar 1957). The history of the colonizers, in contrast, is glorified and couched in terms of 'progress' and 'civilisation'¹. To my knowledge there is only one comprehensive history of Mowbray that records history from the perspective of those residents who were historically disfranchised or marginalised (Western 1981): these were the indigenous inhabitants of the Cape and the slaves who were imported to provide labour for their 'white masters'.

The history I have constructed here needs to be seen as a response to previous 'popular' depictions of Mowbray. With Wolf (1982:19) I believe that there can be no history of the colonized without a history of the colonizers, no 'indigenous history' without an 'imported history', "only a component of a common history suppressed or omitted from conventional studies for economic, political, or ideological reasons".

This chapter is about a history of winning. It is a time and space context that pre-dates the double bind in which White elderly residents in Mowbray now find themselves. My intention here in using snap-shots of the past is to

1. For example in Pienaar's (1957) comment on the "Hottentots" of Van Riebeeck's time and the "coloureds" of his time, he expresses both a negative view of indigenous people and a positive view of what the colonialists brought with them. He writes: "The idea of work was foreign to the Hottentot, a commendable way of life, but unfortunately impossible in civilization" (Pienaar 1957:8). And, "There is every reason and inducement for the coloured people to join in acclaiming the foundation by which we have given them in generous measure a share in the heritage and tradition of Western civilisation" (Pienaar 1957:9).

demonstrate that from 1652 until the mid-1980s the history of housing in Mowbray has been one of winning for 'whites' as the dominators of space; but that their winning has been at the expense of others.

In a narrow sense, this history is about the working out of power relations over time and space: a struggle for resources and privilege and, importantly for this thesis, a struggle over securing land and shelter. In looking at the politics of housing in the present, we need to see the unfolding of history as a process of advantaging some at the expense of others. Mowbray is a micro-context in the greater context of struggles over land on a national scale. It has its own particular dynamics which can only be uncovered by an in-depth analysis of local power relations that fit into a greater context of European colonialism of Africa, *apartheid* and the dynamic nature of politics in South Africa.

In one of the glorified histories of Rondebosch-Mowbray, Robinson (1957:11) has remarked that the story of the development of Cape Town's southern suburbs does not differ greatly from that of any other expanding metropolis - large estates and farms gradually being subdivided for smaller gentlemen's country houses and finally for suburban dwellings and housing estates as the pressure of nineteenth and twentieth century population increases the value of land.

But the history of Mowbray is not simply a neutral trajectory of 'development'. It involved the laying out of social relationships, of 'class and race', and the continued empowering of 'whites' as the winners and definers of space.

And it is from this context of winning that these 'white' residents now draw symbols for responding to the 'housing crisis' in the 1980/1990s, and which they glorify in order both to justify their previous position of privilege and to legitimate their present appeals to maintain that position (see Chapter Four).

I. Colonial Frontier: the Mapping Out of 'Who was Boss'

It is clear that the area now called Mowbray was inhabited by Khoikhoi pastoralists prior to the arrival of Jan van Riebeeck in 1652 (Walker 1965; Pienaar 1957; Platzky and Walker 1985). In 1657 land was granted, west of the Liesbeeck River, to Dutch Vrijburghers for the establishment of farms for the provision of supplies to the Cape Town fort. This settlement by the burghers was not without incident or resistance on the part of the erstwhile inhabitants (Walker 1965) and it set a precedent for further struggles between the dominant and the dominated over access to the resource of land.

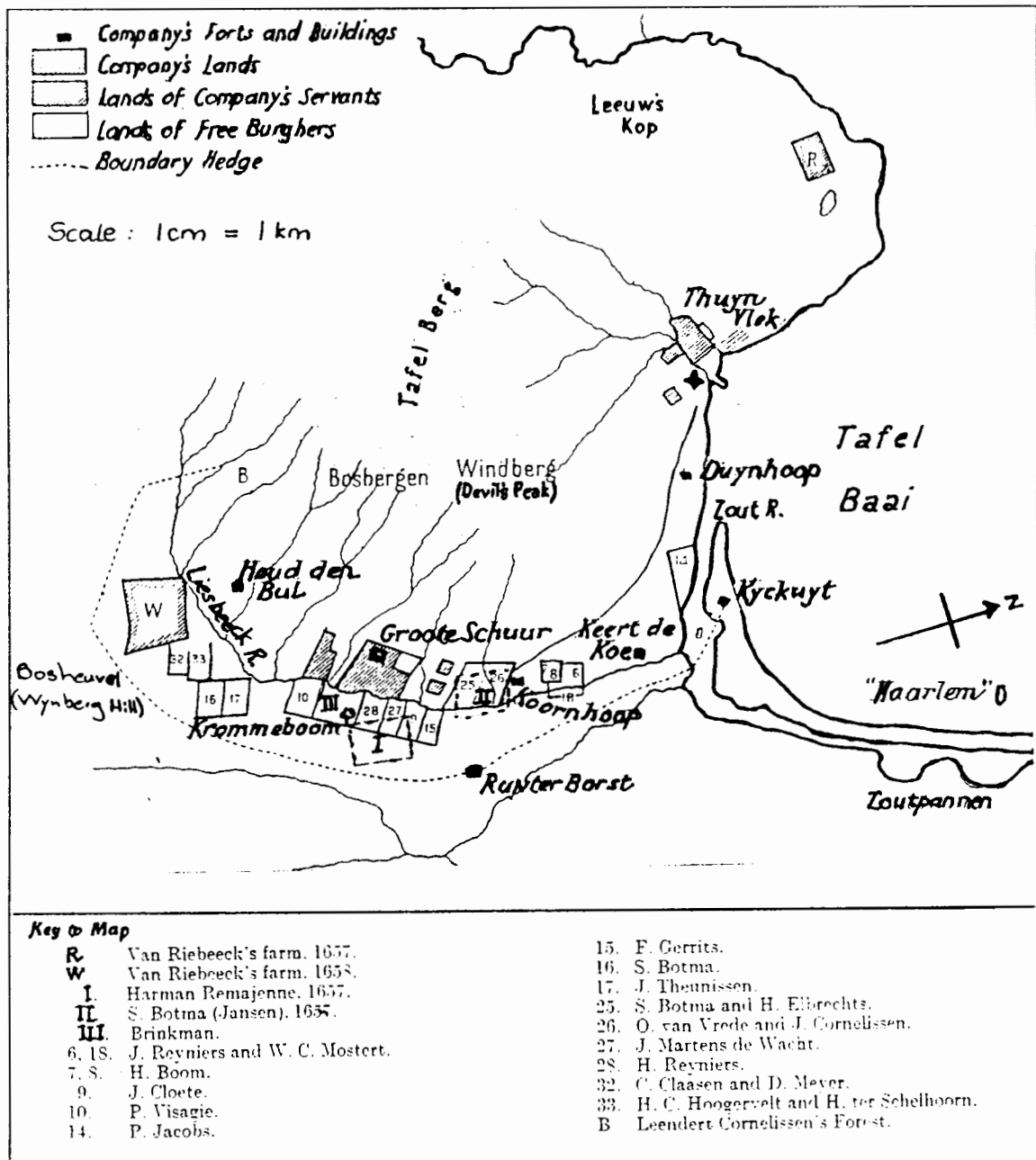
The Khoikhoi were forced to leave the land and settle on the "eastern side of the Salt River and the fresh river Liesbeeck", and only "those Khoi who were prepared to work for the Company or the first white settlers were allowed to remain on their former grazing lands" (Platzky & Walker 1985:71). As far as the Dutch were concerned, insufficient numbers of Khoi were willing to work for the settlers as farm labourers. In addition Governor van Riebeeck was wary of the settlers forming good relations with the indigenous population because he aimed to maintain the Company's

monopoly of trade². In 1658 the first slaves were brought to the Cape from the East Indies. A number were 'rented out' or sold, in exchange for wheat, to the burghers (Walker 1965; Western 1981) and housed in quarters on the farms.

Conflict between Dutch settlers and Khoikhoi over access to land and cattle was a major issue of the time. In order to secure their interests, the Dutch built the fort Koornhoop which also served as a storehouse for wheat (Simcox and Hallack 1990). They grew and developed a boundary hedge (Keen 1991; Walker 1965), established a garrison supported by conscripts from among the farmers and slaves, and built a series of smaller fortifications (Walker 1965). By November 1660 the Dutch settlers had established their presence, in what is today Mowbray, as a dominant force to be reckoned with (Map 2.1).

Within this mesh of farms a small village began to develop. Its nucleus was around a small inn, Driekoppen, that gave its name to the village established in 1723. There is some dispute over the original name of the inn, further highlighting the conflict between colonists and colonised. It has been suggested that Driekoppen originally meant 'three cups', but that possibly this was incorrectly Anglicized from the more macabre name "three heads".

2. Walker (1965) has demonstrated that van Riebeeck attempted to maintain strong control over the degree to which the Burghers could maintain their independence and competitive edge by the introduction of laws which forbade trade with Khoikhoi and the growth and sale of particular crops to passing ships. It would seem that the primary aim of establishing the Burghers was in order to maintain a source of provisions for the European settlement and passing ships, but without creating competition for the Dutch East India Company.



Map 2.1 The Dutch Colony at the Cape by 1660 (Walker 1922)

In 1724 three runaway slaves from the local farm Welgelegen (Map 2.2) were responsible for the murder of the innkeeper, Johannes Beck, and nearly his entire family at the inn (Keen 1990; Western 1981; Simcox and Hallack 1990). The slaves were caught and "punished, in the spirit of the time, by being hung, drawn and quartered" (Simcox & Hallack 1990:10).

They were decapitated and their heads were impaled on posts in the Main Road as public display and warning to others who would attempt to do likewise. The tavern and 'dorp' were then named after this incident³.

If this is the correct origin of the name, it indicates two things. Firstly it supports my suggestion that relationships of power were central from very early on. It seems evident that displays of power were used in order to define social relationships and to entrench control by the Dutch settlers of this small section of their colonial empire. In this case the message was clear: they were 'boss'.

Secondly it suggests that the ordering of space, in terms of Dutch names, was the prerogative of the powerful. This may seem a rather obvious point, but one that needs to be recognised. Part of the ordering of reality involves a process of naming. Those who name, and whose namings are recognised, are usually the politically dominant. In this case the labeling of space by the Dutch is recorded in history and gives meaning to the maps which we have of the time. But they are not simple namings. The words themselves, like Driekoppen, record for history the social position of the settlers and the means they used to maintain their position as the definers of space.

3. This naming however required later sanitisation, and Keen (1991:28) records that in 1850 the "inhabitants of Driekoppen Village petitioned to have the village renamed Mowbray, after Mowbray House, and it was granted."

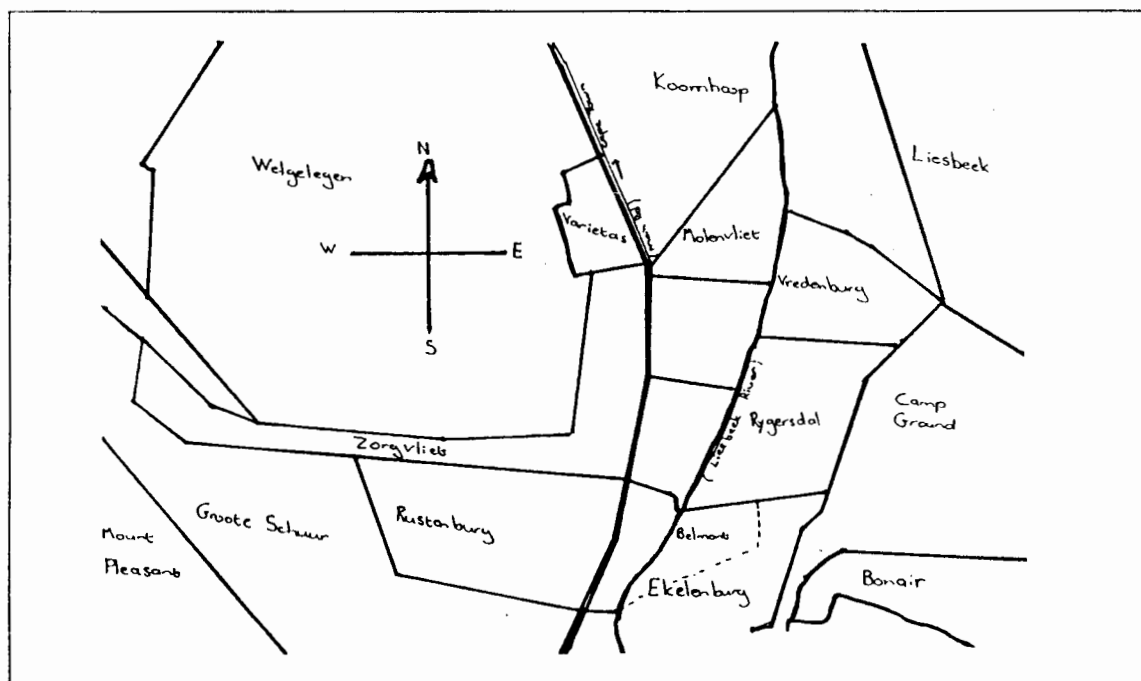
II. From Farm to Village

Mapping out social relations and distinctions took on a new form by the beginning of the 1800s. After the second occupation of the Cape by the British in 1806 there was a growth in the numbers of settlers of whom many were housed in Mowbray. Some were of a higher social status than others and were willing to pay to live on the 'estates' of Driekoppen. This meant that it became expedient for local farmers, in light of the poor economic situation at the time, to sub-divide their farms in order to sell land for residential use (Walker 1965).

Those who could afford to buy sub-divided land were primarily wealthier settlers, with both Dutch and English names. They constructed large family homes, often labelled as 'manors'⁴ or 'lodges'⁵. Such namings of space further reinforced the higher social status of the residents or owners, and in many cases inflated it in a context where social mobility was a possibility.

4. It is of interest to note that the British settlers brought their own notions of social difference to the Cape. These were in part encapsulated in the definition of the land thus owned or occupied. Here the terms 'manor' and 'estate' are significant. A 'manor' is a large house, lived in by a person with the title of lord, on an 'estate'. The terms have their history within the European feudal system where a lord would own a large tract of land which was lived on by serfs, who had an obligation to him, or of which parts were rented to his subjects. In the context of Mowbray it would seem that the term manor was given to the original houses on the Cape farms.

5. The term 'lodges' refers to a smaller house on an estate, a gatekeeper's house or a house used seasonally. In the case of Mowbray/Driekoppen the term lodge seems to have been used for large houses on the plots resulting from the initial sub-division of the farms.

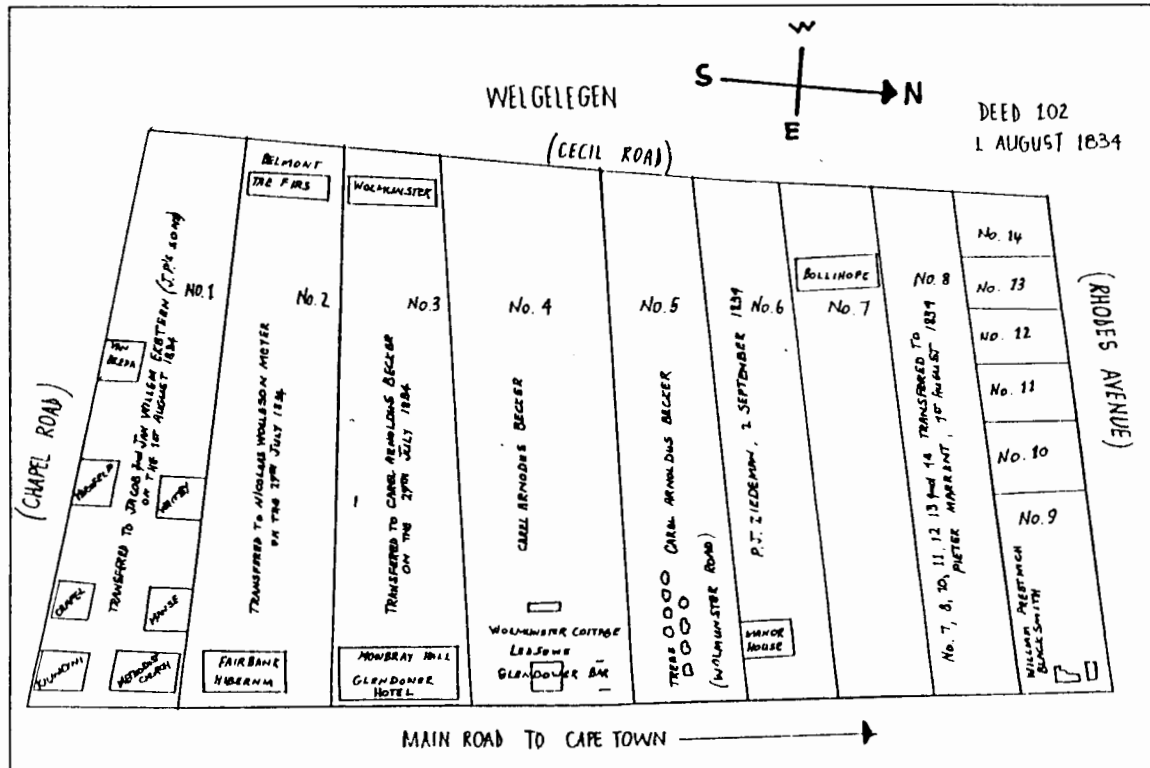


Map 2.2 Farms in the area of Driekoppen by the early 19th Century⁶ (Wagener 1957:22-23). Map not to scale.

A good example of the process of land sub-division is the case of the farm 'Zorgvliet' (Keen 1991) (Map 2.2 and 2.3). In this case many of the deeds were registered in the names of Dutch settlers, but many of the houses were given English names. Following the farm's sub-division, plots and houses were sold or rented to English settlers who came to dominate the politics and business of the area. This degree of domination became evident in their own process of naming. By 1846 the area was informally being referred to as Mowbray, in recognition of the property 'Mowbray Place'. This had been named in memory of the area from which the Leicestershire settler who owned the property had come

6. The map is labeled "The old estates of Rondebosch and district" in Wagener (1957:22-23), and is overlaid with a map from c1960. No date is given to suggest what period the map of the farms signifies. I have assumed it represents the period following the second occupation of the Cape by the British because of the use of both Dutch and English names. Walker (1922) has noted that it is an almost impossible task to unravel the complexity of the naming of these farms over time, and in many senses any attempt to do so is largely based on speculation.

before emigrating from England (Simcox & Hallack 1990). And, as I have already noted, in 1850 the local residents petitioned to have the area formally called Mowbray, after 'Mowbray Place', as an act of sanitizing the name 'Driekoppen'.



Map 2.3 The sub-division of the farm Zorgvliet for large residential homes⁷ (Adapted from Keen 1991:4). Map not to scale.

The residential nature of the village was given a new boost with the development of commercial and industrial enterprises, and the emancipation of Cape slaves in 1834. Previously the population of slaves and labourers had been housed on farms or properties of local settlers from Europe, whereas the new population began to be housed in 'cottages' and smaller houses for 'free' labourers (Western 1981). In

7. Keen (1991) has filled in the street names which in fact would have been added only near the end of the 19th Century. Many house names were later English additions.

conjunction with the growth of small industries such as lime kilns and brickyards⁸, there was the further growth of 'labourers' quarters'. The result was the initial growth of two settlements for 'coloureds' and 'ex-slaves'. The first was on the northern boundary above the brickfields, which came to be known as the 'Bo-Dorp' or 'Malay Quarter', and the second was in the south-eastern section of the 'dorp' (Map 2.4).

Yet this 'class-race' distinction was not that simple. Pastoor (1991) has argued that there was a small number of the "labouring underclass" from Europe who chose to come to the Cape from 1817. Hall (1990:4) has added to this by demonstrating that the "coincidence of race and class was by no means exact, and the private yards and backstreets [of early 19th Century Cape Town] also housed white labourers and indigents". Referring to an Attorney General's report of 1836, he goes further by arguing that the "lower Irish" were stigmatized for their poverty and filth (Hall 1990:4). Armstrong (1977) records that during the 1860s, with the construction of the railway line from Salt River to Wynberg, "Irish labourers were brought out from Ireland". Some of this 'European underclass' settled and worked in Mowbray⁹, and filled a gap in the need for labour.

8. In 1796 a mill, now Mostert's Mill, was established for the processing of the wheat produced by the local farms (Simcox & Hallack 1990). The development of local industries and businesses was given a major boost with the sub-division of farmland for residential use and with the resultant growth in the need for local services.

9. A Cape Town City Engineer's Report (1984/85:23) records that the "rapid development of the southern suburbs was to a large extent due to the introduction of a railway service". Mowbray's own development as a town and then a suburb was as a result of access to it by public transport; but in addition it has and continues to serve as a transport node for the rest of Cape Town (Armstrong:1977).

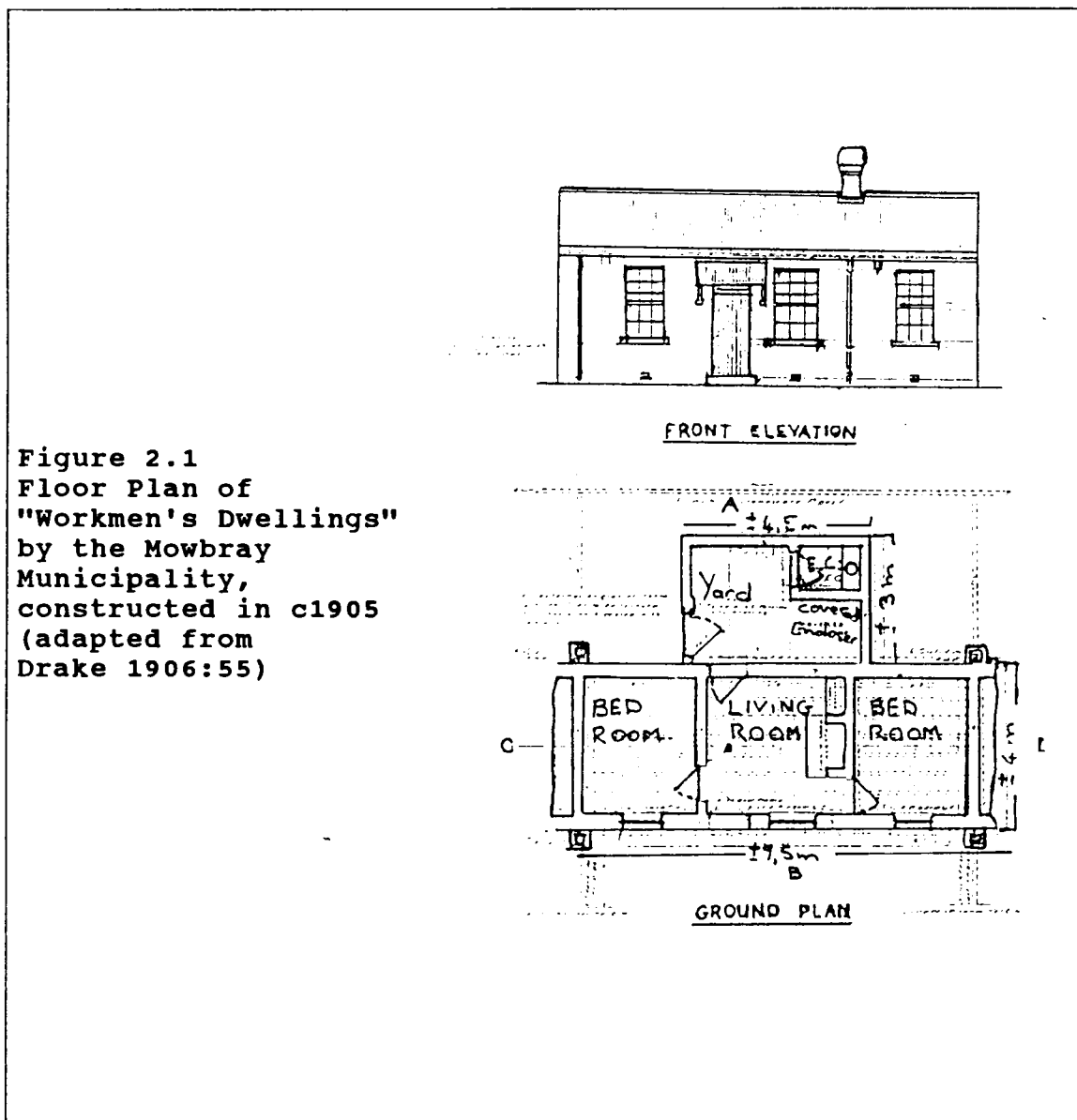
What is evident for the period of the mid-1800s is that there was a severe housing shortage and overcrowding in Cape Town, particularly for those of the lower classes. Moreover, as Hall (1990:4) notes, with the emancipation of slaves and the movement of people to cities, property owners "took advantage of the consequent housing crisis to expand their income as landlords". In Cape Town this process was reflected in a major housing trend at the time: the development of tenancy rows by landowners and speculators.

The Erf Register at the Deeds office in Cape Town records that similar forms of housing 'development' took place in Mowbray. For example Michael Butler, who was registered as an "Oilman, Grocer and General Dealer" in the Good Hope Almanack of 1846 (Simcox and Hallack 1990:10), owned an entire row of houses in Church and Hare Street. Most of these houses consisted of a living room, one or two bedrooms, and a small yard with a toilet (similar to those in Figure 2.1).

III. 1890-1913: The Town Called Mowbray and the Mapping Out of 'Appropriate Space in Class and Race'

In 1890 Mowbray became an independent municipality that included what is now Observatory and Rosebank. By then Mowbray had a substantial middle-class population, most of it housed in double-storey terraced rows and three-to-four bedroomed houses on the north side of the 'dorp' above the railway line. In addition a third area of 'coloured' housing had developed below the line along the west bank of

the Liesbeeck River (Map 2.4 Area known as The Valley). This land was seen as unsuitable for housing for 'whites', because it was flooded on a regular basis when the river burst its banks (Western 1981).



During the period for which the Mowbray Town Council was in existence (1890 to 1913), there was fairly extensive housing development in the area. Johnson (1987:348) has estimated that 788 houses were constructed, and that these ranged from 'labourers' cottages' to 'manor houses'.

A number of the 'labourers' cottages' were "workmen's dwellings" on the east side of the Liesbeeck River on what had been Raapenburg farm. They were built by the municipality of Mowbray to accommodate its workers (City Engineer's Report 1984/85:24). Drake (1906:55), in an architectural report, states that this was "better housing" than that offered to other labourers of the time. In fact these two bedroomed "workmen's dwellings" were based on a fairly common pattern that is evident among other housing of its type in the area, in terms of standard fixtures and design (Figure 2.1). As I will demonstrate later, many examples of this type of housing, along with the terraced rows built in the 1860s, were 'gentrified' after c1964.

In line with its village status, Mowbray also began to 'develop' housing for its growing middle-class population. A good example was erected for sale by F.W.Struben, a diamond magnate and property speculator, in an area between the railway line and the Liesbeeck River on a section of the farms Koornhoop and Westoe¹⁰ which he had bought in 1892. There he built a number of free standing houses (Simcox and Hallack 1990), and two lots of terraced 'villas'. He commissioned two architects to undertake the design of the villas. John Parker was to be responsible for the first 17, and Herbert Baker for the last 19 (Figure 2.2).

10. Part of Westoe was sold to a Mr Willmot and it continued to be used as a dairy until the 1940s.



Figure 2.2 Floor Plan and Front Elevation of Five of the 'Villas' by F.W.Struben along Strubens Rd, Mowbray (adapted from Johnson 1987:161). Not to scale.

In light of the current trend by present house owners to play upon these historical connections to the famous architect Sir Herbert Baker, and by estate agents trying to sell, it is interesting to note Johnson's comments. Referring to the 'villas' designed by Baker, he (1987:78) argued that they were part of an "economic" speculative scheme" which is a "salutary reminder that even the architect with the highest personal standards and ideals is capable of producing work that is cheap and almost nasty". Most of this development was for the growing number of lower middle class residents of Mowbray of whom many were 'white' (Personal communication Hallack, 1991).

Finally, there were some houses for the 'wealthier' residents of Mowbray further up on the hill. These new 'manor' houses were smaller and on less ground than those constructed at the beginning of the 1800s. But they were the residences of wealthier Mowbray residents who commanded positions of power in local politics and civil life. An example of this type of housing is 'Cadboll House' in Avenue Road, designed by John Parker for D. MacKay in 1894 (Johnson 1987).

