LIVED AND EMBODIED SUFFERING AND HEALING AMONGST MOTHERS AND DAUGHTERS IN CHESTERVILLE TOWNSHIP, KWAZULU-NATAL

By

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DECLARATION

I, Nthabiseng Motsemme, student number _34958843_ declare that the dissertation _Lived and Embodied Suffering and Healing amongst Mothers and Daughters in Chesterville Township, KwaZulu-Natal_ is my own work and that all the sources that I have used or quoted have been indicated and acknowledged by means of complete references

Signature...Date...

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Finally, but certainly not least, I sing praises to my husband Ali Saccoh who has been at my side throughout this arduous road of pursuing my PhD, while working full time and bringing together into this world our beautiful children Ibrahim Thoriso, Fatoumata Nokuthula and Aminata Linda. His gracious support at many times made the challenges that I encountered along the way, appear lighter than they actually were.

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my grandmothers gogo Nokuthula Motsemme, gogo Mamane Jali, and my father Basil Hetlamoreng Farrel Motsemme.

ABSTRACT

This is a transdisciplinary study of how 'popular cultures of survival' regenerate and rehumanise township residents and communities whose social fabric and intergenerational bonds have been violently torn by endemic suffering. I focus specifically on township mothers' and daughters' lifeworlds with the aim of recentering these marginalised lives so that they can inform us about retheorising marginality and in this way enrich our limited academic discourses on the subjectivities of poor urban African women. Located in the interdisciplinary field of popular culture studies, the study draws on and synthesises theoretical insights from a number of disciplines such as sociology, political-science, anthropology, history, literary studies, womanist and feminist studies and indigenous studies, while using a variety of methods and sources such as interviews, reports, observation, newspapers, field notes, photo-albums, academic articles and embodied expressions to create a unique theory on the lived and embodied suffering and healing experiences of township women. I have called this situated conceptual framework that is theoretically aligned to African womanism and existential phenomenology, but principally fashioned out of township mothers and daughters ways of understanding the world and their place in it--*Township mothers' and daughters' lived and embodied 'cultures of survival'*. And in order to surface their popular cultural survival strategies I have adopted an *African womanist interpretative phenomenological* methodological framework. This suggested conceptual and methodological framework has allowed me to creatively explore the dialectical tensions of the everyday township philosophies, aesthetics and moralities of 'ukuphanta', to hustle and 'ukuhlonipha', to respect, and show how they create the moral-existential ground for township mothers and daughters not only to continue to survive, but to reclaim lives of dignity and sensuality amidst repeated negation and historical hardships.

KEY TERMS USED IN STUDY

- Township Studies

- African Womanism

- Existential Phenomenology

- Everyday Life

- Situated Knowledges

- Lived and Embodied Suffering

- Lived and Embodied Healing

- Township Mothers and Daughters

- African Womanist Interpretative Phenomenology

- Popular Cultures of Survival

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CHAPTER 1: Dominant Conceptual Approaches and Discourses in Social Studies on Townships and Township Subjectivities

1.0 Introduction: Rethinking Township Scholarship in South Africa

In this chapter I explore a number of analytical gaps and limitations within social science scholarship that has focused on South African townships, township subjectivities and township socio-cultural life. I will demonstrate how social studies emerging from this scholarly archive have assumed, and therefore produced, a particular idea of the 'township subject' its agencies and desires. I will do this by tracing the dominant conceptual frameworks and their underlying discourses that have homogenised and mainstreamed what it means to speak of a 'poor urban African subject' living under conditions of radical uncertainty in everyday life. The dominant conceptual approaches I am referring to include the resilient political-economy, socio-economic, socio-political, urban development -and to a lesser extent- ethnographic frameworks, which have arguably been the most utilised to theorise and account for what we may now call *Township Studies*[1]. These theoretical approaches have come to possess the status of being the 'natural', that is normative explanations on what constitutes townships, township life and township subjectivities. My aim in this chapter is to examine the conceptual bias of these powerful analytical frameworks that have come to over-represent township discourse. Let me continue with general summary and critique of these various epistemologies within social science scholarship which I suggest have contributed to generating a frozen dichotomy of township residents, where they are represented as either victims of their circumstances, or as heroic political subjects always resisting some form of domination.

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[1] I use the term "Township Studies" to refer to various social studies that have focussed on the social, economic, political and cultural formations in South African Townships. Although there is no current formal recognition in the South African academy of such a designated area of study, I propose that it is an exciting inter and trans-disciplinary field of study that is ready to take root in the South African academy.

1.1 Political-Economy Conceptual Framework

Political-economy formulations have arguably been the major conceptual framework used to assemble theoretical notions of what and who constitutes townships and township subjectivities. Social studies that draw their inspiration from this theoretical framework are those that tend to privilege political structural formations that mushroomed in townships as a response to unbearable oppression and violence from the racist apartheid state, as well as 'critical events' that shaped township politics such as political protests and marches. What is collectively common about these sets of literatures embedded within the political economy perspective is their tendency to over-emphasise institutional forms, political processes and political action as structurally determined by usually emphasising explanations of agency that draw on formal state and civic power. Furthermore, as I will show, in these studies township space has generally been conceived and characterised as largely *public-political,* which is often populated by predominantly hollow *male political and protesting subjects* who appear as though they are without cultures and souls. Most disturbing is that the violence which consumed South African townships during the high apartheid period of the 1980s and 1990s, is assumed to be wholly political in nature.

1.1.1 Township-centred Studies

Sociologist Jeremy Seekings' (1992) annotated bibliography on South African Townships between 1980 and 1991 immediately forefronts the notion of the township as a political space and the township subject as a political subject. Seekings' introduction outlines how, "township politics has become the subject of an extensive, if uneven literature. This bibliography, which refers to *over five hundred articles, chapters, papers, reports, dissertations and books that directly or indirectly examines township politics*" (1992: 1, my emphases), graphically illustrates the extent that scholarship on townships has been crucial in formalising the familiar stereotype of viewing township residents as first and foremost political subjects who were mostly engaged in political work located in the public sphere (the protest, the march). A further careful evaluation of this set of literatures on township struggles in the 1980s shows that since their main preoccupation was to describe and explain structures, organisational processes and the processes

of political struggles, in many cases they ended up paying little attention to the "structural conditions and contexts of such struggles" (Zegeye 2001: 20), the ground from which such political organisation and action germinated. It was basically from such functionalist understandings that the form and content of 'township', and by association those occupying these turbulent spaces, was imbued with meaning. In other words, what was immediately evident in this volumous body of intellectual work on townships was that the analytical categories of 'institutions' and 'structures' were the ones predominantly used to render the terms township and township subjectivities meaningful. However, it must be remembered that this form of functionalist scholarship emerged out of a political and intellectual critique to what was a hegemonic scholarship on Africans at the time, which sought to reduce them to being dupes of the colonial project and without any form of agency, political or otherwise. Furthermore, even within this emerging sociological scholarship there were several points of contestation particularly among the pluralist school, which included scholars such as Leo Kuper, Servas Van Den Berhge, Fatima Meer, and the early Archie Mafeje and the Marxist and neo-Marxist school as advanced by Bernard Magubane[2], around what constituted the political agency of the African urban native, thus developing a rich tradition of intellectual thought during that time.

However, Jeremy Seekings does briefly outline the reasons behind the prevalence of much of these structuralist and institutionally-driven perspectives in early works on South African townships, in particular as influenced by not only the politicised and racialised spirit of the times which privileged political research, but also the identity and positioning of researchers. On the question of the entrenchment of the figure of the 'politicised African subject', Seekings writes that "few researchers had direct experience of either living in South African townships or participating in struggles or organizations they studied. In short, most researchers were white whether South African or foreign" (1992: 13). Below are some illustrations of the consolidation of this political-economy perspective, from a number of theoretical perspectives through the much researched political township structure of 'people's courts'. George Pavlich (in Seekings 1992) observed that amid the widespread violence of the mid 1980s, approximately 400

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[2] See for example Van Den Berghe, P.L. 1964, *Caneville: The Social Structure of a South African Town*; Meer, F. 1990. *Black Woman Worker*; Silk, A. 2001. *A Shanty Town in South Africa: The story of Modderdam*, and Magubane, B. 2000. *African Sociology- Towards a Critical Perspective: The collected essays of Bernard Makhoseswe Magubane*.

'people's courts' surfaced in townships around South Africa, until their systematic demise in 1988 when the state of emergency regulations made it possible for the head of the security police to declare their total elimination. Pavlich's work argues that these 'people or kangaroo courts' as they were referred to by locals, which emerged from 'street', 'section', or 'headmen's' committees', also had a number of locally created dispute resolution tribunals. He further observed that these street committees typically dealt with a variety of matters mainly pertaining to clusters of houses, streets or a general area. Pavlich (in Seekings 1992) further explains that above this local level of organisation, it was common to find formally elected township executive committees that in turn, at least in some regions, also had regional umbrella representation.

While in most of the literature the institution of 'people's courts' is often used interchangeably with 'community courts' and 'kangaroo courts', South African criminologist Wilfred Scharf (1992) prefers to differentiate contemporary 'community courts', which he argues developed from the grassroots 'people's courts' tradition of the 1980s and was operated by civic associations and street committees, from 'kangaroo courts'. He describes 'people or community courts' as characterised by their cross sectional representation usually consisting of civic, youth and women's community structures; while in contrast 'kangaroo courts' were rather set up and run irregularly by youth who often handed out violent sentences to those community members they labelled as transgressive and in many instances operated from limited community support (Scharf 1992). Focusing more on township popular justice institutional systems and processes and their commonalities with state driven ones, criminologist Daniel Nina concludes by stating that these grassroots formations should not be viewed as a total rejection of mainstream state justice systems because they also tended to re-appropriate state symbols and codes of justice to legitimise themselves. These kinds of social studies which emphasised formal institutional structures and processes were typical of how several early studies on townships tended to over invest agency in political structures, processes and institutions. It is these kinds of scholarly engagements that contributed towards creating a hegemonic discourse of townships as fundamentally constituted by political forces in which township residents' social experience was principally defined by political institutions and processes, and therefore in the process eroded in unintended ways, the socio-cultural and existential bases of township experience.

The other set of literatures detailing townships and township lives have focused on formulating and understanding of *township subjectivities*, or more specifically the political and criminal subjectivities of young township men. For example, political science scholar Phillip Frenkel's (1981) work on revolutionary subjectivities in Soweto in the 1970s, argued that these subjectivities were shaped by the key mobilising ideology of black consciousness, local political actions within Soweto and South Africa, and the developments of liberation struggles elsewhere in bordering states such as in Mozambique and Zimbabwe. He suggested that the formation of political subjectivities among young black township activists often produced individuals who were, "far less tolerant of ethnic politics than any other of Soweto's inhabitants, more participant within racial boundaries, less inclined to transit across these divisions, less differential to authority, more inclined to organizational activity and more sympathetic to protest type political action though not necessarily to the use of violence" (1981: 848).

While on the other hand, using social movement theory coupled with Durkheim's notion of 'anomie', sociologist Monique Marks's work on *Young Warriors*, also commonly known as 'comrades' (1992, 2001), mapped their participation in the Charterist youth movements in Diepkloof, Soweto from the 1980s to the 1990s. She demonstrated how they quickly came to regard themselves as the rightful guardians of township morality while violently opposing criminal or *tsoti-styled* living. As one of the participants in Monique Marks's study on township youth political organisations in the 1980s explained,

> The comrades are different from other youth in that they are *politically conscious* their approach to things is different from that of youth which is not politically conscious, which is not having political education. I mean their approach generally is different like most of the comrades are not drinking and are not taking liquor and all that because they are having an education about it, they are conscious about the effect of that...I think that comrades are the people who are *disciplined,* they are conscious of a number of things. (2001: 52, my emphases).

There was of course the intermediate space occupied by a rather hazy and hard to capture group commonly referred to as '*comtsotis,*' who were generally those young men who used the "pretext of political activism as a justification for delinquent criminal activity" (Marks; 2001: 52). In responding to ways that the current social breakdown evident in several South African townships can be addressed, in line with other political-economy inspired frameworks, Marks proposes a structurally based solution by suggesting that,

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One way to substantially alleviate the manifest "problems of youth" is the organising of youth into youth structures that are legitimate to youth and which have strong, experienced and informed leadership. Such organisations of the youth have in the past, particularly in the 1980s, formed the base of developing shared norms, values, expectations and aspirations. They have also guided the behaviour of youth through disciplined and respected leadership. In the 1990s with similar material conditions facing the youth, worsened to some extent by the uncertainty and destabilisation of a transitional phase, *these organisational structures are urgently needed* (2001:52, my emphases).

Another study which followed this growing area of social studies exploring the experiences and subjectivities of ex-combatants[3], or more specifically ex-township activists, was that of South African psychologists Malose Langa and Gillian Eagle. Analysing the post-apartheid 'struggle masculinities' of former self-defence unit members in the Kathorus area located in Gauteng province, they similarly demonstrated how township subjectivities and agencies were largely initiated by young urban male political actors. Drawing from earlier work on gender and militarisation that had been completed by writers such as Jacklyn Cock (1989), Langa and Eagle concluded that a 'struggle masculinity' encouraged young combatants to be "strong, brave, tough, fearless, aggressive and violent" (2008: 155), which further contributed to the entrenchment of militarised identities in urban townships. Again, as underlined earlier, studies located in this broad political-economy realm tended to reflect back and reinforce this limited conception of politics as public and structurally determined, which in turn could only produce explanations that privileged political subjectivities.

1.1.2 State-centred Studies

On the other end of the political economy perspectives spectrum are those state-centred social studies whose preferred thematic focus included exploring the role of state institutions such as the security forces[4], the third force[5], organised state intelligence, and state support for covert

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[3] The term 'former combatant' which normally referred to Umkhonto Wesiswe (MK), Azanian Liberation Army (AZLA) and the Azanian People's Liberation Army (APLA) who left the country to train as soldiers in exile, as well as those of the apartheid SADF, was expanded to include township youth who were part of self-protection units and self-defence units (SPU and SDU) in the townships. Those from SPU and SDU formed part of the paramilitary in townships becoming responsible for policing and patrolling areas where they were posted (Langa and Eagle2008: 211)

[4] See for example Grundy, KW (1986) *The Militarisation of South African Politics*; Phillips, M. (1990) *From partisanship to neutrality? Changing perspectives on the role of the South African security forces during transition;* Human Rights Watch (1991) *The Killings in South Africa: The role of the security forces and the response of the state;* Pauw, J (199). *The role of the security forces*; Seegers, A (1995). *The Security Forces and the transition in*

operations such as state death squads. In evaluating these state structures, scholars attempted to uncover the competitions for power as well as political networks which oiled these state institutions. Truth and Reconciliation investigator and writer Piers Pigou (2001) has pointed to the necessity of building this scholarship on the apartheid state's involvement in a variety of illegal actions such as murder, torture and abduction as a part of a broader counter insurgency strategy against township residents. It is now common knowledge that the TRC reports have consistently identified the security forces, special forces and security police operatives as dominant and persistent perpetrators of violence against township residents during the 1980s (TRC report Volume 3, 1998). However, as Pigou (2001) further outlined, even though the TRC was nevertheless able to establish several connections between the state and human rights violations, he concluded that the TRC failed to "develop a detailed and comprehensive understanding of the number and precise identity of the overt and covert security structures, their lines of accountability, and the division of labour between them" (2001: 230), thus providing us with a rather opaque picture of this partially hidden yet horror-filled history of the violent South African apartheid state.

Another dominant scholarship within the political-economy framework has been those state-centred studies that analysed traditional authority and local government institutions in townships, particularly their changing forms as a result of the political instability of the transition period[6] of the early 1990s in KwaZulu-Natal. Contributing significantly to an already large repository of academic work on political systems of governance, forms of neo-traditional authority and accountability and ideas around liberal democratic forms, these instrumentalist studies

South Africa: 1986-1994; Cawrtha, G and Luckham, R (2003) *Governing insecurity: Democratic control of Military and Security establishments in transitional democracies.*

[5] See for example; Laurence, P (1995*) Unmasking the Third Force*; Ellis, S (1998) *The Historical Significance of the South Africa's Third Force*; Pigou, Piers (2001) *The apartheid state Violence: What has the Truth and Reconciliation Commission found?;* Pillay S (2005), *Locations of Violence: Political Rationality and Death Squads in Apartheid South Africa.*

6 According to most sources the highest number of deaths during the political conflict in South Africa occurred in the four years preceding the April 27 1994 elections (http://www.doj.gov.za/trc/media/1997/9705/s970527e.htm). In other words, the years which marked the transition to democracy which were marked with the unbanning of the Afrcan NationalCongress and the release of tata Nelson Mandela, constituted the most explicitly violent period within KwaZulu-Natal province, where Chesterville is based. KwaZulu-Natal recording the highest levels of violence in the country during this time (TRC report vol 3 1998).

collectively shared the goal towards shaping public policy debates regarding the role of local government as an essential factor in the democratisation process. The works of political scientist Mary de Haas and Paulus Zulu (1994) and sociologist Jo Beal (2005) whose key concerns included charting how often competing local political systems contributed towards understanding forms of township violence and (non)development, come to mind. What was clear about these institutionally and structuralist driven studies included their concern with whether the township was changing along vectors of institutional governance, service provision and local politics (Mbembe and Nuttall 2004), than about township residents voices and experiences as such.

In addition to this extensive intellectual production of social studies that focus on violent state institutions, structures and political processes whose aim was to destroy townships and township resident's lives, there has been a recent development of studies that focus on unraveling *perpetrator subjectivities.* In fact these studies form part of a growing global field of study called perpetrator studies. Some examples include the much celebrated book by writer and poet Antjie Krog *Country of my Skull (1998),* and former TRC commissioner and psychologist Pumla Gobodo-Madikizela's *Prime Evil (2004).* Let me share some extracts from these books, part of whose aims was to analyse the hearts and minds of the oppressors. The first extract comes from Gobodo-Madikizela's *Prime Evil*, where she interviewed the infamous Vlakplaas commander and apartheid assassin Eugene de Kock in prison; while the second extract was taken from Krog's *Country of my Skull*:

> In that second of two seconds, you are on automatic because your training takes over. You don't allow yourself to see the faces you see. The moment you pulled the trigger you were already going to the next target. It's very very fast, in a way surgical. Cold. You are in an emotional block, or else you wouldn't be able to pull the trigger. The fear it's like an aura surrounding you. You cross the border and enter the surreal. Your heart is going at about 200 at that stage. Everything becomes a sort of blur, but you have to move" (De Kock in Goboda-Madikizela 2004: 76).

While in *Country of my Skull*

> Dirk Coetzee walked from the darkness into *Vrye Weekblad*. He was not the average Afrikaner, nor was he one of the greatly misled. He was also not a hero. He was just a person, who, like the rest of us at the time, didn't necessarily know what was right, but did know what was wrong. And as he was rejected as insulted over the years, as his reactions veered between paranoia and psychopathy, he never weighed on your conscience. Coetzee was just an Afrikaner who, for whatever reason, decided to walk a certain path. And to pay the price for it (Krog 1998: 72).

However, I must point out that these accounts of former perpetrators have been severely criticised by political scientist Suren Pillay who argued that they have served to, "individualise mass trauma and portraying killers as 'causalities of ideology', equalizing the pain experienced by victims to that experienced by killers, and in the process denying the power of political structures and processes in the production of state terror against unarmed township dwellers" (2005: 417). Instead of these highly individualised and psychologically based explanations, he proposes that we should rather relocate state violence in what he calls, "dominant political rationalities which characterised the defense of the late apartheid period, and which made particular forms of state violence 'thinkable'" (2005:417).

1.2 Socio-Political and Socio-Economic Conceptual Framework

Sociologist Debby Bonnin's work marks a significant departure from these positivist and deterministic political-economy studies discussed above. Moving away from focusing solely on civic and state institutions, structures, public political action and formal practices shaping townships, she rather opts to make the personal political. As I have indicated, these structuralist social studies often neglected to surface yet another important sphere of township life during apartheid, which was the private realm where women were the central actors. In effect, when state violence was discussed within these mainstream political economy approaches, its effects on families, and in particular women and children, was simply ignored. Attempting to then fill this gap by formulating a deeper understanding of the pervasive violence that characterised many townships in the 1980s and which continued into the political transition period of the 1990s, Bonnin's scholarly intervention immediately forefronts the analytical categories of 'gender', 'space', 'township household' and the 'micro-politics in everyday life' that were shaped and in turn shaped political violence and practice. These new gender sensitive accounts, which were mostly imbedded within socio-political and socio-economic conceptual frameworks, stretched and extended earlier classical political-economy analytical perspectives on townships and township subjectivities. They did this by incorporating the forgotten themes of 'woman', 'family' and 'community breakdown', including the coping strategies of how township women tried to stitch together a disentangling social fabric. In other words, these socio-political and

socio-economic accounts attempted to thicken the social, and in this way broadened epistemological and thematic ideas on how townships, as well township subjectivities, became conceptualised.

1.2.1 The Socio-political framework on Township Studies

An example of a socio-political account which integrated what was by now a popular organisational approach with a materially based gendered reading on township violence was Deborah's Bonnin's work on '*Understanding the Legacies of Political Violence: An examination of political conflict in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa*'. Her paper analysed the institutions and processes that gave rise to violent conflict in Mpumalanga Township[7] during the legendary 1980s in KwaZulu-Natal, arguing that an understanding of both the complex relations between political interests, social groups and organisational forms as well as the dynamics of gender and generation were crucial to grapple with in order to reveal the broader effects of this bloody conflict.

This is why from the onset of her study Bonnin combines the mainstream institutional approach with a focus on the mundane in order to better situate the township of Mpumalanga where her research is based. As she highlights, "Mpumalanga has been hard-hit by the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the spiraling of this epidemic as well as the brutal gender relations of the past 1994 period needs to be located within a modality of political violence that was sexualized" (2004:16). Her account immediately demonstrates how an understanding of the historical, sexual and gendered nature of violence was important to grasp in order to reveal the layerdness and depth of the violences that overtook township life in the 1980s with its reverberations felt till today. For example, with regards to the historic nature of violence Bonnin specifically outlines how "the legacies that remain ten years after peace was negotiated are a direct result of the modalities of the proceeding violence" (ibid: 1). She then continues to outline how Mpumalanga Township residents entered the post-1994 period economically depleted with their assets in shreds. And

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[7] Mpumalanga township is midway between Durban and Pietermaritzburg in the province of KwaZulu-Natal

further, as a result of political violence she discusses the socio-structural impact of the violence through ways residents lost jobs, disruption of schooling, collapse of informal economic activities the minimization of household resources. By providing us with a rich overview of the socio-material bases of township residents, Bonin is then able to provide broader explanations that highlight how, "when the impact of trade liberalism is overlaid on such already strained social and economic situation, the effects are all the more devastating" (ibid: 16). This socio-political account remains a vital scholarly contribution in including previously ignored conceptual categories such as 'gender', 'everyday violence' and 'households'. However, in failing to demonstrate their inter-sectionality, which I think would have made for an even richer reading of the deep effects of the violence that she hoped to elucidate, she discusses them as self-contained analytical categories.

Deborah Bonnin's *'Claiming Spaces, Changing Places: Political Violence in Women's protests in KwaZulu-Natal'* provides yet another account which illustrates the conceptual break with earlier organisationally-driven positivist social studies. Building further on critiques made by feminists and critical scholars scathing attacks on positivist research, she experiments with a spatial-gendered analytical approach to empirically test her hypothesis on whether "changes in power relations in one space reformulated subjectivities, and so impacted on power relations in another site" (2000: 316). In other words, Bonnin is interested in exploring connections between women's public agency through political organisation in their communities, and the impact these actions had on the gendered power relations within the private sphere of township households.