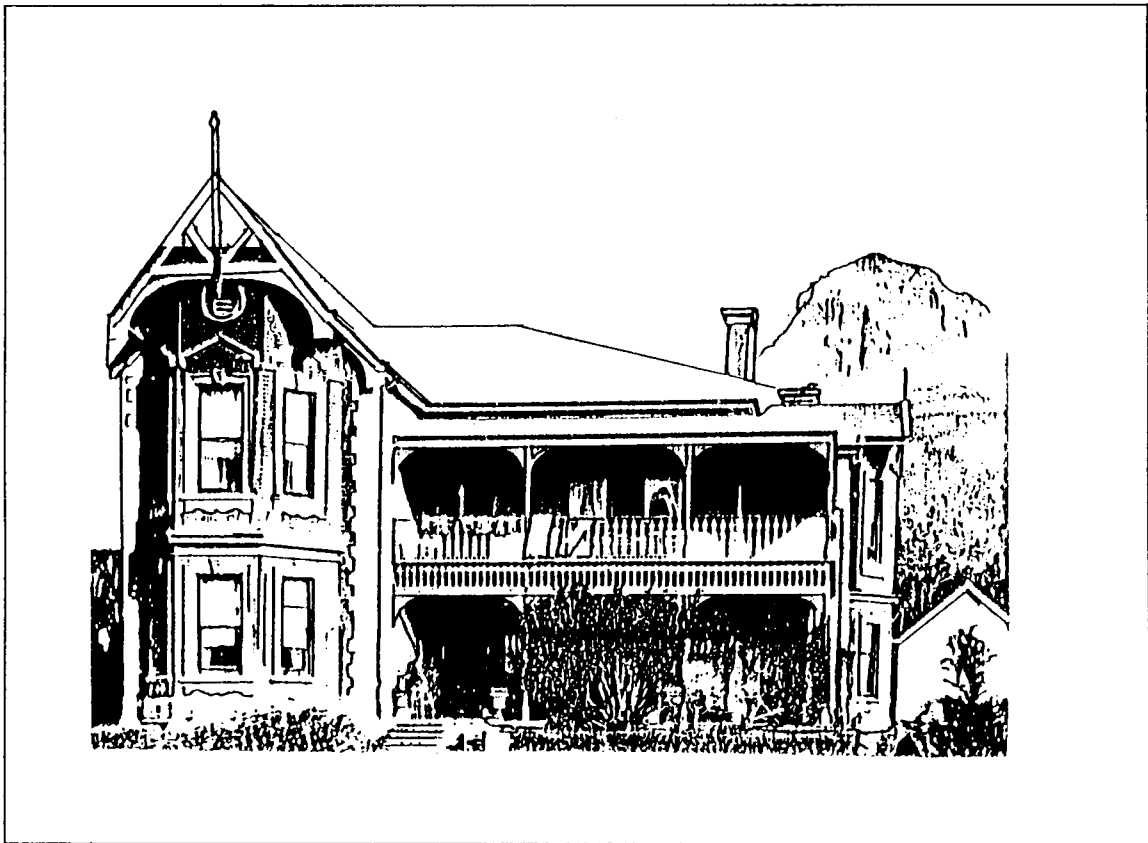


Figure 2.3 Early (Post-1894) Photograph of 'Cadboll House' in Avenue Road, Mowbray (Johnson 1987:210)

The development of housing for the period 1890 - 1913 is interesting for the way geographic space was defined in terms of class and colour. As Western (1981) has noted, Cape Town and its satellites have long had a distinct

housing pattern, based upon the lie of the land, with continued attempts to house the poorer classes on marginal land furthest removed from the mountain slopes. That pattern was particularly true of the *apartheid* era (Davies 1989; Western 1981; Platzky & Walker 1985), but it had its precedent in pre-*apartheid* colonial society. It is for this reason that housing for 'coloureds' and 'labourers', prior to 1913, was on land that was too wet for residential land use by the wealthier classes, or was as far removed as possible from the more 'desirable' parts of the town. But due to the pressure for land along the main transport routes - the railway line and the Main Road - new middle-income housing began to spread below the line and just above the river. In addition, the wealthiest could continue to maintain their position of spatial dominance on the 'high ground' on the slopes of Devil's Peak or on the large 'estates' in the area.

IV. The Apartheid Era: Mapping Out 'Clear Space'

1913 saw the collapse of the Mowbray municipality, primarily because of its struggle to provide water for its growing population and its re-incorporation into greater Cape Town (Simcox & Hallack 1990). The suburb was losing its appeal to the very wealthy, a fact reflected in the sale of some of the 'manor houses' to institutions. But sections of the suburb continued to grow with the construction of housing for the growing middle-class. Larger plots were again subdivided and 'development' spread onto previously marginal land, particularly land that had been defined as space for the labouring class.

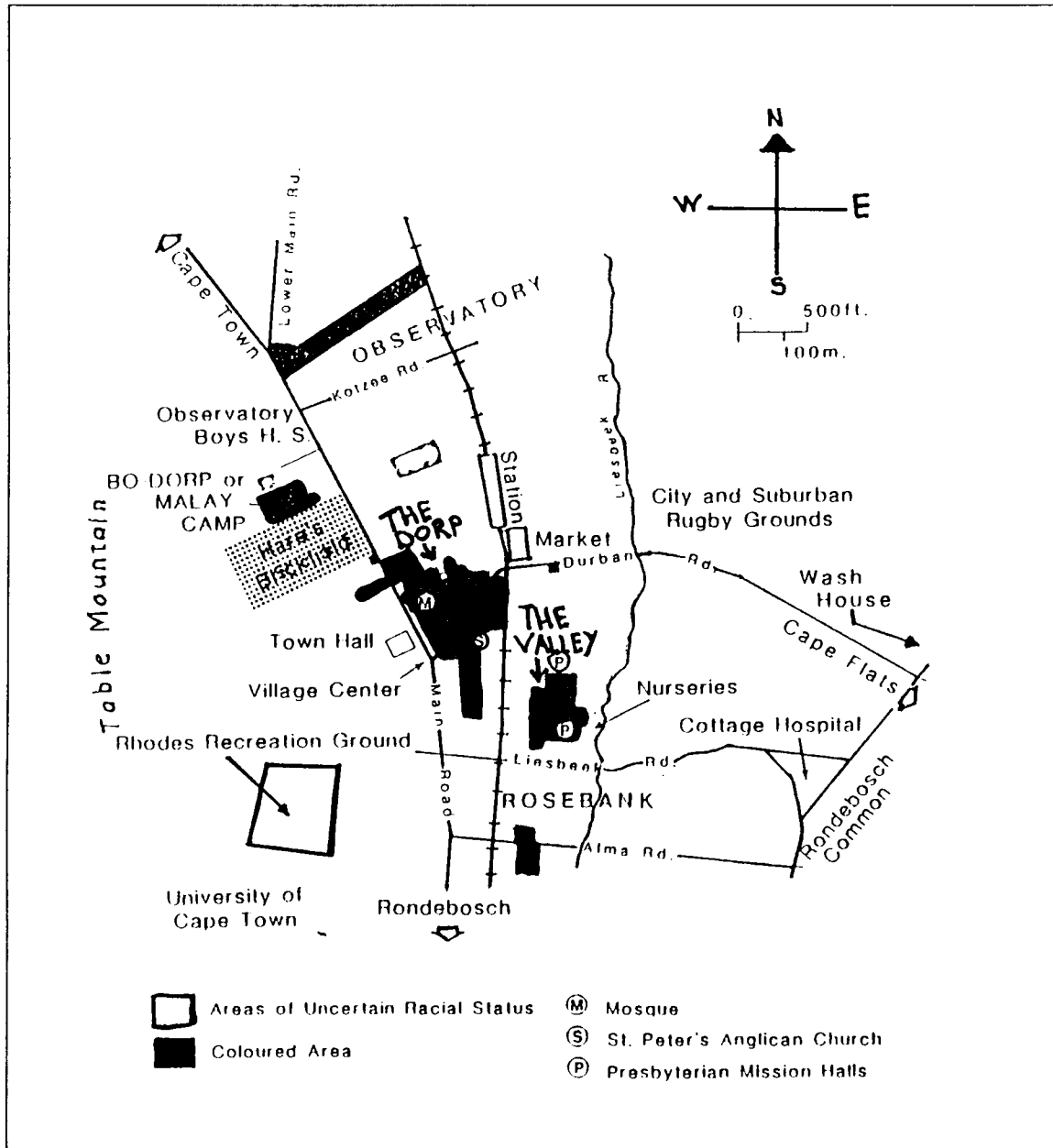
This shift involved the continued expansion of land for the wealthier classes further down the slopes of Table Mountain. This micro-definition of space was to be extended to the rest of Cape Town, and thus onto a macro-level, after the National Party came to power in 1948 (Western 1981). By then greater Cape Town could be divided into two sections: the first was the "older parts of the City stretching from the City Centre to Observatory" which "were multi-racial"; and the second the "residential areas from Mowbray to Claremont" which "contained many pockets of coloureds and Malays" (Western 1981:165). Most of these suburbs had followed the same landscape pattern of Mowbray with the "reasonably high income" areas on the slopes of the mountain and "low income pockets" closer to the Cape flats (Western 1981:165). The boundaries of the slopes of Table Mountain were extended to such an extent that what had once been 'coloured' and 'labourers' space could be redefined as 'white' space with the recreation of boundaries through the application of the Group Areas Act. The key turning points for Mowbray were the redefinition of Mowbray as a White Group Area in 1961 and the forced removal of people classified as Coloured from the suburb in c1964.

The Group Areas Act, which legislated the segregation of land on the basis of 'race' (See Chapter Three), was gazetted in 1950, but this did not mean the immediate introduction of legally segregated suburbs. Definition of space demands an ongoing process of debate around conflicting interests, and the introduction of the Group

Areas Act needs to be seen as part of such a process. Initially the Act saw its expression in the early 1950s with legislated segregation in the Cape through the introduction of "control over acquisition of property" and occupancy using a permit system (Mesthrie 1991:5). Application needed to be made to the Land Tenure Board by people who wanted to rent or buy property from people 'race'-classified differently from themselves. In addition the period involved the initial mapping out of the *apartheid* city as areas were officially demarcated for particular population categories (Western 1981; Center for Intergroup Studies 1983).

Between September 1951 and the first half of 1954 there were 1 944 applications in Cape Town for permits for the purchase or rental of property by people 'inappropriately' classified for particular areas. Not one of these related to a Mowbray property (Mesthrie 1991). This can be explained in a number of ways. Firstly, as Western (1981) has noted, a large number of the 'coloured' residents of Mowbray were lessees of row houses rather than owners of property. These rows had been rented to 'coloureds' for an extended period of time and no permits were needed for their further continued occupation. Secondly, as Mesthrie (1991) indicates, some areas of Cape Town were already fairly well defined as being for specific categories of residents. I believe this was the case in parts of Mowbray where, by the 1950s, the suburb had a fairly clearly defined set of social boundaries of which residents were aware and with which they complied

(Western 1981; Personal communication with a number of informants) (Map 2.4).



Map 2.4 Mowbray in c1960 with 'coloured' sections of the suburb demarcated (Western 1981:162)

By 1955 the boundaries of proposed Group Areas had been made public and in 1956 a commission was set in place to investigate the implications of each. By 1957 the first Group Areas for Cape Town were officially declared, and by

the early 1960s the reality of the full implications of the Group Areas Act was realised by Mowbray's residents.

In his study of 100 of the possibly 200 ex-Mowbray households evicted from the suburb, Western (1981) records the implications of the Group Areas Act in general for Cape Town and in detail for Mowbray. Part of Western's endeavour was to record people's attitude to Mowbray after they had been forced to move out. In the process some of his informants, from 36% of the old Mowbray households, affirmed their desire to return; but primarily to the Mowbray of the 'past'.

The reasons he was given for people wanting (and not wanting) to return to the suburb tell a fair amount about Mowbray itself. Western (1981) notes that new home-owners and private renters were less inclined to want to return, during his period of fieldwork, because the housing they had acquired was larger and of a better quality than that which they had lived in in Mowbray. In contrast those former Mowbray residents who had been moved to City Council housing were largely dissatisfied with their tenancy circumstances and were more inclined to express a desire to return to their former homes.

Western's (1981) informants complained that the state ignored class distinctions that had been part of Mowbray life. Most of the Coloured residents of Mowbray were not 'the poorest of the poor', in that many were professionals and skilled labourers, yet through the process of the forced

removals they were forced to live with people not of their own class.

V. Filling In 'Clear' Space: the Paradox of 'Modernization'

Forced removals resulted in the 'clearing' of 'coloured space' for 'white space'. That in itself was an act of redefinition. But what constituted 'white space'? How was it to be defined? I would argue that this new 'white space' was to be defined in two ways: as space that is modern and that simultaneously has 'history'.

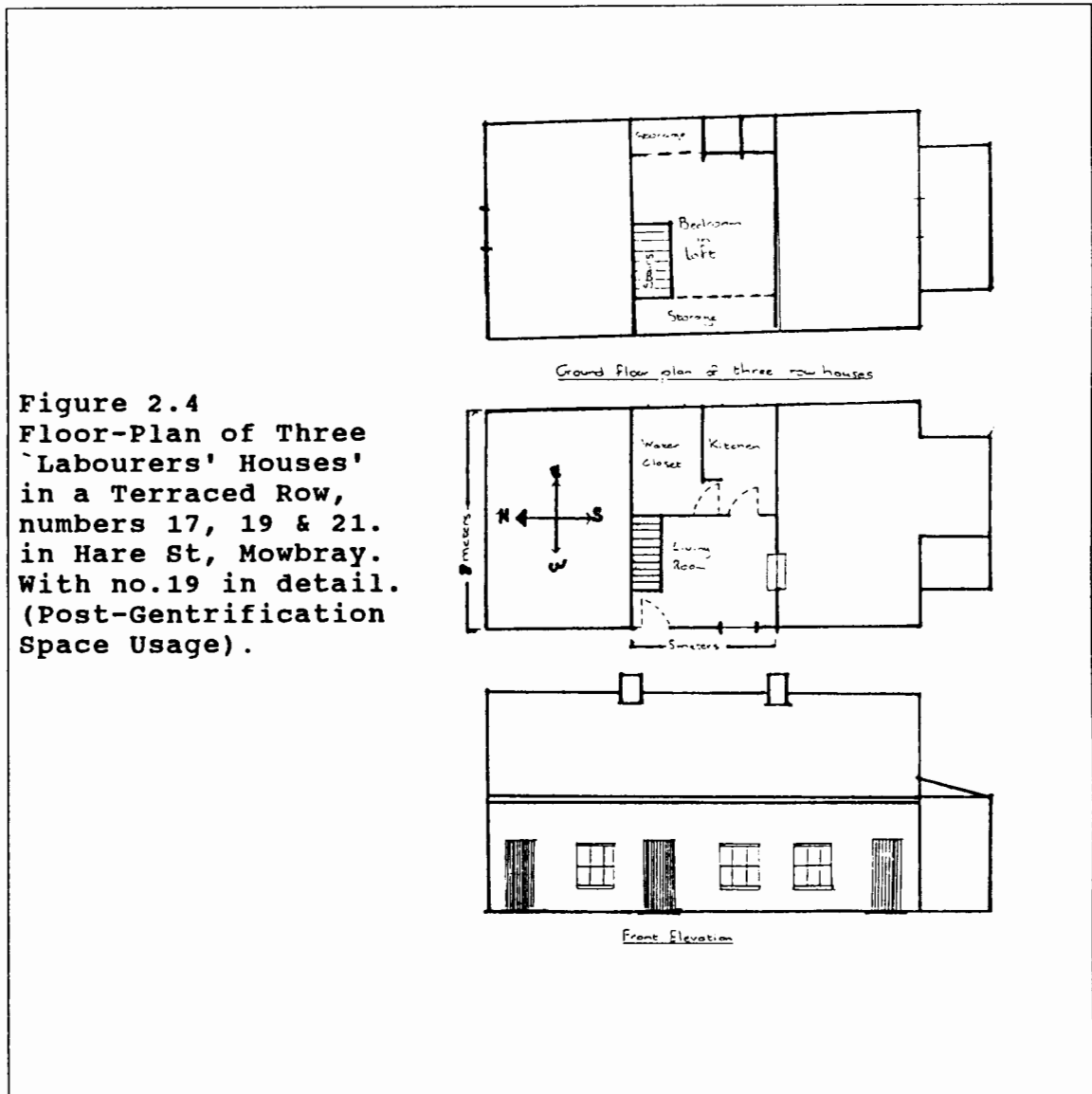
This modernity was expressed in two ways. The first was in large scale urban development patterned on models of the modern city with freeways, efficient transport and suburban development. In part this was achieved in Mowbray by the demolition of some of the areas of the suburb that had been associated with the Coloured residents. Some of the houses in the 'dorp' were demolished for the construction of a parking lot, a bus terminus and a new market area. In addition a number of major roads and freeways were built that cut through the area. For example a large part of the former 'Malay Quarter' (Map 2.4), above the brickfields, was demolished to make way for the Settlers Way Motorway (Map 1.1).

In addition, houses were 'cleared' to make space for modern blocks of flats. Thus, for example, an area between the Liesbeeck River and the railway line, which once consisted of 'coloured labourers cottages' for the local nursery, was flattened to make way for a block of flats called Liesbeeck

Gardens and a number of smaller blocks. The model of that process of modernization in that small section of Mowbray was the demolition of the Wheatfield Nursing Home, which some of Western's (1981) informants knew well, for the construction of the massive and modern Mowbray Maternity Hospital for 'Whites only'.

Another expression of the sentiment of the time was the construction of a complex of 351 flats called Forest Hill on the old brickfields (Map 2.4). This was constructed above the Main Road where the old quarry had been, on the lower slopes of Devil's Peak. It was aimed at more up-market tenants. As the last major housing project undertaken in the area it came to express the best qualities of modernity in contrast to a suburb that was steeped 'in history'.

It is here that the second aspect of modernity, namely its paradoxical nature with 'restoration', comes into focus. It was clear from the start that people classified as White would not live under the same domestic conditions as the previous Coloured residents had. But the many 'cottages' that had once housed Coloured residents had potential if they could be 'restored'. Their selling quality lay in their history which could be played upon to make them appealing; but their disadvantage was their uncomfortable size and lack of 'proper facilities'. By 'restoring' and 'modernizing' them they were, however, reconstructed for White residential use (See Figure 2.4 as an example). It is this process that has been labelled as 'gentrification'.



Dent (1989:73) defines 'gentrification' as the "process by which formerly working-class areas . . . were being resettled and transformed by members of higher socio-economic classes". Many studies of the process in Britain focussed on a class analysis. This has proved useful but limited for South Africa. The phenomenon in South Africa has elements of class inequality in it, but it also has racial elements. As Western (1981) has demonstrated, the process here was given a major push by the forced removals and the 'clearing' of older sections of South African cities

for White residential use. This is true for Mowbray¹¹. I will discuss 'gentrification' and the images of space used to define it in the particular context of Mowbray in more detail in Chapter Five. For now it is important to recognise that the process itself involved unequal power relations and exchanges.

Western (1981) has documented the lucrative nature of gentrification for property speculators and White landlords following the eviction of Coloureds from the suburb. These gains for some, at the expense of others, need to be seen in the light of the powerlessness of Coloured property owners and the power the law gave Whites. White speculators had the benefit of potential value that could be gained in a racist market in a White Group Area.

What the forced removals also amounted to, in suburbs such as Mowbray, was a larger pool of housing for people classified White in prime suburban space close to the city. In contrast, for people classified as Coloured, Asian or Black it meant a further compounding of an already serious shortage of housing. It meant the removal of people so classified further from the city and its conveniences (Davies 1989), the disruption of their social life (Western 1981) and the growth of satellite towns, townships and

11. The process of gentrification has continued in Cape Town, in terms of both 'class' and 'race', even with the growth of 'grey areas' and with the scrapping of the Group Areas Act. I found that people classified as Coloured were buying up 'gentrified cottages' in Maitland in 1989/90 with the eviction of 'poor white' tenants (Bell 1990). In addition, the scrapping of the Group Areas Act has resulted in a further growth in the market for 'gentrified cottages' for 'whites' in the Woodstock-Salt River area and in Bo-Kaap with the eviction of 'poor Coloured and Malay' tenants.

'squatter camps' on marginal land (Platzky & Walker 1985). In this sense it was the mapping out of space that reflected the unequal power relations of *apartheid*, and the inequalities of South African society.

VI. Conclusion

What I have argued is that the history of Mowbray is a history of a process of dominance of colonized by colonizers which is in part expressed in the struggle for and definition of land. From the early beginnings of Dutch settlement, the establishment of farms, and the beginnings of the village of 'Driekoppen' we see the initial attempts at the definition of a 'colonial Frontier'. From the turn of the 19th Century to the end of 1913 we see the growth of the town of Mowbray and the definition of space in terms of notions of social difference within an 'Anglicized discourse'. One of the clues to understanding social boundaries is to be found in the landscape and the types of housing provided for a whole cross-section of Mowbray's population. Another is in the names given to aspects of that landscape.

Post-1913 we begin to see Mowbray emerging as a predominantly 'white' suburb, with a heterogeneous 'white population' and with 'pockets' of 'coloured' residents. By 1950 it would seem that those social boundaries were fairly well entrenched. Between 1950 and 1964 a new dispute arose over the 'definition' of 'white' and 'coloured' space, and again the dominant had the power to appropriate 'old space' in order to give it new meaning. Following the forced

removal from the suburb of people classified as Coloured, 'coloured' space was then redefined as 'white' space through a process of 'modernization' and 'gentrification'.

Mowbray exemplifies process that happened on a macro level in various parts of South Africa. The process in Mowbray had its own idiosyncrasies, but it serves as an example of the continued domination of the powerless by the powerful and the expression of that relationship in disputes over resources of housing and land. These disputes meant increased homelessness and impoverishment among those classified as Coloured, Asian and Black. In contrast they meant unequal access to land, and the growth of a protected housing market, for those classified as White.

In Mowbray the application of the Group Areas Act had specific benefits to those classified as White. Firstly White developers and property speculators made large profits on the 'development' of housing in areas where 'coloured housing' had been demolished and where 'coloured cottages' were 'gentrified'. Secondly, local White landlords secured their position in the market with the removal of Coloured landlords. In addition they obtained far higher rentals from White tenants than they might have obtained from Coloured tenants. The profits of both speculators and landlords were dependent upon the paradoxical nature of gentrification, in that 'history' and 'modernity' are combined in order to reach a housing market. Finally, the Group Areas Act secured an excess of housing for people classified as White. On one hand forced removals opened up

a whole new market of housing for Whites, while on the other hand it continued to protect that market for the exclusive use of that particular category of people. For them 'winning' was a given that contextualised their own perspective of themselves as dominant political players whose interests were secured through the 'story of history'. But, as I will demonstrate in Chapter Three, the changing context challenged that history of winning.

Chapter Three

Elderly Mowbray Residents: Their Experiences and Strategies for Securing Housing in a Context of Change

This research began as a result of a debate in Cape Town newspapers over a growing shortage of housing which suggested that 'elderly people' were seriously disadvantaged. As I have demonstrated in Chapter Two, in the past people classified as White were 'winners' in terms of securing accommodation and defining space. But a new context has arisen. This context is one in which housing security is undermined and the meaning ascribed to space is changing.

I would argue that elderly White residents of Mowbray perceive themselves to be in the middle of a 'housing crisis' as a result of changes in the state's housing policy and property legislation. These elderly residents negotiate that context in terms of a range of factors which they take into consideration in maintaining old and developing new housing options. By looking at these factors, I will show that in this new context elderly White Mowbray residents are both 'winners' and 'losers'.

The factors relate to housing type and are context-specific. For residents in free-standing, terraced- and semi-detached houses (32% or 21 of the elderly White Mowbray residents interviewed), the following factors are of importance: (1)

costs of house maintenance; (2) fear and experience of crime; (3) removal of the Group Areas Act; (4) use of residential property for business purposes; and (5) housing as a rentable asset and to ensure continued support from kin. For residents in flats (68% or 41 of the elderly residents interviewed) the following factors are important: (1) scrapping of rent control and introduction of a sectional title market; and (2) purchases of blocks of flats by UCT for student accommodation.

By looking at elderly people's housing experiences, in terms of housing type and the range of factors they considered for securing housing, I will provide a context in which to understand their responses. This will be done by looking at the factors which were considered as important by: (i) residents in free-standing, semi-detached and terraced houses; and (ii) residents in flats. While I have located specific factors under specific housing types, it needs to be realised that there is a degree of overlap and that residents did enter a debate over each other's experiences.

I. Residents in Free-Standing, Terraced- and Semi-Detached Houses

A. Costs of Maintaining a House

Many of the elderly people I interviewed in free-standing and large semi-detached or terraced houses indicated that they wished to sell in order to move into smaller and more manageable dwellings. This in part was due to the fact that

the larger dwellings needed constant attention and maintenance.

Case 3.1: Balancing Independence with the Maintenance of a Free-Standing House

Mrs Philips is 79. She lives alone in a 3-bedroomed free-standing house which she and her husband bought in 1953. Her husband passed away in 1986 and she was struggling to maintain the house on dwindling funds. For years she and her husband had done most of the work on the house themselves; but just prior to his death they had had to employ workmen to do repairs due to their own failing health.

Now that Mrs Philips was on her own she was afraid to have workmen in the house because of repeated bad experiences which she had had and about which she felt helpless. For example, in the mid-1980s she had the exterior of the house painted. The work had been shoddy and certain jobs had not been completed. When I visited her she explained that she needed to repaint the house but did not have the money to contract a "good" firm to do the job. This meant that she would have to employ labour "off the street". In light of repeated articles in the press of 'elderly people' being assaulted by casual labourers, she felt it unwise to do this.

She argued that the risks and costs of maintaining her own house were becoming too great and she wanted to sell. Her major concern was that she had always lived by herself in a house with space. If she did sell what would she buy or rent, and would it mean a deterioration of her present life-style and loss of independence?

Mrs Philips was not the only elderly person struggling to maintain her house. Another elderly woman I interviewed had contacted a workman through the classified section of the newspaper and paid him R600 in advance for repairing her roof. The workman never did the job and her attempts to contact him again were fruitless. Similar stories were often told to me by elderly women who lived alone and who argued that they were dependent upon employing people to do

even small maintenance tasks, like replacing tap washers. So what do elderly people like this do?

One strategy is to sell their larger houses in order to buy something smaller and more manageable. In the process they hope to save on the running costs invested in the property. To their advantage is the fact that there is a market for larger houses in the area: to their disadvantage is the fact that smaller properties cost proportionately more.

Case 3.2: "Selling Out" in Order to "Buy Down" Once More

After Mrs Burns's husband had died she sold their large house in another suburb because of increasing maintenance costs. She then bought a 2-bedroomed semi-detached cottage in Mowbray in 1987. By doing so she had opted to 'buy down' in an area close to UCT for her son's convenience as a student.

Her son was now leaving home and she had become increasingly concerned about crime in the area after her car was stolen. Thus she was planning to sell again. She had originally bought her 'cottage' for R60 000 in 1987 and was planning to sell it for around R150 000. Mrs Burns had already found another 'cottage, this time with one bedroom, for around R100 000, which she felt could create some investment capital for herself in the process.

In this and other cases 'buying down' is an ongoing strategy in which the cost of maintenance is meant to be reduced, while an attempt is made to generate some added capital. It also reflects a cycle of buying and selling in order to stay in the housing market. Mrs Burns (Case 3.2) was also trying to play the market of 'gentrified cottages' which had been opened to people classified as White as a direct result of the forced removals of the 1960s (Western 1981). In the case of her Mowbray 'cottage', the removal of Coloured

residents in c1964 had created a market for these dwellings, and in the case of her 'new cottage' the eviction of Coloured families from that suburb in c1985 had created a new market for investment (I will discuss this in more detail in Case 3.6).

In Mowbray the semi-detached and terraced houses which elderly White people have bought as part of a 'buying down' strategy are in a lucrative part of the market. Their added selling qualities are their appeal to first-time home buyers, their 'historical' value and their position near the central business district. They thus constitute a good investment for elderly people who want to cut down on maintenance costs and who hope to be able to sell them in the future.

B. Fear and Experience of Crime

A factor that came up repeatedly during interviews was fear of crime. This was justified in terms of people's own experience and the horrific acts that have been committed against elderly people in the area in the last few years and highlighted in the press. Elderly people also related this to the perceived changing nature of the suburb and the possibility of moving to accommodation with better security facilities.

Case 3.3: Selling because of the Fear of Crime

Mr and Mrs MacDonald had lived in their 4-bedroomed free-standing house since 1967 and were considering selling when I first met them in 1991. Mr MacDonald was not keen to sell because he felt that Mowbray was a convenient suburb to live in and near the many

activities in which he had become increasingly involved since his retirement. Mrs MacDonald felt rather strongly that it was time to move. Her concern was the crime in the area. For her the "bus terminus", which was two blocks away from them, "had become a real problem and a hassle". She felt that living in the suburb had become "stressing".

They had planned to sell their house in Cape Town and invest the money in a house for their son in Pretoria, where he was being transferred for a short period, while they looked after his house in another suburb of Cape Town. When he was transferred back to Cape Town they would sell the house in Pretoria and build a 'granny flat' on his property in Cape Town. Mr and Mrs MacDonald would then move into the 'granny flat'.

Case 3.4: Selling because of Experience of Crime, 'Vagrancy' and Employment

Mr and Mrs Williams originally bought their house in 1963 for R6 500. They had decided to sell it for a number of reasons. Firstly in 1990 they had had a frightening experience when their house was broken into. They had not been at home at the time but the burglars had left blood all over the house as one had cut himself on the window broken to enter the house, and they left a massive knife in one of the rooms. Fortunately the burglars had been frightened off by a neighbour and were caught by the police the following day when they came back to finish off the job. But the incident had given Mr and Mrs Williams a fright. Mr Williams expressed it this way: "We now have a massive security system, but it is worrying if we had a fire. We would never get out of here. We do leave a key at the door in case, but it is still worrying. At present we feel like prisoners in our own home".