Deborah's Bonnin's conclusions on this issue were somewhat mixed and highlights how most of women's initial involvement in political protests were not necessarily shaped by the "big national question of the day but rather by women participating in them, the desire to keep issues from interfering in their daily lives" (2000: 302), a notion echoed earlier in Cheryl Walker's book, *Women and Resistance in South Africa* (1982). This, she explains, was due to the practical outcome of violence which tended to disrupt everyday routines and tasks such as washing clothes, cleaning, cooking, cultural rituals and other activities which were generally in the domain of women's work. In this way she illustrates that while participation in these political protests allowed women to subvert and subvert ideas such as the 'good wife' by becoming public

political actors, a territory previously reserved for men, it also meant that "women complained that they had become responsible for 'men's work'. As a result of their role in violence, men had lost their authority for decision-making and for financial well-being of the household. They [women] fixed things that went wrong, and sorted out problems with housing, and took responsibility for ensuring food was on the table" (2000: 315), which over extended their roles as mothers and wives, and heavily burdened them emotionally and physically.

Although she suggested that it was too early to speculate about the transformation of gender power relations in township households, she remained skeptical that such a change was possible given the evidence in case studies from around the world that asserted that "a political identity nurtured by the identity of mother is too limited to change subjectivities of gender power relations in any fundamental way" (2000: 316). An aspect feminist sociologist Zine Magubane strongly contests, as I highlight in chapter three.

While Bonnin's work clearly grappled with the complexities of township women's agencies under conditions of daily brutality and the possible subversions to their traditional roles as mothers and wives, there are still some major flaws within her work which I think need to be addressed. The first is that the voices of subjects are first and foremost appropriated to illustrate and give meaning to the authors' theoretical assertions on her self identified conceptual categories of 'gender' and 'space' among women in Mpumalanga Township. That is, the voices and the bodies of township mothers and daughters are not the primary bases from which Bonnin wishes to theorise the legacies of political violence and political action by township women. Rather their voices are used as a discursive tool to make her positions and arguments more compelling. Given this, she then leaves us with rather abstract versions of what it means for township mothers and daughters to experience violent contexts and be transformed by them. Second, she fails to situate township women as historically and emotionally situated subjects (Bakare-Yusuf 2001), and therefore ends up reproducing the old binaries that represent African women as heroic figures on the one end and stoic figures on other end of the spectrum, thus missing an opportunity to conceptualise them as complex and contradictory mothers, daughters, sisters and aunts who are also attempting to carve lives of dignity amidst economic scarcity and

violence. In fact, I would add that she adds to the already existing flat perspectives on township women which tend to over represent them as political actors, or in her case as political mothers.

1.2.2 The Socio-economic framework in Township Studies

Let us now turn to consider two studies located within the socio-economic theoretical frameworks. These examples are drawn from a collaborative partnership between the Crises States Project, based at the London School of Economics (LSE), the Sociology of Work Unit (SWOP), based at the University of Witwatersrand, and the University of KwaZulu-Natal, sociology department. These three partners formed a project whose aim was to co-investigate the social and political impact of liberalisation on employment and institutional capacity in Southern Africa. Social studies conducted under the banner of this new labour project were conducted with the view of testing the basic claims of economic liberalisation policies which asserted that by "subjecting local industries to higher levels of national, regional and global competition this would increase growth, equity and political freedom by offering producers greater international opportunities and forcing them to became efficient" (http://www.crisestates.com/research/projects/africa03.htm). The scholarly papers produced from this collaboration raised a number of important critiques around international prescriptions that at once promoted economic liberalisation, while simultaneously promoting the expansion and deepening of democracy.

The first working paper that I would like to comment on arises out of the CSP and the SWOP partnership written by Sarah Mosoetsa entitled *The legacies of apartheid and implications of economic liberalization: a post-apartheid towniship.* This socio-economic account described the intertwined impact of apartheid structural legacies and the forces of recent economic liberalisation, and provided a much needed contextualisation of the challenges that confronted the post-apartheid township. Outlining the structural constraints that continued to face present day Mpumalanga township residents which include unemployment, and/or diminished incomes, the complexities accompanying the new dependence on state transfers; the escalation of HIV/AIDS in communities which are simultaneously dealing with the legacies of social

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instability grounded in the political violence, she showed how KwaZulu-Natal came to be marked as a "politically difficult province" (Mosoetsa 2004: 4).

Adding another layer to understand these historical and contemporary violences, Mosoetsa maintains that the political state of affairs which reduced local government to embody contradictory standpoints where it was seen as both "an agent of service delivery, as envisaged by the Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) in the early 1990s, and an agent of cost recovery by GEAR[8]" (2004: 5), served to further complicate life for Mpumalanga Township residents. In addition to this, Sarah Mosoetsa explained that all these political, economic and social processes occurred when the survival nets of Durban's poor had been severely fractured (2004: 1, 8), and given the effects of these harsh socio-political realities she proposed that the agency of Mpumalanga residents to remake their families and community be located in *public civic engagements*.

Much like Bonnin's paper discussed earlier, Mosoetsa's analyses also infuses these socio-economic issues with pertinent everyday social concerns surrounding past violences such as- "during the 1990s, these patterns of disruption continued, 'no-go' zones were introduced, and territorial and political barriers erected so that normal life ceased to exist" (ibid: 3), and how in this community of Mpumalanga "several people lost their lives, families lost their homes and schooling was disrupted" (ibid: 2). However, these incidences of violence, death and aborted hopes for engaging in the future meaningfully, are inadequately probed as constitutive to the feelings of hopelessness that she describes, such as that of a "young mother whose daughter is dying from AIDS" (ibid 9); the retrenched former trade union member who feels betrayed by her trade union she has been loyal to for years (see ibid: 7); or the retrenched mother of four who details the everyday struggles of suffering and indignity following the death of her husband, which ultimately forces her to leave her family home (see ibid: 9,10). In her analyses these social

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[8] Sociologist Abebe Zegeye (2001:61) explains the policy shift from RDP to GEAR, "...in the course of a few years since 1990, the ANC had changed its economic policy from nationalisation of basic industries to a mixed economy and finally to privitisation of the public sector. An official 1996 government paper, entitled "Growth Employment and Redistribution" (GEAR) explicitly rejected union strategies, although union representatives formed an influential part of the ANC hierarchy. Early in 1996, the government abolished the special ministry charged with putting into practice the much propagated Reconstruction and Development Plan (RDP)...A discourse on financial discipline and market forces took over", that is GEAR.

realities of suffering provided are sketched as mere background towards highlighting the impact of the recent political and economic liberalisation in South Africa.

She does make it clear that the bases of her study is to theorise positive organisational forms and agencies that continue to sprout in townships, despite the inevitable conditions of imposed macro neo-liberal economic global shifts and persistent local material scarcity. My point is not to dismiss social studies that foreground positive structures and institutions in townships. These types of social studies are in short supply and to abandon them would be absurd. We simply have to continue uncovering the effects of economic liberalisation programmes, and their impact on political and civic movements in townships. Rather, what I want to draw our attention to is that this type of theoretical understating of townships and its residents, who are the ones caught within the paradoxical moment of past and present violences while continuing to engage in democratic participation and carve their own democratic practices, also needs to be accompanied by exploring *deeper subjectivities.* By deeper subjectivities I mean we also need to ask-"What does it mean to be a township subject at this neo-liberal historical juncture? What emerging subjectivities are being embodied by urban African's? What is the relationship between these global economic trends based on accumulation of wealth and the growing trend of bodies marked by excess among the worlds' poor? How do macroeconomic processes such as neo-liberalism fold into micro everyday life and effect ideas and practices such as intimacy and desire?

Taking this interdisciplinary approach which is grounded in the immediacies of everyday survival, may help us to better illuminate the question that Mosoetsa's study surfaces but fails to analytically engage with on why, for example, as she highlights during post-apartheid the unemployed continue to abuse alcohol, or why young women who receive child grants on behalf of their children squander their monies extracted from the state on cell-phones, clothes, extravagant hairstyles and nails. For we also need to understand how these emerging material bases of desire are also linked to changing neo-liberal political–economic contexts which propel young women to retreat to their bodies in such excessive ways. When we begin to do this, this is when the thickening of the social happens. In embracing these kinds of complex questions we may finally understand how township residents also continue to live "the present in historical terms" (Malkki 1995:75). In short, the implications of the constraints to reproduce one-self

socially and existentially during these neo-liberal times while also carrying historical burdens of the past, are thus lost in Sarah Mosoetsa's socio-economic and institutionally biased assessment.

Building on her earlier work discussed under the socio-political framework, in this study *'I am poor, I must start all over again": The impact of political violence on household economies: A case study from KwaZulu-Natal',* Deborah Bonnin once again confronts the material bases of township violence and its specific effects on the township household economies. Grounding her exploration within a developmental feminist perspective on women's livelihood strategies[9], in *I am poor* she focuses on the extent that the material and emotional devastation that political violence of the 1980s and early 1990s had on township women's households. The explanations she provides in her study explain how households became increasingly more vulnerable as political violence worsened. In other words, a major factor to be taken into account on explanations of poverty and the depletion of township household economies in contemporary KwaZulu-Natal, must include the legacy of political violence.

Using an interdisciplinary approach grounded in a socio-economic framework she carefully maps out how this occurred. Furthering her preferred gendered reading on the effects of political violence on households, Bonnin echoed her earlier work by illustrating to us which much more detail, how the political violence which engulfed Mpumalanga Township in the 1980's left women responsible for men's work and therefore overburdened them in unbearable ways—"as a result of their role in the violence, men lost their authority in the household and women became responsible for decision-making and the financial well being of the household" (2001; 196). She further shows how violence affected every aspect of daily living as "household resources were depleted with new expenses being encountered. This was a result of "defense of neighborhoods" that produced new expenses: money was required for *muti*, weapons and feeding the boys who

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[9] Bonnin uses Grown and Sebstad's definition of livelihood strategies which refers to "the range and mix of activities of strategies used by individuals and households to ensure survival and generate income. These could include labour market involvement, savings and accumulation, informal activities, pensions income and other state grants, vegetable gardening, social networking, exchanges in kind, changes in consumption patterns etc. This approach to understanding people's participation in the economy is located in a livelihood systems framework which refers to the mix of individuals and household strategies that seek to mobilize available resources and opportunities" (2001; 186).

came to help defend the house…residents also lost household goods as theft and looting formed an integral part of the attacks" (2001 197).

In addition to this emotional and physical burden, Bonnin elaborated on the ways political violence further impacted on the vulnerability of the household's livelihood strategies:

> By the late 1980s the situation of many households was precarious-their financial reserves had been depleted through expenses generated directly by political violence, many of them had breadwinners killed and regular incomes from the formal sector had ended, as had income from informal sector activities. Many people had already, lost their houses, either because they lived in a politically hostile area and had been forced out or because it had been burnt in an attack. Furthermore, as a result of the attacks on household goods carefully accumulated on high purchase over many years, had been lost-burnt or looted. All of this was economically devastating to households that were already surviving in precarious financial situations…" (2001: 198).

In this way this study extends her earlier work on how the material existential bases of township women's realities, an area which has been largely ignored in favour of describing the mainstream macro political and economic effects of the brutal violence in KwaZulu-Natal, critically shaped township women's everyday lives. It this way it deepened our understandings of the experiences of township women and how they were left with the bare material minimum to endure and carve viable family and community lives. However, to rely on a development based discourse on livelihoods in some ways also limited the study to narrowly view survival as materially based. In fact, what we currently lack in social studies on township women's experiences of violence, pain and suffering is not so much the discourses of 'collapse and breakdown' (Mbembe and Nuttall 2004), but rather situated understandings of the lived contexts that incorporate both the material bases of existence as well as their metaphysical expressions. For, indeed, as Bakare Yusuf (2001) concluded in her phenomenological study on Dancehall culture among Jamaica's poor, even the poor cannot live on bread alone, underscoring the idea that existence is first and foremost ontological. Afterall, as she observed, our struggles to survive are also guided by our need for love, recognition, enjoyment and dignity.

Whether intended or unintended, what emerged from these kinds of framing of townships and township subjectivities, was a systematic erasure of residents' subjective experiences and voices, and how this violence had intimately folded into their everyday lives and become a source of embodied existential suffering as well as bases to act creatively. These social accounts have

routinely excluded interrogating lived and embodied pain which comes from the experience of regular deaths, unbearable and prolonged seasons of suffering, repeated attacks on the safe spaces of home and life affirming cultural practices, absent fathers, lovers and sons, and the ultimate fragmentation and disintegration of township women and men's familiar social and socio-moral worlds, resulting in trans-generational chords being shattered to shreds. In other words, what these mainly structurally and functionalist-based analytical orientations neglected to incorporate was that there were always other equally powerful forces that continued to shape and transfigure township subjectivities and township life.

However, Nordstrom (1995) notes that we should not be surprised by these conclusions as epistemologies that are grounded in neo-liberal frameworks on violence and poverty in Africa tend to be dominated by a desire for *over-abstraction of these lived phenomena*. She explains that this problem of over-abstraction reflects a historical bias of western forms of reasoning about violence, and other social phenomena, and that this in fact fails the subjects and personhood of those directly violated. This, she explains is based on western epistemology which has a "legacy of thinking about violence as a concept, a phenomenon a 'thing'" (1995 138). This she observes contrasts sharply to the view by those affected who often view it as fluid, felt and embodied.

1.3 Urban Development Conceptual approach to Township Studies

Achille Mbembe and Sarah Nuttall (2004) provide a succinct overview of the two major intellectual trajectories that have shaped the dominant urban development framework in South African social studies. They argue that the first set of studies focused on broad racially based spatial exclusions and dispossessions, privileging topics such as forced removals, racial zoning of areas and gradual limiting of African people's movement in urban areas; while the other strand of these social studies emerged after the death of political apartheid and focused on the structural immediacies such as "housing, land tenure, service delivery (water, sanitation, roads, electricity, waste removal), local government, municipal finance and governance capacities, urban poverty and decentralisation" (Mbembe and Nuttall 2004: 358). While the first set of studies recorded the violence and injustice of racially based spatial exclusion against Africans,

the second set of studies were more interested in contributing to urban public policy. Adopting the familiar functionalist approach to post-apartheid planning, most of these studies assumed that the injustices of the past could easily be reversed through better distribution of public goods and services at local government levels. However, there is another set of scholarship that Mbembe and Nuttall do not mention which includes reflections on the logic and impact of the racialisation and the scientific rationalisation of urban township space. One such publication which grappled with the different ways race was inscribed in the discourse of architecture and architectural history of apartheid South Africa was the Social Identities special issue on *Architecture and Race* guest edited by architect scholar Fassil Demissie (2004).

Articles contained in this volume engaged a number of issues such as, "Do the discourse and practice of architecture serve to evoke or reinforce hidden signs of racialization and cultural hegemony? In what ways do notions of difference figure in the discourse of architectural practice and the construction of the built environment?" (Demissie 2004: 437). In the same collection, Demissie's article on the architectural discourse on native housing and townships which details the minimum housing schemes[10] that were designed in the 1940s for African workers all over South Africa, maintained that native housing and townships were not just simply an architectural drawing or a plan, but rather "a web of practices embedded within the evolving apartheid spatial strategy to control the social and geographic mobility of African workers and their families" (ibid 2004: 437). He described how these architectural icons of South African townships-- the four-roomed houses-- were in fact inspired by the philosophies and design visions based on the 'machine city', and 'machine houses,' which was very much part of the science of urbanism which sought to base design principles on standardisation and planning. And as Demissie (2007) explained, it was the combination of this reactionary architectural modernism based on scientific rationality, and the theory of racial superiority which ultimately provided a remedy to the crises that had marked the urgent need to develop township housing.

However, although many of the contributions in this special issue are invaluable in providing a critique of the scientific rationality and racist ideology that underpinned much of the spatial

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[10] These were housing schemes built with brick and cement blocks, asbestos roofs, and unimaginative textured surfaces, considered to be a major innovation in architectural design (Demissie 2007)

discourse on 'townships,' they also continued the established tradition within social science scholarship of rendering township dwellers as without voice and agency. As I have repeatedly mentioned what we urgently require are more situated accounts that give specific attention to how Africans in townships maneuvered, reworked and reinvented new strategies in these social spaces meant to totally control them, from their own lived and embodied perspectives. In other words, how these townships became Africanised and localised as Africans superimposed their "indigenous cultures, institutions, traditions, norms and practices" (Demissie 2007: 163), continues to be inadequately explored. It is of course undeniable that the master narrative of race was indeed hegemonic in South Africa, and the uniform, ordered and 'machine-like' nature of four-roomed houses attests to this visible performance of state control. However, at the same time the *lived experience of township space* by residents often outmaneuvering this rational logic. Instead townships also became socio-cultural spaces of 'dynamic social heterogeneity" (Demissie 2007: 292), where township dwellers also transformed their socio-spatial practices, creating new urban geographies and imaginaries and in the processes even radicalising forms of African femininity.

As Demissie noted in the African Identities special issue on *African Cities*, in a West African decaying city context, which can also be applied to township life in South Africa to some extent, in spite of the decaying nature that has come to characterise African urban spaces, Africans in these social spaces were also, "reconfiguring and remaking urban worlds, deploying their own forms of urbanity born out of their historical and material circumstances" (Demissie 2007: 156). In this way, those who were living in these deteriorating spaces were actively enacting agency. Demissie continued that it is in these "dense urban spaces with all their contradictions that urban Africans are reworking their local identities, building families, and weaving autonomous communities of solidarity made fragile by neo-liberal states" (2007: 156). So, despite the imposition of these scientifically planned township houses, township residents created their own spatial organisation which often rejected this rational racist logic. For example, instead of the constructed main roads being the center of activity, it was street corners, shop corners, 'passages' between houses, churches and shebeens which became the central hubs of interaction and exchange, while nuclear family spatially designed houses were also rapidly transformed to accommodate African-derived spatial organisation based on extended families (Demissie 2007).

This implies that there were other *spatial rationalities* at work which sought to tame and dignify township space so that it better resonated with the lived experiences of those who came to call townships their home. It is what philosophers Bibi Bakare-Yusuf and Jeremy Weate (2005) in another African urban context outlined as a rationality which was non-linear yet balanced. Also advocating a more progressive and poetic approach towards new conceptions of township space, South African architectural scholar Lindsay Bremner (2004) argued that while "apartheid planning segregated, fragmented and dispersed, post-apartheid planning connects, stitches and centralizes" (2004: 529), thus proposing a less colonising and binary positioning of township space. She continued by suggesting that such conceptualisation will move townships spaces from their current imagined locations as peripheral spaces with an economy of lack (Bremner 2004), to becoming permeable and porous spaces that creatively interact with other hegemonic spaces such as the metropolis. Situating the township beyond the idea as hermeneutically sealed and marginalised urban space has led to a scholarship that Mbembe and Nuttall have argued,

> fails to situate the township in relation to other kinds of urban agglomerations elsewhere (the urban ghetto, the favella) or in South Africa itself (the inner city, the squatter camp, the homeland, new kinds of settlements of poor Black South Africans) and to track the traffic between these places." (2004: 357).

In order to rescue townships from what they call an intellectual parochialism, they suggest that we should rather reframe and relate South African townships with other similar spatial communities elsewhere in South Africa, Africa as well as the world.

1.4 The Developmental discourse

In a militant critique of Western developmental discourse, Mark Hobart (1993) argues that despite persistent sociological and anthropological critiques of the narrow formulation of development as a purely economic and technological idea, these contributions have gone unheeded. In his introduction on an anthropological critique of development, he shows how well meaning social theorists continue to draw on the same *rational scientific development epistemology* to make sense of 'others'. Pointing out this shortfall in current development

discourses, Hobart further argues that it has also proven to be an insufficient analytical tool which tends to be "ill-suited to explain, let alone deal with, processes which are non-natural and involve reflexivity on the part of the human beings involved" (1993: 3). In other words, the development discourse continues to be mired in normative assumptions which in fact have very little bearing on what is actually experienced by marginalised communities. One of the key shortcomings of this discourse lies in its ideas on development as essentially superior and rational scientific processes, a definition which tends to devalue and treat as deficient the conceptual, social and organisational worlds of those to be developed, towards the modernisation goal (Hobart 1993). In other words, as political economist Patrick Chabal makes clear in most development discourses the following assumptions constitute an accepted foundation,

> The first was that there is a path to (political and economic) development, which all countries follow, if in different ways; the second was that Africa is merely behind on the path but that it will eventually catch up. Therefore the role of theory was to identify these factors that hindered or facilitated the onward arch of progress which independence was supposed to make possible (2009: 4).

Political philosopher Achille Mbembe's critique on hegemonic rationalities, where the bulk of the studies I have described fall under, reminds us that several contemporary forms of Western rationalism and consciousness are based on, "the secularization of culture, the release from the thrall of nature, the end of miracles, the elimination of finalism from religion, and the shattering of primary bonds and loyalties and ancient customs and beliefs. This is an assertion whose validity might- if one wanted—could be profoundly questioned" (2001: 10).

As repeatedly emphasised in this chapter what we need are more attempts that change outdated assumptions and bravely explore new epistemologies and methodologies that can assist us in developing more grounded accounts of urban Africans lived and embodied experiences of suffering and healing within a fast shifting social world. That is, "what is needed is a new approach to the same questions; to cast a different light on contemporary Africa that will provide insights rather than certainties" (Chabal 2009: 185). We thus need to move urgently away from the situation that Catherine Adora Hoppers describes painfully below where:

> Theories were, and they often still are, mechanically tried on Third World countries of which many were colonies and, of course, were never consulted about what kind of development they needed or wanted. We stand by and took big gulps of Western economic history, worshipped its evolutionism, which was quickly and willfully

transported via the modernism paradigm unto its recipients with all of us in the academy fully complicit (2006: 46-47).

1.5 Ethnographic Conceptual Framework

The international trend of abandoning master narratives in favour of close readings of social phenomena potentially offers a way out of the above mentioned impasse. This global trend has opened up a fast emerging academic preference for ethnographically based scholarship, with South African academia also participating in this epistemological shift. However we must keep in mind that given the painful historical and highly politicised nature of South African academia relationship with anthropology contained in its racist scholarship on 'natives', this post-apartheid attraction with anthropologising knowledge must be viewed with a critical eye and not taken-for-granted at all. However, it is important to point out that this sudden growth of ethnographically based social research, particularly those studies focusing on violence and poverty in marginalised communities, has been important in challenging traditional assumptions about these social actors by introducing new conceptual categories and themes which have enriched our ideas of violence, survival and healing amongst the urban poor.

This is because first, *ethnographies of violence* reject positivist epistemologies and rather embrace the notion that during any violent context there is always a "cacophony of realities" (Nordstrom 1990: 37). Second, they have not only centred the political, social, economic and cultural dimensions of violent experience, but also the existential and embodied. Third, they have challenged the sacredness of academic writing, introducing *new modes of writing about violence and violation* which has blurred the boundaries of the politics and poetics of writing within social science. An example of this includes Michael Taussig's classical ethnography of violence-- *Shamanism, Colonialism and the Wild Man: A study in terror and healing* (1987). Finally, ethnographies of violence have consistently explored the taken-for granted aspects of *everyday life* rather than the spectacular events and experiences during times of violence. And in placing our emphases on everyday life we are then able to access how continuing stresses and uncertainties, such as those generated by poverty and death are tamed and incorporated as part of

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everyday existence. That is, we witness how violent routines become part of other routines in everyday life. Focusing on this domain of everyday immediate social existence helps us to also understand how local interactions and their meanings are being constantly negotiated. After all, theorising from this particular directs our attention to where the communities meanings systems are organised, daily enacted and reformulated, giving us a better understanding of what social anthropologist Arthur Kleinman (1992) called the 'local moral worlds' of communities. The everyday is also an interesting site to observe, because as scholars we are given the rare opportunity to observe events and subjectivities as they unfold, that is in the making, incorporating the mobility of identity formations and how established claims of what is 'good' and 'bad' are being daily challenged by township mothers and daughters. I have also observed that the everyday is a vital repository of surplus and excessive expressive meanings. Further, in observing everyday practices, we can formulate more nuanced understandings of how multiple and contested meanings around politics, culture, social, psychological and the sacred are being simultaneously contested and synthesised by individuals in order to create meaningful lives. And as phenomenologist Maurice Merleau-Ponty investigation of existential structures suggests- "because we are in the world, we are condemned to meaning" (1962: xix). In other words, one of the key assertions that I demonstrate in this study is that the idea of wanting to experience the world as meaningful is best illustrated in the space of everyday lived experiences where the visceral aspects of our lives are most readily felt and where individuals and communities are constantly regenerating themselves amidst highly strained conditions.