The second reason they wanted to move is related to the first. They feel that a result of the changes in the suburb is an increase in vagrancy. Mr Williams argued that he was more than willing to help unemployed people; but the flood of beggars at the door had become too much. In addition some were abusive, and one had even exposed himself to Mrs Williams. They had begun to lock the front gate, but this further reinforced their own feelings of being trapped.

Finally, Mr Williams is still employed. He officially retired 3 years ago, but continues to work as an engineering consultant in the Somerset West area. He argued that he "would love to live in one of the labourers' cottages on the land near Hermanus"; but felt that such an option was unrealistic. Rather their intention was to sell their 4-bedroomed free-standing house in Mowbray in order to buy a 'cottage' in a retirement village. Even with a good selling price on their present house they would only just be able to buy the 'cottage'. In addition the monthly levy at the

village, which would be about R300/month, worried Mr Williams. He felt they could afford it at present, but was concerned about it increasing markedly with inflation.

Fear and experience of crime surfaced in most of the discussions I had with elderly people. From my initial survey I noted the following: firstly that there was high **experience** of crime, particularly in the form of break-ins and petty theft, in the area of semi-detached and terraced houses around the railway station. In contrast, no flat-residents interviewed reported a single case of a break-in, although some did report cases of personal assault and robbery on the streets of Mowbray. Secondly, during the period of fieldwork two horrific cases of assault on elderly people in their homes were reported. Both were in the area of free-standing houses (Thambodala March 1992:8). The first was an assault on an elderly couple in their garden, neighbours of both the MacDonalds (Case 3.3) and Williamses (Case 3.4). The second involved an elderly woman, a friend of Mrs Philips (Case 3.1), who was stabbed repeatedly and threatened with rape. These cases were often referred to by local residents in order to justify their own fear.

Some residents, like the Williamses (Case 3.4), went to incredible measures to secure themselves in their houses. Yet that too worried them in that it jeopardized their own safety, for example in the case of a household fire, and made them feel like prisoners. This level of confinement was brought home to me one day when I was painting Mrs Philips' (Case 3.1) gates. I had been working in the spring

sunshine when Mrs Philips came to ask me if I wanted something to drink. I said yes, and as she walked away she asked me a question: "Do you mind if I sit at the front of the house with you?" I was confused by her question and she looked at me knowingly. She then went on to explain that she hardly ever goes into the garden because she is afraid that somebody might sneak into the house through the open door or assault her on her own property.

When this level of confinement becomes too much to handle some elderly people opt to move away from the area. The MacDonalds (Case 3.3) had chosen to move to a suburb which they thought safer and was removed from the trains and taxis which Mrs MacDonald claimed were in part responsible for the crime rate. This was part of a strategy, and gave legitimation to it, that included the long term possibility that Mrs MacDonald would need to be cared for by kin after the death of her husband. It also included a knowledge of the housing market. The MacDonalds were aware that they could potentially sell their houses for around R240 000, and that they needed to take into consideration that the housing market in Pretoria was relatively static.

For the Williamses (Case 3.4) moving to a retirement village was seen as a secure option that fitted their other considerations, such as being closer to Mr Williams' place of work. Here again the principle of paying more for less comes into effect. Mr Williams was aware of the price disparity between his large house and a 'retirement

cottage', and that buying into a retirement village had the added worry of levies and hidden costs which increased with each year. His continued employment would provide this required income. But of primary concern to him was to know that his wife would be safe. The retirement village, with its 24-hour security, provided that degree of 'encapsulation', without the sense of confinement they were experiencing in Mowbray.

C. Introduction and Removal of the Group Areas Act: a Source of Benefit

The introduction of the Group Areas Act in the 1950s was an attempt by the state to impose segregation onto the landscape of South Africa. In effect it resulted in a surplus of housing for Whites and worsening of the housing shortage for South Africans classified Coloured, Asian and Black (Bridgman, Palmer & Thomas 1992). In addition, the application of the Act through forced removals was instrumental in creating accessible housing for Whites close to city centres (Davies 1989; Platzky & Walker 1985), and its continued application maintained that situation.

For some elderly residents in Mowbray, namely those who bought houses in the suburb after the eviction of Coloured residents in c1964 and the creation of a range of houses for 'renovation' and 'gentrification' (Western 1981), the application of the Group Areas Act was most advantageous.

Case 3.5: 'Buying Down' as a Forward Strategy for Investment and Saving

69 year old Mrs Mietz and her husband, prior to their retirement, had bought a pair of semi-detached houses in 1977 for R30 000 each. Initially they 'renovated' them and rented them out. Close to their retirement, in 1983, they sold the large free-standing house in which they were living and moved into one of the semi-detached houses in order to be within walking distance of work and to enjoy the "rural and village atmosphere of Mowbray". While they lived in the one they rented out the other. Mr Mietz died in 1990 and Mrs Mietz thought it would be beneficial to sell the rented 'cottage' in order to give her capital investments a boost to carry her through her retirement.

This case demonstrates the long-term planning which goes into the 'buying down' process and the fact that such a strategy was dependent upon the availability of 'restorable' housing created as a result of the application of the Group Areas Act. A number of the elderly residents I interviewed, particularly those who lived in Mowbray in the 1960s, were aware of the fact that the Group Areas Act had resulted in this growth of the market of 'renovated cottages'; but few verbalised a view that the process was a form of injustice.

Pickard-Cambridge (1988:33) has argued that the advantages that the Act offered Whites began to come under serious threat in c1985, when pressures for the repeal of the Group Areas Act "stemmed chiefly from the shortage of housing in black townships and consequent growing black demand for housing in suburbs reserved for whites, where there has been a surplus of accommodation"¹. The 'white' suburbs which were 'greying', in that people from disqualified 'race' or

1. Pickard-Cambridge (1988), in referring to blacks, means people classified as Black, Coloured and Asian in terms of the Population Registration Act.

'population' categories were increasingly residing in them, were the less expensive areas in or closer to the city centres. For example Ferreira and Rip (1990) noted that in 1990 42% of Hillbrow's population was Black. For Cape Town the areas most affected by the 'greying' process were the less expensive suburbs like Maitland (Bell 1990), the inner-city area and accommodation along the major public transport routes close to suburban centres.

But as Davies (1989) has argued, it was economically better off 'blacks' who were moving into these previous 'white' suburbs. These new 'black' tenants and home-buyers moved to the suburbs in order to gain some access to housing, and to be nearer their places of work and the many conveniences previously available only to Whites who lived near the city centre. In effect some of these new residents were competing for rented accommodation with 'poorer whites' and, by pushing up rents, were replacing those residents who were then forced to resort to sharing accommodation in overcrowded conditions (Bell 1990), to squatting (The Argus 8 August 1991:1), and to joining the growing numbers of vagrants and homeless.

During the fieldwork period in Mowbray, no Black or Coloured tenants in flats were interviewed, although a number of interviews were conducted with Black and Coloured tenants in semi-detached or terraced houses. In addition, two of the free-standing houses surveyed were owned by people classified as Coloured, one of which I will consider in Case

3.6. In addition, I interviewed no White 'elderly' house-residents who argued that **their** accommodation was threatened by the scrapping of the Act. Rather I found the reverse to be true. The scrapping of the Group Areas Act in fact widened the pool of potential buyers and thus placed more pressure on the market in favour of sellers.

Case 3.6 Benefitting from the Opening of the Market to 'Black' Buyers

72 and 71 year old Mr and Mrs Langley had decided to sell their 3-bedroomed free-standing house, due to their failing health and because of the opportunity to move to an institution. The buyers who offered them the best price happened to be a middle-aged Coloured couple, the Murrays. Mr Murray was a teacher and Mrs Murray was a "free-lance tour guide".

The Murrays bought the house for R165 000 in November 1991. When I interviewed Mrs Murray she remarked that the "elderly couple" were a little surprised at "blacks" buying their house; but they were very friendly. They had had "no problems with the neighbours" and the house was conveniently placed within walking distance from the school which their two sons attended.

For Mr and Mrs Langley (Case 3.6) the scrapping of the Group Areas Act resulted in an improved market for their house. The Murrays were the type of people who could afford to purchase it but had been previously barred from entering this section of the housing market. Their purchase of this house advantaged the White sellers and challenged the notion that the scrapping of the Group Areas Act necessarily disadvantages 'elderly whites'.

D. The Impact of Business Use on Residential Property

It was evident during the research that, even with an excess of office space and business premises in Cape Town, there was a trend towards the use of residential properties for

business use. This had come about in a number of ways and for various reasons. Firstly professionals and businesses used residential property 'illegally', and managed to evade the law for extended periods of time. Secondly businesses occupied houses and then applied for a rezoning or a waiver on the basis that they had already invested extensive amounts in the property and that it had been altered to a point where it was unsuitable for residential use. Thirdly, estate agents advertised houses with the possibility of a waiver or a rezoning being granted. Finally home-owners applied for business zonings in order to increase the selling price of their property. All of these factors created a snowball effect which the Cape Town City Council found difficult to control as each application was made on the basis of the changing nature of the general character of the area.

Case 3.7: Application for Rezoning in order to Sell a House after Moving to an Institution

82 year old Miss Eaton had to move to an institution due to her failing health. Her home was directly opposite the railway station and surrounded by houses which had businesses in them. It had been structurally damaged by a bomb blast at the railway station and was thus in need of major repair.

Miss Eaton's nephew had been assigned the task of selling the house. He thought it would be far easier to achieve if he had it rezoned for business use and taken off the residential property market. He thus applied to the City Council for a rezoning on the basis that the character of the area had been so altered by local business that the house was no longer suitable for residential use.

Residential properties that were zoned for business-use fetched far higher prices than residential properties, and

it was in the interest of the potential seller to have a property zoned as such. In Case 3.7 there was a number of motivating factors in the applicant's favour, namely the position of the dwelling opposite the railway station and the fact that other houses in the street were already zoned for business use. It was also a classic case of an application based upon the 'general character of the area' being unsuitable for continued residential use. This house was close to the main business area of Mowbray and fell into that 'shady' boundary between residential and business use. It illustrates that while this encroachment of business use did add to the shortage of housing, it also benefited elderly people who were developing new accommodational options. In this case the money from the sale of the house was urgently needed to secure Miss Eaton's (Case 3.7) new accommodational option and for her continued health care. Rezoning her house for business use was a worthwhile strategy in a market where there was a growing demand for business premises of this nature.

E. Housing as a Rentable Asset and to Ensure Kin Support

Even with all of these enticements to sell, some elderly residents chose to stay in their homes in order to take advantage of the housing shortage in another way: by renting out rooms. This formed part of a multiple strategy aimed at augmenting their income while retaining the security of owning their accommodation.

Case 3.8: Sharing with Kin and Renting to Students as a Means of Survival

Mrs Gillis, a 79 year old widow, shares a 4-bedroomed semi-detached house with her 55 year old widowed and handicapped daughter. Mrs Gillis and her husband moved to Mowbray in 1960. When her husband died she found it necessary to take in boarders to augment her income, and as a source of companionship and security. When I first interviewed her she had two UCT student-lodgers. Her widowed daughter had only recently joined her and they had taken on the task of caring for each other.

Responding to questions about staying in Mowbray, Mrs Gillis said it was "central and convenient", although she knew she would have to move one day, albeit unwillingly. To keep a roof over her head and to make ends meet she used her house as an asset to generate income. She felt that the fact that her house was 15 minutes' walk from UCT, and that there was an increasing demand for rentable accommodation, made it worthwhile for her not to sell, even if the market was in her favour. In addition her daughter owned a house on the same street which she rented out to kin at a nominal rate.

As case 3.8 shows, the shortage of rentable accommodation worked in the favour of elderly Mowbray residents willing to take in boarders. In the case of Mrs Gillis and her daughter (Case 3.8), the boarders provided them with income to spend on general maintenance of the house. In addition, Mrs Gillis argued, in light of the fact that her house had been broken into a number of times, the male students provided her with good security.

A number of other single elderly women had, or wanted to develop, a similar strategy of renting rooms to students. In light of the cost of maintenance, the problem of crime and the shortage of other forms of accommodation, this strategy permitted elderly people to stay in their own houses. But it had its problems. Prime among them was finding 'suitable' tenants. In most cases, student tenants

were obtained by word of mouth or from neighbouring 'student digs'. It was also interesting to note that elderly homeowners were reluctant to have 'elderly tenants' who, they feared, would require too much looking after or might prove to be incompatible co-residents.

In some case, elderly women did share accommodation. These arrangements were usually based on a long friendship or a formal companionship such as where an older woman would take in a younger woman and provide her with board and lodging in exchange for companionship and care. Often these were elderly women who lacked kin support.

Importantly though, while the demand for student accommodation has benefitted those elderly White Mowbray residents who own houses, it has undermined the secure access to accommodation of those elderly residents in flats. This has been compounded by changes in legislation governing the renting and purchasing of flats.

II. Residents in Flats

A. The Scrapping of Rent Control and the Introduction of Sectional Title

While there has been rent control in South Africa since the Second World War, the 1976 Rent Control Act significantly increased the types of premises and people covered. Cooper (1976) has argued that the Act had two primary purposes. The first was to control rentals and the second was to protect the "security of tenure" of lessees (Cooper

1976:12). In this regard it provided for the stricter control of rentals² rather than alleviation of housing shortages. The state's intention was to intervene on behalf of poorer Whites, for whom there was little sub-economic and cheaper housing and who were then accommodated in more up-market areas which were increasingly 'beyond their means'.

The 1976 Act made provision for buildings to be declared 'controlled premises', thus subject to rent control, and for the declaration of 'protected tenants': viz. those who were 70 years or older and with incomes below certain levels. The declaration of 'controlled premises' and of income criteria were the two flexible aspects of the Act, in that increasing numbers of premises could be declared as controlled and that the income limits set for 'protected tenants' could be adjusted by regulation.

From 1976 to 1989 the state increased the range of 'controlled premises'. This was reversed from 1989 so that by 1991 no house built after 1939 was controlled. At the same time it increased the income-levels to accommodate inflation. For example, in terms of the Government Gazette of 2 February 1990 (No.12269:87) a lessee "who is the head of a family with dependants" with an income of not more than R1 250 per month or a "single lessee without dependants"

2. It should be noted that the Rent Control Board was administered by the House of Assembly, the White House of Parliament. Following the introduction of the Houses of Delegates and Representatives, after the 1983 referendum, it was decided for economic purposes that rent complaints for other 'population groups' would be dealt with by a single Rent Control Board.

with an income of not more than R750/month is still protected by the Rent Control Act. By 3 August 1991 those figures had been changed to R2 000 and R1 200 per month respectively (Government Gazette No.13482:20).

Case 3.9: Limited Protection as a result of Rent Control

Mr James was an 84 year old 'protected' tenant in a bachelor flat. He had never married and had invested most of his retired life caring for his neighbours and being involved in his church.

He was fortunate that he still lived in 'controlled premises' and qualified as a 'protected tenant'. In 1991 his landlady decided to 'renovate' the block. In the process all the tenants received an across the board rent increase of 75%, from R400 to R700 per month. In contrast Mr James received a 95% increase, from R200 to R390 per month. He complained to me that his rent increase resulted in a major cut in his income, but that he was thankful that he was a 'protected tenant' and safe from the same increases his neighbours experience.

The significance of this case is Mr James's own response. In terms of percentages his increase was high, but in monetary terms the law had protected him to some degree. Mrs Philips (Case 3.1), a good friend of his, remarked that he was a "thorn in his landlady's side" because he was a protected tenant. She suggested that if his landlady could she would get rid of him in order to increase her profits.

Some tenants who were still protected under the Rent Control Act could have their leases terminated under the Sectional Title Act. In terms of the Sectional Title Act (No.95 of 1986), protection is available on application to those 65 years of age or older and those with incomes stipulated in the Rent Control Act. But what is of importance here,

unlike the Rent Control Act, is that tenants in controlled premises must meet both the age and income criteria. A tenant who does so qualify cannot be given notice to vacate a dwelling, even if they are not willing to purchase it. In contrast an unqualified tenant in controlled premises can be given notice if he/she is not willing to buy the section on sale.

Case 3.10: A Tenant Protected under the Rent Control Act, but not under the Sectional Title Act

Mr and Mrs Willis moved to a 2-bedroomed flat in 1962. Mrs Willis had lost her husband and her son, and now faced the possibility of losing her 'home' which contained all her memories of them.

In terms of the Rent Control Act she is a protected tenant, because she is over 70 years of age and living in controlled premises. At the time of our first meeting she was paying R345 per month for a flat which she maintained herself. At the end of 1991 she was given notice on her lease, because she was unable to purchase the flat under sectional title. She qualifies for protection under two aspects of the Sectional Title Act, namely that she was older than 65 and she still lived in a controlled premises; but she earned R40 over the stipulated monthly income of R1 200 to qualify for protection.

When she was interviewed she was still trying hard to stay in the flat. She did not have the capital to buy it and had no other alternative accommodation. In addition she did not know where she stood in terms of the law and was unclear over how the Rent Control and Sectional Title Acts related. Her repeated attempts to contact somebody at the Rent Control Board had met with no success. I attempted to assist her by going to see a Rent Control inspector and doing some legal dog-work. Her plight was a desperate one, and when she was told that the Rent Board was unable and unwilling to help her she simply sat in her lounge and wept.

Case 3.11: Protected Tenants in a Sectional Title Block

Mr and Mrs Norman, Mrs Willis's neighbours, had moved to their flat in 1977 after being evicted from a row of terraced houses which were demolished to make way for a freeway through Mowbray. They qualified as protected tenants in terms of all three conditions set down in the Sectional Title Act. Mr Norman was 75, while his wife was 64; they lived in controlled premises, and had an income of less than R2 000 per month. Despite their

circumstances they were still given notice to vacate their flat when they refused to buy it. They did not have the money to buy it and they were ignorant of how the law actually protected them.

Mr and Mrs Norman's (Case 3.11) situation was fairly common in that landlords simply sent duplicated letters to all tenants informing them of their 'common' situation. They then left it to the tenant to do all the 'legal hunting' in the hope that they would find it such a daunting task that they would give up. Some tenants did make concerted efforts, like Mrs Willis (Case 3.10), to keep up to date on their position as protected tenants. But often they found it incredibly difficult to deal with the complexities of the law. They complained that they were not notified by the relevant authorities of changes in the law, that the needed information was inaccessible - for example the Rent Board did not supply information to the public in a written or verbal form - and that some estate agents, property administrators and property developers took advantage of the public's general ignorance. For example, the Normans (Case 3.11), as a result of the confusion over how the Rent Control Act and the Sectional Title Act applied to them, were convinced that their landlord and his property administrators were in the right. Their neighbour, Mrs Willis (Case 3.10), was at first convinced that both she and the Normans were still protected by law. In fact the reverse was true. Mrs Willis was no longer protected by law, while the Normans were. The paradox is that Mr Norman died within months of my first meeting him. As a result Mrs

Norman lost her status as a protected tenant as the wife of a man who was older than 65.

For those elderly tenants who were not protected by law there was even greater insecurity. Some elderly tenants reported that their landlords had registered their blocks of flats for Sectional Title, and that they were faced with the constant worry of being evicted.

Case 3.12: The Threatening Possibility of Losing Accommodation through Sectional Title Sales

57 year old Miss Drewer, a retired clerk, had lived in her particular block of flats for over 10 years. She had originally moved to Mowbray in order to be near her church in which she was very involved. She feared losing her flat and the possibility of having to leave Mowbray. She has a sister, who lived in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, whom she visits on a regular basis, but was reluctant to go and live with her and to lose the convenience and friendships which were part of her life in Mowbray.

Miss Drewer was not a protected tenant. She was paying R400 per month for a 1-bedroomed flat, but had been given 2 months notice on a rent increase to R500. In December 1991 her landlord had sent all the tenants letters telling them that he had opened a sectional title register on the block of flats, but that he was not intending to sell in the immediate future. The block constituted a "family investment" and Miss Drewer was concerned that her landlord was intending to sell it off under sectional title in order to get as much out of it as possible, so that he could retire and set his children up financially.

13% of all of the elderly flat residents interviewed faced this form of tension. It undermined their security and meant that they had constantly to keep other, often 'negative', housing alternatives open. In addition, the scrapping of rent control, in conjunction with the introduction of sectional title legislation, had enabled

many landlords to make profits out of selling their flats. This trend resulted in increased rentals for the few blocks which remained on the renter's market. Thus for people like Miss Drewer (Case 3.12) a flat was something worth holding on to, and its possible loss was a constant worry.

Not all elderly Mowbray residents felt disadvantaged by the changes in the legislation, however, particularly when it came to the possibility of owning a flat in a sectional title block. There was a growing market in the area for flats for sale under sectional title, with the average 1- and 2-bedroomed flats selling for around R62 000 and R89 000 respectively in 1991/92. There were few elderly people who bought these flats, but some did in order to stay in the property market and to have a more manageable unit. I interviewed only one elderly resident who had bought into such a scheme.

Case 3.13: Sectional Title as a Positive Alternative

Mrs De Costa and her husband had rented a large house in University Estate prior to 1989. When her husband died her son felt that the house was too big and unsafe for her to live in. Thus in 1989 he bought her a flat in a sectional title block for R55 000.

When I interviewed her she had just come back from a walk with her dog, another gift from her son for her safety. She argued that sectional title was a good thing in that it meant blocks of flats were at least looked after, and her block was testimony to that. But it had its down side. She complained that the monthly levy was steep and she was concerned that the possibility of annual increases would result in severe erosion of her limited income.

Mrs De Costa's case (Case 3.13) illustrates that sectional title can indeed be an option for elderly people. The

positive aspect of the scheme for her was that it was like renting, in that somebody else worried about the maintenance, while at the same time it involved ownership. But, as Mrs De Costa's (Case 3.13) friend Mrs Philips (Case 3.1) noted, the levy that had to be paid on a monthly basis "made one into a tenant who was at the mercy of somebody else". And it was for this reason that Mrs Philips (Case 3.1) was reluctant to do the same.

B. Purchase of Blocks of Flats by UCT for Student Residences

UCT (University of Cape Town) came to play a dominant role in the property market in the suburbs stretching from Rondebosch to Observatory, particularly as a competitor for blocks of flats along the Main Road and railway line. Its expansionist policy was legitimated in terms of its need for accommodation for its growing and changing student body (Table 3.1).

Table 3.1 Number of students registered at UCT for period 1985-1991, with numbers of students in residence.

Year:	Registered Students	Students in Residence
1985:	11 848	2 370
1986:	c12 400	2 420
1987:	13 143	2 487
1988:	c13 400	2 649
1989:	13 729	2 727
1990:	14 315	3 104
1991:	14 467	3 286

(Adapted from UCT News May 1992:4-5).

positive aspect of the scheme for her was that it was like renting, in that somebody else worried about the maintenance, while at the same time it involved ownership. But, as Mrs De Costa's (Case 3.13) friend Mrs Philips (Case 3.1) noted, the levy that had to be paid on a monthly basis "made one into a tenant who was at the mercy of somebody else". And it was for this reason that Mrs Philips (Case 3.1) was reluctant to do the same.

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Prior to 1989 UCT bought up a number of small blocks of flats. In 1989 it bought one of the largest blocks of flats in Mowbray, Liesbeeck Gardens. By early 1991 it had negotiated the purchase of an even larger development which included the blocks of flats called Forest Hill, Varietas, Shell Court and Orpington. This totalled 351 flats and a number of commercial premises. One block, Orpington, fell outside the area designated by the Cape Town City Council's zoning scheme for UCT's expansion, and was sold to a property developer later that same year. It was estimated that the flats could accommodate 900 students if each was given his/her own room; but UCT's intention was to maintain some sections of the development for the generation of income from private tenants.

UCT did attempt to accommodate specific categories of tenants by offering to extend leases. Thus people who were between 65 and 74 years of age or who had lived in the flats for 10 to 19 years, on 28 February 1991, were permitted to stay on until the end of 1992. Anybody who was 75 years of age or older, or who had lived in the flats for 20 years or more, could stay on until the end of the decade. In addition UCT offered to consider "special cases", particularly the disabled and tenants who had moved to the flats after being given notice at Liesbeeck Gardens. It also offered to pay all the transfer costs for the tenants who did stay as part of its plan to move them to one particular section of the complex.

My concern here is to examine what happened to various elderly tenants who were living in the complex when UCT bought it. In order to achieve this objective a number of 'typical' scenarios are presented. The first three are of elderly people who left Forest Hill once UCT bought the complex, and the last two are of elderly people who stayed on as tenants of UCT.

Case 3.14: Elderly People as Caregivers - The Institutional Option

Mrs Brooks was 71 and had lived in Forest Hill for 5 years. She had recently lost her husband and was responsible for her own welfare and for that of her son who was in his mid-30s, unemployed and ill.

After being told that she would have to leave Forest Hill in the near future she decided it was time to look around for alternative accommodation as soon as possible. She qualified for entrance into one institution, because she was on a railway workers' pension; but she could not take her son with her. When I last saw her in Forest Hill in 1991 she had been accepted into a home in the northern suburbs of Cape Town, with her son, and she was planning the move and preparing for its implications.

When I met her son in the Main Street just before Christmas of 1991, he said that they had in fact opted not to go to the institution. While they were preparing to move, their local church had bought one of the old 'manor' houses in Mowbray and was setting up a 'home' of their own. Mrs Brooks and her son were accepted immediately and had grabbed at the opportunity.

While I was visiting their church early in 1992, Mrs Brooks and her son reported to me that they had settled in rather happily at the church house. As Mrs Brooks put it: "It was good to be able to stay in Mowbray. It is convenient and all of the services are in walking distance". She is not dependent upon public transport or on friends giving her lifts, and staying in the area means she continues to have the support networks which were so vital to her previously.

Case 3.15: UCT's Purchase as No Surprise - We are Moving to a Retirement Village

70 year old Mr Thomas and his 66 year old wife had moved to Forest Hill in 1984 after immigrating to South Africa from Zimbabwe. They felt that Forest Hill was

"pleasant", "conveniently placed near public transport and the hospital", and was well serviced. But they had already had reservations about staying in Mowbray because it was "too built up" and "polluted". When UCT bought Forest Hill the Thomases had already bought a 'cottage' in a retirement village near Cape Point, and were making plans to move. Having sold property in "Rhodesia" they had some capital to invest in the retirement village and were not overly troubled by UCT's purchase.

Case 3.16: Sharing Together Come Hell or High Water

Miss Noakes, a 73 year old spinster, and 80 year old Miss Griggs had shared a flat in Forest Hill for 10 years in order to "save on expenses". Both of them had been nurses for most of their lives and had decided to share a flat "as friends", in order to cut their living expenses and for companionship.

In relation to Forest Hill, Miss Noakes argued that she "knew the flats had to be sold" and thus had made provision for herself and Miss Griggs by applying for a place in a home for retired nurses. They had both been accepted. On the day of the interview they were busy packing up the flat and apologised for the lack of furniture. They hardly seemed overwhelmed by the move; but Miss Noakes said she felt "sorry for the retired people in Forest Hill who had nowhere to go", and that the present situation was "hard on them".

Of the 30 elderly Forest Hill residents I interviewed, 11 found alternative accommodation outside the complex. For 3 of those 11, like Mrs Brooks (Case 3.14), those alternatives were very limiting to their independence and their range of support. But for the remaining 8 it meant very little change in their lifestyles. Of primary concern was that some of these elderly people had prepared themselves well in advance of UCT's purchase of Forest Hill and reacted immediately, creating alternatives and developing new strategies for shelter.

The institutional option loomed large in people's minds as a good alternative, even though acceptance by institutions was

very difficult and life there considered restrictive. For 5 of the elderly Forest Hill residents it proved a viable option, particularly for members of professional associations, such as nurses and some government employees, or those who belonged to religious or charity organisations. For 3 elderly Forest Hill residents interviewed, namely the Thomases (Case 3.15) and one bachelor, capital was available in order for them to buy into retirement villages. As was argued in the discussion on free-standing houses, such an option was expensive and required the same financial outlay as buying a large free-standing house in Mowbray. In addition it required further wealth to pay the monthly levies and to cover daily living expenses.

Like Misses Griggs and Noakes (Case 3.16), many of the Forest Hill tenants who did move expressed a degree of concern for those who were to stay. For the remaining 19 of the elderly Forest Hill residents interviewed, 5 had their leases extended until the end of the century and intended staying, while 14 had their leases extended until the end of 1992 and were looking for alternative accommodation.

Case 3.17: Staying on at Forest Hill until the End of 1992

71 and 75 year old Mr and Mrs Peters had sold up all they had in Natal and moved to Cape Town in 1988. From 1988 they had rented a flat in Forest Hill in which they "planned to retire". In addition, their son and daughter-in-law rented a flat in the same block and they were able to provide ongoing support for each other.

When the Peters first came to Cape Town they "initially looked for a place to buy", but had opted to rent in order to invest their capital and to augment their pensions through interest. Now they felt they would be

compelled to spend their investment in order to secure themselves accommodation. Mr Peters argued that he was "not too worried" and was glad that UCT had extended their lease until the end of 1992. This he felt would give them more time to shop around for a good alternative.

Case 3.18: Staying On; But Feeling the Pinch of the New Landlords

70 year old Miss Brown and 87 year old Mrs Jones had been sharing a flat in the Forest Hill complex for 20 years. They thus qualified for special attention by UCT and their lease was extended until the end of the century. Through the process they were moved from their flat in one block to another block in the complex set aside for tenants like themselves. This process resulted in an astronomical jump in their rent.

With their move they faced a rent increase of R239, from R445 to R684 per month. In addition they then faced a 25% increase in the new financial year of 1992/93, taking their rent to R855 per month. Thus they faced a total rental increase of R410 per month in less than a year. Miss Brown and Mrs Jones were struggling to keep their heads above water, while they attempted to get into an institution.

Of significance in both Case 3.16 and 3.18 is the way that elderly women, particularly widows and spinsters, shared accommodation in order to share costs. The two ladies in Case 3.16 had been offered an extended lease until the end of 1992, but decided to take advantage of the immediate possibility of going to an institution. The two ladies in Case 3.18 were not as fortunate. The younger one, Miss Brown, had been accepted at an institution, but was not willing to leave her friend. They argued that their combined income was still sufficient for them to pay the rent; but they were finding it increasingly difficult to make ends meet. Mrs Jones was actually on a state pension of just over R300/month, and thus Miss Brown was heavily subsidizing her.

Many elderly people in the past had opted to rent, rather than 'buy down', after selling their larger houses. Some tenants I interviewed, e.g. the Peters (Case 3.17), argued that in doing so they were attempting to save themselves the bother and cost of maintaining their own property. By renting they could spread the burden of such costs, and maintenance was the flat owner's responsibility. Forest Hill was known for its excellent maintenance and service. In such circumstances, renting was a worthwhile option. UCT's purchase of the flats put a halt to that option, in that leases were re-negotiated and the rents increased considerably for those who could stay. But this is not to say that tenants saw all that UCT had done as bad.

What is interesting is that some tenants actually saw UCT as being reasonable and understanding in some respects. The extension of leases for various categories of tenants was one, and the paying of moving and transfer costs for tenants was another. But none of the elderly tenants interviewed were going to stay in Forest Hill if they could help it. One of their primary reasons for this was that they believed UCT was milking them to pay for the students, and that the rent increases gave them no other option. The same was true of tenants in blocks of flats that were sold by UCT to private developers. The continued selling and purchasing of blocks of flats results in escalating rentals as each new owner claims that they have to cover increased purchasing and maintenance costs.

III. Conclusion

South Africa is in the grip of a severe housing shortage that has a long history and that has affected a vast spectrum of the population. Wilson and Ramphele (1989:125) have argued that there is a massive inequality in the provision of housing with those who least need new housing getting more, while those who most need it get the least (See Table 3.2).

Table 3.2 Housing Provision in 1986, and Housing Construction in 1983-1985, for various population categories in South Africa

Housing provision in 1986 in South Africa	
Whites:	excess of 37 000 houses
Coloured:	shortage of 52 000 houses
Asian:	shortage of 44 000 houses
Black ³ :	shortage of 583 000 houses
Houses Constructed During Period 1983-1985	
White:	172 000
Asian:	37 000
Coloured:	62 000
Black:	41 000

(Adapted from Wilson & Ramphele 1989:125)

The Western Cape has a 30 000 to 80 000 dwelling units shortage, with a possible need for an estimated 20 000 units per annum⁴ (Bridgman, Palmer & Thomas 1992). The Cape Town

3. Wilson & Ramphele (1989) use the term African, rather than Black, in order to show sensitivity and as a statement of rejection of the state's imposition of categories. I have used the term Black, in order to demonstrate the connection between the state's category and its effects.

4. This is based upon a projected population increase of 92 000 people per annum, and a housing unit to population ratio of 1:4,6.

City Council's estimate for Cape Town was 40 000 units in 1989; while the Urban Problems Research Unit suggests a figure of 100 000 dwelling units (UCT News 1991:17). It is clear that there is a massive shortage of low-cost housing, particularly for people classified as Black and Coloured.

The debate over housing, when it comes to people classified White, suggests two alternatives. The first of these, which could include material from Wilson and Ramphela (1989), would suggest that there is a surplus of housing for Whites. Much of that argument is dependent upon an analysis of structural inequalities in South Africa that show that Whites benefitted from *apartheid*. The alternative argument suggests that there is a massive crisis in housing among Whites, particularly among 'the elderly' (The Argus 17/4/1991, Southern Suburbs Tatler 25/4/1991). This argument is dependent upon the suggestion that the state's present policy towards housing has seriously undermined White security.

The data from this study in Mowbray would suggest that the situation is far more complex than has been suggested by the press. In agreement with Wilson & Ramphela (1989), I would argue that it is true that elderly Whites have benefitted from *apartheid* legislation. The application of the Group Areas Act created a surplus of housing for Whites and, in the case of Mowbray, resulted in the growth of 'gentrified' housing following the eviction of people classified as Coloured from the area in c1964.

In contrast, the removal of the Group Areas Act, the scrapping of rent control, the introduction of the sectional title market, the rezoning of land from residential to business use and the purchasing of blocks of flats by UCT have added to the general shortage of housing in Mowbray. But the direct effects of these factors on elderly Mowbray residents are complex and diverse, in that the situation works both in their favour and against them.

For elderly Mowbray house-owners the market favoured them as sellers. It added weight to the other factors they considered, such as the costs of home maintenance and the fear of crime, when deciding to sell. In addition, the shortage of housing worked in favour of those who wanted to use their houses as sources of income by renting out rooms. Those who seemed to gain most were five elderly informants who had benefitted from the poor market for previously Coloured housing until the mid-1980s, and who were considering selling their gentrified 'cottages'.

For the 6 elderly residents interviewed who were opting to 'buy down', particularly into retirement villages or smaller houses, the market was not in their favour as purchasers. In addition, elderly tenants in blocks of flats seemed the most hard hit by 'the crisis'. Nine of these elderly flat-tenants had previously owned houses which they had sold in order to create retirement capital. Four of the nine still had enough capital to buy again and to make a 'new start',

while the remaining five were using the 'capital boost' from their houses in order to cover living expenses. Others who seemed less affected by what was happening were those who seemed assured of places in 'retirement homes'; but often this option was limited to those who had religious or professional connections which gave them an edge over other applicants. Those without assets and professional or religious connections, or who had dependents in the form of children or other elderly people and who faced the possibility of losing their access to cheaper accommodation or protection under the law seemed the worst off.

When elderly Mowbray residents strategised for accommodation, they took a range of factors and a wealth of experience into consideration. As social actors they attempted to manipulate the situation to their best advantage despite many structural and professional constraints. But, as I have demonstrated, their strategies were often double-edge in that there were gains and losses in the choices made. It was particularly the losses which made housing such a contentious issue in Mowbray. Changes in elderly people's access to housing provided a new context in which, and to which, they responded. The Chapters that follow examine the forms those responses have taken.

SECTION TWO: NO WIN SITUATIONS

Chapter Four
History as a Political Tool

It is a cool spring evening in 1991 and a group of young Mowbray residents have gathered in a garden for a farewell party for a neighbour. The sun is just beginning to drop behind Devil's Peak as this group of friends begins to eat their food.

I am one of those neighbours and I live in a street of 'gentrified' terraced houses. In all they number seven in a small cul-de-sac in the 'dorp' section of the suburb. All are occupied by young couples or single people. As a neighbour I have been invited to the party.

As the evening progresses a discussion begins about the houses and the possibility of their history. One of my neighbours suggests that originally the street had been an army barracks and 'our cottages' had been officers' quarters. She claims the previous owner had told her this. Somebody else has been told that the 'cottages' had actually housed qualified masons who were brought out from England to do the intricate stonework on the railway station. I reply that I had heard a similar story from Mrs Small, a 53 year old divorcee who lived in a 'cottage' not far from us, but that she had told me it had been Irish workers who had come to do the stonework on the station. I then ask my neighbours if they know anything about the 'Coloured' families who had been evicted from 'the cottages' in the 1960s. One young lady says that she had and that possibly the ANC was going to try and claim some of the houses back if it came into power. That terminated any hope of the conversation continuing. History was dropped and we went onto the more immediate issues of work and the economy.

I. Introduction

As indicated in Chapter Two, Western (1981) has documented the process of gentrification in Mowbray which started with the forced removal of Coloured residents from the suburb in

c1964. He demonstrates how houses which once accommodated Coloured residents in the area were bought up by people classified as White for ridiculously low prices, 'renovated' and given new meaning. This process of gentrification was paralleled by a new interest in what has often been labeled as Cape Dutch and Victorian architecture, and an astronomical growth of the 'cottage furniture' industry (Kench, Mothes & Szymanowski 1987). It is my contention that the new meaning given these semi-detached and terraced houses is similar to that which is ascribed to the 'manor houses' in the suburb.

The former occupants of these 'cottages' are idealised either as gentry or, if of the lower classes, a romantic ideal of the British working class or 'traditional craftsmen'. In addition the houses were 'renovated' to have as many of the 'trappings' of the large 'manor houses' as possible, which would not have been part of their original design (Drake 1906; The Architectural Review 1944; Johnson 1987). These 'trappings' include coachlamps, large quantities of clean brass and woodwork, stained glass windows, ironwork and 'cottage furniture'. It is this issue that Dent (1989) raises when he argues that gentrification is the ultimate illusion in the manipulation of space. It makes the past so real that people end up believing that they are living in it.

From interviews I have had with some residents of Mowbray, it would seem that there was not a major interest in the

historical value of any domestic architecture of the suburb prior to the 1970s¹. During and after the 1970s there were many attempts at renovating various forms of housing, including the 'manor houses'. Much of the support for these endeavours came from the Monuments Council. In the process, the houses of the working class, particularly the semi-detached and terraced houses that had been the residences of Coloured families up until 1964, were given a new meaning associated with that of the wealthier class of the 19th and early 20th centuries. These homes were 'disguised' behind a cloak of colonial history that hid the conflicts of class and colour that had been acted out in the suburb for centuries (See Chapter Two).

In conjunction with this process of gentrification was a steady growth of histories, like those of Keen (1991) and Simcox & Hallack (1990), which gave further meaning to this reinterpretation of architectural form and social space. These histories had a specific focus; namely the lives of the wealthy and politically powerful colonial families who lived in the 'manor houses' in the area.

These histories and architectural forms reinforced the validity of each other, and are now being brought into the debate over the 'crisis' in housing. Various local residents have internalised these histories in order to give

1. Mrs Keen, one of the local historians, has a number of photographs of some of the old 'manor houses' in various states of disrepair, and she made a concerted effort to photograph as many of them as possible before they were demolished.

their living space meaning. Not only is there a symbiotic relationship between the histories and the built form, in that the histories are appropriated to give new meaning to 'old' space while the gentrified 'cottages' make history tangible in a concrete form, but the two are appropriated within debates over housing and the changing nature of the suburb. Here history becomes a charter for what the future **should** hold, or as a yardstick of how far the suburb has moved away from 'civilised' norms.

The manipulation and selective use of history needs to be seen within the historical context of conflicts over land use and accommodation such as are described in Chapters Two and Three. All those who enter the debate bring their own interpretations of the past to address the issues at stake. My main task in this chapter is to look at how history is used, as part of a response, to bring authority into present debates over housing. My focus will not be on domestic architecture, but rather on the histories of these homes and their occupants. In order to do this I will take the histories that do exist and let them engage with each other.

II. Conflicting Histories

There are two key histories on Mowbray that are presently used by local residents. These are Keen's (1991) Under Devil's Peak, and Simcox & Hallack's (1990) Mowbray "100". Both Keen and Hallack, as elderly White Mowbray residents, are regarded by locals as 'the historians' of the suburb. They both depict Mowbray as homogeneous in terms of class

and colour. In addition to these two histories I will draw upon other historical material and a range of oral histories that I have collected during interviews. Some of these oral histories deal with 'competing histories', namely of the forced removal of people classified as Coloured from Mowbray in c1964, that resonate with Western's (1981) work. They are competing texts in that they recognise class and 'colour' conflict.

This chapter focuses on one ideological phenomenon, namely the manipulation and selective use of history. In focussing on the use of history as a political tool I want to argue three points: firstly, that history is a social construct open to manipulation and selective use in political debates. In arguing this I want to demonstrate how a selective history, namely that of the wealthy Cape owners of 'manor houses' in Mowbray, is used to support claims of authority in today's debates about housing. Secondly I suggest that elderly people serve as a source of history. The way in which their histories are appropriated can reinforce their own value as people, particularly for those who are direct descendents of the wealthy residents of Mowbray and are thus seen as 'holders of history'.

My third point is that 'competing histories' are offered by some elderly people, in specific contexts, in order to evaluate the present and to affirm their own accommodational security. These 'competing histories' are also used by present and previous Coloured residents of the suburb to

make claims to their historical right to live in Mowbray. On the level of local political power playing, these 'competing histories' are suppressed. But in a broader political context, in debates with the Cape Town City Council and the Member of Parliament for the constituency of Groote Schuur, these 'competing histories' are indeed used to challenge attempts by 'conservative' Whites to secure their own interests.

III. The Construction, Selective Use and Appropriation of an Idyllic History as a Political Tool

In the context of debates over housing by some elderly White Mowbray residents a specific history is selected to support their claims. Firstly it is a history that paints an idyllic picture of Mowbray's past, one in which quaint forms of livelihood and recreation are dominant themes. Secondly it glorifies a particular class of Mowbray's previous residents, namely the wealthy and politically powerful. Finally the 'manor houses' are chosen as representing what constituted housing in Mowbray.

A. Two Written Histories as Examples

Adele Keen (1991:50) concludes her history of Mowbray with the following lines:

Mowbray and Rondebosch must have been pleasant places to live in, in the early days. What a pity we can't put the clock back! But through these old photographs and old stories we can get a fascinating glimpse, and we will have to be satisfied with that!

Those sentiments were also expressed by Lewis and Edwards (1934:133) when they stated that Mowbray "used to be a lovely suburb, and there are still many old houses with thatched roofs hidden behind modern villas". In reading these histories I began to ask what it was about the suburb that made it "pleasant" and "lovely" to live in? What has been lost, and what is it about Mowbray in the present that makes it unpleasant and 'unlovely'?

The answers began to emerge when I looked at how Keen's (1991) history of Mowbray resonates with other histories of the suburb in relation to the politics of housing. What her history really consists of is a directory of the 'manor houses' of the Mowbray-Rondebosch area and the wealthy Cape families of European descent who lived in them during the 19th Century. She follows the sub-division of farmland from the granting of pastures to the Free Burghers by Van Riebeeck after 1657 to the growth of Mowbray as the first suburb of Cape Town at the end of the 19th Century.

There is an obvious selection process in her text that includes specific aspects of the past and specific informants as important. What also stands out is that which is excluded. The exclusion of a whole range of other forms of housing, and importantly the people who lived in them, leaves one with an idealised depiction of an idyllic Mowbray, without conflict and social difference.

Simcox and Hallack's (1990) history resonates with Keen's in terms of the inclusion and exclusion of information. Much of the photographic material used in the publication was drawn from her work and her collection of photographs at the Mowbray library. Their (1990) history's focus is primarily on the well-to-do families who participated in Mowbray Town Council² and Mowbray Ratepayers' Association, which, it is claimed, became the Rosebank/Mowbray/Observatory Civic Association (hereafter RMOCA). 1990 was the centenary of the Mowbray Municipality and Simcox and Hallack's Mowbray "100" was written, with the blessing of the RMOCA, in order to celebrate the occasion.

The history records these 'golden years' of Mowbray (1890 to 1913) by listing the men who held positions of power on the Mowbray Town Council and Ratepayers' Association, the houses they lived in and the 'valuable' contribution they made to local and national politics. It is a narrow history that includes only the history of 'whites' from the social elite. Moreover the historical connection it suggests between the old Mowbray Town Council and the RMOCA is clearly there in order to legitimate the RMOCA's position within contemporary debates about housing in local and municipal politics.

B. The Historical Text as a Political Statement on Housing

As I read Mowbray '100' after an interview with Hallack, I began to see how the text itself was constructed as a social

2. It was in existence from 1890 to 1913, after which it was incorporated into the Cape Town City Council.

critique, with history explicitly selected and written in order to address an issue, in this case the way in which UCT has bought large blocks of flats to accommodate its students. In the text, specific people perceived as being valued symbols for UCT are selected in order to challenge the principles upon which the University functions. Thus, for example, Cecil John Rhodes' participation in local politics is selected for its interest to both the residents of Mowbray and UCT. He is brought into the present in order to mediate between the interests of the two.

Simcox and Hallack's (1990) history explains that, as a resident of Mowbray and as member of the Mowbray Ratepayers' Association, Rhodes made a valuable contribution to Cape Town by ensuring that much of Table Mountain was reserved for public use by citizens of Cape Town. They (1990:9) qualify this by stating that Rhodes also stipulated "that the University of Cape Town of the future, which he wished to be for the whole of South Africa, should be granted a **reasonable** portion of the Estate" (original emphasis).

Rhodes' stipulation is used by these historians to challenge the University's 'unreasonableness' in buying blocks of flats in the area. The issue being raised is not whether or not the University should accommodate students, but rather that it should not 'sacrifice' local residents in order to achieve its objective. This perception was further clarified for me by elderly residents when they occasionally referred to students, both black and white, as "transients"

and "foreigners". The students are seen as outsiders who have no real commitment to the suburb, yet who seem to be favoured when it comes to disputes about housing.

C. Appropriating Written Histories as Sources of Authority

It is not only as formal histories that one finds a particular image of Mowbray's past used to address the issue of housing. These histories are also appropriated by 'non-historians' in order to prove a point or in order to give authority to the 'speaker'.

Firstly the histories are appropriated in order to prove a point. This is true in regard to debates with the Cape Town City Council over the number of applications granted for rezoning residential erven for business use. Thus, when the City Council calls for objections to such applications, the RMOCA draws upon notions of Mowbray as a once 'idyllic suburb'. They argue that it has steadily decayed as a result of the intrusion of businesses that use local land in a manner out of character with the 'true' nature of the suburb and the interests of the erstwhile 'citizens of note' from the wealthy classes. As ideal citizens, their supposed ideals are used as a gauge by which to judge Mowbray's possible citizens and business people.

Case 4.1: The Use of a Selective History to Oppose a Waiver Application

John Hill, the director of a small school of film and television, applied for a waiver from purely residential use for a large house in Mowbray (Hill 1991). His intention was both to live in the house and to run his film school from it. In response an elderly member of the RMOCA submitted a letter of objection to

Hill's application on the basis that he was encroaching into an area of residential land use. To add further authority to the objection it was brought to the notice of the City Council that Mowbray was a suburb which had had a lot of famous people living in it, like the artist Irma Stern, and that the granting of the waiver would undermine the very fabric of the suburb.

When I interviewed John Hill he was fairly angry about the objection. He argued that he was not altering the house in any major way, nor was his school out of character with the rest of the land use in the area. What really added insult to injury was the insinuation that film was not a respectable art form. He argued that he has made a good name for himself in film circles and his school draws international students. But he argued that the RMOCA could not care less, nor do they have any appreciation for the possible contribution he could make to the suburb.

In this case a particular image of the past was used to provide authority to the RMOCA challenge. The emphasis is not upon the person bringing the objection but upon the amount of historical evidence the objector brings to bear. In this context an idyllic notion of the past was appropriated from local historians and brought into the political fray.

Secondly these formal histories are appropriated in order to reinforce the authority of those who claim to speak on behalf of elderly residents. They become the 'mandate' for members of local political organisations in order to support their own authority as social actors.

Mowbray has one formal political body that is meant to represent it on a municipal level, the RMOCA. The link between the present RMOCA and the past Mowbray Ratepayers' Association is used as a means of claiming precedence in any

local debate over land use. This is particularly true in political interactions with the Cape Town City Council and the Observatory Civic Association (hereafter OCA) with which the RMOCA sees itself in competition.

It should be noted that the Groote Schuur parliamentary constituency, which incorporates Mowbray, has two city councillors. Neither of these councillors, since their election to represent the ward, has ever attended a meeting of the RMOCA, although they attend meetings of the OCA on a regular basis. In addition they are seen by the RMOCA as being responsible for the 'illegitimate' OCA which is seen as participating in local party politics and not seeing to the needs of the residents of the suburb. The RMOCA claims historical precedence on the level of municipal politics and it uses Mowbray '100' in order to do this.

Case 4.2: History as a Source of Legitimation

It came to the attention of the RMOCA that the OCA had been successful in terminating the use of a residential property by a motor garage for business purposes in the Observatory area. In response a question was raised about the jurisdiction of the RMOCA. Was it limited to Mowbray and Rosebank, and did it really have a say in issues that faced Observatory? There was a response that, historically, as documented by Simcox, Observatory fell under the jurisdiction of the RMOCA. Thus it was argued that the City Council was incorrect in not consulting the RMOCA on this matter and in accepting the opinion of the 'illegitimate' OCA.

In principle the RMOCA agreed with the decision to prevent the use of residential land for business purposes. They in fact have been instrumental in getting a number of businesses removed from the area on exactly the same basis.

So why did they respond negatively to the OCA's involvement? It is clear that there is strong competition for power between these two civic associations. In the process of querying the City Council's decision to respond to the OCA alone, members of the RMOCA both questioned the OCA's legitimation and legitimated their own position by using history.

D. Idyllic History: Social Differentiation and the Value of the 'Holders of History'

History is not only used by people to speak on behalf of those elderly residents whose accommodation interests are being threatened. It is also used to place specific value upon some elderly White Mowbray residents. It is they who provide some of the stories which constitute the construction of the past; but more value is placed on some elderly, by some White residents of Mowbray, than upon others.

Williams (1980) argues that people can be defined as being 'elderly' in terms of criteria apart from chronological age. For example, among Indians in Oklahoma, the elderly are defined functionally. In the context of his research, there was an "idealization of the old" because they were "closer to an older form of social behaviour" (1990:109). I would argue that the same is true, within limits, of some elderly Whites in Mowbray. Those who are direct descendents of the wealthy families who lived in the area in the last century are selected out for their proximity to "an older form of

social behaviour" that is important to the construction of the past.

Some elderly people were reluctant to speak of the history of Mowbray from their own experience. Rather they would refer to somebody else's experience as authoritative and as 'real history'. The history that these elderly White Mowbray residents presented was similar to that documented by the local historians. Often I would simply be referred to these texts or to another elderly White who was meant to have lived out the reality of the texts.

Keen's own historical perception is like this. When I interviewed her she showed me piles of photographs and correspondence that she had collected from her elderly informants, most of whom were now dead. She was willing to speak on behalf of these elderly people. But she was not willing to participate in a similar study of her own life, even though at the time of the interview she was 72 and an established resident of the area. In this regard she had appropriated the past from other 'holders of history' because by doing so she believed she could speak with authority on housing in the area.

The same is true of Roy Simcox, Russell Hallack's co-historian. We are told in Simcox's (in Simcox & Hallack 1990) history that his grandparents emigrated to South Africa from Leicestershire in 1900. His family is not recorded among those who contributed to the politics of

Mowbray before 1913, and his only recorded claim to 'observing history' was in watching the visit of the royal family in 1947. His own authority as a historian is drawn from his contact with his co-author Russell Hallack (also Case 4.3) and other kin of those recorded in his text.

Simcox (in Simcox & Hallack 1990) records that he knew members of many of the families listed in his book and that he interviewed many of the elderly people who were descendents of these families. In addition we have personal stories and photographs to demonstrate that connection. For example under one photograph of a Miss Currey having tea with a Mr P van Rensburg and Roy Simcox the following caption is written:

Tea with Miss M.Currey. Inside Welgelegen - 1975 - Mr Peter van Rensburg (Nephew of Miss Winifred Currey, friend of Cecil John Rhodes, Roy Simcox. Miss Currey was then 97 and lived to 1979 (102). Her centenary party was Mowbray's highlight; up to her death she would personally pour afternoon high tea at 4 pm) (Punctuation in original).

This caption is interesting because of the way names are placed together. Here Winifred Currey, Cecil John Rhodes and Roy Simcox are associated with each other so as to reinforce the idea that Simcox's history is credible and important. It is in this sense that the 'holders of history', in this case Miss Winifred Currey, are appropriated by later historians to give authority to their constructions of the past. In the process the historians further reinforce the value placed upon elderly people from

a particular background and social position, namely the wealthy White residents of Mowbray of colonial descent.

Being associated with these elderly people, and using them as a source of information, is thus used to reinforce the credibility of the historian and the history which he/she tells. The only possible improvement on that is to be simultaneously an elderly person with kin connections to Mowbray's past and a local historian. Russell Hallack is such a person.

Case 4.3: 'Holder of History' and Appropriator of the Past

As a 'holder of history' Russell Hallack has been a source of information for local historians and for those who want to speak about the present with the authority of the past. Keen (1991; 19a), in appropriating Hallack's history to support her own authenticity, tells us about a Mr Wiener, the one-time owner of the Mowbray Hall 'manor' and a "member of the old Cape Parliament". Wiener adopted a son whose "sister became Mrs Hallack, mother of Mr Russell Hallack". Keen's text includes a snippet from the Cape Times article "100 Years Ago" for May 23 1991. It records an article from the Cape Times for May 23 1891 which reads as follows:

"Yesterday, at St Peter's Church Mowbray, Mr John Garrett Hallack, of Kroonstad, engineer on the Bloemfontein extension railways, was married to Miss Mary Kilgour, niece of Mr L.Wiener M.L.A. The bride was charmingly attired in a handsome ivory-corded silk dress adorned with pearly trimmings. After the ceremony the bridal party proceeded to Mowbray Hall, residence of the bride's uncle, where a reception of some 60 guests was held. The bridecake, an imposing pile of confectionery, was supplied by Atwell and Co. The bride and bridegroom were the recipients of a large number of valuable and useful presents."

Russell Hallack further reinforced the idea that he was a 'holder of history' during an interview. He felt it was of benefit to him that he was born in 1911 to "parents in their

40s" who supplied him with a wealth of information about Mowbray. He does this again in Mowbray "100", by speaking of those men who made a contribution to the political life of Mowbray. He relates himself to the Wieners, through his mother, when telling of the "royal visit to Mowbray" of the two sons of the Prince of Wales in 1881 (Simcox & Hallack 1990:22). A reception was held for the visitors at Manor House, one of the Mowbray 'manors', by a Mr Porter. In the account Hallack (in Simcox & Hallack 1990:22) tells us that his "mother, aged 14, was living with her uncle and aunt, Mr and Mrs Ludwig Wiener of Mowbray Hall. She had of course not 'come out socially', but was allowed to go and look at the function".

Accounts such as this reinforce the idea that connections of blood and marriage serve as an authority for those who want to speak about the past, and who want to bring the past into debates about the present. Firstly they place a value on the past and a value on those who are closest to that past, namely the elderly. Moreover they introduce a principle of differentiation. The value is not simply on being an elderly person, but on being a specific elderly person. In this sense the class values of the previous century are brought to bear on the present. When speaking of history the greatest authority is given to those who 'lived the past' of the suburb's wealthy families.

This value is further reinforced by elderly people themselves whose accommodation is under threat. I want to draw on one case to illustrate the point.

Case 4.4: Sharing the History and 'Crisis'

I had a lively discussion with two elderly women, Miss Brown and Mrs Jones (Case 3.18), who had just gone through the crisis of having to give up their flat. Miss Brown had a field-day telling me about the former glories of Mowbray. She had grown up in the area and remembered in vivid detail the 'manor houses', the Rosebank agricultural show and the many friends from wealthy and well known families with whom she had socialized in the suburb. By doing so she placed herself in continuity with an idyllic image of Mowbray's past.

Mrs Jones and Miss Brown also showed me with delight a photograph of Forest Hills in a book of famous architecture in Cape Town. In doing so they pointed out its architectural value as a part of South Africa's heritage. In addition they brought to my attention the fact that the complex has on its walls murals of early Mowbray life. While in fact the murals are of the early brickfields upon which the complex was built, and the labour associated with the production of bricks, these two elderly women interpreted the murals to represent Mowbray's early agricultural past and village atmosphere. This they contrasted with their present image of Mowbray as a suburb in decline, of which Forest Hills was now interpreted as being a part as a result of UCT's purchase of it.

I had been introduced to Miss Brown at a meeting of the RMOCA when it was suggested to me that it would be worthwhile interviewing her. The same was true of a number of my informants who were not included in the random sample which I used for a general survey of the area. What was common about all the people selected for me by members of the RMOCA was the fact that they were all tenants in blocks of flats that had been bought by the University of Cape Town or were being registered for sale under sectional title. Like Miss Brown, many of them produced a similar picture of

a changing Mowbray which was negative and characterised by increased social conflict. That image of social conflict and urban decay was often contrasted with an idyllic past.

IV. The Use of Competing Histories: Understanding the Present, Making Claims on the Future and Offering a Challenge

The idyllic picture of Mowbray's wealthy is not the only one of Mowbray's past. There are competing histories which acknowledge, to various degrees, that part of Mowbray's past included both a working-class and Coloured population. They are not dominant local discourses, but are used by some present day brokers of history to demonstrate their own 'liberal' political stance, and by other elderly White residents to make statements about the present and to make claims about the future. In addition, these competing histories are used by Coloured residents of, and vendors in, Mowbray to make claims to the suburb. They are also used by those in power, both in the Cape Town City Council and Parliament, to challenge attempts by those who want to resist socio-political change.