This study has been particularly influenced by two ethnographies of violence. These include Allen Feldman's *Formations of Violence: The narrative of the body and political terror in Northern Ireland* (1991), and Nancy Scheper-Hughes *Death without Weeping: The violence of everyday life in Brazil (1992).* Feldman's study, which was inspired by Taussig's work, was considered to be one of the first sustained explorations of violence through representations of the body. As Csordas (1994) noted, in most anthropological work up until Feldman's groundbreaking study, bodily experience had been tucked away in descriptions of ritual organisation. However, Feldman changed this by rather tracing the destruction and reformulation of the body in Northern Ireland's alternative sites of street culture, political culture and even inside the prison walls though the practices of torture and hunger strikes. In his study he made it

clear that violence is not only culturally situated but also performative in the sense that it invested the body with agency and had the ability to transform individual's socio-cultural worlds. With regards to political violence, drawing on the work of philosopher Ellen Scarry on torture, Feldman viewed political violence as a *mode of transcription* which circulated codes between people. He thus argued that "violence [as] is a transformative practice which transforms material and experiential contexts" (1991: 7). In his brilliant analysis of the performative elements of torture under oppression, Feldman observed that the ultimate primordial scene of displacement in all horrors is in fact the body. However, the limitation of Feldman's study is that it is highly saturated in the post-structural linguistic mode of interpretation, which can often lose sight of the concrete context.

On the other hand, Nancy-Scheper Hughes investigated 'mother love and child death' in an impoverished North-Eastern Brazilian community. In her exploration of *cultures of scarcity and its effects on moral practice*, she focused on the violence of everyday life[11]. She observed that "everyday violence of shantytown life, and the madness of hunger, in particular became the focus of my study, of the specific case of mother love and child death" (1992:18). This idea of how everyday violences permeate the everyday way of life has influenced a number of studies in several disciplines beyond anthropology, including my own work which is interested in mapping out how the banality of violence becomes incorporated into the moral and feeling structures of township mothers and daughters. For me, some of the appealing aspects about Scheper-Hughes work included her conscious centering of women's struggles to survive and their refusal to be negated despite being poor. By bringing violence back to the sphere of the everyday, she forces us to also reconsider both the socio-political as well as existential implications for those who live with constant death, loss, abandonment, sickness, and scarcity. In demonstrating how women's moral inner logics are deeply shaped by political orders, she compelled me to explore how matters of emotions, morality, ethics of care, the politics of maternal bonding, and in general the questions of human relationships also shape and are shaped by our structural conditions.

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[11] The works of social anthropologists Arthur Kleinman, Veena Das, Pamela Reynolds and Mamphele Ramphele also work in the field of everyday violences in the USA, India and South Africa respectively. They have a wonderful book collection, entitled 'Subjectivities of Violence,' which pushed the boundaries of taken-for-granted ideas around violence.

These are issues which have been largely ignored in social studies on violence in impoverished communities. In this way coming across Nancy Scheper Hughes study of how women in the shantytown of Bom Jesus da Mata in Brazil were struggling to reformulate their social worlds out of their structurally limited lives, inspired my own conceptual outlook on how I would approach violence, and in turn suffering, among mothers and daughters in Chesterville Township. In particular, her assertion of a woman-centred ethnography which was principally concerned with making sense with "how we act toward each other…engaging question[s] of human relationships and of ethics" (21), certainly made intuitive sense to me. However, I must point out that the general criticism repeatedly leveled against Scheper-Hughes scholarship has been her tendency, through cultural relativism, to paradoxically advance liberal positioning of universal social orders (1995) within 'other' communities.

In South Africa there have not been many recent ethnographies analysing South African township life[12], and as Mbembe observes on studies in townships in general,

> There have been very few post-liberation ethnographies of everyday life in the township. We have even fewer academic or theoretical reflections on its place in the city, its rhythms and senses...[that]defy ready-made categorizations of this site of extremely complex interconnections...[and]in spite of overwhelming poverty of many township's residents, new cultures of commodification are emerging. These cultures underlie new aesthetic forms, of which cell phones, cars, and various registers of fashion are but example... [to move] beyond the spatialities and temporalities of apartheid (2004: 500).

However given the increasing popularity for these types of social studies, South African academic discourse will be seeking to produce a sizable amount of new knowledge in this area. Interestingly, the most exciting developments in this area of finding alternative readings on townships and township subjectivities have emerged from the 'street' rather than the academy.

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[12] I am aware of Elaine Salo's ethnography on 'Respecetabl mothers, tough men and good daughters: Producing personhood in Mannenberg Township, South Africa; and Adam Ashford's exploration of 'State power, violence in everyday life in Soweto' (1995).

1.6 Street Based Popular Culture Accounts

There has been a burst of creative outputs within the South African popular cultural arena where popular cultural symbols and aspects of township life are being appropriated, reversed and celebrated. This reversal is in turn displacing the familiar traditional political figuring of these spaces and its occupants. In forefronting the popular cultural expressions of music, poetry, theatre, fashion, television, dance as core constitutive forces in the formation of township spaces and subjectivities, townships previously defined in terms of lack, oppression, crises and violence which were predominantly populated by politicised men and women, are being eclipsed by these newer 'street' based approaches. These formulations tend to reject previously discussed dominant scholarly approaches and rather focus on rehabilitating and transforming townships life and their residents into a signs of celebration and desire. And when one peruses the current state of who are the main translators of these emerging contemporary perspectives on township life and subjectivities, it is DJs, filmmakers, playwrights, novelists, poets and singers, rather than academics. And as mentioned, a theme that is closely linked to these alternative popular approaches is their gravitation towards centralising the urban African body of pleasure, rather than pain. In emphasising rehabilitation and pleasure, these popular artists and intellectuals are then engaged in generating some interesting and new genealogies of township history as well as township lives. This development is a breakthrough and illustrates a case of popular discourse overtaking academic discourse about what constitutes contemporary township life and its respective subjectivities. In an effort for academic discourse to 'catch up' and find ways of "translating the language of the street into the argot of the academy" (Cooper 2004:24), and thus expand its "lexicon and grammar of academic discourse" (ibid 24), there has been a number of informal academic roundtables and symposia[13] which have been attempting to generate novel theoretical perspectives on what appears to be the elusive categories of the townships and township residents.

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[13] For example the Wits Institute of Social and economic Research (WISER) organised a symposium in July 2004 on 'The Township Now' which brought together academics, writers, DJs, filmamkers and architects to share new and emerging perspectives on post-apartheid township life, spaces and subjectivities.

1.7 Conclusion

As repeatedly outlined, it is clear that we need to move beyond conceptual approaches that repeatedly center formal political institutions, structures and processes that favour focusing on township subjectivities as essentially political subjectivities. But the question remains on where this new perspective on township contemporary life and its subjectivities will be theoretically situated. Following the rhythms of an emerging vibrant popular street discourse, I would like to propose that the neglected popular culture studies approach offers us the opportunity to not only carve a new interdisciplinary area I term *contemporary popular culture township studies*, but also allows us to critically contribute to a rather thin archive on what constitutes emerging contemporary township lives and subjectivities. And in terms of the interest of this study, which explores the lived and embodied suffering and healing of mothers' and daughters' in Chesterville Township, KwaZulu-Natal, situating my study within this emerging conceptual approach opens up possibilities to probe alternative epistemologies and methodologies that are sympathetic to the subjugated knowledges of township mothers and daughters. To theoretically situate this proposed popular analytical framework, in the next chapter I will then proceed to explore in more detail the scholarship that has been generated around dominant conceptual frameworks on African popular culture and its prevailing discourses.

CHAPTER 2: Dominant Conceptual Approaches and Discourses in Contemporary African Popular Culture Studies

2.0 Introduction: Contemporary African Popular Culture Studies

In the previous chapter, I argued for a formal recognition of a potential field of study called *contemporary popular culture township studies*. This new field while taking into account the insights from the various political-economy, socio-economic, socio-political, urban development and ethnographic dominant theoretical frameworks, also needs to transcend these approaches which have tended to (re)produce hollow politicised township subjects. However, towards the end of the chapter I also show how the public popular arena in South Africa's 'streets', nightclubs and radio stations are rather inserting African urban cultural selves who embrace pleasure, despite their existential and socio-economic conditions. Inspired by reflections from these unofficial popular perspectives on township life, this chapter appropriates these alternative interpretations of the 'popular' in order to assemble a conceptual framework on the lived and embodied suffering of township mothers and daughters in Chesterville Township. However, before we can formulate this approach it is important to first provide an extended literature overview of the dominant conceptual approaches and discourses that have shaped contemporary African popular culture studies. To fulfill this purpose this chapter is thus organised into the following sections: popular culture definitions; cultural studies and anthropological studies approaches to popular culture; and the prevailing popular culture discourses of the 'return to the source' and the 'return to the present.'

2.1 Definitions of Popular Culture

Chandra Mukerji and Michael Schudson (1991) outline a comprehensive overview of the disciplinary origins of popular culture research and highlight the extent to which this relatively new area of study has been shaped by a number of disciplinary frameworks, including in particular history, anthropology, sociology and literary studies. They also point to how the growth of academic interest in popular culture and its consequent process of legitimisation has been a slow process within the academy. This slowness to becoming mainstreamed within traditional academic disciplines has largely been a result of popular culture's stubborn inter-disciplinary nature which has resisted being narrowly 'disciplined'. And it is precisely because of this gravitation towards inter and trans-disciplinarity that cultural theorist Stuart Hall (1992) suggests that cultural studies, where several studies in popular culture have emerged from, must adopt a dialogical approach to theory that is characterised by 'theoretical noise' and 'tension' which captures how this arena of study has always been an unfolding discourse responding to changing historical and political conditions.

However, even despite its lack of a disciplinary home, so to speak, popular culture scholarship is nevertheless held together by a number of critical convergences which include popular culture as a reciprocal process that both reflects and shapes broader socio-economic forces; that includes an interdisciplinary project supported by a number of methodologies; and broadly a study of everything that is not necessarily elite culture, (Harrington and Bielby 2001). Popular culture anthropologist Johannes Fabian adds that by specifying the 'popular' in culture is not just an accidental addition but rather also reflects "discursive strategies and research practices that produce a certain kind of knowledge. When we add the qualifier 'popular' to culture, we do so because we believe it allows us to conceptualise certain kinds of human praxis that the concept of culture without the qualifier either ignores or makes disappear" (1998:1).

To further elaborate on the ways in which popular culture is analytically understood, cultural studies scholar John Storey (2003) describes the dominant perspectives in which popular culture has been defined, which includes 'popular culture as folk culture'; 'popular culture as mass culture'; 'popular culture as taste'; 'popular culture as post-modern culture' and 'popular culture as global culture'. In tracing the prevailing discourse of 'popular culture as folk culture', Storey

illustrates how it has been an integral part of early European nationalisms and prompted many European philosophers such as Johann Gottfried von Herder to popularise the notion that 'folk culture', associated with rural workers, was key to accessing the "origins of, and the possibility of a return to, an authentic German cultural identity" (2003: 3). This once-despised expression of the common people, that is 'folk culture', suddenly became something for the nation to preserve in the midst of what was perceived as a degraded 'urban working class culture'. However folk perspective critiques of popular culture have suggested that it is mere, "romantic fantasy, contrasted through denial and fantasy" (Storey 2003: 13). While on the other hand, the second notion of 'popular culture as mass culture' emerged from the rapid industrialisation, urbanisation and the formation of a European urban working class. This same urban 'mass culture', Storey (2003) explains, was initially viewed as the anarchy embodied by the working poor, was later re-theorised by Marxist scholars as less characterised by anarchy, but rather by a rather dull conformity of the working class who were caught in a "circle of manipulation and retrospective need" which led to "diminishing the working class's humanity while deepening social control" (Storey 2003: 28). It was within this perspective that Gramsci's notion of hegemony became firmly entrenched within the cultural studies tradition. This framework to cultural studies became particularly influential in early British cultural studies institutional approaches and was dynamically elaborated by the British Cultural Studies Birmingham Center for Contemporary Cultural Studies (BCCCS). According to the Gramscian popular culture studies perspective, "popular culture is neither an "authentic" folk culture, working class culture, or subculture, nor a culture simply imposed by the capitalist culture industries, but a "compromise equilibrium" between the two-a contradictory mix of both "below" and "above" both "commercial" and "authentic" marked by both "resistance" and "incorporation," "structure" and "agency" (Storey 2003:51). In this way, while popular culture could be experienced as empowering, this did not necessarily translate to the popular as always being a resistant and empowering force for the poor.

It was French sociologist Pierre Bourdieu's work (1984) that profoundly influenced the now powerful perspective of viewing 'popular culture as taste.' Arguing on how taste is profoundly ideological and acts as a marker of class in the ways "arbitrary tastes and arbitrary ways of living are continuously transmitted into legitimate tastes and the only legitimate ways of life" (in Storey

2002: 43), Bourdieu was able to demonstrate that although class rule was economic, the form it eventually took was in fact cultural. This, he reasoned, was because the "practices of cultural consumption, which involve making, marking and maintaining of social difference, help to secure and legitimate forms of power and domination which are rooted in economy" (2003: 43). While the recent idea of 'popular culture as postmodern culture', draws from French linguistic Jacques Lacan's work on the relationship between signifiers and Frederick Jameson's thesis on the post-modern condition as reflecting "experiences (of) time not as a continuum (past-present-future), but as a perpetual present, which is occasionally marked by the intrusion of the past or the possibility of a future" (in Storey 2003: 65). Viewed from this angle 'popular culture as postmodern culture' signals a discontinuous flow of a perpetual present, that produces a new kind of superficiality which derives its hermeneutic force from other images, other surfaces and the interplay of intertextaulity (Storey 2003). Finally, the idea of 'popular culture as global culture' is very much imbedded in the recent globalisation debates which view globalisation along polarities of it either being a process of homogenisation, Americanisation and a new form of imperialism[14] (Ray 2007), to perspectives such as Stuart Hall's idea of globalisation as,

> "Globalisation must never be read as a simple process of cultural homogenisation; it is always an articulation of the local, of the specific and the global. Therefore, there will always be specificities-of voices, of positioning, of identity, of cultural traditions, of histories, and these are the conditions of enunciation which enable us to speak" (in Cooper 2004:1).

This draws our attention to how, in viewing 'popular culture as global culture', we need to be much more open to emphasising that globalisation is rather a "much more contradictory and complex, involving the ebb and flow of homogenisation and heterogenising forces and the meeting and the mingling of the "local" and "global" in new forms of hybrid cultures" (Storey 2003:112). This growing discourse of 'popular culture as global culture' is closely associated with cosmopolitan scholars since it resonates with some key characteristics of cosmopolitanism which includes "a keen grasp of a globalised world as one in which there are no *others*" (Storey 2003: 120, my emphases). Cosmopolitans view this assertion as a way of conceptualising difference within the context of a shared humanity rather than open denial of difference. These

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[14] Fabian notes that even though it is no longer fashionable to speak of imperialism, he asks who would deny that "power is still exercised by societies that are organised as nation states (though they be used by multinational business interests) over other societies whose political institutions are shaky and whose economy, if not reduced to subsistence production, is based on exporting cash crops and minerals?" (1998:30)

popular culture definitions emerge from two dominant approaches to studying the 'popular' which include cultural studies approaches to popular culture, as well as anthropological approaches to popular culture.

2.2 Cultural Studies Approaches to Popular Culture

Cultural studies definitions of culture stress the importance of social production and the ways in which competing and unequal relations of power are always involved within meaning making processes. More specifically, John Storey defines culture as,

> "not in the object but in the experience of the object: how we make it meaningful, what we do with it, how we value it...how we make sense of ourselves and the world around us; it is the practice through which we share and contest meanings of ourselves, of each other and the world...To share a culture is to interpret the world-to make it meaningful-in recognisably similar ways...Cultures are arenas in which different ways of articulating the world come into conflict and alliance...It is this conflict-the relations between culture and power-which is the core interest of cultural studies" (2003: x-xi).

With regards to definitions of popular culture that came out of the cultural studies approach was of the earliest one's was from Stuart Hall, one of the founding members of the BCCCS which was founded in 1964, who identified it as, "one of the sites where this struggle for and against a culture of the powerful is engaged; it is also the stake to be won or lost in that struggle. It is simultaneously the arena of consent and resistance" (1981: 239); or as cultural studies scholar John Fiske later suggested that, "popular culture is made of various factions of subordinated or disempowered people out of the resources...that are provided by the social system that disempowers them" (1989, 1-2). In other words, cultural studies scholars have conceived the 'popular' as a site of both struggle and negotiation over interests and meanings between dominant groups and subordinate groups over a range of issues such as taste, pleasure, beauty, nation and gender. However, as Harrington and Bielby outline, framing popular culture in this manner was also part of a larger ideological project which sought to investigate "how groups with the least power practically develop their own readings of, and uses for, cultural products-in turn, in resistance, or to articulate their own identity" (2001: 4), thereby firmly anchoring the meaning-making strategies and counter visions of ordinary people in their everyday lives.

As mentioned earlier, the British Cultural Studies approach to popular culture is based on the Marxist theoretical orientations where concepts of power, hegemony and ideology were used to understand the cultural formation of modern societies. It was again Stuart Hall (1992) who popularised the idea of cultural studies as an epistemological and methodological tool *to think through culture politically.* This innovation of bringing into focus the political rather than the structural and aesthetic elements of culture, constituted a major rupture from what were then overwhelmingly specific anthropological views of culture that continued to assert that cultures rather than being bounded and discrete, were constituted through the dialectic "interplay between situated cultures and ideological formations" (in Murdock 1996: 59). Jamaican cultural theorist Carolyn Cooper's work on Jamaica's urban ghettoes, which draws on some facets of the British cultural studies approach, elaborates on this aspect of cultural studies as requiring us to "identify the operation of specific cultural practices, of how they continuously re-inscribe the line between the legitimate and popular culture and what they accomplish in specific contexts" (2004: 4). In order to re-theorise marginality and power, she then advocates that popular culture needs to also forefront displaced popular cultural texts, languages, body movement and sounds within in particularly poor socio-political and aesthetic contexts. For example, she describes how by centralising the role given to the mother tongue/outlaw language *patwa* in her study of Jamaican dancehall culture she also "reclaim[s] the power of indigenous voice and the nativist worldview of the marginalised wordsmiths, especially the DJs" (Cooper 2004: 7).

Initially, it was studies on British sub-culture that developed from the BCCCS tradition that can be argued as providing the major critical base from which this interdisciplinary area of popular culture studies took root. Early landmark studies that incorporated the 'popular' of subordinated groups as a serious area for analysis included the works of Richard Hoggart's portrait of working class culture between the wars (in Murdock 1997), Paul Willis's *Learning to Labour: How working class kids get working class jobs* (1977) and Janice Radways's *Reading the Romance "Women, patriarchy, and popular literature* (1984). These early studies on the 'popular' played a major role in shaping later studies within a fast emerging area of scholarship coined popular culture studies. In fact, it was its distinctive feature of being able to combine "a hermeneutic focus on lived realities, a (post)structuralist critical analysis of discourses that mediate our experiences and realities, and a contextualist/realist investigation of historical, social, and

political structures of power" (Saukko 2005: 343), that accounted for its compelling explanatory force, and hence appeal among interdisciplinary scholars.

The sub-cultural studies approach was rapidly appropriated by scholars from various disciplines globally. For example, South African historian Clive Glazer worked creatively with this BCCCS approach to produce what became a classical study on *tsotsi* subcultures in the 1930s and 1940s in Johannesburg. Interested in excavating the *tsotsi* sub-cultural value system and its associated rituals and popular expressions, he found that the existential base of being a *tsotsi* in the 1930s in Johannesburg was usually based on coming from an unstable urban family context, being an artful trickster, or *skelm,* who embodied urban sophistication through desired ways of dressing, walking and talking. It was from occupying this anti-establishment location that tsotsis created what Glaser called an "alternative insulated subculture structure...which celebrated hedonism, disrespect for the law, enjoyment, violence and style" (1990: 65), as well as a constant search for immediate gratification. Furthermore, they rejected all responsible and respectable notions of saving for and investing in the future and rather aspired to extravagant lifestyles--"So that when they got money they would spend it on "gambling, alcohol, clothing and girlfriends" (Glaser 2000: 66).

Given their hedonistic outlook, street wisdom and new forms of morality which were borrowed mainly from American gangster hustler imagery, *tsotsi's* also rejected all forms of middle-class morality while at the same time distancing themselves from what was seen as naive traditionalism which was inappropriate to urban street life, it was then a surprising contradiction that *tsotsis* became actively involved in the politics of the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC), during the 1950s[15].

However, one of the major criticisms labelled against sub-cultural readings of marginalised groups was that they offered interpretations that were often detached from the grounded

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[15] "Tsotsi's were attracted to the PACs emphasis on "action" and confrontation...Unlike the ANC, the PAC did not make a point of emphasising non-violence. PAC rhetoric appealed to the aggressively anti-establishment tsotsi subculture. Although tsotsi's did not necessarily identify with the intellectual concept of Africanism, they shared the PACs hatred of white middle-class values and white structures of authority" (Glaser 2000: 85). On a useful outline on the formation of the PAC see Clive Glazer (2000: 82-83).

experience of those being studied and this way undermined the self understandings of participants. This, it was pointed out, resulted in insufficient knowledge bases about the life situation and beliefs of the subjects themselves (Murdock 1997). Finally, most of the studies that particularly focused on youth subcultures remained overwhelmingly male biased.

By the mid 1990s a post-structuralist framework was firmly entrenched within the cultural studies approach to popular culture and had rapidly developed an archive of scholarship that focussed on the areas such as mass entertainment and the consumption of television, film and music. However, these studies also rapidly began to receive criticism. Part of those who supported the rising criticisms of studies that over focussed on the mass consumption of popular cultural expressions, was cultural studies feminist theorist Angela McRobbie. Her argument was that what was urgently needed was a radical reappraisal of these studies as they were now producing insights that concluded that anything that was being popularly consumed was also oppositional (1996). These types of popular culture studies were also seen as falling into another conceptual trap that entailed an uncritical reflection and blind celebration of consumerism that usually translated into consumption being understood exclusively in terms of pleasure (Storey 1996). However, at the same time we must keep in mind that these postmodern interpretations of popular culture were in fact reflecting a much broader epistemological shift within the social sciences which included a rejection of earlier studies which had drawn from Marxist frameworks where the pleasure principle was viewed as an "...escape from everyday drudgery which the whole culture industry promises...[is a] paradise of the same old drudgery ...escape ...is predesigned to lead back to the starting point. Pleasure promotes the resignation which it ought to help forget (Adorno and Horkheimer 1979 in Storey 2003: 28).

Another criticism that also began to be levelled against these post-structural readings of the 'popular' was their overwhelming textual bias. This discursive or narrative turn in the social sciences, mainly characterised by the convergence of Foucaldians, social constructionists, Lacanians and Althusserian Marxists (Frosh 2002), highlighted the great extent that the "importance of language...the expansion of the notion of text and textuality, the recognition of heterogeneity, the multiplicity of meanings, the acknowledgement of textuality and cultural power...the power of the linguistic metaphor to any study of culture" (Hall 1996: 271), has come

to occupy within contemporary social theory. Furthermore, post-structuralism with its abstractions and employment of high theory, it was maintained, had also produced an *anti-human scholarship* which essentially erased the agency of subjects. Frosh argued that the implications of this type of knowledge-making strategy was that it became a narrow and elitist intellectual project where the "true understanding is restricted only to those in the know, and at times, when the language of these theories became most rarefied, it has seemed impossible for anyone to be in the know except the speaker, making all commentary, let alone criticism impossible" (2002: 2).

What newer cultural studies approaches to popular culture argued that what was needed was in fact an extension of the Gramscian cultural analysis, coupled with a return to ethnographic cultural analysis "which takes as its object study the lived experiences which breathes life into... inanimate objects of popular culture" (McRobbie 1996: 5). Put simply, those who rejected the postmodern turn in popular studies preferred to see social studies that focussed on "the values and strengths of the sense-making strategies used by ordinary people in their everyday lives" (Harrington and Bielby 2001: 4), being privileged. However, it would be short-sighted to totally reject post structuralist approaches to popular culture as they have made valid insights to the study of the 'popular' in their recognition of multiple meanings and the heterogeneity of social experience.