A. Elderly White Mowbray Residents: 'Holders of Competing Histories'

Mrs Keen and Mr Hallack were both very aware that Mowbray had more to its history than they presented in written form for public consumption. Both regarded themselves as 'liberals' and strong supporters of the Democratic Party,

and both used their knowledge of 'competing histories' of Mowbray to prove their political credentials to me.

Case 4.5: A Broker of Competing Histories as Personal Legitimation

When I first phoned Mr Hallack to set up an appointment to see him, I explained to him that I was an anthropologist from UCT interested in talking to him about the history of Mowbray. His immediate response was to suggest that I was only interested in the history of the "Coloured folk" of Mowbray. I then explained to him what my objectives were. He sounded surprised to hear that an anthropologist could possibly be interested in Whites as well.

During a formal interview with him he went into great detail on the idyllic past of Mowbray, but paid scant attention to the life of the working-class and Coloured residents of the past, except to note that he was forbidden by his mother to play with them as a child. Only after the formal interview was over did he freely offer information on 'competing histories', particularly when he took me to the public library to show me his collection of information on the suburb and John Western's (1981) Outcast Cape Town.

Mr Hallack has been able to produce the type of history that appeals to White residents of Mowbray and to those from the RMOCA. But he is also able to broker the 'competing histories' when called on to do so. As an educationalist who worked for the Department of Culture in the Coloured House of Representatives, he was familiar with a range of interpretations of history. And in order to prove his credentials to me, he was able to demonstrate that he was aware of the struggles that shaped the past. But, as was clear to me during discussions, these were sub-texts with which he struggled to identify.

These sub-texts also emerged occasionally in discussions with other elderly White residents of Mowbray. It is clear

that there is social differentiation among elderly Mowbray residents. Class distinctions of the past are brought to bear on the present, and continue to have social relevance in the mapping out of social relationships and in the way that 'correct' histories are selected. The possibility exists that some elderly people will offer 'competing histories' that further reinforce their own position. Their histories are not used by those who claim to speak on their behalf and are not openly discussed as part of the larger debate over housing in the suburb, but they are used by these elderly people in a specific way: as a means of critiquing the present and as a way of staking a claim to the future.

Case 4.6: Mowbray as 'Mixed' and Safe

Mrs Gillis (Case 3.8) had fairly fond memories of Mowbray prior to the forced removals of the 1960s. She and her husband, a builder, had moved to the suburb in 1960 after he had built a house for them. In a discussion about crime she related the following: "I won't go out at night. We could before, but not now. In the old days, before the flats were put up, you could walk around here at midnight. My husband and I used to walk up to the post office to post letters at that time of night and not be bothered. (Pointing towards a row of gentrified cottages) These were all Malay people in our street prior to them being told to move out."

Mrs Gillis' (Case 4.6) response fitted into a discussion on what she liked and did not like about Mowbray. For her, Mowbray had become crime-ridden because of the increasing number of Coloured and Black residents of the suburb. In order to qualify her point she noted that Mowbray had been "mixed" and "safe" before, but that the situation was different now. By making such a comparison she was doing

two things. Firstly she was making a statement which suggested that people classified as Black or Coloured are not innately criminal (c.f. Chapter Six). And, following on from that, she was passing comment on her present circumstances by drawing on images of the past.

The use of 'competing histories' by elderly White residents is not limited to discussions of the present. They were also used in order to make claims to access to housing in a future Mowbray.

Case 4.7: Knowing the Space of the Past in Order to Claim Legitimate Ownership in the Future

Mrs Philips (Case 3.1) and her husband moved to Mowbray in 1953. While relating her life history to me she raised the possibility of a conflicting history of Mowbray.

Mrs Philips: "Where those flats are [now] it used to be Coloured cottages when we came here. Yes, and this block of flats over here, those were built about a year after we came here."

Me: "All of the cottages were flattened obviously."

Mrs Philips: "Yes. Well then they [former Coloured residents] had to move out you see and they built Court."

During the discussion she pointed to an area down the road from where she lived, which used to be part of a large nursery. She remembered that most of the cottages had housed Coloured tenants who were labourers for the nursery³. Mrs Philips remembered that the labourers were 'moved out' of the area with the application of the Group Areas Act after she and her husband had bought their house.

On a later occasion she asked me what I thought the future government's policy would be to private ownership of land. She then suggested that if the African National Congress came to power then they might

3. Keen (1991) records that a Mr Ayres owned the nursery and he lived in one of the large 'manor houses', Devonshire Hill, in Grotto Road, Rondebosch. He was later to co-operate with a Mr Starke, another landowner and businessman in Mowbray, to establish Starke-Ayres Nursery. Keen (1991) does not record that the labourers who worked for Starke and Ayres were actually residents of Mowbray and that they lived in labourers' cottages near their places of work.

wish to return land to those from whom the National Party had taken it during the period of forced removals. While she noted that former White tenants of Liesbeeck Gardens had lost their accommodation to Black students as a result of UCT buying the block of flats, she felt that it would be difficult for a new government to take housing away from those who had bought their houses prior to the forced removals.

A number of other elderly Whites whom I interviewed had similar memories of Mowbray and related them to me as histories. What was interesting about these informants was that not one was a tenant in a block of flats or a 'gentrified cottage'. Rather, all were home-owners in free-standing houses that had been built after the 1920s. Many of these houses were built and occupied by White artisans and government employees. For example, Mrs Gillis' (Case 4.6) husband was a local builder and Mrs Philips' (Case 4.7) husband was an artisan who worked at a local gas works.

It was significant that discussions about history with elderly White residents like Mrs Gillis and Mrs Philips always centred on the issue of accommodational security. Such informants all expressed the opinion that it was better to own a house than to be a tenant, because nobody could keep forcing the rent up or evicting you when they wanted to sell. For example, Mrs Philips (Case 4.7) expressed sympathy for tenants who were facing those possibilities, some of whom she knew personally. But she did so in a way that reinforced her own security and good fortune, and that related to her perception of Mowbray's history. During a discussion with Mrs Philips (Case 4.7) about a future

'black' government, she asserted that they would have no right to take her house away from her to give to 'blacks'. She had bought her house before 'coloureds' were evicted from the suburb as a result of the Group Areas Act, thus any government which might want to right the wrongs of the past had no right to claim her house. It was this knowledge which assured her, and others like her, of her future access to housing in a changing political context.

B. 'Competing Histories': Suppressed Texts in Local Discussion

It is not only elderly White residents who remember and use 'competing histories' of Mowbray. One of the features of the suburb is the number of poor Coloured and Black residents, some of whom work as janitors or care-takers in local blocks of flats and institutions, hawk or are "vagrants⁴". In addition there is a range of past residents of Mowbray, evicted from the suburb in c1964, who commute to the area to use facilities such as churches. They also have 'competing histories' of Mowbray which are used to make claims to the suburb. But many of them are aware that their histories are subordinate: texts that, like their own lives, are largely suppressed and marginalised by White residents of the suburb.

4. Both the White and Coloured people I interviewed referred to the many homeless individuals in Mowbray as "vagrants". Or they would be referred to as "bergies" (Those who live on the Table Mountain) or "rondloopers" (Those who walk around or wander). In every case these are derogatory terms which suggest irresponsibility.

Case 4.8: Making Claims to Space: the Experience of a Former Resident of the Suburb

Mr Jacobs, a man in his late 50s, is a fruit-and-vegetable seller in Mowbray. At present he lives in the "township" of Bonteheuwel, a Coloured suburb on the Cape Flats, to which he was moved in 1980 after being evicted from District Six. He spent a part of his youth living in various houses in Mowbray. As he explained: My mother did laundry for many of the rich people on the hill here in Mowbray. I would have to go to fetch it and bring it to her friends who lived in Hare St [In one of the 'cottages' where I stayed during the fieldwork period]. She would often sit with her friends here waiting for me. I stayed all over Mowbray and knew people in the Dorp and the Valley" (Map 2.4).

Since his youth Mr Jacobs has traveled South Africa and lived in various parts of Cape Town. After settling in District Six he was moved to Bonteheuwel where he was allocated a council house. In 1990, after losing his job on a construction site in Mowbray, he decided to start selling fruit and vegetables in an area "that had always been good" to him. He often sees "old Mowbray people" (former Coloured residents of the suburb). They talk about the past together and remark on how much "their houses" have been altered.

One of Mr Jacobs' biggest dreams is to leave the Cape Flats "townships" as he calls them, and which he describes in the same uneasy manner as Western's (1981) informants, and move back to Cape Town (meaning the area between Mowbray and District Six). It is this contrast between 'good' Cape Town and 'bad' Cape Flats which characterises much of how Coloured ex-residents of Mowbray related their histories. But it was within this contrast that the foundation to claims on Mowbray lay. The point was made that they did not belong in the "townships" with all the crime and sense of disorder (See Western 1981 for a good description of these sentiments). Mowbray, they argued, was really their home. Their removal was an injustice which could only be remedied by their return to their "homes". Mr Jacobs (Case 4.8) reinforced this claim by suggesting that he had hoped to

have moved his mother back to Mowbray before she died. His mother's dream had never been fulfilled; but he still cherished it for himself.

Claims such as these, based as they are on particular uses of history, are occasionally linked to other values by the tellers of these competing accounts. Among them is the idea that these 'competing histories', like those who tell them, are "third-class" histories (Case 4.9) that are reflected in the experience of the teller. Among the local tellers of the 'competing histories' are the caretakers of institutions or blocks of flats and 'vagrants', both of whom were permitted to remain in Mowbray after the forced removal of other Coloured residents. Their histories of Mowbray are linked to their own experiences of marginalisation as transients.

Case 4.9: Living Here; but Never a Resident

63 year old Mr Benjamin has lived and worked at one institution in Mowbray for 32 years. The institution plans to retire him in 1994 and to "send him back to Worcester". He can remember Mowbray from before the forced removals in c1964 and has watched it change. But he has always been treated as a transient in the suburb which has been his home for half his life.

He rather aptly illustrated his status by drawing a parallel with a train journey and referring to himself as a "third-class" citizen. One day he came across to chat to me, something he often did when I walked around Mowbray, to tell me that he had just caught a train and sat in a first-class apartment for the first time in his life. "It's a funny thing this *apartheid*. I bought my first-class ticket and climbed into a first-class carriage. Now when I was inside I felt like I shouldn't be there. I had been told this all my life." He then related this to his own knowledge of the history of Mowbray by suggesting that he knew many of the old residents of Mowbray, just prior to the forced removals in c1964, but nobody showed him respect. "I've lived here (in Mowbray) nearly all my life and

I've been friends with many of the Mowbray people. (He points across the road to a large 'manor' house') I was friends with Dr and his sons. But they (his employers) won't let me stay here."

I often saw Mr Benjamin in the park in front of the Town Hall with the "vagrants", many of whom had also continued to stay in Mowbray in spite of the Group Areas Act. But his history, and indeed his life, has been marginalised and treated as inferior just as has that of the "vagrants". His own use of history was to illustrate that point and to make a claim to a space in Mowbray. He lamented the fact that he would have to return to Worcester, where he was born, a place where "he would not know what to do". His own knowledge of Mowbray and its various residents served as a legitimate reason, in his mind, for him to stay in the suburb.

While Coloured people who use history to make a claim to Mowbray may feel that the past is on their side, their own experience in the suburb does not confirm this. This was brought home to me in a number of churches where Coloured ex-residents of Mowbray remained loyal members after their eviction from the area. It was in this context that the subordination of their 'competing histories' is reinforced.

During a 1991 Christmas Party for elderly members of one congregation I took photographs of people at various tables. My intention was to use the photographs as a way of

developing rapport and to do a network analysis⁵. I returned to a similar meeting in the new year to show the photographs to various people who were at the party in order to find out how much they knew about other people with whom they had shared a table or conversed during the occasion.

In general few people knew each other well, apart from those I have referred to as the "holders of an idyllic history" and some key leaders in the church. But more telling were people's responses to a photograph of two elderly Coloured ladies from Bonteheuwel who are regular attenders of these meetings. None of those I interviewed, all of whom were White and included the two people who shared a table with them, knew them at all. It was not that these two ladies were explicitly unwelcome. They were simply ignored and treated as if they were not there.

Ignorance of the personal details of previous Coloured residents of Mowbray is common among today's White residents, and often gives rise to rejection of the former Coloured residents whom they see as making 'unreasonable' claims of access to Mowbray. This was brought home to me during a discussion with a church councillor at one of the congregations which has a large number of Coloured members from "old Mowbray" families. She could not understand why Coloured families did not go to churches in "their own areas", and why "they" kept trying to run the church "their

5. See Collier & Collier (1986) and McNamara (1978) for further discussion on this technique of research.

way". This insensitivity itself reflects a rejection of the history that has shaped the lives of Coloured members of the church. It reinforces the idea among Coloured residents and former residents I interviewed that their histories and lives are marginalised by some White residents of the suburb.

C. Presenting 'Competing Histories' as a Challenge

On one level the 'competing histories' are marginalised and ignored in local discussions. On another they are used by those in positions in power, in municipal and parliamentary politics, to challenge local White residents. This has been true of attempts by some municipal councillors and the member of Parliament for this constituency, Dene Smuts (whom I will discuss in detail in Chapter Five), in dealing with the criticism levelled at them for not dealing with the 'housing crisis' in Mowbray.

69 year old Cape Town City Councillor Eulalie Stott, Chairman (sic) of the City Council's Housing Committee since 1979, responded in the press (Southern Suburbs Tatler 10 May 1991:6) to accusations that the City Council was doing nothing about the growing shortage of housing for Whites.

She wrote:

The plight of people who want to rent dwellings is indeed terrible. The old rent control regulations were unfair to owners but the removal of rent control coupled with the Sectional Title Act was undeniably a major cause of hardship for working 'white' people. (The long suffering 'coloured' community have had to bear this shortage problem for decades.) The council's 'white' housing waiting lists are relatively short.

People expect to go on living in the suburb of their choice but they would, for example, not be living in major parts of Diep River, Claremont, Newlands etc if 'coloured' people had not been moved out of the rent controlled premises they now occupy when the Group Areas Act was implemented.

This letter was cold comfort for those elderly White residents of Mowbray who felt that they were in the middle of a 'housing crisis' and wanted some solutions from the City Council. In addition, this type of response from Mrs Stott, using the 'facts of history' to demonstrate the priorities of the Housing Committee, infuriated local RMOCA politicians who attempted to 'represent' their ward to the City. In many ways it cut short their own agenda and challenged the power of their own constructions of history. And as they have come to realise, it is those competing versions of history that have come to dominate much of the planning and policy that the City Council develops.

This approach by the City Council was further reinforced with Mrs Stott's resignation in mid-1991 and the appointment of Neil Ross as her successor. His priority is housing for people in Coloured areas (The Weekend Argus 14-9-1991:10), because, he argues, they have been historically disadvantaged and neglected. In contrast, as Mrs Stott noted (Southern Suburbs Tatler 10 May 1991), Whites have been historically advantaged and thus are the least in need of any form of intervention.

V. Conclusion

The idea that the past has functional value in the present is hardly new to anthropology. Malinowski argued that history was primarily a tool used in political disputes in the present (Gellner 1987). Until Frazer, anthropologists had used the present in order to speak with authority on the past, particularly within evolutionary and diffusionist frameworks. Malinowski challenged such views and argued that "(a)nthropology was no longer to be a time machine for visiting the past, a study of retardations fuelled by survivals: it was to be a tool for investigating the ethnographic present, in which beliefs about the past are seen as functionally subservient to current, present needs" (Gellner 1987:63).

In my own analysis of the manipulation of Mowbray's history I have found this functional approach of some value. In this chapter I have demonstrated Malinowski's point by looking at how a particular architectural form that exists in the present has been used in conjunction with personal and documented histories to justify a particular political stance towards a 'crisis' in the provision of housing. But, like Gellner, I would argue that Malinowski's approach is limited because it is itself ahistorical. Importantly, the use of history itself needs to be seen within its historical context. Hall (1990:2) has argued that we need to interpret representations of the past as competing texts. He (1990:3) goes further by arguing that by doing this in terms of a class analysis we can "tease apart the continuum of

connections between the past and the present - the manner in which the past is constantly reinterpreted to serve changing political circumstances".

By looking at the selection and construction of history by some elderly residents of Mowbray to address the 'crisis' in housing, I have argued that history is a malleable resource. There is one view of the past which involves the construction of an idyllic history which depicts Mowbray as the sole domain of wealthy colonialists who lived in large 'manor houses'. That history is constructed and used in various contexts. The historical texts themselves are a form of social critique that requires historical contextualisation. In addition the texts are used by people and agencies like the RMOCA to lend authority to their views and as a means of legitimation for themselves as social actors.

I have also argued that some elderly people are regarded by residents of Mowbray as 'holders of history'. Within the context of the housing debate in Mowbray, particularly for those who want to halt their loss of accommodational tenure, specific elderly people are selected as having authority regarding the past. That authority is either ascribed to them by virtue of the fact that their kin were wealthy residents of the suburb or achieved by appropriating the history of those with the necessary connections to the past.

Many elderly people with 'connections' to the past have taken up the challenge of being brokers of history. I link this to Williams's (1990) assertion that elderly people can be defined in a number of ways, in his case in terms of social function. In doing this I have also attempted to go one step beyond Williams (1990) by arguing that in the context of Mowbray the emic definition of some elderly people as 'holders of history' serves to reinforce further their own class position and to legitimate their authority as 'specialists' on history.

But the 'idyllic past' is not the only construction of history available. Some elderly White residents are aware of competing histories that recognise that Mowbray's past had aspects of class and colour difference and conflict. They use this past to critique the present and to affirm their place in the future. Their depiction of the past resonates to some extent with the past presented by present and former Coloured residents of Mowbray who also use history to legitimate their claims to the suburb. There are two levels of political power-play on which these 'competing histories' are displayed. On one level, within local discussions of the past, these competing histories are suppressed and the 'idyllic history' is made to dominate. On another level, particularly where it involves policy statements by the Cape Town City Council and the local Member of Parliament for Groote Schuur, the 'idyllic history' is challenged by the 'competing histories' (also see Chapter Six). And importantly for an analysis of the

double bind in which Mowbray's elderly Whites find themselves, we must note that the 'competing histories' are used to justify the negative response of those in power to attempts by elderly White residents, and those that claim to represent them, to have their accommodational interests secured. Because history is effectively a double-edged sword, its use helps to double bind many elderly Whites in Mowbray.

Chapter Five

Elderly White Mowbray Residents' Use of the Southern Suburbs Action Network as an Avenue of Response to the 'Housing Crisis'

Case 5.1: Refusing to Talk but Wanting to be Heard

When I first began to interview residents of Forest Hill I was told by a number of informants that I should make a point of visiting Mr and Mrs Day if I really wanted to know what tenants of Forest Hill were experiencing as a result of UCT buying the complex. One informant even led me to believe that the Days, as established elderly tenants, would have a lot to say that was worth listening to.

One winter morning in July 1991 I decided to follow this advice and visit the Days, expecting an enlightening and open interview. When I called at their flat the door was answered by a stuttering and shaking Mr Day. I explained to him that I was from UCT and was doing a study on how elderly residents in Mowbray were responding to the 'housing crisis'. Mrs Day suddenly appeared from the kitchen looking incredibly angry. She asked me what I wanted and I repeated my story.

She looked shocked: "Is this some kind of a joke?" "No", I replied, "I am doing research on housing in Mowbray." She still did not look happy. She explained that they could not see me then because the "maid" was there. She suggested I come back at a more convenient time, but would not suggest one.

I left with a feeling of surprise at the way I had been treated. The more I thought of the interview the more I began to see it as a cruel joke that highlighted the paradox of a UCT student doing research on elderly people being displaced by UCT.

As I became more familiar with tenants at Forest Hill, they explained the Days' response to me in light of their own understanding of the implications of UCT's purchase of the complex. Those implications were in part based upon the experience of former residents of Liesbeeck Gardens who had moved to Forest Hill when UCT had bought the former block of flats in 1989. They also referred to the Days as an illustration of the shock of hearing that UCT had purchased Forest Hill, pointing out that Mr Day had had a stroke on receiving the news. These explanations began to fill in the detail of what my 'interview' with the Days had meant,

but it never captured the full emotion of their response.

When I finally obtained access to the Southern Suburbs Action Network petition to Parliament in September 1991, the final pieces of the puzzle fell into place. There the Days had written one short statement which reflected their horror and shock of being told that UCT had bought Forest Hill: "After 25 years!"

This chapter is about how elderly White Mowbray residents used the SSAN, an organisation they saw as having political credibility and which represented them as both 'white' and 'elderly' in order to respond to the 'housing crisis'. It investigates how residents such as the Days (Case 5.1) entrusted a populist-styled movement with their pains, frustrations, rich experience and hopes.

I have structured the chapter with three goals in mind. The first is to provide some understanding of what the SSAN was. The second is to document how some elderly White Mowbray residents used the SSAN. The third is to demonstrate how using the SSAN failed as an avenue of response to the 'housing crisis' and resulted in a strengthening of the double bind in which elderly White Mowbray residents found themselves.

I. The Political Organisation of 'the Elderly': a Brief

History of the SSAN

Whites caught in housing squeeze

. . . little attention is paid - and no hope given - to the poor whites. . . . Many whites are finding it extremely difficult to find accommodation. Subsidised accommodation, with few exceptions, is available only to blacks . . . If those of us who are struggling to make ends meet - be we pensioners, single parents or

working-class families - don't look after ourselves, no one else will and we will end up homeless. ... Maybe as a group we could be heard by those in authority - whom we keep in luxury through our taxes.

(Letter: The Cape Times 15 April 1991. Also appeared in various other publications)

The SSAN began as a result of the above letter in a number of Cape Town newspapers and national magazines. It was written by a Mrs Abramowitz, a White resident of Cape Town's southern suburbs who had been given notice to vacate her rented accommodation. In response to the letter, a number of people contacted Mrs Abramowitz and the SSAN was formed.

The group had as its objectives: (i) to document the plight of White tenants whose access to accommodation was diminishing; (ii) to act as a support group to such people; (iii) to enter debates in the press to highlight the 'housing crisis' among Whites; (iv) to organise a petition to Parliament to protest against the state's lack of willingness to help Whites; and (v) to organise acts of public protest (personal communication Mrs Abramowitz, 1991; SSAN correspondence). While the group was successful as a support group and in organising a petition to Parliament and significant press coverage, it failed to organise any acts of protest. By the end of 1991 the SSAN had collapsed, primarily because of the state's successful attempts to thwart its objectives which created a leadership dispute (personal communication Mrs Abramowitz, 1991).

While the SSAN was a small and short-lived movement, its history and activities provide a good picture of one form of

political organisation in local White politics. Its importance, for the purposes of this thesis, is its role as a support and lobby group, and the way it inspired 'conservative' elderly White residents of Mowbray to model their political action on "black grassroots" political organisations. However, the SSAN's inability to bring to fruition a threatened protest squat on Rondebosch Common (see Map 1.2) highlights the conflict between a desire to copy "black protest politics" and a strong revulsion for such acts among the SSAN's White supporters.

The SSAN received much public coverage in the press. This was facilitated by a close relationship between members of its leadership and a number of local reporters (personal communication Mrs Abramowitz, 1991). Newspaper coverage was part of an orchestrated strategy which involved feeding journalists with information and leads, collecting newspaper articles and responding to them in letters to the press, and becoming involved in debates in local newspapers between supporters of the SSAN and key political players. What emerged over a period of 5 months was a debate reflecting the opinions of a range of people.

Mrs Abramowitz collected newspaper articles on the 'housing crisis', some of which related to Mowbray, during the period for which the SSAN existed. She put these into a scrapbook to which I was given access. The articles formed a public commentary which reflected the views of the SSAN and their

supporters, the views of their opposition and a record of the experiences of many elderly White Mowbray residents.

Two issues arise from the use of the SSAN by elderly White Mowbray residents. The first concerns a debate over the reluctance or not of elderly people to become involved in political debates. The second reflects the forms of political organisations to which elderly people will affiliate themselves.

As Crandell (1980) has argued, there is no reason to believe that elderly people are necessarily too staid or unwilling to try new ideas. Indeed, as Oriol (1981) has shown, elderly people are no less politically active than any other category of individuals in society. It is clear that 'elderly people' who can do so will grasp whatever political power is available to them even to the extent of establishing systems of rule based upon age seniority (Almagor 1978; Hamer 1972).

I will discuss the idea of age seniority as a criterion for political rights in more detail in Chapter Six. It is nonetheless worth noting here that my research in Mowbray corroborates Crandell's (1980) and Oriol's (1981) findings. By using the SSAN as a lobby and support group, elderly White Mowbray residents were willing to adjust their notions of political participation in order to be 'populist'. But their participation was limited by their own perceptions of what was socially acceptable overt political action. The

SSAN provided a limited avenue of response to the 'housing crisis'. Many elderly White Mowbray residents I interviewed were willing to sign a petition and present themselves as social victims of change in order to gain support.

Palmore and Morton (1973) have argued that "ageism", discrimination against 'elderly people', has resulted in a massive political mobilization of "the aged" in the United States of America. While there are similar trends emerging in South Africa, I would suggest that elderly Mowbray residents did not simply affiliate themselves politically on the basis of age. Rather their participation in the SSAN was based on the perception that they needed representation on the basis of both their "race" and their social position as "the elderly."

Pratt (1976; 1983) has written extensively on organisations that represent 'elderly people' or are organised by 'elderly people' in order to represent their interests. He has argued (1976; 1983) that they have worked successfully as political lobby groups in America. Hudson and Binstock (1976) add the insight that these organisations play a social role as well.

In 1981 a South African "grey power movement", called the Association for Retired Persons and Pensioners, was launched to represent the interests of 'elderly' South Africans and to provide them with information and support (Senior News June 1992). There are many such organisations in the

country, yet not one of my elderly White Mowbray informants remarked that they were using such organisations to address their political concerns over housing.

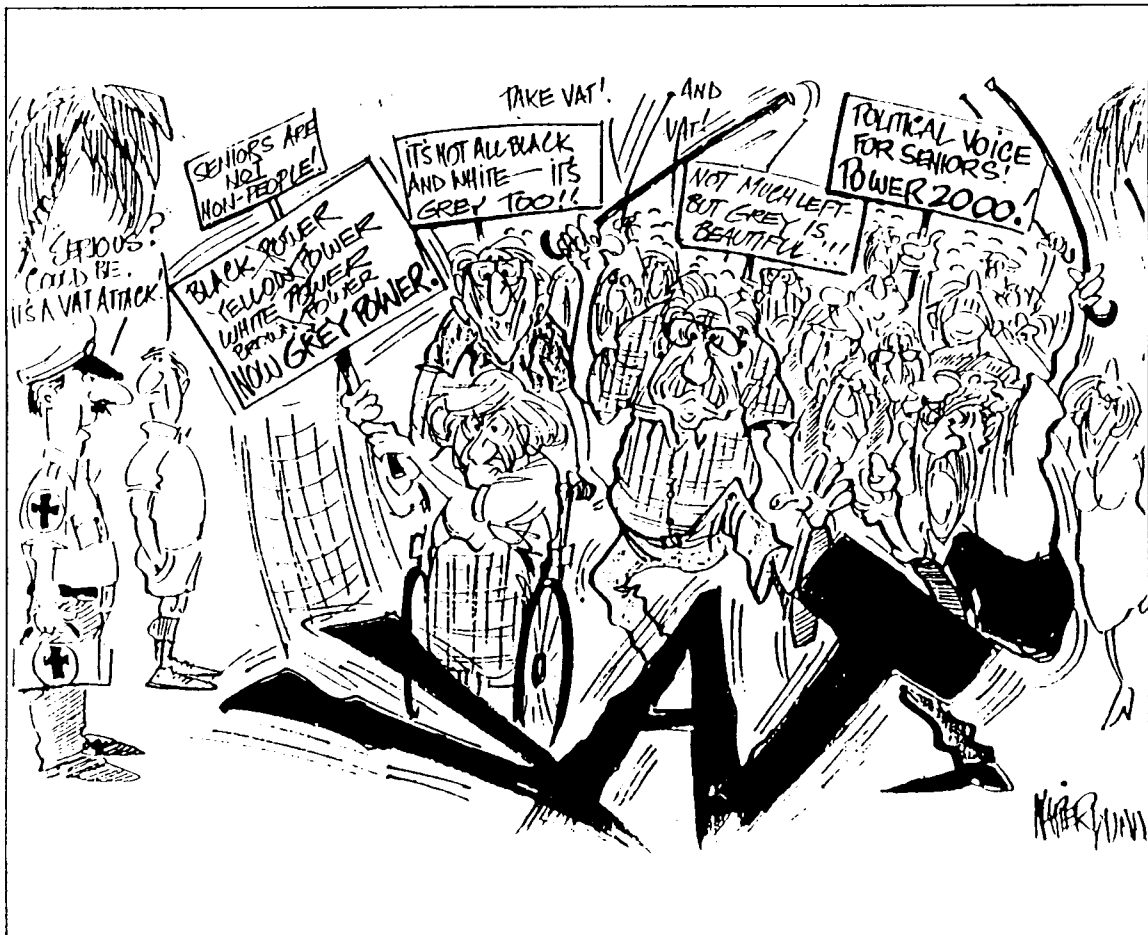


Figure 5.1: "Grey Power". A cartoon originally published in the Natal Mercury (8 October 1991) and copied from Senior News (December 1991)

The reason for this is that such organisations have attempted recently to broaden their bases of support and to represent the interests of all 'elderly people', not only 'whites' (Senior News December 1991) (Diagram 5.1). Yet in doing so, such organisations have found it increasingly difficult to represent the selective interests of particular sections of the population, particularly 'whites'. They

have been forced to tread very lightly and to confine themselves to the more obvious struggles that represent 'elderly' people in general.

In contrast the SSAN met elderly White Mowbray residents' needs by providing a forum for people caught up by the 'housing crisis' on account of their being both 'white' and 'elderly'. The SSAN was exclusively a 'white' lobby group concerned with the plight of 'elderly people' affected by the 'housing crisis'. Its objectives were thus neatly definable and it had an issue to address relating directly to elderly White Mowbray residents.

II. Use of the SSAN by Elderly White Mowbray Resident

Elderly White Mowbray residents used the SSAN in three ways: (i) by participating in the SSAN petition to Parliament; (ii) by using the SSAN as a support group during housing disputes; and (iii) by attempting to bring to fruition the SSAN's model for political action, particularly its threatened squat on Rondebosch Common.

A. A Petition to Parliament

In May 1991 the SSAN campaigned for support through a petition intended to go to Parliament. Each page of the petition was headed by the following questions: "Are YOU an abused householder?? Has Sectional Title or business take-over robbed you of the roof over your head??" The petition had space for the name, address, telephone number and the comments of each petitioner.

Of particular importance here, in relation to White residents of Mowbray, is the fact that the SSAN was an organisation that largely represented tenants. Thus of the 511 southern suburbs petitioners who signed the SSAN petition, 72 were from Mowbray. And of that 72, 34 were Forest Hill tenants and 17 were tenants in other blocks of flats in the suburb. Of the remaining 21 petition supporters from Mowbray, 15 were residents in houses and 6 gave business addresses.

The names of a number of the 72 Mowbray residents who signed the petition were those of some of my elderly respondents. The petition thus provided me with a research tool giving written insights to substantiate other data I had collected. The SSAN petition provided elderly Mowbray residents with a collective voice which brought together a range of particular experiences and views. It reflected three themes which elderly Mowbray residents expressed: (i) shock; (ii) a sense of displacement; and (iii) a view that the 'housing crisis' needed to be seen within the broader political context of "reform" in South Africa.

1. Reflections of shock in the petition

The statements in the petition crystallised for me the sentiments some elderly White Mowbray residents had expressed to me about their experience of housing. Yet without some background to the context from which they emerge, it is almost impossible to do justice to the SSAN

petitioners' comments. Thus the Days' response (Case 5.1), "After 25 years", needs to be understood in light of what residents of Forest Hill thought their future prospects were as UCT's tenants or as people who would be forced to leave the complex after living in it for so long.

Case 5.2: I Hate Mowbray now that UCT has Bought Forest Hill

Mrs Wright was a 82 year old widow. She had lived in Forest Hill for 15 years when UCT bought the complex. Responding to my questions about what she did not like about Mowbray, she suggested that she would "hate to live in any place near to Mowbray." Why? "Life has changed now and will change more." And while she noted that her flat had never been broken into before, she challenged me to "imagine what the crime rate would be in the future" as a result of UCT's purchase of Forest Hill.

She contrasted her 'hate' image of Mowbray now with an image of the suburb prior to UCT's purchase of Forest Hill. She had liked Mowbray then because it was "not a rush like Claremont" (the previous suburb she had lived in). Mowbray had also been "more friendly" and "smaller", thus more intimate, than Claremont.

Mrs Wright pointed out that the purchase of Forest Hill by UCT had come as a shock to her, which was why she had participated in the SSAN petition. The shock was a result of the realisation that her dreams of keeping her "freedom and independence" and staying out of an institution were being undermined. She felt that institutions were not "decent accommodation for retired people", and that she would now have to work to find other accommodation outside one. She wanted a place with "lifts and a garage", "good sized rooms", a "separate bathroom and loo", and a "kitchenette": in other words her flat at Forest Hill. As far as she was concerned, she "had worked hard as a nurse" and "needed comfort and care, but not a sick bay."

Some elderly Forest Hill tenants saw it as worthless remaining at Forest Hill or indeed as tenants in Mowbray because they saw no future in the complex or suburb now that UCT had bought Forest Hill (Case 5.2). As already stated,

the shock that these elderly residents expressed needs to be seen in the context of their own lives, their own dreams and aspirations, and how their hopes for the future were shattered by UCT's purchases in the suburb. They were very bitter about what UCT had done, because it had destroyed their dreams, as elderly people, of staying in a perfect environment through their retirement years.

The shock derived from realising that Mowbray would no longer be the familiar place it had been, but would change to an unacceptable degree. Part of the change would be an increase in crime and an erosion of those aspects of Mowbray which informants liked.

In addition, some of these elderly tenants felt that they were being forced into a situation they had wanted to avoid. For Mrs Wright for example (Case 5.2), UCT's purchase of Forest Hill meant the possibility of having to go to a cramped institution where privacy, "independence and freedom" were removed. Part of her shock resulted from having to face the possibility of ending up in a "sick bay" waiting for death.

The SSAN petition provided some elderly tenants with an avenue to express this shock. While some people's shock was expressed in their physical condition (Case 5.1), others found an outlet in the SSAN petition. Their sense of horror was expressed in statements such as: "Shocking", "Sorry

state of affairs" and "Damned Disgraceful!!" (punctuation in original).

But the SSAN petition promised more than just a release valve for emotions. Behind the expressions of shock was a faint hope that somebody would intervene and turn the clock back. For some elderly tenants, UCT's purchase of Forest Hill shook the very foundations of their future. While the past now became a collection of memories of what it was like to live in a Mowbray and in a Forest Hill which pre-dated UCT's purchase of the complex, the present was increasingly a struggle to rebuild the future in the image of that past. Part of that struggle meant participating in the SSAN petition. By the time I start interviewing these informants, three months after they had put their names and comments to the petition, the faint hope which they had placed in the SSAN was gone. All some were left with was their shock and bitterness.

2. Reflections of displacement in the petition

The theme of displacement is reminiscent of the many accounts that the Surplus People Project has repeatedly used in describing the impact of forced removals in the *apartheid* era (Platzky & Walker 1985). These accounts give a sense that people were wrenched from places where they felt they belonged, some expressing a loss of hope and a feeling of abandonment. Such experience of forced removal was far more horrific than the 'crisis' that elderly residents of Mowbray

faced, yet the similarities in people's experiences are worth noting.

The term "displaced person" was used by six SSAN petitioners in Mowbray. Three of them were residents in Forest Hill and three lived in Orpington, another block of flats which UCT had bought and then sold (see Chapter Three). Their use of the term "displaced person" reflected people's sense of dislocation and hopelessness and was coupled with pleas for outside help. The sentiments implied by the terms use were aptly expressed by one petitioner who referred to herself as "Kathy". She wrote:

We were asked to leave Liesbeeck Gardens when UCT took over and now guess what. Once again! Moving to where we do not know where. Can you help?

Another of the petitioners, who had referred to herself as "displaced" in the petition, was somebody I had interviewed.

Case 5.3: A "Displaced Person": I have Lost Both my Access to Accommodation and my Husband

69 year old Mrs Stanley was a retired school teacher who had lived in Forest Hill since 1981. In April 1991 she was informed that UCT had bought Forest Hill and that her future as a tenant was in question. On 18 April 1991 she expressed her position, as a result of UCT' purchase of the complex, in the SSAN petition: "Displaced Person." In July of 1991 her husband passed away.

I first visited Mrs Stanley in August 1991. She confided in me that since her husband's death she had become a lonely woman and that she was reluctant to talk about herself. In addition UCT's purchase of Forest Hill had resulted in her being given notice to vacate her flat. This had resulted in her feeling "displaced", which was compounded by her lack of alternative accommodation. She was willing to answer the general survey questions, but she was not willing to discuss personal details of her life that related to her husband or enter into a conversation about UCT's

purchase of Forest Hill. While for that afternoon we sat and chatted about some of Mowbray's environmental problems and the convenience of living in a suburb with easy access to public transport, Mrs Stanley made constant references to herself as a person whose life was in turmoil. In addition, while she remarked that she "had loved the conveniences of Mowbray" and that it had been a "lovely to live in", she stated that she no longer "liked the suburb".

Mrs Stanley's neighbour, Mrs Brooks (Case 3.14), later explained to me that Mrs Stanley was very upset about both her husband's death and UCT's purchase of Forest Hill. In addition, according to a number of neighbours, it seemed as if Mrs Stanley had steadily withdrawn from local neighbourhood life in the flats. She had become reclusive and was no longer maintaining the established neighbourhood relationships which had been a part of her life in Forest Hill.

In some regards the responses of those informants who had felt "displaced" resonated with those who had experienced "shock". Both categories of informants linked their perception of themselves to a change in Mowbray's status and their view of themselves as no longer fitting into the suburb. Part of their sense of displacement related to informants' certainty that they would not remain at Forest Hill, even if they were permitted to do so, and their resulting uncertainty over where they would live in the future.

At the time of the SSAN petition UCT had not yet informed Forest Hill tenants whether it would terminate or extend their leases. It was a period of uncertainty for many which was expressed by the Mowbray Baptist News's (August 1991:14) reference to Forest Hill tenants as "cave-dwellers" and "refugees". But even after UCT had informed tenants of its intentions to let some elderly people stay on, there was

still a sense of dislocation among some of those I interviewed. This was true both of tenants who had been given notice and of those with extended leases.

Case 5.4: A Sense of Displacement: Looking for Familiar Ground

Miss Brown and Mrs Jones (Case 3.18), joint tenants in Forest Hill, had had their lease extended until the end of the century. While they were happy to have a roof over their heads, Miss Brown still felt a sense of displacement at being moved to a block for selected tenants who were to stay and were unhappy with the rent increases. Indeed she was still attempting to get a place in an institution in Somerset West.

As she noted, "elderly" people expected to stay in Forest Hill for the rest of their retirement. But UCT's purchase of the complex meant termination of those dreams. This resulted in feelings of despair at the thought of having to move and of dislocation at leaving familiar space.

Miss Brown's immediate response was to look for somewhere else to go, but to a place which she could recreate as home. As she explained: "We are waiting to hear about something to share. We would be happy to move into something where we can take all our furniture. I know from other elderly people here [Forest Hill] that it [the move] is disruptive. Therefore it is nice to have things of your own that you can relate to."

In overview one can see a continuity in the use of a term. Within the confines of the SSAN petition the term "displaced" was used as a basis for political protest. In general discussion it served as a means of explanation and as a reference for future plans. Given an opportunity to reflect, elderly people (e.g. Case 5.4) expressed a sense of displacement because of the threat of a loss of familiar space. These expressions were then used to prepare themselves for the adjustment of moving to unfamiliar places. While elderly Mowbray residents felt UCT was

"displacing" them from both their flats and their suburb, they interpreted their belongings as transportable familiarity. Part of the problem for many elderly residents who wound up in institutions is that few were permitted to take private belongings, such as furniture, with them (See Frankental, 1979). In this regard their experience, expressed in the SSAN petition, would be perpetuated in their future housing experiences.

3. Reflections of the 'Housing Crisis' and 'Reform' in South Africa

Comments in the SSAN petition also suggested that some elderly Mowbray residents saw the 'housing crisis' as an issue reflecting the National Party government's loss of power and its simultaneous irresponsible policy towards housing for elderly Whites. Eleven Mowbray tenants used the SSAN petition to challenge the state to take up the challenge of re-introducing legislation that would protect the rights of White tenants in general, and elderly tenants in particular. For them, the types of property "reform" required were those that would reverse the state's attempts at political "reform" that had resulted in a loss of control in both the property market and the general social fabric of Mowbray and South Africa.

Case 5.5: Demanding "Urgent" Housing "Reform"

84 year old Miss Rosen, a retired school teacher, had been living in Forest Hill for 18 years when UCT bought the complex. In response to her vulnerable position as a tenant she remarked in the SSAN petition: "I myself a victim. [Urgent] need for reform. Urgent."

During an interview she expanded upon her opinions on the 'housing crisis' by noting that it had come "so suddenly" and was compounded by a drastic reduction in rentable accommodation as a result of both UCT's policy and the growth of the sectional title market. In addition the "demand for accommodation was so great" that "the wolves were there" to make a killing. She also realised that while there were some "nice places for elderly people to stay", "there were such long waiting lists for them." Ultimately, from her perspective, the government had to take responsibility for the situation and intervene through introducing "reforms" which protected tenants.

Other Mowbray tenants, who were not from Forest Hill, concurred with Miss Rosen's (Case 5.5) view that the 'housing crisis' was a result of a general shortage of affordable local rented accommodation. This was reflected in comments in the SSAN petition which read:

Shortage of rentable accommodation. Prices and rents too high.
 Big business is forcing us out of our homes and security.
 Not everybody can afford houses. Tremendous shortage of rentable premises.

Some tenants who signed the SSAN petition added to Miss Rosen's view that housing "reform" was needed which would involve a greater control of the market by the state in the interest of tenants (Case 5.5). This was reflected in the following comments in the SSAN petition:

There's got to be some sort of control.
 There is some sort of control needed. Rents are totally out of control.
 Rent going up by 80% - not a protected tenant although I have lived in same flat for 38 years.

These comments came predominantly from elderly White tenants in blocks of flats in the 'dorp' section west of the railway

station (Map 1.2). They reflected the fear that many elderly Mowbray tenants experienced of diminishing access to accommodation as a result of landlords selling blocks of flats under sectional title or increasing the rents to benefit from the shortage of rentable accommodation (Chapter Three). But these calls for "reform", in terms of the state's intervention through legislation to protect tenants, were contained within a larger debate over a general sense of lawlessness that was perceived to be a result of the Nationalist government's political "reforms".

Case 5.6: Attempting to Adjust; But Trapped by Fear and Apprehension

67 year old Miss Masters had grown up in Paarl (Map 1.1) and had moved to Mowbray in 1956 when she was employed as a clerk at a local hospital. By 1991 she had been a tenant in the same flat in the 'dorp', near the railway station, for 35 years.

On the day that I first interviewed her there were protest marches taking place in the suburb. From the balcony of her flat we watched police attempting to stop groups of "black protesters" moving into the narrow streets off the Main Road. While watching the scene below us, Miss Masters reflected on how Mowbray had changed in the 1990s. She remarked that she felt unsettled by the increase in crime and the noisy behaviour of students, complaining that the students in the flats opposite her were often drunk and had fights with each other. In addition, police trying to intervene became objects of student abuse for attempting to enforce the law. In her mind this was a reflection of the changing nature of South African society.

In relation to her own flat, she noted that it had hardly been cared for by various landlords in the entire 35 years that she had stayed in it. She had had to paint it herself and keep it in good repair. New property developers had just bought the block and given it a coat of paint. She interpreted this as a sign that they were going to increase the rents. Part of her concern was that there were few legal restraints on her landlord. If he decided to increase the rent to an amount that was beyond her means then she had no way of stopping him.

In order to deal with what she saw as unacceptable changes in the suburb and her own fear of an increase in rental, she had begun consider moving into an institution in Somerset West (Map 1.1).

Elderly Mowbray residents' perceptions that the state was losing control were based on their observations that the police had become powerless (Case 5.6), that "black" protesters successfully achieved their objectives (Case 5.6 and 6.4), and that 'white' tenants were not adequately protected by the law. In SSAN petition comments, the 'housing crisis' was related to this perception of anarchy at both a suburban and a national level. At the suburban level the 'housing crisis' was linked to lawlessness and moral decline. As one elderly couple, neighbours of Miss Masters (Case 5.6), wrote in the SSAN petition: "(T)he area is disgusting. The amount of crime and hobos, prostitutes, area is filthy". And another petitioner related it to a national level by suggesting that the 'housing crisis' was "par for the course in a country like this".

B. The SSAN as a Support Group

In addition to running a petition, the leadership of the SSAN kept correspondence and detailed records of telephone-calls from members of the public asking for assistance with housing disputes. I have no clear indication of the amount of correspondence the SSAN received as I was not given access to all of it. I do however have their detailed telephone-call record. Of a total of 96 Cape Town southern suburbs residents who asked for assistance, only two were from Mowbray. Both of them were tenants in Orpington (See

Chapter Three), and one entered into further correspondence with the SSAN and was given fairly extensive support with his housing dispute with UCT.

The case (Case 5.7) highlights a number of issues that relate to this chapter. Firstly it shows how elderly White Mowbray tenants used the SSAN for support in their housing disputes. Secondly it shows what limited support the SSAN had to offer, particularly in its use of the press, to assist such elderly residents. Finally the case serves to illustrate how the success of the SSAN in securing accommodation for one particular elderly couple reinforced the double bind in which most elderly White Mowbray residents found themselves.

Case 5.7: Using the SSAN as a Support Group while in a Housing Dispute with UCT

77 year old Mr Swart and his 83 year old wife had been living in Orpington flats for 27 years when UCT bought the block as part of the complex which included Forest Hill. Mr Swart was upset by the possible implications of the purchase so he telephoned the SSAN to add his protest to its petition. On 12 May 1992 the SSAN recorded his call in their telephone-call register and their agreement to help him and his spouse.

Mr Swart also entered into correspondence with the appointed administrators of the flats in order to obtain clarity on his position as a tenant. On 8 April 1991 he received a letter from the administrators stating that UCT had not finalised its policy towards the tenants of Orpington, but that he would be informed of any future developments. On 28 May 1991 he received a further letter which in part read:

. . . your rent is being generally reviewed and we have been instructed to give you two calendar months notice, as we hereby do, increasing your rental from R480,00 to R720,00 per month, with effect from the 1st of August 1991. Consequently,

you are required to ensure that the increased rental is paid without fail . . .

Yours faithfully

Will G. Hare CC.

(As Agents for the University of Cape Town)

On the same day he received a letter on UCT letterhead and "issued on behalf of the Registrar", that stated that Orpington had been sold to Progressive Holding Investments CC and that the transfer of property would be effective from 1 August 1991. The letter stated that UCT was to "inform residents ... of any new arrangements the **new owners** want to implement (emphasis in original)." It then ended with the statement: "We stress that these communications will be made on behalf of the new owners and will **not** be decisions involving the University (emphasis in original)."

After receiving both letters, Mr Swart forwarded them to the SSAN with his own comments attached and a further request for help.

While it is difficult to piece together the fine detail of what happened, it is clear that the SSAN approached UCT on behalf of the Swarts and obtained an undertaking to move the elderly couple to another block of flats which they owned, Shell Court. But the Swarts objected that the flat was "cold and damp." A journalist from the Southern Argus, one of the SSAN's contacts, then intervened and prompted UCT to move the Swarts to Forest Hill (Southern Argus 13 June 1991).

It is difficult to gauge how typical Mr and Mrs Swart's (Case 5.7) use of the SSAN was, primarily because I did not have access to a broader range of correspondence between elderly White Mowbray residents and the SSAN. What the SSAN's record of telephone-calls and newspaper articles suggest, however, is that there are some aspects of the Swarts's case which were peculiar, and others which were common to the way elderly Mowbray residents attempts to use

the SSAN as a support group. What is common is the limited way in which residents would attempt to get the SSAN to help them. This involved an introductory story on the telephone which meant supplying the SSAN with some details of a personal nature, such as age and income, and their particular housing experience. From there the SSAN would ask the person to forward correspondence from and to landlords or property administrators.

Intervention by the SSAN at this point was usually very limited, involving only limited discussion with landlords or property administrators, and occasionally assisting elderly tenants with transport to the offices of a range of authorities who needed to be seen, for example the Rent Control Board or government officials in the Department of Local Government, Housing and Works. Tenants who asked for help were also encouraged to write to their local Member of Parliament and to the press in order to publicize their stories. From all 96 cases taken up by the SSAN only a few, to my knowledge only one in Mowbray (Case 5.7), were taken to a point of actual intervention on behalf of the tenant concerned.

What is peculiar about the Swarts's case (Case 5.7) was the way in which the SSAN used press-reporters to put public pressure on UCT to assist the Swarts by using in-depth reports in the press on the 'housing crisis'. The fact that this resulted in Swarts's accommodation being secured meant, however, that the SSAN intervention via the press had the

opposite effect to what had been hoped. Rather than providing publicity for the 'housing crisis', the press coverage provided positive publicity for UCT. In effect this press coverage further undermined the attempts of elderly White Mowbray residents to have their interests secured by suggesting that their objections to UCT's purchase of flats in the area were unfounded. The press reinforced elderly White Mowbray residents' sense of being caught in a double bind.

The above point can be illustrated by looking at changes in UCT's image in the press in relation to changing interpretations of the effects on elderly White Mowbray residents of UCT's purchase of blocks of flats. The process began with very negative press coverage for UCT, which was soon challenged by members of the University and Dene Smuts, the local Member of Parliament. Paradoxically, UCT's most positive press coverage came only after the intervention of the SSAN.

The negative publicity that UCT first received is well summarised in an article entitled "It's a cold future for the old folks", in a local newspaper (Tony Robertson, in Southern Suburbs Tatler 2 May 1991):

And then came along the University to buy up more blocks of flats. Of course there were good reasons for this. The University needed accommodation for the growing numbers of students and buying old blocks was cheaper than buying new ones. And it also made sense to buy the flats near the campus. But to the pensioner who is forced out of his (sic) flat it doesn't make much difference whether the perpetrator is a ruthless profiteer or a respected

academic institution. **It is just as cold out there in the street.** The University may not have changed the rules or be in any way responsible for the plight of the elderly poor, but for many of them the final blow came from the institution on Devil's Peak. There is no escaping the share of responsibility. The other surprising thing is the deafening silence from the social science fraternity who don't seem to have noticed that their employers are **behaving rather like capitalist lords.** But that is another story. (Emphases mine).

Drawing upon local imagery of UCT as "Moscow on the Hill", the journalist, Robertson, thus suggested that the University had not lived up to its own principles by being like "capitalist lords". In particular he selected Social Scientists, often perceived to be the most radical of Communists, for special attention. On one level, by drawing on stereotypes, he was calling on UCT to live up to its convictions, while on another he was reinforcing his readers' negative image of the institution.

Professor John Reid, then acting Vice-Chancellor of UCT, immediately responded in a letter to the press entitled "Misinformation and wrong conclusions about Forest Hill" (The Cape Times 7 May 1991). He attempted to defend UCT's position:

The Group Areas Act coupled with the housing crisis in Cape Town, particularly for Africans, have ensured that it is virtually impossible for black students to obtain accommodation outside the university that enables them to study or avoid excessive travel time and expense. . . . UCT must accommodate in order to educate. . . . We are trying our best to show consideration to residents (of Forest Hill) with special circumstances, and have accepted the moral obligation to do so. . . . UCT is concerned about victims of the housing crisis, including its own students. Its primary responsibility is to try to accommodate those students.

Reid made it clear that while UCT would consider the situation of tenants at Forest Hill, its first priority was to its students. He supported his position by suggesting that UCT's priorities needed to be seen within the broader context of South African political inequality. As such the needs of African students struggling to find accommodation near the University were a priority.

Reid's letter was supported by another from the local Member of Parliament, Dene Smuts (The Cape Times 13 May 1991). Entitled "More to the UCT flat debate than housing", she argued that:

. . . it is important, as our country enters transition, that we all see our own lives, our suburbs and cities, in the full South African context. . . . The matter cannot be viewed simply as an urban environmental nor even a housing issue. We are dealing with an aspect of the apartheid legacy - educational exclusion - which has shaped our history. . . . The people who put me in Parliament included students, academics and flat dwellers. We have to reconcile everyone's interests, including those of people who did not have the vote in 1989 - and their constitutional exclusion was the matter I campaigned on. . . . The era of racial regulation of the composition of universities ended symbolically this week with the tabling of the Bill which will revoke the "quota clause". . . . It would be unforgivable if the year 1991, . . . , the end of the era that gave birth to black consciousness is met with a lack of "consciousness", a lack of understanding of our past, present and future, on the part of whites.

Again there is an appeal to see the issue of UCT's purchase of Forest Hill in the broader context of South Africa's history (see Chapter Four) and the dismantling of *apartheid*. In addition there is an appeal to local White residents who

voted for Smuts in the 1989 General Election to be understanding. These attempts to repair UCT's tarnished image were reinforced some weeks later by the SSAN's success in secure the Swarts's (Case 5.7) accommodation. As an article in The Cape Times (30 May 1991) reported:

The University of Cape Town has **performed a praiseworthy act of compassion** in offering an elderly pensioner couple a bright and sunny flat in one of the Forest Hill blocks after they were turned out of the flat they had been living in for 29 years. The couple, an invalid of 83 and her husband, 77, were given notice to leave Orpington . . . UCT are to pay the cost of moving, as well as telephone and reconnection fees, and the couple will have security of tenure at a reasonable rental until the end of the century. The wife has had a stroke and a heart attack and suffers from diabetes and high blood pressure. Thus she had reason to despair at the thought of having to live in a small, damp flat at a much higher rental. Now, with the help of others, at least they can face the future with more confidence and happiness (Emphasis mine).

The article in The Cape Times (30 May 1991) was followed by a similar one in the Southern Argus (13 June 1991). They marked the end of the press debate over the impact of UCT's purchase of Mowbray blocks of flats. They also illustrate how the SSAN's use of the press to secure the interests of a particular elderly White Mowbray couple had unforeseen consequences: positive publicity for UCT and a strengthening of elderly White Mowbray residents' double bind through undermining their objections to UCT's purchasing of blocks of flats. For, as many of my interviews with elderly tenants in Forest Hill illustrated (e.g. Cases 5.2 and 5.3), elderly White Mowbray residents still felt very bitter about what UCT had done, and were still frustrated by their

C. Attempting to Bring to Fruition the SSAN's Model for Political Action

The SSAN had planned two acts of protest to highlight the 'housing crisis'. The first was a march to the Houses of Parliament in order to present their petition and the second was a "squat" on Rondebosch Common. Both ideas received considerable press coverage (See Southern Suburbs Tatler 25 April 1991), were discussed in Parliament (The Argus 17 April 1991) and formed an intricate part of their campaign for support from Cape Town's southern suburbs residents (SSAN correspondence).

While the petition was handed to representatives from Parliament without the march taking place, the squat never came to fruition. And while elderly White Mowbray residents were willing to participate in the SSAN petition and to use the SSAN as a support group, they were generally not willing to participate in its more overt acts of political expression. Part of the reason, I believe, has to do with the way such acts of protest by 'blacks' were stigmatised by Mowbray's 'whites' who saw themselves as respectable citizens.

Of all the elderly Mowbray residents I interviewed who supported or had heard of the SSAN, only one suggested that he agreed with the idea of a squat on Rondebosch Common. And as I will demonstrate, insight can be gained into the limits of elderly White Mowbray residents' responses to the 'housing crisis' by examining the conflict this Mowbray

resident expressed over the issue of squatting on Rondebosch Common.

Case 5.8 Threatening to Squat on the Common; But Trapped by a Conflict in Values

Mr Norman (Case 3.11) argued that he had come to a point in his life where he would be willing to become a squatter on Rondebosch Common (Map 1.2). He justified his position by suggesting that it was cheap as a way of life, that there was such a shortage of rentable accommodation that he felt he was being forced to squat, and that the state let 'blacks' do it and should logically permit him to do so as well. He argued that he already had a "good car" and all he needed was a caravan.

Mr Norman then argued that squatting could in itself be seen as an act of protest. By squatting, he suggested, he would make the statement that the government had "forced whites to squat" by "giving everything to blacks." As such, those in power would be embarrassed and respond by doing something about his plight.

Three noteworthy points arise from this case (Case 5.8). Firstly, Mr Norman could justify his plan to squat on Rondebosch Common in reasonable terms. It was a cheap form of accommodation that was realistic in light of the shortage of affordable housing and the state's own policy. In addition the government, which Mr Norman saw as 'pro-black'¹, was willing to let 'blacks' squat so it could not be illegal.

Secondly, Mr Norman (Case 5.8) noted that what is legal is not necessary desirable. While he assumed that the

1. Cecil Helman (personal communication, 1991) noted that many 'white' South Africans see the African National Congress as a form of "cargo-cult" for 'blacks' in that it will bring the promised benefits of a post-apartheid society. In the case of my fieldwork in Mowbray I would agree with him, but I would want to take it one step further. In the case of Mr Norman (Case 5.8) the Nationalist government is seen as fulfilling that role already.

government had accepted squatting in South Africa, he presumed that it will be embarrassed by 'whites' squatting². Logically then, if he were to have squatted in the middle of a large 'white' residential area he would have embarrassed the government and force it to take his plight seriously.