With regards to South African scholarly works on popular culture located within the cultural studies tradition, studies that emerged tended to focus on aesthetic medias such as Keyan Tomaselli's (1988) work on *The Cinema of Apartheid: Race and Class in South Africa Film*; youth subcultures which includes the already mentioned historical work of Clive Glaser on youth tsotsi gangs; and the politics of identity particularly among youth in post-apartheid South Africa as illustrated in the works of Nadine Dolby's *Constructing Race: Youth, Identity and Popular Culture in South Africa*, and *Stylizing the Self: The Y-Generation in Rosebank Johannesburg* by South African cultural studies scholar Sarah Nuttall. In addition, most of the articles contained in one of the first sustained edited texts on post-apartheid South African popular culture studies, *Senses of Culture* which is edited by Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michaels, remain rooted

within the cultural studies tradition that is allied to post-colonial theory and globalisation theories (Barber 2001).

2.3 Anthropological Approaches to Popular Culture

> African popular cultures are not merely pure folklore or superficial adaptations of imported western culture (Fabian in Gondola 1999: 24).

Many popular culture studies have not been situated within the cultural studies approach, but within anthropological scholarship, which as anthropologist Johannes Fabian (1988) reminds us, is an established and distinctive field of enquiry within anthropology. The popular culture studies tradition in anthropology has explored, amongst other things, some of the following popular cultural forms: contemporary music, movies, films, popular magazines, clothing and fashion. Specific examples of studies include Johannes Fabian's (1971, 1990) explorations of popular Zairian music, painting and religion; Abigual Jewsiewicki's (1995, 1999) investigations on painting and popular art in the Congo; and Karin Barber's (1987, 1997) re-readings of popular art and popular culture in Africa. These studies on distinctive forms of African popular expressions have played a key role in displacing what had become the dominant anthropological definitions of culture as a closed system with identifiable values, beliefs and social networks. Feminist cultural anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod has repeatedly cautioned against this approach which she argued tended to "make differences seem evident and people seem other" (1986: 12), an employed discursive tools which were essential in the production of the strange and bestial 'other'. However, as Fabian (1998) quickly reminded us, in their attempts to deal with contemporaneity, anthropological approaches to popular culture were visibly characterised by their rejection of these dominant structural cultural discourses dominant in their own discipline.

Working against these narrow definitions of culture, this emerging group of anthropologists working on popular cultural expressions chose to rather focus on power and freedom that drew on how groups with the least power practically developed their own readings of, and uses for, cultural products to resist and to articulate their own identity (Fabian 1998). Therefore, definitions of popular culture emerging from this approach have rather emphasised that it is

neither an "authentic" folk culture, working class culture, or subculture, nor is it a culture simply imposed by the capitalist culture industries. It is, they posit, a "compromise equilibrium between the two-a contradictory mix of forces from "below" and "above", both "commercial" and "authentic", marked by both "resistance" and "incorporating" "structure" and "agency" (Fabian 1998: 51), that characterises the popular. This has created room for popular culture to be conceived as a practice that embodies contradiction, contestation and experimentation. Essentially mirroring the cultural studies approach to popular culture, anthropological approaches have also highlighted the extent to which this sphere of cultural production also constitutes a vibrant site for the struggle for meaning, that is, a space where people make sense of their situations and express these understandings in their everyday lives to themselves and each other. It is then a site where "supposedly passive victims of urbanisation undertook to preserve what they wanted to save of their heritage and to create new forms of sociality" (Fabian 1998: 12).

In addition anthropological definitions of popular culture have predominantly drawn from textually rich ethnographies that have contributed to denser and more layered understandings of this term, which has in turn transformed how we conceptualise the 'popular' within this growing field. Such is the case of urban anthropologist Abdoulique Simone (2008) work ventured beyond the familiar conceptual tropes of power and hegemony to analyse popular culture, by rather depicting it as a means to make the intolerable tolerable, and the unbearable bearable--that is, a potentially humanising resource and space. In his ethnographic study among Cameroonian youth in New Bell, an inner city neighbourhood in Doula, Cameroon, the notion of the popular that emerges out of this context is that it is something that, "rests somewhere in the middle, keeping open the possibilities of joining the past-the one fundamental connections with ancestors a lineage of connection with personages both here and there, alive and dead-with relations to be built in the future" (2008: 88). On the other hand for French social anthropologist Didier Gondola, comfortably grounded in the post-modern tradition, he suggests that popular culture constitutes a space where the "dramatisation of daily life is enacted" (1991: 24); reflects the "originality of popular consciousness" (ibid: 24); and where Africans "reinscribe and renegotiate the collective memory of the social group" and where "African youth build a dreamlike order otherwise unreachable" (ibid 25). While Brazilian cultural anthropologist Cesar De Souza

Tavares in his ethnographic work based in Rio de Janeiro *favellas* and United States of America's inner-cities, identified the space of the 'popular' as a "constellation of styles of living that might recall either a shamanic way of being... or an Epicurean moral philosophy with its celebration of a good life without fear of dying" (1998: 20). Clearly these formulations of what constitutes popular culture challenged mainstream anthropological understandings which had until then presented rather simple ideas of African popular cultural expressions. Instead these ethnographically derived definitions on popular culture, provided us with opportunities to further our explorations on new forms of subjectivity, sociality, self-stylisation, new signatories of desire and imaginaries, changing tastes, everyday life, and embodiment that were taking place in contemporary African urban communities.

Even though a South African popular culture scholarship does exist, what is noticeable is that its development as a demarcated area of studies has been rather slow and sporadic. However, a growing scholarship on popular culture situated within the anthropological tradition developed from the 1980s, such as David Coplan's classic musicological study on Township music in *Township Tonight!: South Africa's Black city music: Some theoretical observations* (1985), and the classic study by Monica Wilson and Archie Mafeje on *Langa: A study of social groups in an African township (1992), which* combined anthropological and sociological approaches to understand townships, can be found. The general criticisms levelled against studies located within this anthropological approach has been that while they were able to inform us about how particularly those at the margins negotiated meanings and identities, they neglected to explain how these social processes were are also being shaped by wider socio-economic and ideological formations—which as mentioned earlier, was precisely what the cultural studies approach to popular culture emphasised. Others even argue that this failure of anthropological studies in popular culture to integrate these political and political-economy insights into their analytical perspectives, remains the reason why such approaches have had little to say on the injury of inequality (Murdock 1996).

2.4 The Politics of Representation within Popular Culture Studies Approaches

Stuart Hall (1992) points out that the issue of race has been a profound theoretical struggle in the development of cultural studies field in general. Cultural studies feminist theorist bell hooks launched a scathing attack against what she called the emergence of a trendy cultural critique which was not linked in any way with critical pedagogy or black emancipatory struggles. She writes,

> When white critics write about black culture cause it's the "in" thing' subject without interrogating their work to see whether or not it helps to perpetuate and maintain racist domination, they participate in the commodification of "blackness" that is so peculiar to postmodern strategies of colonisation" (1990: 8).

Within cultural studies scholarship the race debate has in recent years been further complicated by issues of geography and location. These issues have been intermeshed with heated discussions on cultural politics and representation in the academy, with tensions exploding between the 'north' and 'south', 'insider' and 'outsider' perspectives. In popular culture studies in particular, one of the contentious and continuing open debates centres on who can legitimately represent the working class poor within popular cultural discourses.

African-American social anthropologist Faye Harrison (1991) highlights that it is important to contextualise these debates that come out of an intellectual context where, firstly, African scholarship has traditionally been marginalised and devalued, and therefore forced into the intellectual periphery; and second, we must also consider the prevailing trend within cultural studies that continues to reflect an assumption that "cultural, epistemological and theoretical perspectives outside of the Eurocentric canon are less adequate, less "universal" and less "scientific"--in other words, inferior" (Harrison 1991: 7). This process of a racially based intellectual marginalisation of African scholarship everywhere has been heavily criticised by African scholars on the continent as well as the Diaspora. For example, bell hooks has also identified how in the United States,

Ironically, though black writers and/or scholars have always been engaged in writing cultural criticism, the way it has been constituted as a new field of discourse in the academy tends to overlook these contributions or, when they are recognised, they tend to be devalued" (1990: 10).

And Faye Harrison (1991) adds that this has been particularly visible in the peripherisation of activist scholarship within western academic discourse in general. For example, she argues that Eduardo Chivambo Mondlane's integration of activism and scholarship where he proposed that knowledge production and praxis are inseparable and reflected this in his scholarly reflections on racial and national oppressions, the liberation struggle, and the educators' role in reproducing colonial order, remain invaluable in directly challenging the current dichotomy between theory and advocacy, are to this day ignored in the academy (Harrison 1991).

Declaring a 'borderclash' with those foreign experts who undermine local scholarship by "routinely tell[ing] us how best to understand and "develop" our society...[while] the insider's perspective is constantly invalidated as the outsider positions him/herself as the "real" authority in these matter, " (Cooper 2004:2), Jamaican cultural studies theorist Carolyn Cooper, proceeds to assertively position her book *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large* (2004: 2) in the following manner,

this study of Jamaican dancehall is stubbornly rooted on a politics of a place that claims a privileged space for the local and asserts the authority of the native speaking voice (2004: 2).

And as a way to confront this critical domain of the *politics of representation* and canon setting within cultural studies, Faye Harrison (1991: 7) has proposed that we must ask ourselves the following questions: "When natives of various cultures denied history and intellectual authority do indeed theorize, are those theories legitimated? Are they even acknowledged as higher order explanations? Erasures result when contributions are not cited nor included in literature overviews" (1991:7). She continues to explain how,

The historical experiences and intellectual contributions of 'minorities' and women are relegated to the status of special interest trivia and are not viewed as deserving of scholarly validation outside of the established study of 'social problems' or the authorized curricula menu of expendable 'add and stir' electives" (Harrison 1991: 6-7).

And given the rapid global institutionalisation of cultural studies approaches, African American cultural critic bell hooks cautions that,

Given the context of white supremacy, we must always interrogate institutional structures which give voice to people of colour from other countries while systematically suppressing and/or censoring the radical speech of indigenous folks of colour...[we] must not abdicate intellectual responsibility for promoting a cultural studies that will enhance our ability to speak specifically about our culture and gain a hearing" (1990: 133).

These reflections serve to demonstrate that the politics of representation remains hotly contested within this young area of study. When we turn to some of the key discourses that have informed the development of African popular culture studies approaches, we encounter new theoretical contestations. In the next section I discuss what I have termed the 'return to the source' and 'return to the present' discourses which have shaped major positions among scholars on what they maintain constitutes contemporary African popular culture studies.

2.5 African Popular Culture Studies Discourses of 'Return to the Source' and 'Return to the Present'

Analytical frameworks on African popular culture studies appear to be caught into two distinctive and resilient oppositional discourses that I have termed the 'return to the source,' associated with nativist, afro-radical and nationalist scholars, and the 'return to the present,' commonly aligned with cosmopolitans. These polar discursive positions form part of what Benin philosopher Paulin Houtondji (1995) has described as the dilemma of the particular versus the universal, where scholarship on African identities either focuses on naming difference and uniqueness or insists on a generic human identity. In other words, as Cameroonian political philosopher Achille Mbembe notes,

Discourse on African identity has been caught in a dilemma from which it is struggling to free itself: Does African identity partake in the generic human identity? Or should one insist, in the name of difference and uniqueness, on the possibility of diverse cultural forms within a single humanity-but whose cultural forms whose purpose is not to be self-sufficient, whose ultimate signification is universal? (Mbembe 2002: 253).

To summarise, the 'return to the source' and the 'return to the present' popular culture discourses are constituted by the following polarised positions:

"RETURN TO THE SOURCE"	"RETURN TO THE PRESENT"
Nativists; Nationalists; Negritude; Afrocetrists	Cosmopolitans; Post-nativists
Particularistic; stress difference; uniqueness; localised politics of representations; culture specific; ethnic particularity	Universalistic; Emphases on commonalities, sameness and universality; Anti-essentialists
Nation state; national society	Post-nation state and nationality; global citizenship
Cultural Imperialism and cultural resistance	Globalisation and cultural pluralism
*Afrocentrism	Euro-centrism
Marxism, political economy, developmentalism,	Post-structuralism; deconstruction; new historicism; postmodernism
*Indigenization	Migrants, diasporas
*Borders	Border crossing

*Drawn from Pieterse and Parekh (1995: 12)

Each of these discourses on African identity and culture presents us with competing philosophies of personhood, freedom, time, aesthetics and ethics. Each offers divergent theories on temporality, the state, citizenship, nationalism and subjectivities. Furthermore, each tradition of scholarship consistently constructs its own discourses by refuting the other, situating the other discourse as outside its own ideological and ontological position. This polarity has resulted in what I call a theoretical cul-de-sac, which has left little room for both discourses to productively engage, stretch and deepen our epistemic horizons with regards to what constitutes African popular cultural production. This polarisation persists despite recent attempts to reinvigorate and demarcate what constitutes a South African cultural studies approach. Most disconcerting to me

is that this 'false' dichotomy has resulted in a premature closure of the possibility of comprehending what is actually unfolding in South African urban townships.

2.5.1 The "Return to the Source[16]" Discourse

According to Achille Mbembe, who has launched a total attack on nativism, he argues that nativism is basically "the idea of a unique African identity founded on the membership of the black race" (Mbembe 2002a: 240); "an ideology of difference par excellence" (Mbembe 2001: 3), which constantly laments the loss of purity which makes it a form of "culturalism preoccupied with questions of identity and authenticity" which proposes a false "return to an ontological and mythical Africanness" (Mbembe 2002c: 629), with a tendency to "privilege victimhood over subjecthood" (Mbembe 2002a: 245). Furthermore, he argues that nativist understandings are basically preoccupied with establishing a limited African, or indigenous understanding of things, whose starting point is that "Africans have an authentic culture that confers on them a peculiar self irreducible to that of any other group, and the negation of this self and this authenticity would thus constitute a mutilation" (Mbembe 2002a: 254). Paul Gilroy (1996) has similarly critiqued current scholarship on popular culture as dependent on ethnic authenticity. He argues that this emphasis on uniqueness, purity and the power of the vernacular, the celebration of racialised difference, in fact constitutes a form of ethnic absolutism in this scholarship. Finally, nativist, afro-radicals and nationalists, who are the main supporters of the 'return to the source' discourses, have been further charged with an essentialism that is over-determined by notions of political resistance (Nuttall and Michaels 2000).

However, an assessment of nativist scholarship highlights that these wholesale criticisms levelled against it remains analytically misleading. It is a fact that this scholarship on African popular cultural production based on the 'return to the source' discourse is broadly identifiable in its emphases on cultural difference, the uniqueness and resilience of African neo-oral cultures, and definitions of culture which are imbedded in notions of resistance. These ideas of culture as a

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[16] Taken from Cabral, A. 2007. 'Return to the Source', in *Amilcar Cabral: Unity and Struggle: Speeches and Writing.* Vambe, T. and Zegeye, A. and Vambe T. (eds).

critical weapon of resistance does indeed appear repeatedly in the speeches and writings of activist scholars such as Eduardo Mondlane of Mozambique, Cabral of Guinea Bissau, and Bantu Steven Biko from South Africa. However, it is important to contextualise this work as this growing idea of 'culture as resistance' in much of the early reflections emerged from the lived experience of African's struggles from colonial rule towards self definition and self rule, as evidenced in the liberation movements throughout Africa. Many of these above mentioned writers and activists maintained that these political struggles were in fact also cultural acts. As cultural studies theorist Bheki Peterson explains these expressions of resistance among Africans "form[s] part of the larger processes of self-definition and self-actualisation and as Fanon (a seminal influence on Biko) and Amilcar Cabral were often compelled to remind us, national liberation struggles are, in themselves, cultural acts" (2006: 165).

For a sustained assertion of culture as a factor of resistance within national liberation struggles, the works of revolutionary scholar Amilcar Cabral, *National Liberation* and *Return to the Source,* provides one of the best illustrations. Typical of its time, this work was largely shaped by a structural Marxist political-economy theoretical framework which was primarily concerned with questions of breaking away from imperialism and dependence through class struggle. Emphasising the power of culture as a weapon of resistance, in his Eduardo Mandlana Memorial Lecture, delivered at Syracuse University, New York, programme of Eastern African Studies, in February 1970 Cabral argued that, "to take up arms to dominate a people is, above all, to take up arms to destroy, or at least to neutralise and to paralyse their cultural life. For as long as part of that people can have a cultural life, foreign domination cannot be sure of its perpetuation" (in Cabral 2007: 170). That is, even when the politico-military resistance was destroyed, the people could continue to resist culturally, making the cultural arena potentially one of the most potent resistance sites. In this light Cabral's definition of the liberation movements was thus principally defined in cultural terms as, "the organised political expression of the struggling people's culture and saw the value of culture as being an exhaustible source of courage, of material and moral support, of physical and psychic energy, which enables them to accept sacrifices and even do 'miracles'" (ibid: 181). And this is why for Cabral there was an urgent need for the assimilated bourgeoisie to quickly 'return to culture,' in order to undergo what he described as a "spiritual

conversion and *re-Africanisation which should be based on popular culture which connects to deepest aspirations of a people, as a necessary condition of freedom*" (ibid: 175, my emphases).

Similarly concerned with the role of culture within a rising African nationalism, HIE Dhlomo, who was part of the Natal cultural renaissance of the 1940s[17], espoused another variant of African nationalism as rather a political philosophy of modernity, which, unlike Cabral's, stood in firm opposition to Marxism and tribalism. African cultural theorist Ntongela Masilela (2006) explains that this distaste for Marxism was quite common among early African nationalists and could be explained through Marxist thoughts adversarial relation to Christianity. Most new African intellectuals, he explains, sought to synthesise Christianity with humanism. Wrestling with the ideas and practices of custom and tradition, HIE Dhlomo was ambivalent and viewed them both as forms of tyranny that retarded people's progress, while on the other hand in his writings for the newspaper iLanga laseNatal he asserted that "modernity could not be created or constructed on the basis of discarding of the old (tradition)" (Masilela 2007: 20). As opposed to Cabral, for him "history is made by the heroic action of individuals and not classes or by the masses of people" (in Masilela 2007: 42-43). However, while African nationalists such as Cabral and Dhlomo often had differing views on how culture should be used as a mode of resistance, they shared the deep concern to rehabilitate the agency of Africans by using their marginalised cultural processes and resources.

Of course this idea of focusing on the positive aspects of African cultural existence as a base for liberation had also been elaborated within the Negritude movement by proponents such as Leopold Senghor, Aime Cesaire and others in Paris in the 1930s. Negritude which continued to live on in the historical revisionist work of Cheikh Anta Diop and his conclusions that ancient Egypt was an African project, could also be traced in Kwame Nkrumah combination of various "anti-imperialistic imaginaries and politics, a convergence of nationalism, socialism and Pan-

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[17] It was HIE Dhlomo, as editor and regular writer in the pages of Ilanga lase Natal (The Natal Sun) in the 1940s, a New African newspaper founded by John Langelibalele Dube that reflected most comprehensive, albeit unsystematic intellectual history of the New African Movement. Other intellectuals were also part of this New African Movement (Masilela 2006)included Benedict Vilakazi, RRR Dhlomo, Jordan Kush Ngubane and MB Nhlapho Silas Modiri Molema, Walter Rubusana, Charlotte Manye Maxeke, Griffiths Motsielou and Alfred Mangena.

Africanism, which however remained strongly imbedded in the logic of nativism" (Pieterse and Parekh 1995: 7). And as part of the continuity of the works of Molefe Kente Asante well known for his development of the Afrocentric approach, Ugandan sociologist Dani Nabudere has drawn from this early scholarship by extending it to advocate what he calls the science of *Afrikology* which he describes as,

> The construction of the science of Afrikology therefore flows directly from the need for Africans to redefine their world, which can enable them to advance their self-understanding and the worlds around them based on their cosmologies. The issue of creating knowledge that promotes African self-understanding and knowledge that can promote their transformation is not just an issue of methodologies. As we have seen, the objective of imperialism was to capture the upper ground of knowing the natives in order to control their thinking and self-understanding (Nabudere 2006: 20).

We cannot move on from this discussion without briefly mentioning one of the most popularly recognised proponents for the reconstitution of the African self and past as expressed in the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) of the young Steve Bantu Biko. Drawing from post-colonial theorist Franz Fanon, Biko observed that, "colonialism is not satisfied merely with holding a people in its grip and emptying the natives brain of all form and content, by a kind of perverted logic, it turns to the past of the oppressed people and distorts, disguises and destroys it" (2004: 75-76). Writing fervently against the psychosocial effects of colonialism and more specifically apartheid, under the pseudonym 'Frank Talk', Biko defined Black consciousness as:

> making the black come to himself; to pump back into his empty shell; to infuse him with pride and dignity, to remind him of his complicity in the crime of allowing himself to be misused and therefore letting evil reign supreme in the country of his birth. This is what we mean by an inward-looking process. This is the definition of Black consciousness (2004: 31).

And, as a means of deepening our knowledge around issues relating to struggles for freedom, the Black Consciousness Movement (BCM) has, and continues, to be a critical force in reshaping the nature of resistance politics by providing an alternative vocabulary and practice of the 'black experience'. However, as we know BCM was not only a social and political movement, but also a cultural and aesthetic movement. In this regard, the BCM was heavily influenced by Leopold Sedar Senghor and Aimé Césaire's *negritude movement*. This was evident in its rhetoric which focused on the *recovery* of a beautiful and heroic African past; the *rehabilitation* of the wounded African body and its history; and the *transfiguration* of blackness which encompassed transforming African's from ugly to beautiful. And it was within these theoretical developments

that Steve Biko argued that the conditions for the black man to attain full selfhood (Mbembe, 2002) meant a return, or a revisit to the past where black legends and heroes would be restored back into history. Continuing with negritude, pan-African and nationalist traditions described earlier, BCM was also committed to the intellectual project of re-representing the African past as Steve Biko wrote that "part of the approach envisaged in bringing about 'black consciousness' has to be directed to the past, to seek to rewrite the history of the black man and to produce in it the heroes who form the core of the African background" (1978: 29). Finally, Reverend Mvume Dandala (2007) reminds us that Black consciousness was not only focussed on the cultural and psychological reconstruction of blackness, but also on the formation of the soul as a political strategy. That is, it was a doctrine and movement which sought to go beyond sparking a political-cultural awakening, but extended to offering a *cultural--spiritual awakening for Africans.*

The 'return to the source' discourse has continued to live as a set of ideas even within contemporary public-political platforms especially under the recent African Renaissance discourse, primarily advocated by South African ex-president Thabo Mbeki. In his address *The African Renaissance, South Africa and the World,* made at the United Nations University on 9 April 1998, he drew from this same discourse of return as he adds,

> I would say that confidence, in part, derives from a discovery of ourselves, from the fact that, perforce, as one would who is critical of oneself, we had had to *undertake a voyage of discovery into our own antecedents, our own past, as Africans* (my emphases). And when archaeology presents daily evidence of an African primacy in the historical evolution to the emergence of the human person described in science as homosapiens, how can we be but confident that we are capable of effecting Africa's rebirth? (1998: np)

However, I would like to emphasise that this insistence by Cabral's 'return to the source', and Biko's celebration of the African past cannot be simply dismissed as forms of essentialism, as many cosmopolitan scholars have argued. For, if we take a closer look, we will uncover that this 'return' has been conceptualised in a much more nuanced manner than often presented by its critics. In an address that he gave on 15 October 1972 when he received an honorary doctorate at Lincoln University in Pennsylvania, Amilcar Cabral described the 'return of the source' as, "no longer necessarily means a return to traditions. It is the denial, by the petit-bourgeoisie, of the pretended supremacy of the culture of dominant power over that of the dominated people with which it must identify itself. The 'return of the source' is therefore not a voluntary step, but the

only possible reply" (in Cabral 2007: 192). And as Zegeye and Vambe (2007: 2) point out in their introduction to the second edition of the *Selected Speeches and Writings of Amilcar Cabral* they elaborate,

> The notion of return to ones' own culture is imbued with a fundamentally pluralistic ethnic, one that rejects the contemporary emphases upon a top down political projection. To 'return to the source' goes beyond attempts at retrieving past identities conceived as intact. Cabral recognises that returning to the source is problematic because there is no single source but several, a return to the source implies recognition of the instabilities of the meanings of the sources.