The idea of the squat was hardly original to Mr Norman (Case 5.8). As already noted, the idea was voiced publicly months prior to my interview with him in September 1991. According to Mrs Abramowitz (personal communication 1991) the idea was conceived by the SSAN as a result of realisation that 'black protest politics' was so successful. It was further encouraged by a squat by a 'white family' on Church Square in Pretoria (The Argus 30 April 1991) and by people's suggestions in the SSAN petition. But while the much publicized SSAN squat never materialised, Mr Norman (Case 5.8) was convinced it would still work.

A third point arises out of Case 5.8 about the limits that elderly White Mowbray residents set on their responses to the 'housing crisis'. Mr Norman was exceptional in his desire to bring to fruition the SSAN's plan to squat on Rondebosch Common. He realised that the success of the act was dependent upon its unacceptable nature. For him, squatting was not something 'white' people chose to do, but rather something they were forced to do. It was this

2. It would seem though that the state was not embarrassed by Whites squatting. The Argus (8 August 1991:1) reported that five "white families" had settled into a squatter settlement in Milnerton, a Cape Town suburb, "without any fanfare" early in 1991.

contradiction, between the success of squatting as an act of protest and its unacceptable nature, which ultimately resulted in the action never being undertaken. Indeed, Mr Norman's own reluctance to carry the act through reinforced his compliance with the view of other residents that squatting was unacceptable (see Chapter Six). In this regard he had attempted to go beyond the limits of what was perceived of by local residents as legitimate responses to the 'housing crisis'.

It was clear from Mrs Abramowitz that the SSAN's squat had been halted, and its leadership split, over a similar conflict in values. While the SSAN had attempted to organise a march to Parliament and a squat on Rondebosch Common, such acts of protest were frowned upon by supporters and some of the leaders of the lobby group. This conflict of values was evident in a letter to State President F.W. de Klerk from Mrs Abramowitz on behalf of the SSAN. She wrote:

We would also like to take advantage of your Open Door Policy (as did the women from the ANC with their babies in tow to add insult to injury) and in so doing give back that feeling of security to our Citizens of South Africa - the words keep coming up. YOU WILL NOT GET ANYWHERE WITH GOVERNMENT, THEY DO NOT CARE, I WISH YOU LUCK, YOU ARE FIGHTING A LOSING BATTLE (Emphasis in text).

Here I think the contradiction is made clear. While the SSAN was threatening to organise its own acts of protest, such as a march on Parliament, it was critical of others doing the same. Its members found themselves unable to effect actions patterned on those of others which they found

abhorrent. While on one level they could logically reason out the value of squatting on Rondebosch Common as an act of protest, on another level such act constituted a direct challenge to their own values of what was acceptable behaviour for 'whites'.

III. Conclusion

The SSAN played extensively on the perceived need for state intervention on behalf of 'white' South Africans who were losing their relatively secure access to housing. It also picked up on the theme of helpless 'white elderly' people as victims of the process of change in property legislation and political reform. It then manipulated these two criteria in order to be heard and to gain support.

Elderly White Mowbray residents perceived the possibility of their own needs being met through affiliating with the SSAN because they could participate as 'whites' and 'elderly' people. They thus used the SSAN as a channel to call on the state to reintroduce pre-reform law and order, part of which involved securing access to accommodation for 'whites'. For some elderly residents this meant participating in the SSAN petition in order to call on the state to introduce legislation to protect 'elderly' tenants. For others it meant attempting to use the SSAN as a support group.

As social actors, elderly White Mowbray residents were willing to play along with the notion of themselves as the helpless victims of profiteers and land-grabbing

institutions. In doing so they made themselves available to the SSAN to be used for purposes of publicity. Paradoxically, this strategy had the reverse effect to that hoped for. Thus, in the case of Mr Swart (Case 5.7), the SSAN intervention resulted in UCT gaining positive press coverage. In this regard it is clear that elderly Mowbray residents and the SSAN were not the only social actors who manipulated the notions of 'race' and age. Thus both Dene Smuts and Professor John Reid, in their letters to the press, highlighted the fact that what was at stake in UCT's purchase of Forest Hill was racial discrimination. Both suggested that "Africans", who had been historically prejudiced, had a right to suitable accommodation near the University. It should be noted that neither suggested that the young had precedence over 'the elderly', a suggestion that would not have won much support. Rather they argued that there was a need to adjust in order to rectify past injustices. In addition, in light of Case 5.7, both UCT and Dene Smuts reinforced the notion of 'elderly people' as helpless victims and by doing so repaired their own image in the press. In fact they were so successful that by the end of 1992, when UCT increased the rentals for its tenants at Forest Hill, local residents were cynical of reports in the press of the plight of 'elderly' tenants.

Finally, state officials were not willing to take up the cause of a 'conservative white' group. This was clear both from their unwillingness to address the issues publicly and from their correspondence with the SSAN. Thus the then

Minister of Housing (Sam de Beer), in a letter to Mrs Abramowitz, suggested that the government had done sufficient for providing access to housing for Whites. His department had other concerns, namely the massive housing backlog in Black and Coloured areas.

The end result of elderly White Mowbray residents' attempts to use the SSAN as an avenue of response was failure. Instead of being heard and returned to the main arena of political debate, they found themselves marginalised and their own double bind reinforced.

Chapter Six
Responding to the 'Housing Crisis' through Opposed Images of Self and Others

In this final substantive chapter I look at various ways in which elderly White Mowbray residents categorised the social reality of life in Mowbray by constituting it through a range of opposed images of 'self' and 'other'. I end the chapter by showing how use of these images exacerbated the double bind situation in which many of these people found themselves.

There were three motifs that dominated the ways my informants opposed themselves to others whom they saw as threatening. These motifs are best summarised by the couplets: (i) last frontier versus "black cloud"; (ii) "community" versus intruders; and (iii) law-abiding citizens versus "criminals". I look at each in turn.

I. The Last Frontier and the "Black Cloud"

Roy Simcox, in his Mowbray Frontier Town (1975), implies that the early Dutch and British settlement in Mowbray was one of the first frontier settlements in colonial southern Africa. Referring to Mowbray's "barbarous Hottentots" of the early colonial period, he implies a contrast between the European settlers (particularly the English) and the indigenous inhabitants of Africa (1975:3). In his image the

settlers brought "civilisation" and light to a darkened Africa.

As I have argued in Chapter Four, images of an idyllic colonial settlement were still being used and manipulated by elderly White residents in the early 1990s. By using these idyllic notions of the past, these elderly residents suggested that Mowbray was still a frontier and that they had taken on the mantle of defending "civilisation" against an invasion epitomised by the accommodation of 'black' students in Mowbray. This student presence was described as a "black cloud", as disorderly, cruel and rude. Firstly I discuss the notions of the self as "civilised" and as defender of the last frontier, and then turn to examine how the other is constructed as a "black cloud" and uncivilised.

A. The Self as "Civilised" and Defender of the Last Frontier

Elderly White Mowbray residents asserted an image of themselves as "civilised", and thus mannerly and orderly, in three ways: (a) by connecting themselves to historical space that they valued; (b) by means of symbols within their faith; and (c) by assertions about their own socialisation.

1. Connections to Historical Space

Case 6.1: A Herbert Baker House and a Respected Woman

75 year old Mrs Coxan had come to Mowbray when it was a "very select area", and by 1991 had lived in her free-standing house in the suburb for 45 years. She was active in local politics, particularly the RMOCA, and seemed to make it her task to ensure that Cape Town City Council employees "did their job" of "maintaining civilised norms" in her suburb.

Talking one day about the history of Mowbray she very proudly referred to her house as a "Herbert Baker original". She thereby implied that her association with, and possession of, such a house imparted to her the values of the colonial era. The house represented for her the noble Victorian values of the time, of colonial rule and the task of maintaining "civilised" values.

Some elderly White Mowbray residents, while not what I have called 'holders of history' because of their social position (Chapter Four), ascribed value to themselves through their association with a particular piece of space which they valued because of the historical period it was seen to represent. In doing so they asserted that their values were continuous with those of the past and that this gave them the right to define what Mowbray should be like (Case 6.1). In addition they used their connection to the past, through the ownership of historical space, as legitimation to speak on the 'housing crisis'.

These self-images of elderly White people as "civilised", based on their connection to the past, were also expressed and used within the public domain. Thus Mrs Coxan's (Case 6.1) values were expressed reinforced by the RMOCA in letters made available to the public. In this regard she shared a common map of reality with other members of the Association. That map of reality, which strongly suggested a link between history and civilisation, was encapsulated in the RMOCA's Chairman's Newsletter (December 1992):

I wish I could promise you an easier and brighter 1993 - but, it is likely to be more difficult than anything we have had to deal with hitherto. However by our shared efforts we can carry the Association forward -

to play a meaningful part in Civic affairs for the benefit of us all who live and work here. After all, **we owe nothing less to the heritage of what is perhaps the oldest association in the country. - We alone can see to it that the efforts of the past 100 years are not neglected and left to die.**

For some time now I have had a feeling that we may have to face a by-Election in Ward 10 before long. Even if we don't, we certainly need to think about the next Elections so that we can put up Candidates to represent us more fully and more effectively. The next Council - will be even more based on party politics and likely to reflect the changing society in which - Illiterates - Squatters - Vagrants - Criminals of all sorts - Murderers, Terrorists, Gangsters, Thugs, Rapists are to have an equal Vote on the basis of - "One Man-One Vote." If only the present government & prospective - future leaders would agree on a massive educational campaign -to uplift the masses - To have protection meanwhile of a Moratorium until a suitable qualified Franchise could be worked out to ensure an educated, civilised and RESPONSIBLE - Electorate (Capitals and punctuation in original; emphasis mine).

Elderly residents' images of themselves as "civilised" were thus expressed and reinforced within the RMOCA. The RMOCA too continually played on its own connection to the past, particularly its alleged link to the (long defunct) Mowbray Town Council. It did so to legitimate its role as the keeper of "civilisation" in Mowbray. In doing so its members suggested that while the original European settlers of Mowbray constituted the first frontier of "civilisation" the RMOCA, and particularly its elderly members, were manning the last frontier. In their imagery, while the rest of South Africa was crumbling as a result of political change, members of the RMOCA had the task of seeing that the "efforts of the past 100 years are not neglected and left to die." Elderly people in the RMOCA took on this task by challenging the Cape Town City Council to "do its task" of

maintaining "civilised norms" (Case 6.1) and by opposing the state's attempts at housing reform.

2. Symbols in One's Faith

This notion of being "civilised" was both ascribed from association with particular buildings and ideas of historical continuity in Mowbray and claimed from membership of particular Christian perspectives and symbols. Thus some elderly White Mowbray residents asserted their value as "civilised" because of their membership of the Church of the Province of South Africa.

Case 6.2: Flags and Banners Represent both Faith and "Civilisation"

The Thomases (Case 3.15) were both members of longstanding in the Church of the Province and worshipped at Cape Town's St. George's Cathedral. During a discussion about housing reform in South Africa and the housing options available to elderly White people, they drew me into a debate on the role of the church in politics. Yes, they agreed with me, the church should be involved in political discussions; but the church needed to set limits on what it was willing to do. They related with horror an incident when the Dean of Cape Town permitted a group of toyi-toying¹ protestors to go into the Cathedral in order to escape the police and carrying "communist flags" and "ANC banners" with them.

Mrs Thomas had been so horrified by the event that she had telephoned the Dean of the Cathedral to complain. He responded by asking her why she was so offended by the African National Congress banners being in the church, if she was not offended by the multitude of colonial military banners on display. She explained to me that she found his question and attitude troublesome, and went on to respond that it was what the banners symbolised which made the difference.

For her the ANC's symbols and the "communist flag" represented a world of social upheaval and everything that was opposed to "Christian" and "Civilised norms". By contrast the British regimental flags represented

1. Toyi-toying is a popular form of dance in South Africa associated with public acts of protest.

"civilisation", order and good social norms. To her it was the British colonialists who had "brought light to Africa".

De Gruchy (1979) has noted that while the Church of the Province has been at the forefront of opposition to *apartheid* in South Africa, it has a strong historical connection, as a mission church, to the legitimisation of colonialism by the British in southern Africa. Part of that legitimisation was encapsulated in the notion that both the British government and the church had the task of bringing "light" and "civilisation". Cuthbertson (1987) has argued that such support for colonialism by the church was often reflected in open support for colonists' use of violence to 'tame' the country and its people. This is reflected, in turn, in that some parishes have long been conservatories for the flags and banners of colonial regiments.

While the Dean's response to Mrs Thomas in Case 6.2 supports both De Gruchy's (1979) and Villa-Vicencio's (1986) assertion that the church has challenged the political *status quo*, it also strongly illustrates the way that aspects of its history in South Africa can be selected to legitimate attempts to halt political change. Mrs Thomas (Case 6.2) participated in a manipulation of identity which suggested that the colonial symbolism of military banners displayed in Anglican churches represented her own value of the process of "civilisation" and the bringing of "light" to Africa. In addition she distanced herself from what she saw as the antithesis of this, the African National Congress and

its "anti-Christian" and "communist" banners. By doing so she was creating a symbolic dualism distinguishing herself from those with whom she could not agree, and suggesting that the process of social change reflected in the impact of housing reform in Mowbray was a move away from "civilised" norms.

3. Proper Upbringing

Some elderly White Mowbray residents who described themselves as "civilised" did so on the basis of their socialisation.

Case 6.3: I was Brought Up to be "Civilised"

Mr and Mrs Frank were both 70 and had moved into a flat in Mowbray in 1981 after leaving "Rhodesia". They had found their niche in Mowbray as very active members of a local church and by being involved in a range of social activities.

While her husband went to the post office, I spoke to Mrs Frank about how she felt about UCT giving them notice to vacate their flat and about their attempts to stay in Mowbray. She then described their experience of the suburb in light of her husband's past. "My husband grew up in the Karroo with Coloured friends. He then went to the South African Air Force during the [Second World] War. After the War he moved to Rhodesia and worked as a cattle farmer for 30 years. He came back to South Africa in 1981 and found it very difficult, because the Coloureds and Africans are cheeky."

She then drew on her own experience to illustrate the point: "I took my grandsons to play tennis in Observatory one day. There were mobs of Coloured people playing. We waited for a court while playing on the netball court; but the Coloured people kept taking the courts. I felt powerless to do anything and physically threatened. Coloured people need to learn etiquette and to take turns for things."

As Mrs Frank finished her illustration her husband came in. She told him what we had been speaking about and he simply responded by saying, "This is how we were brought up to think."

Both Mr and Mrs Frank felt they had been brought up in the correct manner. They claimed not to be racist, as indicated by Mr Frank's childhood with "Coloured people" and the Franks' Christian convictions. It was just that "Coloureds" and "Africans" did not know how to behave in an orderly manner. From the Franks' perspective the disgust they felt was ingrained in their being, and justified by others' unwillingness or ignorance of how to be mannerly and "civilised".

Other elderly Mowbray residents had a similar response. Mrs Willis (Case 3.10) used the words "as **we** have been brought up" (emphasis mine) to suggest that her feelings about 'blacks' were based on her upbringing. She thereby conceptualised herself as part of a greater community of like-minded people, a generation that had been raised properly. By doing so she was generalising a characteristic to imply that all those who were 'elderly' could not adjust to the "new South Africa" because its practices clashed with the principles they had been taught. In a similar manner, both she and the Franks (Case 6.3) generalised their self-defined negative characteristics onto 'blacks/Africans' and 'coloureds'.

B. The "Black Cloud" as Uncivilised

If "civilisation" is characterised by some elderly people in terms of orderliness of behaviour then the other must be represented by disorder. The other, ie. 'blacks' and

'coloureds', are thus characterised by chaos and conflict. Importantly, that chaos, conflict and its perceived bearers are depicted in an ominous fashion as **something** that is both natural and beyond the control of interventions of elderly Mowbray residents.

Case 6.4: The Gathering of the "Black Cloud"

Mr Norman (Case 3.11) and his wife lived in a block of flats opposite Liesbeeck Gardens, one of the blocks of flats that had been bought by UCT and which local residents saw as being for 'black' students. I talked to Mr Norman about Mowbray and the 'housing crisis'. He related how it had been a "good suburb" that was like a "small, picturesque village". "But not today!" In the past, he said, he could go to "Jones' field" (a sports ground on the Main Road) to watch sport on the weekend, but "not today!" "Before, it was safe past 12.00 o'clock at night." "Now (he pointed towards Liesbeeck Gardens) there is a black cloud in our lives". "These black tenants do not pay the rent. It would have been better to get local white residents to live there. They would pay rent."

Mr Norman's imagery of the movement of 'black' students into the suburb as a "black cloud" carried within it the notion that 'elderly' residents were now under a cloud of despair that hung heavily over their lives. It was a cloud that shattered the serene village existence which idyllic histories of Mowbray imagined for the suburb (Chapter Four), and which were extended into the present ideal. But the "black cloud" had brought disorder into these lives. Moreover the clouds were certainly not of the kind that brought relief and hope after a long drought. They were clouds that broke a peaceful existence and heralded a storm of destruction that would bring more chaos and disorder into Mowbray.

The imagery also tells us something about how the self is conceptualised in opposition to the other. The other is represented as an irresponsible cloud that deprived the responsible of housing. Considering that Mr Norman (Case 3.11) was in the process of being dispossessed of his own accommodation through a sectional title scheme, and was feeling the pressure of UCT's removal of blocks of flats from the rental market, his response is not surprising. He conceptualised himself as a responsible tenant who now had to suffer and sacrifice for those he saw as lacking a sense of responsibility. To him the correct ordering of things, through rewarding those who had done right, was not being observed. This was an injustice.

A similar image of despair and moral chaos was described by a person who referred to himself as an "elderly man" who had formerly resided in Sybrand Park, a neighbouring suburb which he had left because he thought Mowbray would be safer. At a neighbourhood watch meeting, after a local police major had given an address, the "elderly man" asked what the police were doing about the "black students" in Liesbeeck Gardens. He then illustrated his question with a range of images of "black students" as "drunks", "prostitutes" and "uncivilised"; as people who "ran shebeens in their rooms", and rented them out to "squatters" and "black families" in order to make money; people who were "primitives" in their religious practice because they "slaughtered sheep and oxen"

in the gardens of the flats². He then suggested that the police should raid the residences on a regular basis with the aim of introducing "**law and order**" (my emphasis).

This type of negative image of black students was commonly used to justify resentment about the students being accommodated in Mowbray. In the process, the suburb's elderly White residents simultaneously resigned themselves to the situation because they felt a sense of incapacity to do anything about it (Case 6.4). They then felt dependent upon outside intervention, either by the police or by UCT.

The image of 'blacks' as bringers of chaos, and some elderly White residents' recognition of their own lack of power to control that incursion, were reflected in some interpretations of the occupation of a school in Mowbray by 800 pupils from Khayelitsha in August 1992. As part of a protest by Black school children to "highlight the crisis in black education and call for an end to the 'platooning system' in which township schools double up for primary and high school pupils" (The Cape Times 27-8-1992), Mowbray's Tafelberg School was occupied on 26 August. The following day the school children returned and blockaded Mowbray's

2. This response was part of local mythology that suggested that "black students" were bringing "primitive" religious practices to Mowbray. Brisbarre (1993) has shown that similar images of the other being primitive, because of the slaughter of livestock in an "unhygienic manner", have emerged in suburban areas of France. She demonstrates how French nationals have responded to the slaughter of sheep by Muslim immigrants, particularly for *Id al-kabir*, by playing on images of "barbaric" behaviour.

Main Road for 6 hours before negotiating for the use of the building for their education.

The event became a major talking point for locals and was interpreted by some elderly White residents as an "invasion" that further reinforced their image of 'blacks' as disorderly and irresponsible. Simultaneously it highlighted their own sense of insecurity and powerlessness.

Case 6.5: They have Taken Our Schools - Now They will Take Our Homes

Miss Betrix, a 79 year old spinster who lived on her own was preparing to go overseas for a month. She had asked me if I would feed her cats and look after her house while she was away. The 'school incident' happened just prior to her departure and raised a degree of uneasiness in her mind.

I visited her on 27 August, the second day of the protest, after she had encountered a blockade while returning from shopping on the Main Road. She interpreted the protest as an unnecessary "invasion" of the suburb. And argued that "they" (the 'black' school children) burn down the schools in "their own areas" and now they want to "take ours". "Would they now destroy this one as well?"

She then asked me if I was still willing to look after her house because she was afraid that "the blacks might take over our houses next." She added that she would not know what to do if such a thing happened. She had "worked hard for her home", a point which she usually reinforced by telling me about her struggle from poverty and a 'poor white' background, while "these people" simply took or received things in life. For the same reason she would not support any charity for 'blacks', because there were many 'whites' who struggled without help.

As indicated in Chapter Five, some elderly White Mowbray residents saw the 'housing crisis' as part of a continuing conflict over resources within a larger political context. Now the perceived chaos and disruption of that context was

seen to be "invading" Mowbray. A local struggle for access to a disused school in Mowbray came to be part of something greater, the destruction of the ordered social fabric of the suburb and the possible invasion of 'private' space. Simultaneously, a contrast was made between 'elderly whites' as hardworking and deserving of their belongings, and 'blacks' as the recipients of resources which they simply demanded, did not deserve and would doubtlessly destroy.

II. The "Community" Versus Intruders

Bothma (1991) states: "(C)ommunity has shown a constant tendency to elude precise definition and absolute clarity." As both he and Thornton & Ramphela (1988) have noted, the term "community" is subject to a range of interpretations and meanings in various contexts. There has also been an ongoing debate within gerontology over how 'elderly people' are included or excluded from 'the community' (Frankental 1979) and whether 'elderly people' constitute a 'community' of their own (Fry 1979; Hendel-Sebestyen 1979; Keith 1980).

I engage with this debate briefly here to demonstrate how notions of "community", as a form of self identification, were used by elderly White Mowbray residents in order to respond to the 'housing crisis'. In doing so I will refer to the emic criteria used in the suburb to distinguish levels of inclusion and exclusion. This will reveal how elderly residents used the term "community": (i) to link themselves to the state's use of the term thereby reinforcing racial categorisations; (ii) to define belonging

on the basis of commitment to a political agenda that attempted to exclude students as 'transients'; and (iii) to define residents of Forest Hill who were threatened by UCT's purchase of the complex.

A. The Mowbray "Community" as "White"

Rose Stolze, Director of the Abbeyfield Society in South Africa, remarked to me that the aim of Abbeyfield was to assist "elderly people" to be accommodated "in the community", rather than in institutions. And as one of Abbeyfield's brochures states: "Our aim is to have an Abbeyfield House in every suburb throughout the country. Each community should have at least one little house to start with." Her use of the term "community" reflected its repeated use in Abbeyfield newsletters where it often substituted for the words "neighbourhood" or "suburb".

Rose Stolze was herself a resident of Mowbray who, in response to the 'housing crisis', had attempted to establish a local Abbeyfield committee. Part of her efforts included visiting the suburb's churches and civic associations in order to recruit members and to raise funds for the purchase of an Abbeyfield house or to secure the donation of a house. In the process, a number of local residents heard of Abbeyfield and its aims and latched onto and adapted its idea.

Case 6.6: The "Community" of Mowbray: A Home for Elderly White Residents

Mrs Sutherland, a local 'elderly' woman who was very involved in local politics and a strong supporter of Abbeyfield, remarked to me one evening at a RMOCA meeting that the "community" of Mowbray needed an Abbeyfield house. She had heard about my interest in the issue of housing, and she wanted my opinion and possibly my involvement.

Knowing her reputation as a 'conservative', I asked her whom she would regard as appropriately accommodated in an Abbeyfield house in Mowbray. She responded by drawing my attention to Mowbray's characteristic as a "white community" adding that, in order not to force people into situations of social conflict, the Abbeyfield house should include only "elderly white residents."

Thornton & Ramphela (1988:30) have remarked that the South African state has used the term 'community' "interchangeably with 'race', 'ethnic group', 'nation' or 'peoples', and in doing so, appears to justify its insistence that since each is a distinct 'community' it must develop 'separately'." Indeed, such an approach previously legitimated state policies regarding land- and housing-allocations and was commonly used, for example, by the (inaptly named) Department of Community Development. By my fieldwork period however, this ideology was losing ground among those in power, although it still functioned at the level of Mowbray's civic politics as a means of justifying exclusive access to housing.

The idea that "communities" have different cultures provided self justification for some elderly people's insistence that 'separation' was necessary for harmony (Case 6.6). This led to an assertion that Mowbray, as a "white suburb", should secure homes for "elderly white" despite the fact that it

had residents who were classified differently. Black UCT students and other residents who would previously have been disqualified in terms of the Group Areas Act, were regarded as having no right to live in the suburb.

While the rhetoric of Mowbray being a "white community", and thus exclusively for the accommodation of 'whites', was common among some elderly residents, it did not go unchallenged. Interviews with local ministers indicated that church councils in the area were wary of supporting Abbeyfield for this very reason: indeed one church council would not hand over the title deeds of a house they owned to the Abbeyfield Society. Part of its concern was that not all members of the congregation would reap benefits from the facility, although they would have to contribute to its existence.

A local Baptist Church minister remarked that one of the more important issues in his church was to reconcile people's differences. With a congregation almost wholly composed of "elderly people" and students, many of whom were "black", he noted that his primary objective was to teach them to respect each other. If the church were to participate in an Abbeyfield project, he said, it would threaten its own sense of "community", a community of faith and practice that crossed boundaries of race.

The Baptist Church thus set up its own Abbeyfield-type-house. Admission into the home was dependent upon

membership of the religious "community" and was not exclusively for 'the elderly'. The first two residents to move into the home in 1991 were an elderly mother and her son (Case 1.14). When I visited the home in 1992 there were also two students staying there, one of whom was 'black'.

Use of the notion of "community" to mean separate 'race groups' with distinct cultures was an important way in which some elderly White residents legitimated their privileged access to a possible resource. But it is clear that such an approach held limited appeal for those who actually had power and resources.

Local churches were indeed concerned about the effects of the 'housing crisis' on 'elderly' Mowbray residents. Yet they were not happy with the local people's continued use of the state's parameters for action. The four churches which owned vacant houses to which Abbeyfield was trying to gain access resisted such attempts. Instead they attempted to create their own "communities", based on religious affiliation. Those elderly White Mowbray residents willing to share such definitions of "community", few as they were, secured accommodation. Others, despite being members of these churches (eg. Case 6.3), excluded themselves through their prejudiced view and thus reinforced their own double bind by refusing to participate in a housing project that would benefit them.

B. The Mowbray "Community" Versus "Students as Transients"

While one notion of "community" places 'whites' in opposition to 'blacks' and 'coloureds', the term was also used in a narrower sense. Thus some elderly White Mowbray residents referred to a smaller aggregate of people (long-standing White residents of Mowbray who were recognisable to each other) as "community". This was in contrast to students in general who were regarded as "transients" with no commitment to, or any long-term interest in, Mowbray or its "community values."

Realisation that political power, and thus control of access to resources (Almagor 1978), can be legitimated in terms of age seniority is not new to anthropology (Spencer 1976; Hamer 1972). While elderly White Mowbray residents realised that they lacked relative power, they still attempted to manipulate the notion of themselves as seniors in Mowbray in order to bolster their sense of control. Thus they contrasted their position as seniors who had a right of access to housing on the basis of the longevity of their stay in Mowbray with the status of students as juniors and "transients." In addition, by participating in local politics, they attempted to hold onto recognisable positions of local and city power. In the process, elderly residents equated themselves with the "community" of true citizens of Mowbray, in contrast to "transient" students. As one press correspondent put it (The Cape Times 2 May 1991):

The University of Cape Town is gradually buying residences and properties in adjacent suburbs to

accommodate the growing number of students, despite public protests and the recommendation not to do so by the city planner's consultants. . . . The purchase of Liesbeeck Garden Flats and Forest Hill recently, with hundreds of residents facing eviction, is iniquitous. . . . Among the many factors that enter into consideration for acquiring houses and residences, one that provides a safe neighbourhood with which the community can establish healthy relationships has very much merit. . . . One does not need to be an expert in social sciences to **understand that volatile and transient neighbours such as students are the last thing that a permanent resident desires** (Emphasis mine).

The RMOCA, to elevate the status of elderly White residents of Mowbray, often praised them for their continuing contribution to the life of the suburb and for their endeavours to be moral examples in the neighbourhood. The RMOCA too referred to elderly Whites as a "community" that was constituted through their participation in making Mowbray what it was and through their continuing role as guardians of the achievements of the past. As "the community", they deserved the right to live in the suburb and to be protected from the University's programme to elevate the status of the young at the expense of "senior citizens."

Some elderly members of the RMOCA attempted to use their notion of themselves as "the community" to legitimate their right to control the RMOCA and its position in local politics, particularly when speaking of the 'housing crisis' in Mowbray. But their limited notion began to be challenged by some younger members of the same association.

At a meeting of the RMOCA near the end of 1992 that was reported to me by a number of informants, one elderly Observatory member asked the Chairman if it was possible to belong to two civic associations. Attention was then drawn to the fact that one of the members of the RMOCA was also a member of the Rondebosch Ratepayers' Association (RRA). It was agreed, in light of the fact that the RMOCA had a good relationship with the RRA, that this was permissible. The member then asked if this relationship was possible with the OCA. A major argument then broke out over divided allegiances.