As several African scholars and creative writers have argued, colonialism brought with it a radical cultural onslaught to African value and belief systems, which indigenous scholar Catherine Odora Hoppers suggests has left us with an "immense historical burden and legacy that European colonialism left at Africa's doorstep. Tremendous energy has been expended to deal with, rebuff, contest and debate the various deposits that the encounter with Europe has bequeathed Africa" (2006: 45). To counter against acts of historical amnesia, it is then not surprising that national narratives of resistance borrow widely from various sources such as indigenous oral traditions, interwoven with Christian symbols and colonial and post-colonial institutions and processes (Vambe 2004). However, as Zimbabwean African literary scholar Maurice Vambe demonstrates, orature has been a critical epistemic force in the formulation of counter-cultures of resistance throughout the colonial and post-colonial period in Africa. Finally, in drawing out the contradictory elements of oral cultures, Vambe writes against Paulin Houtondji's claim that "oral traditions favours the consolidation of knowledge into dogmatic, intangible systems" (1995: 173), by rather maintaining that African orality in constructing an anti-imperialistic discourse was in fact also reflecting a "desire in Africans to experiment with modern ideas of democracy, nationality and ethnicity that had been introduced by white settlers." (2004: 22).

Therefore, arguing similarly to Cabral's non-essentialist idea of 'return', Vambe continues to challenge the essentialisation of orature as unchanging same and states that, "writers were not mere slaves of tradition, waiting passively to be influenced by orality. They select some aspects or orality and fuse these with new ideas that either confirm, modify or even reject the old elements of tradition in their bid to transform their works into something new" (Vambe 2004: 13). He further elaborates on this issue by quoting Abiola Irele who had earlier observed that the

relationships of indigenous oral resources to the modern novel is one "not so much of abiding, permanent, immutable stock of beliefs and symbols, but as constant refinement and extension of these in a way which relates them to an experience that is felt as being at once continuous and significantly new" (2004: 13). Within this kind of reasoning a simple return to a pristine ontological Africanness, begins to be thwart as we see that recent scholarship and discussions on tradition and traditional resources have rather chosen to view these terms as in flux, as opposed to being static. So the charge of essentialism made to 'return to the source' cultural discourses have often been misplaced, as we also find within them that the notion of a pure *return* is never possible, and that in fact the sources one *returns* to have always already shifted (Vambe and Zegeye 2007). And as Simon Gikandi asks-- If essentialism implies unchanging identity and singularity, what are the assertions of paradox, contradiction and ambiguity doing in most African cultural theorists? Furthermore, if essence requires totalitarian and unitary integration why do they advance views of fragmentation and disjuncture of the black experience (2000: 41)?

2.5.2. Rejection of Racialised, Folk and Ethnic-based ideas of being African

In a scathing critique on ethno-philosophy, Paulin Houtondji rejected what he saw as a non-existent philosophy imbedded within folk beliefs of traditional people which he stated,

> "wrongly believed that [African Philosophy] lies in our past, needing only to be exhumed and then brandished like a miraculous weapon in the astonished face of colonialist Europe" (1995: 172).

This idea of celebrating folk beliefs was not new nor specific to African intellectual development and was also similarly elaborated in early European writings on nationalism, including the work of German nationalist philosopher, Johann Gottfried von Herder who suggested that the "possibility of a return to a more "grounded" or "rooted" culture; a return to culture before the fall into the corrupting conditions of industrialisation and urbanisation, which promoted the possibility of a return to an authentic cultural identity" (in Storey 2003: 3). This iconoclastic folk idea of culture has been described as nothing more than a "myth of culture as having previously existed in isolation from other localities, global or otherwise is a nostalgic romanticism and

fantasy which amounts to nothing but an "active denial of actual lived cultures of working people, both urban and rural" (Storey 2003: 14)

Continuing his sustained critique on what he viewed as problematic discourses of return, Houtondji dismissed these cultural discourses embedded in difference, ethnicity and Africanist abstract particularism as only capable of producing knowledge that reproduced static societies which often escaped living critiques. Repeatedly accused of being Eurocentric and defending western values in his critiques of these methodologies and strategies employed in ethno-philosophical discourses, Houtondji did however concur that "ethno-philosophy has its reasons that are not forcedly bad and that are even, on the whole, quite generous. It struggles against a given situation, it condemns the prejudices that we continue to condemn still, it has adversaries who, in most cases, are also our own" (1995:180). He outlined that his main interest was in fact to illuminate the limitations of the movement than the movement itself, and made it quite explicit that even his critique on ethno-philosophy should not be viewed as a blatant negation of the existence of constants in cultural tradition since "one wouldn't know how to move to such an extreme without betraying reality" (1995: 191).

While Wole Soyinka who rejected and ridiculed negritude calling it tigritude making the now famous observation that, "I don't think a tiger has to go around proclaiming his tigritude.' (in Pieterse and Parekh 1995: 8), was also in agreement with Houtondji's line of criticism against nativist-type philosophical discourses. And again like Houtondji, although he argued that "no invocation of blackness was enough to take the African across the abyss of modernity", he also realised the benefits of ethnic-based readings and acknowledged that "only an essentialist matrix could return the African to an "untouched part of himself" (in Gikandi 2000: 43). In his works on the role of African art in social change, Soyinka was clear that, "it was in art that tradition was challenged by the forces of newness, the force of the avant-garde represented by the dissident gods!" (in Gikandi 2000: 42).

However, we must keep in mind that Soyinka's work reflected a paradox because while he clearly rejected Eurocentric epistemology and Negritude alike, as Simon Gikandi (2000: 40) highlights, he was the one who was also "most indebted to post-enlightenment European notion of art and aesthetic judgement." Gikandi elaborates on Soyinka's theory of culture and art as,

...[perhaps] the most radical in its rejection of a racialised idiom of blackness as the sanction of African identities, but it was also constructed around an essentialist Yoruba matrix that seemed to speak to us in familiar idiom of modernism, especially the Nietzchean critique of metaphysics...he sought to fulfil the Nietzchean cultural project; to link the destiny of the nation (or continent) to its art and to reconcile the discordance between art and truth, or rather the truth of art against the claims of politics (2000: 41).

These critiques of a racialiased, folk and ethnic based idea of being-African by these post-nativists generated a number of new and exciting approaches to theorise cultural synthesising by Africans. These ranged from the development of approaches such as polytheism, syncretism, hybridist, mestizage to creolisation, which are briefly discussed below.

2.5.2.i Polytheism

The polytheistic approach is based on an alternative epistemology of conceptualising cultural synthesis within African communities. Bibi Bakare-Yusuf explains it as,

> Polytheism is not simply a plural relation to the spirit world. It is an organising principle that goes beyond religious practice. It engenders a fluid and pragmatic attitude, not towards gods, but towards all things, categories and concepts. Although contemporary Nigerian society (and contemporary Yoruba culture) is, on the surface, divided in terms of Christian and Islamic faiths, the deep structure of society is polytheistic and ordered by the *spirit* world of the accommodative traditional gods. This theological background is revealed most readily in aesthetic practices such as dance and music. Polytheism in spirit translates into aesthetics of polyrhythm (2004: 75).

In this sense she argues that polytheism rejects the idea of a "hermetically sealed African culture" (Bakare-Yusuf 2004: 74), and rather highlights the eclecticism and pragmatism of Yoruba society, in particular, and how it readily absorbs change and difference from other contexts.

2.5.2.ii Syncretism

With regards to 'syncretism' Pieterse and Parekh succinctly outline it as a form of synthesis between Western and local traditional culture. To illustrate this perspective they quote from Onwuchekwa Chinweizu and Madubuike Ichechukwu classical text *Towards the Decolonization of African Literature,* the following passage,

> on the one hand, our culture has to destroy all the encrustations of colonial mentality, and on the other hand, has to map out new foundations for an African modernity. This cultural task demands deliberate and calculated process of syncretism: one which, above all, emphasises valuable continuities with our pre-colonial culture, welcomes vitalizing contributions from other cultures,

and exercises inventive genius in making a healthy and distinguished synthesis from them all (1995: 9).

2.5.2.iii Hybridity

The theory and model of hybridity as popularised by Homi Bhabha (1994) in *Location of Culture* is identified an in-between space where the burden of the meaning of culture is said to be carried. Homi Bhabha suggests that it is in fact from this indeterminate place of departure where we are presented with the possibility to "elude the politics of polarity and emerge as the others of our selves" (1994: 38-39).

2.5.2.iv Mestizage

Foregrounding a "rainbow epistemology" and a "politics of co-habitation" toward a "global rainbow democracy", Pieterse and Parekh (1995: 15) ultimately argue in their edited text *The Decolonization of the Imagination: Culture, Knowledge and Power* for an intercultural synthesis under the perspective of the Latin American *Mestizage*. They argue that mestizage, unlike hybridisation, has a cultural center of gravity since it allows for "imagining the mixed and betwixt as a creative jostling space, of homemaking in multiple worlds" (ibid 1995: 15).

2.5.2.v Creolisation

Let me spend some time on this concept of creolisation since it has been widely used during recent attempts to retheorise contemporary South African popular culture. In their recent attempt to rewrite the South African cultural studies landscape, literary scholars Sarah Nuttall and Cheryl-Ann Michaels in their jointly edited book *Senses of Culture* (2002) opted to deploy the term "creolisation" to theoretically frame emerging post-apartheid popular cultural processes and experiences. In their efforts to situate cultural studies more firmly within the South African academy, Nuttall and Michaels immediately map their intellectual project as one which must confront and challenge dominant "narrow readings of South Africa culture" (2002: 22). Engaging a perspective of cultural studies that is allied to postcolonial and globalisation theory (Barber 2001), they argue that cultural theorising in South Africa has been severely limited due to its inherent bias towards the following tendencies-- "the over determination of the political, the inflection of resistance and the inflection given to race as a determinant of identity" (2002:

10). Given this essentialist, parochial tendency evident in South African cultural theorising, they propose that a new 'open theorising' of cultural studies should rather focus on cultural processes which foreground marginalised identities, everyday life, intimacy and the local/global dynamics that impinge on contemporary African popular cultures.

According to popular culture scholar Karin Barber, this edited collection seems more concerned with a "media focussed European cultural studies, glib globalisation and over-generalised post-colonial theory" (2001: 182), clearly making accumulated local theories on culture not its preferred point of departure. In choosing to rather situate their proposed cultural studies framework within this limited genealogy of cultural theorists such as anthropologists Robert Thornton and David Coplan works as examples of exceptions to this otherwise weak archive of South African cultural studies scholarship, Nuttall and Michaels proceed to reject wholesale the scholarship on cultural identities and subjectivities that has been generated by generations of African scholars. With this shaky foundation, they proceed to map out how specific connections, commonalities and intimacies can be uncovered in the post-apartheid cultural landscape through the deployment of the notion of *creolisation,* as defined by the Martiniquean novelist and theorist Eduard Glissant, as

> Creolisation as an idea is not primarily the glorification of the composite nature of people, indeed, no people has been spared the cross cultural process...To accept peoples as creolised and to deconstruct the category of 'creolised' that is considered as halfway between two pure extremes..." (in Nuttall and Michaels 2000: 7).

Using this rather thin theoretical bases to propose a new South African cultural studies field, they continue to elaborate why they are drawn to this particular model of cultural synthesis, which they view as offering an opportunity to study an unfolding transformative fusion, and the intimacies involved when various societies who are 'thrown together,' and how they make connections which might or might not include resistance and perversion (Nuttall and Michaels 2002). However, I must point out that their formulation of the notion of creolisation itself is, in the first instance, insufficiently theorised. Second, that the term itself can be characterised as a continuum, is not even interrogated. Third, the category of resistance is conveniently deemphasised, and at times out-rightly erased in their construction of cultural synthesis. However as Caribbean writers who have used the term extensively to explain the formation of

these island societies have consistently shown, processes or resistance and opposition are in fact integral to the notion of creolisation.

For example, Burton, in his much cited work on *Afro-Creole: Power, Opposition and Play in the Caribbean* (1997: 5), outlines a creolisation continuum which ranges from synthetic to segmentary creolisation that emerged during the colonial period, and continued in other forms in the post-colonial period. He explains that segmentary and synthetic creolisation refers to, "whereas in the latter each group develops its own culture, with the former the group attempts to forge a local culture that combines elements from all the available resources." Burton continues to explain that within these various forms of creolisation 'cultures of opposition' and 'cultures of resistance', emerge where 'cultures of opposition' refer to the forms of contestation of a given system that are conducted within that system, using weapons and concepts derived from the system itself; whereas in 'cultures of resistance' forms of contestation of a given system are conducted from outside that system, using weapons and concepts derived from a source or sources other than the system in question. Of course we now know that both processes are often operating within the process of cultural production.

Further, other Caribbean scholars (for example Yelvington 1995) have pointed out that the construction and contestation of creolisation in the Caribbean cannot simply be viewed as a homogenising process, but rather as a process of contestation between different racial and social groups. As emphasised earlier, we cannot wish away how in the Caribbean the development of an ethnic-class structure shaped by slavery and indentured labour was in fact an integral part of the formation of Creole cultures, and therefore cannot be erased from what constitutes the 'cultural' resources of these societies. But for Barber (2001: 184) the main criticism she launches against this text is not so much for its weak theoretical foundations that it rests upon, but rather on its exclusion of oral and African language texts, and its limited ethnographic depth which provide a lens to view everyday cultural change in Africa "from the point of view of the people who live it." In this manner, for Barber, *Senses of Culture* forecloses, yet again, the possibility to Africanise an emerging popular culture studies scholarship in South Africa (Barber 2001).

2.6 The "Return of the Present[18]" Discourse

As outlined earlier sections, cosmopolitans[19] such as Achille Mbembe, Kwame Appiah and Paul Gilroy have consistently rejected nativist discourses as futile theoretical attempts that constitute a retreat towards essentialising Africa and Africans. For example, Paul Gilroy has repeatedly argued that these ethnic-based, authenticity-obsessed and absolutist conceptualisations of purists or nativist versions of African cultural production "have a tendency not to tolerate[d] in the long run because they contribute wholly to the heroics of racial reconstruction" (1996: 104). In agreement with these sentiments, Achille Mbembe has also suggested that these romantic assertions by Afro-radicals, nativist and nationalists scholars who insist on establishing a nativist understanding of history, and an "African interpretation of things, on creating one's own schemata of self mastery, of understanding oneself and the universe, of producing endogenous knowledge" (2002: 252), have in fact undermined the wide variety of African experiences that actually takes place on the ground. Furthermore, as outlined earlier, these modes of 'cultural otherhood' (Pieterse and Parekh 1995) are viewed by cosmopolitans as over-determined by nationalist resistance with an unhealthy bias on the rhetoric of "autonomy, resistance, and emancipation [which] serves as the sole criterion for determining the legitimacy of an authentic African discourse" (Mbembe 2002: 241). Describing them as nothing more than "faked philosophies" (Mbembe 2002c: 629), Mbembe argues for the complete overhaul of this African scholarship tradition, since it does nothing more than provide "mere manifestos, polemics, part of the highly political atmosphere of that period" (D'Amico-Samuels 1991: 76)

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[18] Taken from Homi Bhabha in *Location of Culture (*1997: 7).

[19] Leornard Harris describes various cosmopolitans in the following way- "Radical cosmopolitans reject the idea that ethnic or racial identities are justified for the purpose of groups forming cohesion   to protect themselves against dominant groups. A radical cosmopolitan is one who refrains from fixating on tribal (racial/ethnic/national) loyalties and is especially suspicious of employing such loyalties as criteria in moral deliberations...a radical cosmopolitan feels no compulsion to be loyal to his roots, origin, or heritage..." (2009: 184). . While "A moderate cosmopolitan is one who favours cultivating cultural resources associated with a specific ethnic, racial, or national groups on the premise that in-group cohesion and cultivation are provisionally necessary, if not also socially beneficial. Moderates or situated cosmopolitans consider such identities as warranted, but hope that in an ideal world such identities would dissipate, or at least their salience would have no effect on life chances." (Harris: 2009: 185)

Proposing new registers which go beyond viewing the world as an "archipelago of particularisms which can intercommunicate only on the basis of difference" (Pieterse and Parekh 1995: 9), cosmopolitan scholars such as Bhabha have argued for a "return to the present" (2004: 7); while others have similarly suggested "liberating of the present from the past" (Mbembe 2002b). In a *Public Culture* special issue on "*Johannesburg the elusive metropolis,*" Mbembe and Nuttall propose what they call new ways to theorise the complexities of African social life by merging their theoretical positions in the article, *"Writing the world from an African metropolis"* (2004). It begins by outlining the limitations of current social theory and studies as preoccupied with, "the obsession with originality of African societies by anthropology and the pragmatics of description, and the discourses of social state building and good governance, which preoccupy the development studies frame" (2004: 348). They then propose as post-nativist *imaginaire* that embraces what they call "bodies on the move" (ibid: 348). This framework, they argue, will move away from a "scholarship of difference" towards sameness as worldliness" (ibid: 348). That is, this fresh scholarship must rather be informed by revisiting the "frontiers of commonality and the potential for sameness-as-worldliness" (ibid: 351) which they argue would require that "scholarship on Africa should be deprovincialised" (ibid: 351)...and provide a "sense of the worldliness of African life in general..." (ibid: 352). This shift in perspective, they maintain, requires an epistemology and methodology on Africa based on revised assumptions around the metaphysics of difference, temporality, the privileging of victimhood over subjectivity, identities and existence as, "a formation of desires, passions and undifferentiated fantasies" (Mbembe 2006: 144), to the study of African social life.

Such an approach, they argue, would begin to allow the *contemporaneous* of situated African lived experiences to finally surface. After-all, as Mbembe has observed, "in Africa today, the subject who *accomplishes the age* and validates it, who lives and espouses his/her contemporaneousness-that is, what is "distinctive" or "particular" to his/her present real world-is first a subject who has an *experience* of "living in the concrete world" (Mbembe 2001a: 17). And an essential component of this contemporaneousness within this 'discourse of present' are notions of 'displacement" and 'existential uncertainty', which are seen as the main existential conditions characterising African lived realities today. Nuttall and Mbembe (2004: 349) then advocate that much of African scholarship has in fact underplayed this embeddedness of

contingency, provisionality from which the continent now actually speaks, and they maintain
that,

> it is "uncertainty and turbulence, instability and unpredictability, and rapid, chronic, and
> multidirectional shifts are the social forms taken, in many instances, by daily experience...[Yet]
> the conceptual categories with which to account for social velocity, the power of the unforeseen
> and the unfolding, are in need of refinement. So, too, the language with which to describe
> people's relentless determination to negotiate conditions of turbulence and to introduce order and
> predictability into their lives (2004: 349).

In theoretical efforts to give meaning to this location in the present, Mbembe proposes the
conceptual tools of "entanglement" and "displacement" as defining notions shaping this
contemporaneousness. Clearly influenced by recent theoretical reassessments in postcolonialism,
post-structuralism, deconstruction, new historicism and post-modernism[20] (Pieterse and Parekh
1995), Mbembe defines the notion of contemporaneousness as a process of entanglement which
is constituted by "multiple temporalities overlapping and superseding each other, sometimes
inside each other" (2002b: 3).

In *Locations of Culture* Bhabha further elaborates on this notion of the present by highlighting
that "to be part of a revisionary time, *a return to the present* to reinscribe our cultural
contemporaneity; to reinscribe our human, historic commonality" (1994:7, my emphases), is
necessary. He continues to say that this 'return to the present' entails "an encounter with
'newness' that is not part of the continuum of past and present. It creates a sense of the new as an
insurgent act of cultural translation. Such art does not merely recall the past as social cause or
aesthetic precedent; it renews the past, refiguring it as a contingent 'in-between' space, that
innovates and interrupts the performance of the present. The 'past-present' becomes part of the
necessity, not the nostalgia, of living" (Bhabha 1994: 7). In fact what these authors outline is that
in times of uncertainly and fracture, the present is not only a condition characterised by

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[20] Jordan (in Harrison 1991:6) points out a number of limitations in postmodernism: "the extreme relativism and
skpeticism which invalidate radical critique from the ranks of the politically engaged, the reaction against scientific
dogmatism that gives denial of the validity and reliability of theoretical explanations, the appropriation and
neutralization of the concepts of contradiction, power and authority; the conceptualisation of dialogic relationships
as textual rather than as concrete collaborations…the privileging of the force of rhetoric over institutionalised
relations of power; the absence of attention to racism and class inequality in poetic treatments of authority and
power...that postmodernism privileges poetics over political, and its politics is that of academia and not the world at
large."

multiplicities of social time and various temporalities, but is also experienced acutely "where immediatism prevails, enfolded in a time deprived of a horizon of expectation" (Pecaut 2000:147), which is contingent, indeterminate and provisional. However, Mbembe does clarify to us that we should not confuse cosmopolitans' emphases on the present to mean for example that "that colonialism or apartheid is over does not mean to negate history or to erase memory. It simply means to be attentive to those signs of the times which signal the entry into other configurations of human experience, hope and possibilities, or if you will other temporalities" (2002b).

In addition, cosmopolitans assert that nativist-aligned discourses have not adequately dealt with the notion of *freedom* in African experience as an ontological condition. They identify the present as being the site of freedom and possible transformation, and ultimately *freedom as expressed in being lifted off the weight of the past.* As phenomenologist philosopher Jeremy Weate reminds us, Fanon in his classic essay, The *Condition of the Black Man* had theorised about this and suggested that, "instead of being mesmerized by the past, the present is attended to as the site of possible transformation and dis-alienation." In other words, the weight of history was therefore to be dismissed; he further asserts: "I will not make myself the man of any past. I do not want to exalt the past at the expense of my present and of my here...the only past that is legitimate for the purposes of freedom is a universal past" (in Weate 2001: 178). He then declares, "I am not a prisoner of history. I should not seek there for the meaning of my destiny. In the world through which I travel, I am endlessly creating myself. I am not the slave of the slavery that dehumanised my ancestors. I am my own foundation" (Fanon in Weate 2001: 178). Working with Fanon, Mbembe makes similar claims that the *condition for freedom is to be liberated from the past* when he proposes that,

> In order to build a truly cosmopolitan culture in Africa, the present has somewhat to be liberated from the past. It should be clear that I am not advocating the erasure of the past. I am preoccupied with ways in which we can open avenues of memorial practices that foster the work of remembrance-but remembrance is part of the work of freedom, the ultimate frontier. It cannot be achieved through black racial romanticism (2002b: 14).

2.6.1 General criticism levelled against cosmopolitans

Faye Harrison notes that "cosmopolitans who are usually located within a postmodern epistemology believe that they have moved African cultural studies into a cutting edge scholarly space which will liberate the discipline from its dysfunctional modernist (positivist) realistic legacy" (1991: 4), but instead this scholarship has in fact served to "devalue the currency of the local" (Cooper 2004: 1). This is in part because cosmopolitan scholarship is only able to construct these 'new' epistemic horizons of 'alternative historicities' and subjectivity through a rejection of 'cultural nationalism', 'ethnic absolutism' or 'racial essentialism' and therefore tends to label "essentialistic just about any strategy that relies on ethnic solidarity" (Bakare Yusuf 2001: 88). However, this sort of cultural theorising that strategically de-emphasises historical and political-economy realities essentially obliterates the specificities of African historical and cultural experiences. In fact, in most 'return to the present' cultural discourses politics tends to be brought in as a "background variable, or, more often, it is discussed in a generalized and unreflective way" (Pieterse and Prakesh 1995: 13).

For 'return to the source' advocates such as Zegeye and Vambe who support historical particularism, these efforts to minimise the efforts of cultural nationalists in dismantling oppressive regimes, such as in the case of Antony Appiah, fail to acknowledge that-- "ordinary people in the colonial and post-colonial context are able to acknowledge the praiseworthy political projects cultural nationalists have authored. Appiah fails to understand that these same 'ordinary' people have criticised some of the actions of cultural nationalists during colonialism and continue to criticise those elite driven projects that do not promote the interests of the common people" (2009:12), constitutes a deep flaw within this discourse. This position is supported by Carolyn Cooper who maintains that these anti-essentialists positions are made possible by,

> Ubiquitous postmodernist conceptions of the self as a hybridised mass of displaced, free-floating, multiple signifiers are quite irrelevant in supposedly "post-colonial" societies where hardworking people struggle to articulate a coherent sense of identity in resistance to the destabilising imperative of neo-colonial social, economic, and political forces (2004: 2).