The reason for the question was the fact, now revealed by an elderly member, that a very active younger member of the RMOCA executive was also on the executive of the OCA. The point, he added, was that "no man can serve two masters". The young activist concerned responded that he served neither association but was in office to "serve the community". This challenged the elderly members of the RMOCA's narrow definition of "community" by implying that "the community's" communality was not to be found in its degree of agreement over a few local issues which affected 'elderly people', but over balancing a range of interests (Personal communication with informant, 1992).

C. Forest Hill: The Break Up of "Community"

Another use of the notion of community is reflected in the responses of elderly White Mowbray residents who had moved to Forest Hill prior to UCT's purchase of the complex. Here

the term is limited to refer to themselves and their co-residents of the complex.

Case 6.7: Forest Hill as "Community"

71 and 67 year old Mr and Mrs Morris had lived in a flat in Forest Hill for 6 years when UCT gave them notice to vacate by the end of 1992. While they did not like Mowbray because it was "polluted", they loved Forest Hill. As Mr Morris noted: "We are in a prestigious block with a view of Devil's Peak. This really is a lovely place to retire. It is a community on its own, a little village. It is handy and convenient staying here, and we're near good transport. This is a good place for retired people."

While commenting on these positive images of Forest Hill, they also reflected on its sad future. As far as the Morrises were concerned, things had gone bad since UCT's purchase. They had stories of increases in the incidences of crime. For example their daughter and son-in-law's flat, directly above theirs, had been broken into. Mr and Mrs Morris were not happy with the increasing numbers of "blacks knocking on the door." And they related to me a story of some friends, in another block in the complex, who had been "told by a black woman that their flat had been allocated to her." For them, things had turned sour, but they were intending to "stick it out until the end of 1992."

As a "community", Forest Hill was characterised by positive images of beauty, care and intimacy. The staff who ran the complex were praised for their efficiency and dedication, while tenants' co-residents were lauded for their consideration and friendliness. Forest Hill was typified as having a serene atmosphere which was perfect for retirement.

But implied in the idea that Forest Hill was a "community" lay a suggestion that it existed in isolation, surrounded by a sea of filth and anomie. Indeed, some elderly residents of the complex juxtaposed their positive image of the "community" of Forest Hill with a negative image of Mowbray

in general. While Forest Hill was safe, Mowbray was crime-ridden. This was confirmed by people's interpretation of their experience of mugging and bag-snatching on the street of Mowbray, and a lack of crime in the complex. In contrast to Forest Hill's beauty, Mowbray was "polluted" (Case 6.7). Forest Hill was peaceful, while Mowbray was "congested" and "noisy" (Case 3.17).

Are the divisions apparent in the RMOCA notion of "community", in the use of a dichotomy between "the community" and students, the same as Forest Hill residents' use of "community" to describe themselves? According to one informant, Mr Peters (Case 3.17), they are not. He argued: "I don't approve of aged people in boxes (in reference to institutions). I support the integration of people, of maintaining the young and old together." This view was confirmed by other elderly people living in Forest Hill. The students and young professionals living in their block were referred to as reasonable and friendly. They were not a problem, but part of the "community."

This was not, however, the image of UCT's Forest Hill. Elderly tenants' image of themselves as a "community" of Forest Hill residents was shattered by the purchase of the complex by UCT (Case 6.7). Part of the problem related to the fact that 'blacks' were moving into the flats, which suggests that the earlier notion of "community", while not agist, was indeed racist. But now ageism also crept in, with some elderly tenants arguing that large numbers of

students living at Forest Hill would render it similar to the rest of Mowbray - a giant student digs which consumed large quantities of alcohol and kept everybody awake all night.

As some elderly tenants noted, this concern was realised when a drunk student drove his car across the manicured lawn in the centre of the complex. In addition they reported an increase in the level of noise and a lack of consideration on the part of younger residents. Thus changes in Forest Hill were characterised as being "difficult for the elderly" because the "loss of the village atmosphere would be hard on them" (Case 3.16).

III. Law-Abiding Citizens Versus "Criminals"

In Chapter Three I noted that fear and experience of crime was cited by some elderly residents as a major contributing factor in developing strategies for securing accommodation. While the majority of adult respondents to the dwelling survey felt that crime was a serious problem in Mowbray (Table 6.1), elderly respondents were far more inclined to hold this view incisively. Responding to my survey, elderly respondents also reported more break-ins for the dwellings which they occupied than did young people. In addition, elderly people were the only ones to report cases of assault in Mowbray (Table 6.2). Finally, elderly respondents were far more inclined to report criminal incidents to the police (Table 6.2).

Table 6.1 Response of 59 Adult Mowbray Residents during the Initial Survey of 59 Dwellings to the Question "Is Crime a Serious Problem in Mowbray?"

Response	Percentage	Number
Yes	57.9%	36 (27 were elderly)
No	29.7%	18 (13 were elderly)
Not sure	12.8%	5 (1 was elderly)

Table 6.2 Experiences of Crime for 5 Year Period (1987-1991) Recorded for 123 Occupants of 57 Mowbray Dwellings Surveyed

Number	Incidents Recorded by Survey	Whether Reported to Police
59 Dwellings	30 Break-ins for 16 Dwellings (17 cases recorded by elderly people)	23 (16 by elderly people)
123 Occupants	4 assaults in Mowbray (all on elderly people)	4 (all by elderly people)
123 Occupants	2 cases of sexual harassment (1 case of exposure to elderly person)	0 (not reported)

Paralleling Ferreira & Rip's (1990) findings for elderly White residents in central Johannesburg, I found that elderly White Mowbray residents linked their perception of crime to the increasing number of Black residents in the suburb. In addition my research reinforces their finding that elderly Whites develop avoidance behaviour and methods to secure themselves in their homes, and move to what they perceive of as safer suburbs in order to "reduce the threat of crime" (Ferreira and Rip 1990:40).

1. Avoidance Behaviour to Escape Crime

Case 6.8: "Blacks" are Criminal and not to be Trusted

Mrs Philips (Case 3.1), discussing when I might visit her again for an interview, remarked that she was usually home on a Saturday morning because she never went shopping on Mowbray's Main Road when 'blacks' did. She noted that weekday mornings were usually very quiet, which was a good time to do business, and that weekday afternoons and Saturdays were bad.

She said she found the "crowds of blacks" threatening, because they bumped into her and she was scared that she would be mugged. In addition, she avoided specific areas of Mowbray when she went out. She noted that the "bus station was not very safe" and she "avoided the subways because people were accosted in them."

On another day, when talking of the 'black students' in Liesbeeck Gardens, she noted that when "they" walk past her house she makes a point of being courteous. She felt it was important to do so, because "one can never trust them" and it was better to be friendly.

Mrs Philips (Case 6.8) used her perception of 'blacks' as 'criminal' primarily to determine whom she could trust. This perception was also used to limit where she could go in Mowbray and to structure her daily activities including when she could go shopping or do business. In this regard her daily life was shaped by her images of social reality.

I repeatedly noticed during the research period that many elderly informants used a social map similar to that of Mrs Philips (Case 6.8), and they were generally very careful about where they went, how they got there, and whom they let into their homes and spoke to. Many saw public transport and areas of public congestion and thoroughfare as unsafe, primarily because they were utilized by 'blacks'. By doing so they extended a social map onto space itself. And by

defining public space used by 'blacks' as dangerous, they then attempted to make their homes safe havens.

2. Attempting to make the House a Haven from Crime

Case 6.9: Home as a Safe Haven threatened by a "Big Black Man"

One morning I met Mrs De Costa (Case 3.13) as she came home from her daily walk with her dog. As was our usual pattern, we had a discussion about keeping dogs and their worth to elderly people. The discussion centred around the value of the company and exercise that dogs provide to their elderly owners. And, as was our custom, we began to discuss our own dogs and their peculiar characters and habits.

Mrs De Costa remarked that her dog had been given to her by her son for her protection. He was a handful on walks because he dragged her everywhere, but he was a "good guard dog". He had proved his worth often. This she proved by relating one particular incident to me.

One day, when she had left the door open and had forgotten to lock the security gate, a "big black man" came to the door. Her dog had acted immediately by barking, which alerted her, and she could respond by closing the door.

She had been shaken by her own thoughts of what the "big black man" might have done to her, but she was reassured by her dog's quick response. She felt that in a suburb such as Mowbray her dog was of value to her.

Those elderly residents who were intent on staying in Mowbray developed means of securing their houses from 'blacks'. Mrs De Costa (Case 6.9), in relating the story of the "big black man" and her dog, assumed that 'blacks' have criminal intent. As far as she was concerned she was saved from a horrible incident by her dog's vigilance. Keeping a dog was only one strategy used by elderly White residents to secure their homes from 'blacks'. Others locked themselves in their houses (Case 3.1) or had burglar alarms and burglar

bars installed (Case 3.3). But such strategies did not lessen their fear.

3. Moving to Safer Suburbs in Order to Escape Crime

As noted in Chapter Three, many elderly White Mowbray residents chose to move away from the suburb because of their fear of crime. They then used their perception of 'blacks' as 'criminal' to justify their attempts to find alternative accommodation outside Mowbray in suburbs which they saw as more secure and with fewer 'black' residents.

Case 6.10: Black Students are Criminals: I cannot Remove Them so I will Move Away

One morning in mid-1992 one of my neighbours reported that during the night a 'few black students' had broken into a car in front of Mrs Burns's (Case 3.2) house. He then stated that Mrs Burns's son had seen the incident and telephoned the police. The police responded to the call and arrested the 'students' while they were walking towards Liesbeeck Gardens.

That same morning I saw Mrs Burns and she related her interpretation of the story to me. After going through the details she pointed out that one of the policemen had told her that since the "black students" had arrived in the area the "crime rate had shot up." In addition, when the "black students" left to go on holiday the crime rate decreased again. She then concluded her story by suggesting that if nobody was going to move the "black students" from the area, then she was going to move.

A number of elderly residents responded to their fears and experiences of crime by moving out of the suburb. Some moved to 'safer' suburbs (Case 3.2 and 3.3) and others moved to retirement villages (Case 3.4). An important part of their reason for moving was that as 'blacks' were criminal, and as increasing numbers of 'blacks' were now residing in Mowbray, they felt especially threatened.

But elderly White Mowbray residents' use of the stereotype of 'blacks' as 'criminal' did not end with their attempts to deal with crime. The stereotype was also used instrumentally, in conjunction with a notion of 'elderly whites' as 'law-abiding', in order to address the 'housing crisis' and to make claims to accommodation. This instrumental use of such stereotypes is paralleled by Ferreira and Rip's (1990) attempts at intervention on behalf of elderly White residents of the central Johannesburg area by using their informants similar notions.

4. **The Instrumental Use of Stereotypes to Address the 'Housing Crisis'**

All my life I've worked hard. I've paid my taxes and lived according to the law. I've tried to do my bit for others and now, in my closing years I'm all alone. I can feel myself slide into poverty, my meagre income being eaten away by inflation. I'm really afraid of the future (Emphasis mine).

This statement appeared on the cover of a pamphlet produced by the Abbeyfield Society entitled, A Bold New Approach To The Accommodational Crisis Facing The Elderly. Through the above statement it was suggested that 'elderly' people deserve to be accommodated, because they are law abiding citizens who have made a contribution to society. This idea, of the elderly as law-abiding citizens, was not limited to such pamphlets. It was often used by elderly Mowbray residents to justify their own demands for access to housing. In addition, it was contrasted with their notion

of 'blacks' as criminal and thus undeserving of accommodation in Mowbray.

Case 6.11: I Deserve to be Accommodated - "I have been Well Behaved"

70 year old Mrs Gardener lived alone in her semi-detached house which she claimed to have lived in "all her life." When I interviewed her she was intending to move because of the increase in crime in Mowbray. She related how she was "finding it difficult to find accommodation" even though "she had been well behaved".

Mrs Gardner pointed out that "Mowbray used to be nice", but that it had become "rather unsafe because there were a lot of burglaries". She noted that she had been burgled 3 or 4 times in the "last few years" and that she had reported each case to the police.

In contrast to herself as a "well behaved" resident in Mowbray, she noted that other people who had begun frequenting and living in the suburb were not trustworthy, particularly those people who had been brought in on the "black taxis". She remarked that she did not even feel safe in her own home anymore, a fear she demonstrated by keeping me outside the security gate and by closing the front door in my face when the telephone rang. When she returned she told me of one of her experiences. One night at "12 o'clock" a man broke into her house when she was asleep. She woke up to find him next to her bed. Even though she "went all cold", she switched on the bedside light and he fled.

Mrs Gardner (Case 6.11) was in fact successful in her use of the idea that she deserved accommodation. By the end of 1991 a social worker had successfully negotiated for Mrs Gardner to be accommodated in an institution. This was done on the basis that Mrs Gardner had been the repeated victim of crime and, as a member of good standing of a "religious community", was deserving of help.

Some elderly White Mowbray tenants contrasted themselves as law-abiding responsible citizens who paid their rents, with 'black' students whom they saw as irresponsible criminals

who were nonetheless provided with free accommodation by UCT (Case 6.4). As self-perceived law-abiding citizens, they objected to their exclusion as tenants from flats bought by UCT for students while they could, they claimed, pay rents in a responsible manner. They then linked their status as law-abiding elderly White residents of Mowbray to the idea that they deserved accommodation. This was, I believe, linked to their desperate situations as regards accommodation. In many senses they were like the figurative person on the Abbeyfield pamphlet who was sliding into despair. The question one can hear them asking is "Why me?" Their explicit response is that they had been law-abiding citizens who did not deserve this treatment or situation. In contrast they noted that those whom they conceptualised as being "criminals", namely 'blacks', were being 'rewarded' in spite of their misbehaviour (Case 6.4).

During a number of interviews with professional care-givers at institutions for the aged I found that some institutions based their acceptance criteria upon the idea that only some elderly people were deserving of institutionalised accommodation. Such care-givers assumed that elderly people who were objects of crime, or residents who were poorly integrated in their racially changing suburbs, met their criteria of admission. Such a notion of integration, or "person-situation congruence", is used by Ferreira & Rip (1990:44) to legitimate their suggestion that elderly Whites in central Johannesburg should be moved and that steps should be taken to "minimize the negative impact on the

elderly" of the demographic changes taking place in those suburbs (1990:45).

But as Oriol (1981) notes, it is this very notion of elderly people deserving care, because they are both social victims and worthy citizens, which furthers elderly people's own subordination within institutions and the 'community'. No longer are 'the elderly' treated as autonomous social individuals. Rather they become people who are acted upon for their own 'welfare'. As Cohen (1992:155) demonstrates in relation to gerontology in India, we end up with the "gerontologist-hero and his or her object of disciplinary desire, the pensioner awaiting rescue and husbandry." In the process of selection, few of 'the elderly' are 'rescued', paradoxically for their own subordination, and are used to justify the neglect and marginalisation of the remainder who are not seen as deserving the same degree of intervention.

I would suggest, in the case of elderly White Mowbray residents, that the inclusion of some into the category of those deserving accommodation resulted in the exclusion of other elderly residents from a limited range of institutions in the Cape Peninsula. This was compounded by the fact that such access was often linked to religious (Case 6.11) and professional affiliation (Case 3.16; see Chapter Three). As a number of my elderly informants complained, they perceived that their own access to institutions was barred because they did not have the right connections or were not in the

types of desperate situations, such as being objects of crime, that administrators of institutions saw as warranting intervention.

IV. Conclusion

There are four noteworthy points about how images of self and other were presented by elderly White Mowbray residents: (i) they were dualist; (ii) they were over-generalisations; (iii) informants claimed the images were shaped by their experiences; and (iv) the images were contested.

Firstly, because the images are dualist and based on a categorisation of social reality dependent on comparative dichotomies that are positive about the self and negative about the other, there is a constant process of comparison between self and other, 'white' and 'black', positive and negative, "civilised" and uncivilised, "community" and intruders, law-abiding citizens and "criminals". On one level this implies an overlapping of various images; on another it reveals attempts to refine them in order to signify levels of inclusion and exclusion.

Secondly, the notion of two social categories, of us and them, is an over-generalisation. Its use did not mean that all those included or excluded actually perceived of themselves as such. This is because the categories represent generalisations of a perceived shared experience or culture on the part of particular informants who wanted to include themselves in an imagined community, while

excluding those with whom they did not wish to associate. It is true that there were group occasions, particularly in local politico-civic meetings, when these images were used to mobilise support for opposition to housing reforms. But most of these images were developed and communicated in private conversation.

Thirdly, the images people used to categorise themselves versus others were reinforced by, and shaped, their daily experience. These images were part of a continuing process of reassessment which both shaped behaviour and were continually confirmed through reinterpretation of social context. This was particularly noticeable in terms of elderly White residents' notions of themselves as "civilised" and law-abiding in contrast to 'blacks' who were "unmannerly" and "criminal". In the sense that they shaped elderly people's behaviour, these images were normative. Yet they were constantly subjected to validation through experience, and elderly White residents had consciously to argue that their daily interaction with 'blacks' confirmed what they believed.

Finally, these images were contested, both by some elderly people and by other people involved in local debate over access to housing. They were simply the wrong images for their time, and reinforced the idea that elderly people were stuck in the past and beyond change.

The police major who responded to an "elderly man's" image of 'blacks' as "criminal" and "uncivilised" at a neighbourhood watch meeting warned that White Mowbray residents were only doing themselves a disservice by holding to these stereotypes. He argued that race does not predispose people to crime, and that local residents need to be aware that there were 'white' criminals who also operated in the Mowbray area. In doing so he challenged elderly residents' images of 'blacks'. In addition he suggested that it was not the police department's job to enforce past laws, such as the Group Areas Act, or to raid UCT residences just because there were 'black' students staying in them. He made it clear that the task of the police was to enforce law and order without discrimination. As such he reinforced the double bind in which elderly White residents found themselves by refusing to take up their cause.

As I have demonstrated in Chapter Five, UCT did not see its task as one of bending to the claims of elderly Mowbray residents to accommodation. Its primary objective, in terms of its policy towards residences, was to accommodate "African" students. And as both Dene Smuts M.P. and Professor Reid of UCT made clear in letters to the press (The Cape Times 13 May 1991 and 7 May 1991), the time for stereotypes, particularly of a racist nature, was past. As such they rejected elderly Mowbray residents' negative images of 'blacks' and 'students'.

As they refined and reconstituted their own images of themselves and others, elderly White Mowbray residents came to realise that they were being marginalised as social actors and that they were relatively powerless by comparison with the categories of others they were stereotyping. Some elderly Mowbray residents successfully used such an image of themselves as powerless victims, in conjunction with a notion of themselves as law-abiding citizens, in order to secure accommodation. Yet while this response was 'successful' on an individual level, it failed for the larger aggregate of people when it took on overt political meaning. In this regard elderly people's attempts to oblige the police, UCT and the church to act on their behalf, by manipulating positive images of self and negative images of others, failed because of the political dynamics involved in the possible ramifications of carrying those images to their logical conclusion. Rather than finding themselves with secure access to housing, elderly White Mowbray residents found their notion of themselves as powerless confirmed through their no win situation.

Conclusion

The Politics of Housing: Loss of Power and Hope
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Carter (1981) has clearly demonstrated that housing is an overtly political issue that must be located within the domain of power and relationships of privilege. This thesis is built upon that premise. As such, it is not so much a discussion on housing, but a discussion of the responses of a particular category of people to the circumstances that frame a debate over housing. Thus my primary aim has been to look at how elderly White Mowbray residents have responded to the implications of reforms in South African property legislation.

In light of this objective I have found that Gregory Bateson's (1973) notion of double binds that create no win situations provides a good framework in which to understand the responses of elderly White Mowbray residents to their changing context. As Bateson demonstrates, there is always an ongoing relationship between context and the responses of individuals to that context. Importantly, the context is constantly shaped by people's responses in a way that reinforces the double bind in which they find themselves.

The degree to which elderly White Mowbray residents had hope concerning their future accommodation, and power to shape the provision of housing to benefit themselves, have repeatedly been undermined as a result of recent changes in property legislation and as the process of political reform

in South Africa has unfolded. They have thus found themselves steadily more marginalised within the national debate over housing. Their attempts to counter that process have been built primarily upon outmoded strategies or upon strategies that contradicted their own self-image. They have therefore increasingly found themselves to be in double bind no win situations.

Bateson's notion of the double bind has also proved useful as an analytic tool for understanding the many ways in which these elderly residents have responded to the context of the 'housing crisis'. As I noted in the Introduction, Bateson and others who have used the notion of the double bind have assumed a homogeneity in the responses of their informants to the various contexts which they describe. I would argue that this is a weakness of their analysis. In fact, as I have demonstrated, people do not respond to particular contexts in a uniform way. Rather, their responses can be both diverse and conflicting.

Thus I noted in Chapter Four that elderly White Mowbray residents' use of history as a political tool was not uniform, but based upon social divisions. This resulted in some elderly Whites drawing upon an idyllic history which was legitimated by their position as holders of history, while others drew upon a past which recognised the class and colour differences of the past.

Such differentiation was also apparent in the ways that elderly White Mowbray residents used the SSAN as an avenue of response to the 'housing crisis'. Thus the types of responses that are recorded in the SSAN petition are directly related to the area of Mowbray and the types of accommodation in which elderly residents lived. Furthermore, some elderly residents successfully used the SSAN as a support group to secure their own accommodation while undermining the objectives of other elderly residents. In addition, the majority of elderly White Mowbray residents were unwilling to extend their participation in the SSAN to the point of overt acts of political protest. This demonstrated a conflict in the types of responses which these elderly residents saw as appropriate.

This social differentiation can again be seen in the way that elderly White Mowbray residents manipulated images of themselves and others in order to respond to the pressures they were facing. Thus the bases upon which elderly residents build their notion of themselves as 'civilised' differ from one category of elderly to another. In addition, various categories of elderly residents used the term 'community' in different senses and thus referred to different social groups that at times included or exclude other elderly residents. Moreover, the notion of 'elderly' people as 'law abiding' successfully legitimated some elderly residents' claims to privileged access to institutionalised accommodation while it undermined others'

access to such a resource, precisely because they were perceived of as not being in need.

Finally my analysis of social differentiation can be taken one step further if one looks at the responses of various White social actors to the behaviour of elderly White Mowbray residents. These outside agents thus either sided with 'the elderly' or, in most cases, saw it as politically expedient to distance themselves from what they saw as 'politically conservative' attempts by Mowbray's White elderly to maintain privilege. Their opposition to the 'elderly's' alleged conservatism was based on over-generalisations which suggested that 'the elderly' were stuck in the past and resistant to change. Their 'progressive' positions were constructed through reference to a range of ideologies and considerations: UCT's attempts to accommodate disadvantaged African students; state officials' attempts to appear 'pro-reform' and to deal with a more pressing 'housing crisis' among Blacks and Coloureds; local M.P., Dene Smuts's, own ideological position as a campaigner for the redressing of the wrongs of *apartheid*; local ministers' practical attempts to integrate their religious 'communities'; and the Mowbray Police Department's own attempts to take policing out of a racial paradigm. The end result is a complex, unorchestrated range of responses which resulted in elderly White Mowbray residents' double bind.

This discussion on social differentiation brings me back to the two themes in the literature on South African Whites that need questioning. That literature's starting point, with which I agree, reinforces Wilson & Ramphela's (1989) assertion that housing provision in South Africa has to be located in the politics of racism. In addition, it suggests that the degree to which housing and the definition of urban landscape have become such key political issues in White politics in South Africa are a result of the removal of the Group Areas Act and political reform in general (Davies, 1989; Pickard-Cambridge, 1988). But in the process the discussion has been limited to racism and to the broader implications of housing reform. In addition, as I noted in my Introduction, there has been a tendency for those authors who have looked at the political responses of Whites to housing and political reform to fall into one of two traps. The first is to over-generalise, in varying degrees, the specific responses of their White South African informants. The second is to play down the importance of looking for the reasons for such responses, particularly when they appear to reflect conservative attitudes.

Crapanzano's (1985) discussion of the response of Whites to the general context of political reform in the early 1980s represents the first of these when he suggests that White South Africans have been stunned into inactivity as a result of the political process in the last decade. The key term for Crapanzano, which describes that response, is "waiting".

Crapanzano introduces his monograph by asserting that his objective was to pick out the "plurivocality" of White South Africans' conceptions of the future. And he notes that "plurivocality, the cacophony, the baroque quality if you will, of social reality is often sacrificed in ethnographic and sociological description to theoretically inspired classicism" (Crapanzano, 1985:x). Yet he goes on to contradict that objective when, a few pages later, he suggests "that South Africa today is caught in a deadened time of waiting" that is "compounded by fear" for Whites and "illuminated by hope, [and] by a belief that time is on their side" for Blacks (Crapanzano 1985:xx). The temptation is great to challenge his statement on Blacks, although I realise I am in no position to do so. Yet I would argue strongly that his statement concerning Whites is a serious over-generalisation. I cannot comment directly about people in the area of the Cape where Crapanzano did his fieldwork. But I would argue that my own findings on elderly Whites in Mowbray provide a radical contrast to what he suggests. I found that elderly White Mowbray residents were highly engaged with their context. Rather than being stunned by fear and inactively "waiting" for some new dispensation, my informants consciously and conscientiously responded to the 'housing crisis'. And they did so in a variety of ways. Many of my informants, like Crapanzano's, did indeed draw on racist images to justify their political positions. But in doing so they actively asserted claims to the future, just as others who opposed a racist ideology did. In addition, rather than simply being backward-looking in a sentimental

fashion, Mowbray's elderly Whites have reconstructed the past in various ways, but always to make claims about both the present and future. Finally, in a populist fashion, some attempted to place themselves in the mainstream of political activity by adopting 'grassroots' political action to suit their own ends. They were surely not just "waiting"?

Pickard-Cambridge (1988) has also over-generalised particular responses onto Whites in general. In her focussed study on the impact of the abolition of the Group Areas Act on White suburbs, she is careful not to suggest that all Whites respond in a conservative manner. Thus she creates two social categories. The first is of progressive Whites who engage themselves in the process of integration in former White suburbs. The second is of 'conservative' Whites whose response she simply disregards as unworthy of detailed analysis. Pickard-Cambridge (1988) thus also tends to fall into the second trap which I have noted, namely the tendency to ignore the complexity of the apparently conservative responses of some Whites, and their links to more apparently progressive responses.

As I have demonstrated, apparently conservative and progressive responses can be two sides of the same coin. In the case of elderly White Mowbray residents the same people who are blatantly racist and conservative in their responses to the 'housing crisis' simultaneously refer to themselves as "liberals" and vote for a reformist political party and

for continued negotiations for reform in a nationwide referendum. In addition, they attempt falteringly to adopt 'populist' political methods in order to respond to the 'housing crisis' in which they find themselves. These elderly White Mowbray residents adopted strategies that went beyond the narrow confines which any outsider might have expected of them. They thus speak in various voices. To borrow from Crapanzano (1985/1986:x), they generate a plurivocal "cacophony . . . that is often sacrificed in ethnographic and sociological description to a theoretically inspired classicism".

In contrast to both Crapanzano (1985), Ferreira and Rip (1990) use their awareness of the danger of over-generalisation. But, like Pickard-Cambridge (1988), Ferreira and Rip (1990) do not develop an analysis of the conservative responses they record. Rather, in assuming their elderly central Johannesburg informants' perceptions of Blacks fellow residents as criminals to be valid, they suggest that such an environment is not fit for the social integration of elderly Whites. In the process they treat racist notions of criminality as a given reality and not as political statements that are used instrumentally by their elderly White informants. Rather than recognising that access to space is contested (c.f. Bender 1992), they assume that their informants' responses to the changing nature of the central suburbs of Johannesburg are unmediated representations of daily experience.

In the thesis above I have demonstrated that there is a clear relationship between their perception of crime and how elderly White Mowbray residents manipulate notions of criminality in order to address the 'housing crisis'. My emphasis here has been upon how elderly White Mowbray residents have constructed an image of themselves as law-abiding, and of Blacks as criminal, in order to bolster their claims to accommodation. This is not to suggest that crime does not occur. Yet the methods of coping with it are always mediated by perceptions of crime and criminals. And the perceptions are, at least in part, the product of experiences that may have nothing to do with crime itself but which are addressed through constructing images of others as criminals.

My general aim has been to show that the sample of White South Africans with whom I worked cannot be said to be responding in one singular way to reforms in property legislation. Indeed their responses to political reform in general are especially varied, such variation being determined by the specificities of context and structural constraints. Suggesting that we need always to place people's behaviour and opinions in context means that we must recognise the factors that have determined or given rise to how Mowbray's elderly Whites respond to changes in their housing predicament as political reform has taken place in South Africa. Yet such contextualisation does not constitute legitimation of these people's claims, and I would not want to be understood to be arguing that it does:

explanation does not imply justification. Just as Turnbull (1972) had both to explain the behaviour of the Ik while simultaneously condemning it, I believe it is necessary to analyse the reasons for apparently racist beliefs and attitudes among White South Africans. To do so does not imply endorsement. Yet it is crucial if we are to explain the growing marginalisation of elderly Whites who have long relied on their skin-colour to provide them with resources such as housing. It can also help explain why they turn to racist rhetoric and behaviour to defend what they see as their rights during a period of transition that increasingly restricts them.

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