She criticises a cosmopolitan scholarship that is driven by anti-essentialist anxieties as disregarding precisely what is locally and culturally specific about subordinated cultures which she says are also driven by "economic realities, including racism, anti-colonialism and Black nationalism" (Cooper 2003: 46). Arguing against conceptions which regard radical localism as problematic, such as those from Gilroy, Appiah and Mbembe, Cooper reminds us that the local should not be conceived as "narrowly insular, uniform flat landscape, cut off from currents of thoughts beyond its shores" but rather as "specificities of voices, of positioning, of identity, of cultural" (Stuart Hall in Cooper: 2004: 2).

Therefore, these critics of the 'return to the present' discourses argue that by grounding African experiences within perspectives which propose positions such as the "worldliness as sameness," end up failing to appreciate that for the majority of the world's oppressed the presence of the past in the present has been a critical factor in making their lives bearable and coherent (Bakare-Yusuf 2000). Given this, Bakare-Yusuf (2000: 105) suggests that contemporaneousness should rather be read as when the "present becomes a (re)memoration of the past, where both African history and the New World future are inherently woven in a tapestry of contradiction" (2000:105). Furthermore, this idea within cosmopolitan scholarship which advocates commonality over difference, the global over the local has amounted to the following situation,

> Although a cosmopolitan eschews parochial commitments, unfortunately, societies promoting cosmopolitanism frequently practice sophisticated forms of cruelty. By 'sophisticated cruelty' I mean the kind of cruelty that sustains socially effective ways of subjugating native or ethnic cultures within a society, by producing increased efficiencies such as standardised weights, currencies, languages and religious practices" (Harris 2009: 189).

As it has been pointed out, the problem with such conditions is that it is usually the oppressed who must be converted in order to experience a world common to all human beings. Therefore for world historian Paul Zeleza much of the scholarship from cosmopolitans can be viewed as part of, "a long line of disempowering theories and discourses, coming at a time when Africans who had long been silenced had begun to act as the subjects rather than objects of history" (2006 :9-10). Ironically, observes Faye Harrison (1991: 5), these postmodernist mostly postcolonial, mostly literary experiments that essentially undermine the ontological status of the subject have risen in academic popularity when "women and Third World theorists are challenging the universality and hegemony of western andocentric views" (1991: 5).

2.7 Gendered Perspectives on Contemporary Popular Culture and new sites for Reclamations of Humanity

Gendered perspectives on contemporary popular culture, especially those authored by African women and focusing on poor urban women's lives, have received scant attention within all popular culture studies approaches. However, one of the most exciting theoretical developments regarding African women's subjectivities has been in the popular culture arena and is pioneered by African women scholars who are theorising new variants of 'indigenous feminism' (Cooper 2003), 'grassroots femininity' (Hope 2006) and 'ghetto feminism' (Thomas 2004). These gendered readings of popular culture, they argue, are based on the mores of ghetto women and directly engage the bodies and desires of working class women. Jamaican popular cultural theorist Carolyn Cooper's work is perhaps one of the earliest that refined this gender perspective on Jamaican popular culture employing a neo-African folk lens in her book, *Noises in the Blood (1995).* Her reading against the grain of Jamaican dancehall spaces as empowering for working class women, was extended in her following book *Sound Clash: Jamaican Dancehall Culture at Large,* where she made the provocative conclusion that "slackness[21], though often conceived and critiqued as an exclusively sexual and politically conservative discourse, can be much more permissively theorized as "a radical, underground confrontation with the patriarchal gender ideology and the duplicitous morality of fundamentalist Jamaican society" (Cooper 2004: 3).

Slackness, which is an integral part of Jamaican Dancehall popular culture, has generated opposing views on whether it should be viewed as liberating, or merely acts that commodify poor ghetto women. On the one side of the debate is Cooper's provocative position which, as mentioned, puts forward the argument that the raw celebration of sexuality and unapologetic materialism in dancehall culture among seductively dressed women is in fact a "liberating space for Jamaican women" (2004: 21), even though this liberation is contingent and partial. In fact,

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[21] According to Stanley-Niaah Slackness refers to "hovering around untidy and illicit displays of especially sexual practices sometimes refered to as nastiness. It can mean illicit sex, public displays of sex and sexuality, lewd language containing explicit references to sex or sexual innuendo, or talk of body parts" (2006:182-183). Carolyn Cooper adds that "the *Dictionary of Jamaican English* does not have an entry on "slackness". But it does define "slack" as "1. a slovenly person. 2. a woman of loose morals" (2003:3).

she explains it more comprehensively when she asserts that, "I propose that Jamaican dancehall culture at home and in the Diaspora is best understood as a potentially liberating space in which working class women and their more timid middle class sisters assert the freedom to play out eroticised roles that may not ordinarily be available to them in the rigid social conventions of the everyday" (2004: 17). This reading of dancehall has generated an uproar not only within academic circles, but also in the public space where public figureheads such as Ires Myrie, vice-President of the Business and Professional Women's Club of Kingston, Jamaica dismissed popular cultural scholar Cooper's reading of dancehall as a liberating space for working class women as, "...derogatory comments. The fact that many of these women dance to these songs..., compete with other women to attract their male cohorts, dress their young daughters to attract the males, is evidence that conditioning has happened. To us some of the dancehall lyrics have been used to enslave, subjugate and demoralise women" (in Cooper 2004: 11).

For Cooper such responses were not surprising since the mainstream's reading of Jamaican dancehall culture had up until then been dominated by the view that it was "misogynist, homophobic, homicidal discourse that reduces both men and women to bare essentials: skeletal remains…In this dehumanising caricature women are misrepresented as mindless bodies, (un)dressed and on display exclusively for male sexual pleasure. And men are stereotyped as dog-hearted predators stalking potential victims" (2004: 16). In her neo-oral, lyrics-centred perspective based on a localised politics of representation (Cooper 1995; 2004), it becomes evident that Cooper's project was primarily to surface the pleasurable, redemptive and humanising possibilities also present in what have been conceptualised as wholly poor and patriarchal spaces by traditional critical discourses. In her attempt to make art from the harsh socio-economic existential present in Jamaica's ghettoes she then reflects how, "the people of the Caribbean share a common capacity to make sweet music out of the industrial waste of our societies" (1995: 191). What elsewhere Jamaican poet and literary scholar Kwame Dawes (2007) has referred to as the *creative redemptive force* (referring to the reggae music which took the world by storm) which came out of marginalised ghettos such as Trenchtown, Jamaica.

In contrast to Cooper, Donna Hope's *Inna da Dancehall: Popular Culture and the Politics of Identity in Jamaica*, deploying a socio-political popular culture reading of Jamaican dancehall

culture concludes that-- "Yet, based on my own longstanding work and immersion in the dancehall I find it prudent to underline the fact that while the heterogeneous image of femininity may be engaged in what could be classified as liberatory sexuality, this feminine persona is more actively engaged in the promotion of a capitalistic-influenced sexuality for the benefit of men" (Hope 2006: 69). Put simply, dancehall does nothing more that commodify women. Andrea Queeley has also reached similar conclusions in her analyses of hip-hop cultures' raw display of black women's sexuality, and maintains that women using their availability as sexual objects are transformed into another commodity where they "use sex to get paid" (2003: 13).

These views support traditional feminist outlooks whose aims includes identifying and dismantling harmful patriarchal power structures that promote women as objects of male desire. And indeed we cannot set aside the ways in which contemporary global economic structures and political ideologies promote consumer driven heterosexualities and desires. Furthermore, in these neo-liberal political-economic circumstances where most things are calculated on the basis of exchange value, Paul Gilroy observes that, "the desire to be free is closely linked with the desire to be seen to be free and with the pursuit of an individual and embodied intensity of experience that contrasts sharply with the collective and spiritual forms of immortality esteemed in times gone by" (1996: 98). The sign of our times, as Stanley-Niaah observes, is characterised by a new "quick wealth sensibility and the evolution of an exaggerated, ostentatious selfhood" (2006: 179), which also reflects our emerging morality. However, Cooper (1995) quickly reminds us that in addition to understanding how the economic conditions of Jamaica forces women of all social classes to commodify their sexuality, we should not lose sight that women's enjoyment of sexual and economic independence also increases women's pleasure, which is also an essential constituent of total health (1995). Afterall, as Trans Haunani-Kay (1986) in *Eros and Power: The promise of feminist theory* outlines, that part of the collective struggle for existence includes the struggle for the pleasure principle, which is never wholly defeated even during extreme repression. She proposes that rather than "repress our bodily needs, which later result as a dirty fascination or morbid rejection of the body...we should integrate and accept the body's pleasures as well as its pains" (1986: 98). But more importantly, Cooper reminds us that conservative discourses of domesticated female sexuality have been an integral part of colonial projects of reading indigenous women's bodies as signifying the absence of beauty, sensuality and desirable

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sexuality. And in fact as feminist scholars such as Audre Lorde and Adrienne Rich have pointed out that women's desire and sexuality contains a rich potential to, in fact, subvert and challenge patriarchy which seeks to control women's bodies (in Hewitt 2009).

Recently, some feminists have begun to caution that there is a need to challenge rigid feminist dismissals of female longings for style and beauty, which feminist bell hooks (2000) argues has in fact undermined feminist politics. In *Feminism is for Everybody*, she observes that this schism within feminism has resulted in a situation where, "increasingly those who write and speak openly about sexual desire and practice tend to dismiss or distance themselves from feminist sexual politics. And more than ever the feminist movement is seen primarily as anti-sex. Visionary feminist discourse on sexual passion has suggested that sexual right must also critically incorporate sexual pleasure as a right for all social classes of women.

In fact, for Cooper (2004) these brazen displays of sexuality and excessive "bling-bling" materialism must also be viewed as releasing these women from the prison of their identities which often limits them to their social class and colour. Within permissive dancehall cultural spaces, these women revel in their power to hold the male gaze and in fact "no feminist anxieties of objectification disturb her" (Cooper 2004: 128). Choosing to centralise working class women's resourcefulness and strategies of cunning disguise, seduction and entrapment tropes, which in fact deploy folklore heavily, Cooper reveals the pleasures that women experience in *being desired.* And as postcolonial scholar Frantz Fanon has argued, "as soon as I desire, I am asking to be considered. I am not merely here-and-now, sealed into nothingness" (in Bhabha 1994: 8). While anthropologist Sonya Madison has also made the critical observation that-- "Desire is inseparable in the formation of subjectivity, because it is desire that is the driving force in mankind's innate and unconscious need for completeness and recognition...in the struggle for completeness and recognition, *desire is not simply a sexual force, but part of existence and what constitutes being human.* Desire is the desire not simply for a body, but for the desire of the other-the desire to be recognised, to feel free of lack and loneliness. It is the desire to be desired" (2005: 62, my emphases).

In other words, *desire rehumanises* these women who are often viewed as cheap and/or replaceable labour within the global labour matrix so often pushed to the margins of their

communities, and reinserts them back into the 'world of reciprocal recognitions' (Bhabha 1996) that create a humane lifeworld.

Furthermore, for these women whose *desire has often been cast as a wound,* which is caught in a litany of loss, erotic despair, unfulfilled physical yearnings, abandonment and broken promises, (hooks 1990), in these displays of sexual desires they also affirm the pleasures of the body, while also celebrating the therapeutic potential of the dancing body (particularly the butt and hips), which serve as loci of the sensual which has often been denied in a repressed everyday ghetto life (1995). And this celebration of the creative body is important as Paul Gilroy reminds us that "*dance refined the exercise of autonomous power in the body by claiming it back from the absolute sovereignty of work*. It produced that alternative 'natural' hierarchy wholly anti-ethical to the order required by the institutions of white supremacy" (1996: 102, my emphases). And so contrary to some feminist readings which have viewed this raw celebration of sexuality and excessive adornment as a commodification and objectification of the African female body and sexuality, Cooper (1995: 2004) proposes that her ultimate project has in fact been precisely to undermine these negative dominant readings in social science scholarship of the feminised native body as vulgar.

2.8. Conclusion

Despite the divergent positions and contestations present in popular culture conceptual approaches and discourses, this analytical lens offers a more grounded and situated promise to understand the township mothers' and daughters' strategies of survival and how they humanise their everyday lives. This is largely because they move us beyond the overwhelmingly structural and institutionally-based explanations that have historically dominated what it means to be a township subject. Instead they present theorisations that reframe familiar conceptual categories in order to better comprehend how the poor, using their own popular cultural resources, make the intolerable tolerable, and the unbearable bearable (Simone 2008). In constructing a popular culture conceptual framework on township mothers' and daughters' lived and embodied survival

strategies to tame and humanise their surroundings, this study synthesised illuminating elements from both the cultural studies and anthropological approaches to popular culture. It thus incorporated both the idea of culture as political (Hall 1996) from cultural studies, while also embracing anthropological centerings of categories such as the 'lived experience' based on the everyday sense-making strategies of people in their lives (Harrington and Bielby 2001). Furthermore, my proposed approach will draw from both 'return to the source' discourses that stresses local resistance and forms of cultural specificity, while simultaneously acknowledging the contemporaneity of experience, and the multiplicity of meanings and heterogeneity that is inherent in social life, as suggested in the 'return to the present' discourses. It is thus from this integrating, as opposed to polarising, bases that my proposed popular culture framework formulates. In the following chapter I then proceed to present my proposed conceptual framework on township mothers and daughters lived and embodied 'cultures of survival' which is closely allied to African womanism and existential phenomenology.

CHAPTER 3: Township Mothers and Daughters Lived and Embodied 'Popular Cultures of Survival'

3.0 Introduction: Towards a Popular Culture Studies Framework aligned to African Womanism and Existential Phenomenology in South Africa

The aim of this chapter is to introduce an alternative framework to analyse the lived and embodied suffering and healing experiences of township mothers and daughters. To do this I will propose a popular culture framework that is aligned to African womanism and existential phenomenology that I have coined *township mothers' and daughters' lived and embodied 'cultures of survival'*. The aim is not to take these diverse theoretical traditions with very different intellectual histories and discourses and artificially mould them together so that they appear consistent and coherent, but to use a much more pragmatic approach. This pragmatic perspective will extract those concepts and basic insights within both theoretical frameworks which give analytical depth and elasticity towards creating a conceptual framework that contributes to the "felt sense of life" (Slattery 2000: 238), a dimension on African[22] women's experiences in townships that most explanations have so far lacked. In this way the suggested approach must then enable us to move between multiple registers and sensibilities, travelling between disciplines to ultimately produce a trans-disciplinary text which will be predominantly based on an "*experientially-based epistemology*[23]" (Keating 2005: 244).

As evident from the previous chapters, both the frameworks and discourses that have dominated social studies on townships and African cultural production have tended to favour northern based

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[22] I use the term African to include both continental Africans as well as diasporic subjects of African descent. I have not used the term "Africana' as this only captures those Africans from the continent and African-Americans from the United States of America, whereas this study draws on scholars of African descent across the globe.

[23] The reason I call this an experientially based epistemology is because this popular cultural conceptual framework of township mothers and daughters lived and embodied 'cultures of survival' has been principally shaped by the material gathered from the field and participant's voices which compelled me to think through an analytical framework that could as best as possible capture what was being actually experienced in their everyday lives.

and/or male scholars. However, at the same time it is becoming abundantly clear that we need to unlock ourselves and think beyond these western, male-centric and dichotomising approaches of formulating conceptual positions, since they have frankly failed to produce meaningful explanations on urban Africans' lived experiences. In fact, what they have done is to reinforce the logocentric notion of reason born, as we know, out of enlightenment, which is based on dualistic thinking and radical separations, which limits and falsifies lived life with their neat distinctions (Levine 2005).

This is not to say that the hegemony of this rationalist epistemology has not produced some of the most fascinating and illuminating work, but to point to how it has also eclipsed the "variety of ways in which human beings create visible lives-emotional, bodily, magical, metaphorical, anthropomorphic; practical and narrative" (Levine 2005: 179). That is, when we draw on social theories that also allow for the explorations of how human beings create a sense that life is worth living and celebrating (Bakare Yusuf 2000; Cooper 2004; Tavares 1998), we also enlarge and deepen our current epistemic frameworks to understand African women's contemporary lives and experiences. Therefore, proposing a popular culture studies framework which is heavily shaped by African womanism (which privileges African women's ways-of-knowing) and Existential Phenomenology (which privileges the body's ways-of-knowing), becomes an attempt to break away from existing oppositional logics reflected in current scholarship on townships and African cultural production which, as we know, shy away from the messiness of experience. In fact this thesis continues the efforts of clearing and making room for a conceptual space where townships mothers' and daughters' lived and embodied experiences coloured by contradiction, paradox and ambiguity, which in fact constitutes their situated existence, can surface, be heard, and productively engaged. I will do this first by drawing on the several and rich yet marginalised conceptual frameworks generated by specifically African women, which is part of a continuous project by African womanist and feminist scholars to disturb and introduce 'other' openings to read popular cultural processes and practices currently taking shape among urban African women and their communities. This includes centring the emerging scholarship among African women scholars who have begun to interrupt taken-for-granted assumptions about African women's lived and embodied subjectivities, selfhood, agency, desire, sexuality in particularly urban ghettoes.

I cannot overemphasise the alarming gap in African popular culture studies neglect to incorporate and centre the experiences and voices of African women within its analysis. Furthermore, even up until now, very few women-centred perspectives that are generated by African women scholars are being fore-fronted in the academy. Now this project to further mainstream the works of African women scholars cannot only be fuelled by oppositional political and ideological standpoints. It seems to me that this needs to also be informed by the realisation that in further neglecting these ways-of-knowing, we are in fact eroding the potential to further expand our theoretical frameworks to know our worlds, and therefore, to know ourselves even better.

By engaging ideas and experiences that are often obscured by more orthodox approaches, I would even argue that we are, in fact, contributing towards fundamental shifts in how we even begin to know, and the nature of knowledge itself. And since these accounts by African women scholars have largely existed outside the dominant *power-epistemic privilege*, they have generated a plethora of alternative epistemologies which have been variously labelled as "views from the cracks," "a third eye view", "post-rationalist epistemologies" (Alzundua in Levine 2000: 173) and "endarkened epistemologies" (Dillard 2006), which are characterised by their displacement of official conceptual frameworks. I am particularly referring to those women-centred accounts, such as the one's proposed by Carolyn Cooper's in the previous chapter, which acknowledge the spiritual, the imaginal and the embodied as also legitimate knowledge construction sites, and in this way demand us to have more inclusive and nuanced vision of theory and reality.

Such theoretical ruptures are crucial in as far as they unearth alternative memory sites, forms and places where in fact ordinary African women have elaborated and stored their memories and histories. Social anthropologist Robert Adams reminds us that, "popular history is never entirely displaced. The 'people without history' keep their own books. Their 'hidden transcripts' masquerade in plain view, disrupting 'official' accounts for their homecoming" (2006: 71). And in this way these accounts are important in as far as they cast doubt to the official story, thereby demystifying dominance (Alexander 2005). However, before we outline my proposed theoretical framework on 'cultures of survival' let me first outline some of the reasons why African women

have felt compelled to construct alternative epistemologies and methodologies that better resonate with their marginalised lived and embodied experiences.

3.1 African women's alternative knowledges

As illustrated in the last section of the previous chapter there is an emerging scholarship among African scholars that has begun to challenge taken-for-granted assumptions regarding what a gendered contemporary popular culture studies framework for analysing urban ghettoes might mean. This determination to carve our own theoretical spaces has arisen out of the misfit we have often experienced between our academic training and what we as African women scholars have witnessed and experienced in our own communities. We have thus remained what Afro-centric feminist Hill-Collins calls, 'outsiders'-within our own disciplines. Reflecting on her own location within the academy, Hill-Collins writes,

> I found my training as a social scientist inadequate for the task of studying the subjugated knowledge of a Black women's standpoint. This is because subordinate groups have long had to use alternative ways to create independent self definition and self evaluations and to articulate them through our own specialist knowledge (2007: 198).

This discomfort for many of us arose out of what Hill-Collins calls, "*a misfit between [their] personal cultural experiences and the elements of dominant social science paradigms*" (1998: 18, my emphases), which have had very little to say about our situated experiences and the ways we have and continue to survive and create as African women scholars. This misfit/disjuncture is aptly captured by African academics and creative writers in various ways as outlined below. For womanist Cynthia Dillard reflecting on her work on African American women's academic lives writes:

> being a black woman scholar, and like most, relying on formal academic training designed to encourage us to decontextualise our deeply raced/ gendered/ classed/ sexualized lives and alienate ourselves from our communities, families, and even ourselves in order to do "legitimate" scholarship: Attempting to work within such sites is fraught with immeasurable contradictions and exaggerations (2006: 27).

The creative writer Ralph Ellison is simply outraged when reading several academic accounts of Blacks in Harlem as he observes,

> I simply don't recognise Harlem [in the sociological formulas]. I certainly don't recognise the people of Harlem whom I know. Which is by no means to deny the ruggedness of life there, nor the hardship, the poverty, the sordidness, the filth. But there is something else in Harlem, something subjective, willful and complexly and compellingly human. It is 'that something else' that challenges the sociologists who ignore it, and the society which would deny its existence (in Brown 1991:76).

This dislocation among African scholars has thus forced us to construct knowledges outside traditional knowledge validation frameworks which uniquely synthesise academic and everyday lived knowledge, and womanist Phillips and McCaskill (1995: 1008) elaborates on how,

> Over many generations of constructing knowledge and gradually chipping away at the impermeability of the academy, Black women intellectuals, whether inside or outside the academy, have created systems of translation between the two milieus-the academic and the everyday.

Furthermore, the experience of our intimate lives being appropriated, exploited, misconstrued and ultimately dismissed, has further fuelled this intense need to interrupt dominant perspectives on what constitutes our subjectivities, selfhood, womanhood, bodies, agency, sexuality, etc. And it is within these (mis)recognitions that a *Black women's standpoint*[24] emerged and progressively penetrated mainstream academic discourses focussing on African women's lives. Hill-Collins defines this alternative epistemology as,

> First, Black women political and economic status provides them with a distinctive set of experiences that offers a different view of material reality than that available to other groups. The unpaid and paid work that Black women perform, the types of communities in which they live, and the kinds of relationships they have with others suggest that African-American women, as a group, experience a different world than those who are not black and female. Second, these experiences stimulate a distinctive Black feminist consciousness concerning that material reality. In brief, a subordinate group not only experiences a different reality than a group that rules, but a subordinate group may interpret that reality differently than a dominant group (1989: 749).

Even though mainstream scholarship would rather ignore and/or further marginalise these types of knowledges as over-subjective and over-emotional, and therefore, unacceptable for the academic context, as Chicano radical feminist and poet Gloria Anzaldua confirms,

> The dominant culture…would rather ignore these knowledges (indigenous)-condescend and say you're being too hysterical, you're woman, what do feelings or the soul or your

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[24] Virginia Oleson (2005: 243) explains that "standpoints are cognitive emotional-political achievements, crafted out of located social-historical-bodily experience."

body have to do with academia? These knowledges that you bring in with your body and soul and your spiritual practice are not accepted (in Lara 2005:51).

However African womanists and feminists fully recognise that by introducing these subjugated frameworks we can only "enrich the academy, further humanises it, and makes it more accessible to a wider segment of humanity including, but not limited to Black women" (Phillips and McCaskell 1995: 10). As mentioned, my proposed popular culture studies conceptual framework on township mothers' and daughters' lived and embodied 'cultures of survival' is supported by two theoretical pillars, that is: *African womanism* and *existential phenomenology*. Let me now turn to discussing the first pillar which privileges *African women's ways of knowing*.

3.2 Dimensions of African Womanism

In my journey towards mapping an alternative woman-centred popular culture studies approach, womanism provided me with a useful starting point. Womanism suited me as it immediately recognises the necessity of creating theories outside of traditional knowledge validation systems by embracing the idea of alternative and multiple knowledge sites. Interestingly, one of the first definitions of womanism was in fact poetically, rather than scholarly, defined. It was coined by the poet and novelist Alice Walker in her much cited article *In Search of our Mothers Gardens* which celebrated black women's creative heritage. She classically defined it as follows,

> Womanist: A black feminist or feminist of colour...From the black womanish...Usually referring to outrageous, audacious, courageous or willful behaviours. Wanting to know more and in greater depth than considered good for one…A woman who loves other women...Appreciates and prefers women's culture, women's emotional flexibility...and women's strength... (Walker 1983: xii)

Black feminist Barbara Christian in her essay on Alice Walker, *"The Black Woman Artist as Wayward"*, explained that this definition with its emphasis on independence and unity came directly out of black women's *culture of surviving* multiple oppressions and dehumanisation (in White 2004). While Layli Phillips in her recent comprehensive edited collection, *Womanism: A Reader,* provides us with one of the most comprehensive definitions of womanism as, "a social change perspective rooted in Black women's and other women of color's everyday experiences and everyday methods of problem solving in everyday spaces, extended to the problem of ending all forms of oppression for all people, restoring the balance between people and the

environment/nature, and reconciling human life with the spiritual dimension" (2006: xx). She then identifies five overreaching characteristics that she argues uniquely define a womanist perspective which include: that, it is anti-oppressionist; it is vernacular; it is non-ideological; it is communitarian; and it is spiritualised (ibid: 2006).

As a universal perspective authored by African women drawing from their unique history of oppression and activism, womanism was then able to open up a system of analysis and a worldview that was previously not explicitly available to African women scholars. Previously, the dominant critical perspective was feminism which centred its analysis on the eradication of sexism, the dismantling of patriarchy, and the elimination of violence against women (Phillips 2006). As social-change perspectives, womanism and feminism both fall within the larger rubric of the critical paradigm. So while they may differ on certain dimensions, they also share the goal of generating knowledge that contributes to the emancipation and empowerment of society (Banks-Wallace 2006). However, I must point out that these approaches are characterised more by intersections, overlaps and convergences, and as womanist Layli Phillips (2006) suggests, they should then be rather be viewed as sisters. In fact, womanist historian Yvette Abrahams (2000) reminds us that many of the analytical building tools of womanism have drawn from the pioneering works of Black feminist scholars who locate themselves within various feminist traditions such as African feminism[25], third world feminism, postcolonial feminism and Pan-African feminism. And Alice Walker, as mentioned considered by many the pioneer of womanism when she first used the term womanist in her short story *Coming Apart* that was published in 1979, used womanist and feminist interchangeably in the following interesting way-- "The wife has never considered herself a feminist-though she is, of course, a 'womanist.' A womanist is a feminist, only more common" (In Phillips 2006: xix).

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[25] The following are some of the critical texts in African feminism: Awa Thiam's *Black Sister Speak out: Feminism and oppression in Black Africa* (1978); Christine Obbo's *African Women: Their struggle for economic independence* (1981); Ifi Amadiume, *Male Daughters, Female husbands: Gender and Sex in an African society* (1987); Florence Dolphyne's *The Emancipation of Women: An African Perspective* (1991); Mercy Oduyoye's *Daughters of Anowa: African Women and Patriarchy (*1995); Mary E. Modupe Kolawoke, *Womanism and African Consciousness* (1997); Obioma Nnameka, ed, *Sisterhood, Feminisms and Power: From Africa to the Diaspora* (1998); Patricia McFadden, outspoken Zimbabwean feminist and general editor of the *South African Political Economy Monthly* (In Guy Sheftall: 2003: 36).

So it makes analytical sense that womanists and feminists should share propositions such as *multiple and interlocking identities and oppressions* where race, class and gender are viewed as mutually constitutive categories, a conceptual innovation which allows us to better understand the totality of African women's experiences. Barbara Smith (in Hill Collins 1986) has rightly observed that the centralisation of intersectionality and interlocking oppressions is perhaps one of the most significant ideological contributions made by Black feminist traditions to social theory. Second, by paying serious attention to the participants experiences and their modes of constructing themselves in their worlds (Allen 2002), African feminist and womanist epistemologies are profoundly rooted in broader notions of knowledge construction, where for instance lived experience, 'survival knowledge,' embodied knowledge, common sense, moral wisdom all form legitimate knowledge.

But if we look more closely we find that there are even greater overlaps between the Afrocentric[26] feminist perspective and womanism, than any other Black feminist tradition. These theoretical models have such a close proximity that in many accounts they are often used interchangeably by womanists and Afrocentric feminists alike. For example in search of a culturally valid women's theory, Patricia Hill Collins (2007) outlines the following as the key building blocks to her *Afrocentric feminist epistemology*- wisdom as essential for survival; concrete experience as bases for knowledge; the importance of dialogue; the ethic of care; and the ethic of personal accountability in knowledge production.

However, in formulating this Afro-centric feminist perspective, she admits that she was compelled to replace "existing definitions of culture in Afro-centric scholarship that often viewed culture as being an accumulation of static, ahistoric traits moved from one locale to

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[26] Jerome Schiele (2007: 188-189) maintains that the "Afrocentric paradigm is a social science paradigm/a worldview predicated on the philosophical concepts of contemporary African American and traditional Africa which maintains that the philosophical integrity of traditional Africa has survived among continental Africans (Mazrui 1986; Mbiti 1970; Zahan 1979) and among people of the African Diaspora (Akbar 1979; Asante 1988; Dixon 1976; Kambon 1992). Afrocentricity then has three objectives:

i. It seeks to promote an alternative social science paradigm more reflective of the cultural and political reality of African-Americans; ii. It seeks to dispel the negative distortions about people of African ancestry by legitimising and disseminating a worldview that goes back thousands of years and exists in the hearts and minds of many people of African descent; and iii. It seeks to promote a worldview that will facilitate human and societal transformation toward spiritual moral and humanistic ends"

another, to another with a more dynamic, historically grounded, and socially constructed perspective. I aimed for a view of Afrocentricity that was not a normative yardstick to measure blackness" (1992: 518). This reassessment of Afrocentricity was in fact responding to the growing number of critiques which accused mainstream Afrocentric approaches as over-emphasising the African male experience, while celebrating the traditional roles of women and thus inevitably promoting a patriarchal vision of African life (Nkumane 1999). And for womanist African languages scholar, Khabonina Nkumane the main differences between Afrocentrists and Womanists was simply that,

> Afrocentrists continue the patriarchal aspects of the Eurocentric male perspective, while womanist reflect on the entire African American community from a female perspective. While Afrocentrists assert the validity of a separate and distinct voice from the European one, womanists further that distinction by validating the unique perspective of African American women. Afrocentrists are not womanist, *but womanists are Afrocentric* (1999: 36, my emphasis).

Another African gender scholar who has been a key figure in reformulating the Afrocentric feminist perspective is Nigerian born Oyeronke Oyewemu. Her starting point is that if we fail to further develop Afrocentric conceptual categories within studies of women's lives, we will continue to contribute to the existing historical continuity of uncritically adopting and relying on Western social categories which introduces the risk of further erasing African histories, cultural norms and institutions. Not only does this add to "epistemological dependency and laziness" (Oyewemu in Bakare-Yusuf 2002, 2), but it also continues the reproduction of "distortions, obfuscations in language and total lack of comprehension since the social categories and institutions are incommensurable" (Oyewemu 2004: 7), within African scholarship. Oyewemu thus suggests that any future theory building by African scholars must be informed by local concerns and interpretations of African experiences, and when we do this we must "interrogate foundational assumptions undergirding hegemonic intellectual tools while at the same time recover[ing] local epistemologies" (2004: xiv). Finally, she suggests that if we as African researchers fail to urgently incorporate these epistemological and ideological concerns, we will repeatedly waste valuable time on the theme of misrepresentation at the expense of "building knowledge on the specificities of African social life and building genuine dialogues with others" (2004: 25).

However, we must also keep in mind that several criticisms have been raised around the problematics of constructing a uniquely African episteme. For example, Nigerian-based existentialist feminist philosopher Bibi Bakare-Yusuf cautions scholars striving to articulate an account of identity and social dynamics in opposition to the western norm as they are bound to encounter the "repressing [of] the difference, the silences that inhere within the object of study itself" (2004 :9).

However, despite the many convergences mentioned between African womanists and feminists, it is important to point two major divergences between these epistemologies. These include womanism insistence on *'self-naming'* and its privileging of a *'culturally valid women's theory'*. Womanist historian Yvette Abrahams explains that it is the power of self definition and self-naming which incorporates a vision of humanity that is "self-centred rather than other defined, that makes womanism an "adult name" (Gqola in Abrahams 2000: 67). And as African womanist Mary Modupe Kolawole aptly reminds us of the centrality of naming among Africans-- "You have to establish your identity yourself and not leave it to others. Self-naming is very central to the African worldview. In many African cultures, naming assumes an almost sacred status…This is at the heart of the search for new terminologies of self-definition" (1997: 65). In describing why she chose womanism rather than feminism as a preferred theoretical framework, Denise Troutman adds, "I have selected womanism as an ideological framework instead of Black feminism for two reasons. First, womanism emerges from African American culture itself, emanating from and relating to women in particular. The phrase Black feminism appears to colonise an ideology grounded in a different set of historical events, a different reality" (2002: 104). And in support of this, Hayes (1995: 52) maintains that for a woman to call herself womanist means "to embrace, to love her culture and religious-cultural traditions, her people, her people's struggle, her own embodiment...to tap the roots of the historically traditional liberation capability of Black people." Womanism can then also be seen as reflecting the multiple ways of theorising African womanhood and femininities, where womanism tends to *emphasise the African cultural framework rather than the socio-political framework* as a way of reclaiming the autonomy of African women's experiences, and with a tendency to emphasise all forms of oppression, as opposed to privileging gender or sexism (Phillips 2006).

Like all emerging conceptual frameworks the womanist idea has also undergone challenges and changes from within on what womanism ought to entail. For example, there are those womanists who suggest that womanism is a distinct African women's intellectual tradition which is "not Black feminism, Africana feminism or Walker's womanism…Africana womanism is an ideology created and designed for all women of African descent. It is grounded in African culture and focuses on the unique struggles, needs and desires of African women" (Hudson Weems 1997: 157). This is the definition of Africana womanism[27] according to its founder Cleonora Hudson Weems. While Mary Modupe Kolawole in *Womanism and African Consciousness*, advocates an inclusive definition of African Womanism[28] that draws from literary scholar Chikwenye Okonjo Ogunyemi's pioneering article in 1985 *Womanism: The dynamics of the contemporary black female novel in English,* where she defined it as a "philosophy that celebrates Black roots, the ideals of black life, while giving a balanced presentation of black woman-dom. It concerns itself as much with Black sexual power tussle as with the world power structure that subjugates Blacks" (in Kolawole 1997: 24). The above-mentioned discussion highlights that although during the initial stages of its development womanism wanted to avoid qualifiers such as 'Black' and 'African' (Abrahams 2000), it has not escaped this natural development found in all dynamic and contested theoretical formulations. However, for the purposes of this study I employ the term African womanism in ways that predominantly draws and blends both womanist and Afrocentric feminist definitions.

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[27] Rather than tracing their geneology to Alice Walker's definition of womanism as does *The Womanist Reader* and several other womanist texts, Africana womanism traces its trajectory to Soujourner Truth's improtu speech-Aint I a woman, where she questions the accepted idea of black womanhood. It is a term that was coined in 1987 by Clenora Hudson-Weems after nearly 2 years of publicly debating the importance of self-naming for African women and reclaiming their own collective struggle (Hudson-Weems 2003).

[28] According to Modupe Kolawole African womanism adopts a dialogic approach to theory formation which principally draws from African belief systems as predicated on a philosophy of life as a negotiation of values, as a continuum, an intersection between the past, present and the future. The world is conceived as a negotiation of diverse convictions and so heteroglossia is more valid to any African thoughts as opposed to mono-vocality. No wonder the market in most traditional African settings is an open place, a space characterized by fluid boundaries as each person's space is not rigidly divided but the borders of one woman's space marks the beginning of another with hardly ant fixed dividing walls. The numerous points of entry and exit make room for everyone (1997: 35).

Finally, the main criticisms that has been leveled against womanism in general is that it affords epistemic privilege to African women by glorifying their experiences (Abrahams 2000; Cannon 1993; Phillips 2006), while at the same time being "resolutely idealistic and essentialistic" (Allen 1995: 6). However, despite its shortfalls, African womanism as I have demonstrated opens up a much needed space for African women's ways of knowing to be heard and documented. And in building my conceptual approach on township mothers and daughters 'cultures of survival', I selectively draw from the following womanist principles- lived and embodied experience as bases for situated knowledge; returning the spiritual into socio-cultural analysis; the importance of maternal legacies in shaping mother daughter relationships.

3.2.1 Lived and Embodied Experience as Basis for Situated Knowledge

As mentioned, womanists demand an alternative way of conceptualising knowledge by challenging how and by whom knowledge is produced. In this section I explore the womanist notion that 'knowledge is situated' and that this understanding enriches existing social theories which have neglected certain ways of *being-African women* (Mama 1995). Situated knowledge simply refers to knowledge that is specifically placed and has a context from which it is produced (Bhavnani 1994). Womanist epistemologies thus consider survival wisdom, tacit knowledge and embodied ways of knowing as constituting vital forms of situated knowledges. Running as a common thread through all these modalities of conceptualising these subjugated knowledges, is the concept of *experience.*

Experience, as we know, is a category that is of great epistemic importance not just to womanist but feminist theoretical formulations. In fact, feminist epistemologies, from which as I have mentioned womanism draws freely, are generally referred to as "women's ways of knowing," *"women's experiences"* or simply "women's knowledge" (Alcoff and Potter 1993: 1, my emphases). Womanists concur with this insight and also argue that concrete experience must be formulated as the source from which knowledge about women is produced (Phillips 2004). This is based on our socialisation and cultural experiences that we are exposed to in which contextual rules versus abstract principles continue to govern our lived experiences (Scheper Hughes 1992). Within womanist perspectives "your personal experience is considered very good evidence as

these forms of knowledge rest in the women themselves (not in higher authority), and are experienced directly in the world (not through abstractions)" (Hill-Collins 1990: 211). Hill-Collins (2007) further clarifies this point by pointing out that women's fact of embodiment to potentially bear children and engage in childrearing activities, also means that they will likely experience two modes of knowing: one located in the body and the other passing beyond it. Therefore women are more likely to mediate these modes of knowing and use concrete experiences in their daily lives to access more abstract knowledge. Social class also appears to be a factor in the valuing of situated knowledge as Hill Collins illustrates from her study on working class women's ways of knowing when Ruth one of her participants says,

> I am the kind of person who doesn't have a lot of education, but both my mother and my father had good common sense. Now, I think that is all you need. I might not know how to use thirty words where three would do, but that does not mean that I don't know what I am talking about because I'm talking about myself. I'm talking about what I've lived" (in Patricia Hill-Collins 2007: 202).

However, it is not only womanists and feminists who have directly challenged the privileged epistemological positioning of the written word over lived experience of oppressed groups. For example, playwright Robert O'Hara play *Insurrection*[29] provides a wonderful portrayal of why this privileging must always be contested when he shows how it is T.J. who teaches Ron, a doctoral student, a life altering lesson that one's knowledge of history filtered through theory and opinion, rather than first-hand experience, will inevitably suffer from a lack of "real" understanding and insight.

> TJ: Hush Up!
>
> You know nuttin
>
> You know letter on paper
>
> You know big words
>
> Connected to little ideas
>
> You know nuttin…
>
> I lived it!!!
>
> You, the one watchin (Carpenter 1997: 329).

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[29] I would like to thank Prof Darrell Moore for sharing this play with me.

Even AIDS activists on the continent have also made repeated assertions that experience must be afforded epistemic privilege over abstraction when drawing up effective HIV/AIDS social policies. In 2007 I was honoured to have met Mr. Basajja John Bosco, the district Co-ordinator of the Jinja district, Uganda Network of People Living with HIV/AIDS, who related some of his thoughts with me regarding the value of situated knowledges in his network. In fact, I would go as far as saying that Bosco's assertions went beyond celebrating lived experience as a basis for knowledge, but went further to incorporate the idea of embodied knowledge as a powerful source of knowledge in itself. In a short document outlining the standpoint of the network that he shared with me, the following points were emphasised:

> We, people living with HIV/AIDS in Jinja District appeal that Public policy on *HIV/AIDS prevention should not be theoretical but practical:*
>
> - An expert is better at the tap and not on the top
> - HIV/AIDS is no longer theoretical but now has become a practical problem because we are there to help
> - We should not be taken as patients but as partners in the struggle against HIV/AIDS
> - We have more concerns about HIV/AIDS, it hurts us most, we fear for our children and loved one's like anybody else and the society at large
> - *We have practical knowledge*
> - We can guide, direct and remind other actors about the most painful points and priorities (nd: 2, my emphases).

Later in the document it continues, "We were once HIV-negative but now we are HIV- positive. The changes we've undergone between the two statuses put us in a good position of knowing what impact HIV/AIDS creates to mankind" (nd: 2).

In other words, the key factor when distinguishing abstract forms of knowledge from situated forms of knowledge, often referred to as wisdom, is *experience.* And womanists identify these forms of knowledge as being vital in ensuring the survival of African women under unbearable historical conditions. Similarly, phenomenologist's who prioritise lived experience over theoretical knowledge have explained that this is because the knowledge whereby a person lives is not necessarily identical to the knowledge whereby you explain life (Jackson 1992). And in the context of race, gender, and class oppression, this distinction is essential since "knowledge without wisdom is adequate for the powerful, but wisdom is essential to the survival of the

subordinate" (Hill-Collins 1989: 745). And so for womanists experience is not just emphasised in isolation, but is firmly situated within wider historical, social, economic and political conditions in order to surface the hierarchies and systems of oppression operating. And it is through these intersecting and multilayered levels of experience that the 'survival wisdom' among poor urban women is cultivated. Phillips explains how *survival wisdom* is a type of knowing that is gained under specific conditions of, "near annihilation and forged in the interstitial spaces" (2006: xxxviii). It is a form of "knowing how" rather than "knowing what" (Stuckelberger 2005:22). While womanist Katie Canon vividly describes this way of knowing as involving the convergence of emotions and analysis,

> It means you know danger without having to be taught. It is what June Jordan calls 'jungle posture'…what Ntozange Shange calls the 'combat stance'…You know where the minefields are…there is wisdom…you are in touch with the ancestors…and it is from the gut, not rationally figured out. Black women have to use this all the time…" (1993: 11).

Under these conditions survival goes beyond the struggle to meet carnal will, but also involves finding ways the oppressed master their terrains so well that they learn to recreate and heal themselves and communities. It is what Bakare-Yusuf has elaborated as,

> survival first of all concerns the affirmation of being in the face of nothingness, denial and the threat of annihilation, rather that the question of where the next meal will come from….survival involves the search to go beyond social death, trying to transcend the legacy of slavery, colonialism and white supremacist assaults, producing the energy to derive meaning in a context of meaninglessness. …it is about how we fuse and satisfy our metaphysical, spiritual and existential needs in a way that allows us to be whole and shout and emphatic "Yes: to the questions of existence (2002:6).

In these instances the central work of 'survival wisdom' has thus been to humanise the horrors of subjugation, while asserting dignity and worthiness for the wretched of the earth, to use a Fanonian term. Womanist Katie Canon (1993) has called this search for humanity under terrifying existential and social conditions the subliminal dense space where the 'soul' of African communities resides.

Finally, these challenges to orthodox approaches to knowledge production have also opened up room for new approaches such as *corporeal epistemologies*, where the body and emotions become legitimate sites of knowledge, to emerge. In fact, feminist philosopher Elizabeth Grotsz, who is in favour of these embodied knowledge forms, argues that western knowledge has

produced knowledges that privilege a disembodied individual that correspondingly presents 'Reason' as free of desire and as purely mental.

Critiquing these limited yet highly dominant cultural understandings of knowledge, Grotz advocates the need to *center corporeality, the lived body, as part of women's knowledge's,* particularly since clearly the "body [has been] unacknowledged or inadequately acknowledged condition of knowledge's (1993: 10). Now, as African women who continue to be relegated to the margins, we have known that our *embodied knowledges* offer powerful sites of knowledge as they remain an "intense storage of intuition, emotion, feelings, sentiments and emotions enacted through bodily practices" (Tavares 1998: 240), as aptly outlined above by Katie Canon. This intuitive bodily knowing is based on our experiences and versions of pain and marginalisation. This is precisely what African poet and scholar Ntozange Shange expresses when she passionately describes the goals of her work:

> Western society allows people to be absolutely neurotic and totally out of reach with their feelings and everyone else's feelings. And yet be respectable. This, to me, is a travesty… [I am] trying to change the idea of emotions and emotions as distinct faculties" (in Hill-Collins: 2007: 204).

3.2.2 Returning the Spiritual into Socio-cultural analysis

> "And as women preaching a womanist gospel would reflect: "helped are those who receive only to give; always in their house will be the circular energy of generosity and in their hearts a beginning of a new age on earth" (White 2004: 446).

If we are to ask questions which are fundamental to ordinary African's women's lived experiences, the issue of spirituality cannot be conveniently erased simply because we lack adequate epistemological frameworks. I think we can admit an intellectual bankruptcy within mainstream social sciences when it comes to incorporating African spiritualities in particular within our analyses. In fact, African gender theorist Orinke Oyewemu argues that if we are to create a relevant scholarship on African systems of knowledge, we have no choice but to be "cognisant of the relevance of the metaphysical in the constitution of power, and pay attention to the ways in which spirituality undergirds interpretations of the material world" (2005a: 1).

This leads me to the second core principle I utilise from womanist theory to apply to my suggested framework on township mothers and daughters 'cultures of survival'-- lived and embodied spiritualities. Womanism centers the spiritual explicitly and in this way it openly affirms and embraces the spiritual parts of African womanhood and experience. As Phillips writes-- "For womanists, this realm is actual and palpable, and the relationship between it and humans is neither abstract nor insignificant to politics" (2006: xxvi). In fact, this *rejection of the secularisation of experience* marks yet another important point of difference between womanists and feminists. The reasons why feminists have not been as direct in engaging the spiritual realm within their theoretical engagements is clarified by Hill-Collins when she notes that, "although much of Black feminist thought draw[s] on humanist religious tradition, much of contemporary Black feminist writings draws on this religious tradition, but reframes the basic vision in secular terms" (In Sandra Harding 2004: 124). This is an element that Black feminist thought inherits from Western feminism, which coupled with the academy's over-emphasis on rational thought, and the mind/body dualism that pervades in western cultures, have resulted in a resistance to explore anything that is explicitly spiritual. And as Ana Louise Keating notes, "when we talk about spiritual worlds, soul transformation, interconnectedness, the sacred and so forth, we risk accusations of essentialism, escapism, or other forms of apolitical, naïve thinking" (2005: 242). And despite the work of several African womanist and feminist scholars, Jacqui Alexander, a Caribbean transnational radical feminist and healer, reminds us that there remains a shame and that no self respecting feminist would want to align herself (at least in public) with a category such as the spiritual, which tends to appear so fixed, so unchanging, heavily scented with tradition. She amusingly adds, "many I suspect, have been forced into a spiritual closet" (Alexander 2005: 15). In fact, this understanding of feminism in purely secular terms means that sacred and spiritual ways-of-knowing and ways-of-being have come to be generally viewed as lacking the capacity to instruct how we understand women's lives in any meaningful way (Alexander 2005).

Jacqui Alexander's book, *Pedagogies of the Crossing* captured me in its unapologetic standpoint that "the personal is not only political but spiritual" (2005: 7). Arguing for the inclusion of spirituality into social and feminist analysis, she observes that, "it is a paradox that feminism that has insisted on a politics of a historicized self has rendered that self so secularized, that it has

paid very little attention to the ways in which spiritual labour and spiritual knowing is primarily a project of self-knowing and transformation that constantly invokes community simply because it requires it" (2005: 15). These growing developments to incorporate the sacred explicitly into social analysis also emerges out of a realisation by womanists that if we are to confront the violence and the repeated distortion of our bodily integrity that has been exercised against us by white supremacy and African patriarchy, then we must engage the spiritual realm of our existence as humans, in order to fully heal. Yvette Abrahams (2000) illustrates this point in her work on aunty Saartjie Baartman, the iconic Hottentot Venus, when she critiques the majority of scholarly texts which have focused on the uses and abuses of her body while neglecting her emotional and spiritual well-being. She argues that only a holistic approach to theory which also sees faith as a source of change will be able to recognise how aunty Saartjie not only survived her oppression and humiliation, but resisted it. Furthermore, Chicano feminist Gloria Alzundua hauntingly urges us that we simply cannot afford to edit out spirituality from our social theories as often, "spirituality is oppressed people only weapon and means of protection" (in Levine 2005: 81).

Let me clarify that even though at times I use the terms spirituality and the sacred interchangeably, the sacred is commonly regarded as a broader term which may include spirituality. While there are several definitions of spirituality, Leela Fernandez's articulation articulates the main elements of lived spirituality, a term that I also employ, which she maintain includes,

> …when I speak of spirituality, at the most basic level I am referring to in understanding of the self as encompassing body and mind, as well as spirit. I am also referring to a transcendent sense of interconnection that moves beyond the knowable, visible material world. This sense of interconnection has been described variously as divinity, the sacred, spirit, or simply the universe. My understanding is also grounded in a form of *lived spirituality*, which is directly accessible to all and which does not need to be mediated by religious experts, institutions or theological texts (in Keating 2005: 253; my emphases).

While womanist Elizabeth Dobson Gray (in Westfield 2001) provides us with a much more inclusive understanding of the sacred by identifying seven dimensions as sacred to women's experiences. These include women's creativity; giving birth; care-giving; creating sacred space; doing housework; feeding as sacred ritual and our bodies. She explains,

> Women's renaming of the sacred is quite different from men. Our style is to peer into the richly woven texture of ordinary human experience and to find already woven there a golden strand of what we would name sacred. Instead of distancing ourselves and withdrawing from the reality of life to find sacredness, we go towards that reality-towards bodies, toward nature, toward food, toward dust, towards transitory moments in relationships. And wherever we look, we find that which nourishes and deepens us (2001:30).

These abovementioned emerging groups of woman scholars choose to embrace the spiritual as a fluid yet permanent social condition, and not an embracing by-product of tradition in which women are disproportionately caught. This opens up possibilities to broaden our understandings of the inherit paradox and contradictions of the human condition (Alexander 2005; Bakare-Yusuf 2001). In this way when we acknowledge these intangibles which are made tangible through spiritual labour, we will, "learn to sense, taste and understand paradox as the motor of things" (Alexander 2005: 266), and thus deepen our knowledge of the dialectics of struggle, freedom and beauty. And I am in agreement with Alexander (2005) when she notes that the spiritual and sacred can form an essential element in creating and living our lives with a quality of beauty. That is, living with integrity from the heart even amidst a harsh material everyday under which the majority of the world's poor women continue to live.

Furthermore, these notions of spirituality, expressed in various forms of faith and religious practices, are grounded in the lived experiences of African women, and thus affirm their specific presence in this world which so often seeks to marginalise them. Given this investment in the spiritual realm it should not be surprising that one of the most vibrant areas within womanism has been its dynamic relationship with theology. This is because African women theologian scholars have found a liberating effect within the womanist perspective in its incorporation of their faith. For womanist theologians "faith has provided a firm ground for criticizing white racism as well as the sexism within Black churches and communities" (Abrahams 2000: 76), and in this way the church while paradoxically oppressing African women also provides them with strength to resist a hostile society. Within this religious outlook, *prayer and song have served as an invaluable means to rehumanise the unspeakable.* And as philosopher and preacher Cornel West has observed in his own work is that music can also cushion the inhumanity that the poor experience, and in this way acts as a cultural buffer (1999) by providing a rich response to those "psychic wound and social scars of a despised people" (1999: 126). Womanist theologian Katie

Canon also recounted how African American slaves collectively sang about the "suffering in the midst of unspeakable cruelty" (1993: 35) and in this way they "expressed my ancestors' unflinching faith that they, too, were people of God."

Regarding prayer specifically, Canon (1995: 48) also identified how slaves trying to make their lives worth living "sang, prayed and shouted their troubles away…humanizing [her] environment." In a highly unequal society prayer then became a crucial site to transform oppression into dignity and also purge self hate in order to assert an alternative selfhood. In other words, these religious practices allowed slaves to negotiate more human centred identities which directly opposed those signified by their oppressors (Harding 2000). And for many of the oppressed the pains of living was often shared in collective prayer as Adeline Hodges born a slave in Alabama, attests --"De slaves want allowed to go to church, but dey wold whisper roun, and call meet in the woods and pray" (in Canon 1995: 36). Prayer then also simply permitted the externalising of those experiences that oppression generated, that simply could not be shared in everyday conversation. In drawing from this spiritual deep, African women were then able to express their deep burdens, discover their voices and humanity, and heal. Ultimately, this prayer tradition became a collective expression of the syntheses of oral traditions and Christian faith practices, ultimately producing a rich discursive site to house alternative practices and memories of dignity for the suffering.

For example, within the *manyano*[30] movement in South Africa, religious scholar and Anglican priest Beverly Hadaad (2004), who has carried out extensive work on this movement in KwaZululu-Natal, identified *manyano* prayer groups' as social spaces where women gather together and in dignified ways pragmatically weave together the spiritual and material dimensions of their lives. In the course of her research on these prayer groups, Hadaad identified three major characteristics that marked these African women's indigenous ways of voicing their humanity amidst oppression and unburden what "weighs heavily in their hearts" (2004: 10) to include, the ritualised wearing of a church uniform; the use of women-centred prayer and

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[30] The word comes from the Nguni word ukumanyana: means to join. The word is said to have been coined by Methodist women to refer specifically to their weekly prayer union meetings. And as Beverly Haadad (2004) further informs us, manyano was later to be adopted by women from other denominations when referring to their church organizations.

preaching; and fundraising based on *stokvel*[31] principles. She demonstrates how such religious movements which have been labeled by feminist scholars as conservative, in fact constitute important forms of subjugated knowledges. They also, she adds, provide us with insight into the area that lies strategically between what American political scientist James Scott (1980) calls the public and hidden transcript which tends to offer glimpses of non-hegemonic voices and practices. Hadaad (2004) then suggests that only when we pay attention to these poor women's religious practices will we begin to unravel how ordinary women in townships self-fashion dignity and autonomy within highly contradictory spaces such as the Christian church. For it is within these self-same women-centred communities of practice that women transform the pains of oppression into a collective spiritual, yet materially based response. Moulded by the power of communal care-giving and bonding, the *manyano* prayer movements encapsulate the voices and practices of women simply surviving.

Let me emphasise that I am not saying that this use of prayer is a sacred practice that remains popular only among the African poor. For, as Peat has also observed, prayer is an integral practice in several indigenous communities. He highlights how in most native America gatherings, "everything is begun with a prayer, from an important religious ceremony to negotiations with government representatives. And every circle usually begins with "smudging" an anointing of the head and body with sacred smoke from sweetgrass, sage or cedar" (1996: 51).

Although mainstream Christian traditions practiced by millions of Africans have been accepted as established religions, African Traditional Religion (ATR) scholar Nokuzola Mndende reminds

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[31] Stokvels are mutual assistance networks among African women in their communities (Phillips 2006).

us that to date there has been a failure to incorporate African spiritual practices as a religion, which she maintains several African continue to draw on in their daily lives. She outlines that "ATR was never recognised as an independent religion in its own right, and in fact has never appeared in the census forms, simply because some people classify it under African initiated churches" (2009: 5). Mndende continues that the prejudice against ATR continues in its being labeled not a religion but as "ancestor worship characterized by spirit possession, secular spirituality, nature religion, primal religion or just African culture" (2009: 10). This continuing marginalization and demonisation of ATR and consequently African cosmological[32] systems within current social science scholarship has been deeply questioned by several womanist and feminist scholars recently. They argue that the underlying reasons for this deligitimisation of ATR and African aligned spiritual systems of thought and practices are the effects of multiple historical, ideological as well as epistemological factors. One common reason cited includes the effects of colonisation which imposed a view of African histories through alien lenses, thus using metaphors ill-suited to understand African situated realities (Abrahams 2004). On the other hand, Alexander (2005: 296) contends that essentially it is the cultural relativist paradigm which has produced this regressive idea of Africans and their sacred traditions:

> One of the consequences with the cultural relativist paradigm is the production of a distant alterity in which tradition is made subordinate to, and unintelligible within, that which is modern. Yes, it is not only that (post)modernity's secularism renders the Sacred as tradition, but it also that tradition, understood as extreme alterity, is always made to reside elsewhere and denied entry into the modern. In this context, African-based cosmological systems become subordinated to the European cosmos, not usually expected to accord any significance to modernity's itinerary, their provenance of little value in the constitution and formation of the very categories on which we have relied (Alexander 2005: 296).

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[32] According to Peat (1996: 268) "Cosmology- the study of the nature and origin of the universe, of "all there is"-is one of the foundation stones of Western science. Cosmological conceptions also play a vital role within Native science. Cosmology is intimately connected to the origins and the great migrations of people; to calenders, sacred cycles, sacred mathematics, and indigenous notions of time. Cosmology is not abstracted as a particular branch of indigenous science, but is fully integrated into the unity of nature and of all living things, the harmourny between the world of spirits and the manifest, the special names and roles of plants and animals and the life-path of each individual. Indigenous cosmology provides a set of values, social integration, and validation for the people. It is a way of life, a relationship to the natural world, a deeper reason for ceremonies and daily practice, a foundation for song, art and artefact. Furthermore in indigenous Science: spirituality, role of humanity, elders, spirits, history, subjectivity cosmology, dreams, sacred space, ceremony, practice, visions, symbols, understanding; harmourny and compassion, dream and vision, earth and cosmos, cycle and balance, song and dance, death and renewal.

In all this, for Mndende, "ATR remains voiceless, its mouth is closed and its hand and feet are tied unless it allows itself to be defined within the parameters of Christian precepts…People of other faiths have spoken for ATR but we have never heard the side of the adherents of ATR" (2009: 18). There is a need to review the underlying cosmological categories of ATR in more fluid and dynamic terms since they are in themselves always under strain and open to change. In other words, we are in urgent need of approaches that move beyond understanding African cosmological concepts and practices as cultural retention and survival. What we should be doing rather is finding ways to get inside the meanings of these terms, symbols and practices that Africans continue to use to make sense, connect and formulate identities of value in what are increasingly fragmented social worlds.

In fact, accounts documenting the *histories of sprits* in both the continent (Honwana 1997) and the Diaspora (Alexander 2005; Adams 2006) have clearly illustrated how these ways of knowing have been rejected, not so much because of their 'backwardness' and 'inherent irrationality', but because they carried within them the potential to undermine and threaten project of consolidating colonial rule and modernity consciousness[33]. Alexander explains,

> African cosmologies and modes of healing became a locus of epistemic struggle in ninetieth-century Trinidad, the period marking the establishment of the slave plantation economy and the consolidation of the colonial rule (2005:293).

Furthermore, social anthropologist Robert Adams in his work on Dominican Vodou, shows how these spiritual sensibilities were never frozen in historical time, but were always integrally influenced and transformed by broader social, economic and political forces. That is why he observed that,

> Each historical period has left its mark on Dominican Vodu, which has incorporated new materials, ideologies and spirits….Vodu spirits-laos in Haitian Kreyol and luases in Dominican

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[33] Rachel Harding illustrates how slaves in Brazil were very much aware of the power and threat these belief systems posed to the colonialists, and this awareness was materialised in the spatial organisation of the slave household. She notes from a historical record of a raid of slave quatres- "When the sub-delegate and his block inspectors arrived at Domingos Sodre house, the African was there, perhaps awaiting their arrival, in the uniform of the Independence War veterans. A vast array of items was found in the house, most out of immediate view of visitors. In the front room of the house (the *sala*, living room) were paintings of Catholic saints and a small Catholic alter. Away from this more public display however, the sub-delegate reported finding a variety of materials related to Candomble: four metal chocalhos (rattle shakers), a box of various wooden figures, and other objects such as beads and cowrie shell; a blunt-edged and point-less sword" (2000:94).

Spanish- are more than spiritual beings, they are signs of history…the loas are fundamentally rooted in history; they represent the socio-ideological view of ancestral tradition". (Roberts 2006: 57).

Mozambican social anthropologist Alcinda Honwana (1997) using data collected in her ethnographic work conducted in Northern Mozambique on spirit possession highlights how even phenomena such as spirit possession undergo transformations as they are influenced by migration. She notes,

> Spirit possession involving altered states of consciousness or 'real' trance, appears to be a relatively recent phenomenon in the region. It was only in the last quarter of the ninetieth century that the Tsonga people were exposed to 'real' trance through the foreign Nguni and Ndau groups with whom they interacted. This interaction is rooted in the Nguni migration from Zululand towards the north of Mozambique. (1997: 4).

These illustrations show what was earlier pointed out that we must be continuously aware that the categories of cosmology and tradition are not trapped in some primordial notions of self and society, since for them to have meaningful effect for those who make use of them in their lives, they have to be grounded within modern sensibilities of being-African which is shaped by various processes such as globalisation, migration, varying market economies and emerging ideas of democracy. And as the abovementioned historians, anthropologists and religious scholars on African religions and spirituality have repeatedly noted, we must recognise that while these traditions have maintained a stability over the years, they have also been incredibly flexible in 'their ability to incorporate new symbols, rites, and myths and reorganize older ones in an effort to respond to the immediate needs and situations of their adherents" (Harding 2000: 19). In this sense cosmology is then better understood as not merely something from the past, but rather as in constant flux and its categories under stress (Sveker 2002). This is why the definition of cosmology as, "an everyday process of social contest and human creativity," (Kapferer 2002: 201), fits well within this study.

And so even though we are in danger of losing this spirituality which has enabled us to make a way out of no way (Hayes 1995), African based forms of the sacred continue to remarkably endure. For it remains a fact that in most modern African communities the powers of the spirit continue to be sought, "to understand the *true* reasons behind the emergence of events believed to transcend human perception and understanding" (Honwana 1997: 2, my emphases). Ugandan poet Okot P'Bitek (1986) has also pointed out the extent that spiritual and religious beliefs and

practices are still used to diagnose, explain and interpret the individual causes of misfortune and illness in Africa. This is because they continue to provide compelling explanations and ways of coping for individuals and communities, particularly those exposed to conditions of violence which continues to characterise many African communities. For it is during these stressful times, as Sveker (2003) reminds us, when the order of things cannot be fully controlled that we find that humans often return to ritual, magic and religion to reduce uncertainty and anxiety.

3.2.3 Maternal legacies among Mothers and Daughters

> *Mama Helen Brent Henderson Cade Brehon who in 1948, having come across me daydreaming in the middle of the kitchen floor, mopped around me (Bambara 1980).*

This study specifically privileges the positionality of township women as 'mothers' and 'daughters' in ways that go beyond mainstream readings that conceptualise motherhood and daughterhood as conservative institutions whose purpose is to uphold patriarchy. My argument is that studies that continue to collapse the theorising of women's lives to an abstracted gender categorisation of 'women' masks other selves and experiences that various women embody. In grouping mothers and daughters in Chesterville together as simply 'women,' we then conceal the layered-ness of their unique experiences which may lead us to conclude that their experiences of suffering and healing are equivalent. It is also vital to point out that mothers' and daughters' in Chesterville Township are inserted in particular ways within the historical narrative of apartheid. To become a mother in the 1980's is to enter motherhood during one of the most explicitly violent phases of apartheid history. In 1985 a national state of emergency was declared by the ruling regime in response to what was termed the 'ungovernability' status of townships in South Africa. In other words, for many individuals interviewed in this study their formative experiences of motherhood were then during moments of high apartheid violence. And part of formulating an analytical framework which captures township mothers and daughters lived and embodied 'cultures of survival', thus involves understanding these differentiated and specific experiences on how various women experienced being-in-the-township. In addition mother-daughter relationships have also been a theme of concern for womanists, as the editors in one of

the first anthologies on Black mothers and daughters entitled, *Double-Stitch: Black women write about mothers and daughters* notes,

> Despite heightened interest in the problems of Black families and the emergence of feminist social science, the mother daughter dyad has received scant attention from scholars of any persuasion. *Double Stitch* also reflects our womanist orientation and privileges diverse voices among us (Bell-Scott and Guy-Sheftal, 1991: 3).

Even less has been written about the nature of African mother-daughter relationships which are profoundly shaped by the racism and sexism in their own communities, while at the same time subjectively defined by paradox and contradiction by being both 'turbulent and tender', as Johnetta Cole (1991) defines them. However, given the *matriarchal character* of not only South African townships, but most urban ghettoes the world-over, the dominance of women in these urban spaces warrants that we begin to understand the personal and interpersonal aspects of these intergenerational connections. Multigenerational perspectives which operate from the basic assumption that "family patterns are shared, transformed, and manifested through trans-generational transmission" (Miller-Day 2002:13), help in beginning to reveal how values and embodied behaviours are transmitted between generations of women. However, the few studies that have been completed on mothers and daughters, and their relationships specifically, have been dominated by western psycho-analytic and social learning theories (Hill Collins 1991), which have tended to foreground the 'conflict' and 'blaming' themes between mothers and daughters (Miller Day 2002). But when one adopts an African womanist perspective on mother-daughter relations, such perspectives are interwoven with historically and contextually sensitive frameworks regarding the development of these relationships.

This is because for womanists, it is the lived experience of racism, gender and cultural discrimination and economic exploitation generationally inherited by African communities which have necessitated the creation and cultivation of values which often subvert mainstream negative constructions of African womanhood. To survive such oppressive social realities Kate Canon (1993: 58) argues that this requires a *moral wisdom* where women's appraisal of "what is right and wrong, good or bad develops out of the various ways of coping related to conditions of their own cultural circumstances". While dominant liberal ideology assumes that a moral agent is to a considerable degree free and self directing, from early in their lives African women learn that depending on who you are, we all live with very different ranges of freedom (Cannon 1993),

and that suffering is not an option for others. And as Gloria Joseph observes, in addition to having to simply survive, social science literature on African women has often imprisoned them in their privileging of the following stereotypes,

> on the one hand, they are portrayed as string, competent, self reliant and dominant; and on the other hand, they are viewed as victims suffering from double or triple jeopardy, lacking the gumption to remove themselves from the bottom of the occupational and economic ladders. Grandmothers, mothers, and daughters routinely face objectifying sexist behaviour from Black men as well as from patriarchal society at large (1991: 98).

African mothers are then faced with having to teach their daughters what it is to endure these harsh and inhumane exigencies of life as women. This moral counsel of mothers to their daughters often passed on by word of mouth or through social and cultural practices, then attempts to capture what is of value for a growing African woman. And as they attempt to teach their daughters to not only survive living within the interlocking structures of race, class and gender oppression (Hill-Collins 1991), they must also encourage them to transcend their painful pasts and continue the survival of their communities. Within these transgenerational interactions, tensions erupt. These tensions are often as a result of daughters rejecting their mothers experiences as invalid for their own social times, particularly when mothers are resented for their complacency and lack of what may be perceived by daughters as a lack of political awareness, or simply a lack of identification with communalism by daughters who do not feel the urge of reciprocity to family and community members as strongly as their mothers. Afterall, for them more seductive modeling and transmission of messages takes place more frequently through mass media and modern technologies, rather than relatives and community elders. In such cases, as Canon (1993) suggests, mother's moral wisdoms may often appear inappropriate for their daughter's for whom individualism and autonomy appears more valid for their experiences.

It is during this time when mothers are preparing their daughters to survive the harsh socio-economic conditions they will have to face, through the transmission of morals and values, that paradoxical maternal love expressions surface. This can be seen in the stereotypical depiction of African mothers being strong and devoted, but rarely affectionate. Gloria Wade Gayles argues that this can be explained by the maternal demands on African mothers who are often the key breadwinners of their families--"For too many Black mothers, the demands of providing for

children are so demanding that affection often must wait until the basic needs of physical survival are satisfied" (1991: 55). Joseph points out that this condition was further shaped by,

> necessity not choice, Black women have had to be resourceful, assertive, and self reliant in order to survive. They could not routinely depend on Black men to lend or give the needed economic and emotional support. The same system that victimized and dehumanized Black men also victimized and dehumanized Black women (1991: 98-99)

While novelist Toni Morrison in an interview on reflecting on her own relationship with her mother outlines the changing definitions of love between different generations of women in this way,

> Each generation has a kind of love. Some of it's really tough. What my mother's mother thought was love for her children was really staying alive for them. What my mother thought was love for her children was get a better place, maybe send you to college if you wanted to. What I thought was love for my children was giving them maximum freedom, setting an example of how you could make choices in your life" (http://www.cbsnews.com/stories/2004/04/02/sunday/main610053.shtml).

However, research highlights that even though things were not sweet and loving between them, daughter's feelings and attitudes towards their mothers continued to be positive as they expressed a tremendous respect for their mothers (Gayles 1991). So there is, as psychologists might say, a complex identification and dis-indentification between mothers and daughters where daughters may experience their interactions with their mothers as both tender and cruel, possessive and detached, but all the while mediated by a deep yearning for connectedness to their mothers, particularly during their adult years (White 1996). White describes a spiritual maternity which eventually develops between mothers and daughters which, "overcomes patriarchal and racist violence to heal the wounds of separation and to foster a community in which people feel connected to each other" (1996: 7). And so grown daughters finally embrace the moral wisdom of their mothers as they attempt to forge their own adult identities under changed historical conditions. And it is often at this time that they "go in search of our mother's garden's, it's not really to learn who trampled on them or how or even why-we usually know that already. Rather, it's to learn what our mothers planted there, what they thought as they sowed, and how they survived the blighting of so many fruits" (Sherley-Anne Williams in Canon 1993: 27). During this journey daughters finally learn that the powerful regenerative aspects of maternal legacies

must be lived and embodied in order for them to be renewed, rather than possessed as an artifact or abstraction (Christian 1985).

In search of the roots of her own creativity, womanist novelist and poet Alice Walker in one of her most quoted essays, *In search of our mother's gardens* (1983) viewed as one of the foundational texts of womanism, shows us how African women's creative expressions of functional beauty, which are also related to the community's health, are in fact directly connected to our maternal ancestors. She writes,

> ..our mothers and grandmothers have, more often than not anonymously, handed on the creative spark, the seed of a flower they themselves never hoped to see...or like a sealed letter they could not plainly read...so many of the stories I write, that we all write, are my mother's stories. Only recently did I fully realise this: though years of listening to my mother's stories of her life, I have not only absorbed the stories themselves, but something of the manner in which she spoke, something of the urgency that involves the knowledge that her stories-like her life-must be recorded (1983: 240).

Afterall, as Barbara Christian reminds us "the new black woman will recreate herself out of the creative legacy of her maternal ancestors" (1985: 94). For it is in uncovering our creative legacy that we will begin to find answers to questions that have long plagued us as daughters such as-"How did they do it? How did they manage to keep their creativity alive year after year and century after century? The spirit that brought them through" (Hayes 1995: 14). Or as Toni Morrison shares her key reasons for daring to write the novel about slavery, *Beloved,* as being about uncovering and uncovering-"What they do to keep on, how they make a life, what they're willing to risk, however long it lasts, in order to relate to one another" (http://www.time.com/time/community/pulitzerinterview.html). Of course most of what has endured is not only to be found in objects, but is embodied.

3.4 Merleau Ponty's Existential Phenomenology: The Historically and Emotionally Situated Body

> To abandon the body is to abandon one's history and one's biography. To retrieve one's own embodiment bit by bit, piece by piece, and to stitch the parts back together is at the same time to reclaim the history of the embodiment, for incarnation always insists on a context-a history and a future (Slattery 2000: 212).

Existential phenomenology[34] offers a productive lens of inserting the body back into social theory without getting caught in the dichotomy of embodied-ness and body-lessness, nor to notions of embodiment that are reducible "to the body as a representation, to the body as an objectification of power, to the body as physiological entity, nor to the body as the inalienable centre of human consciousness" (Williams and Bendelow 1998: xvi). Merleau Ponty's existential phenomenology specifically goes beyond these anti-body theories (see Csordas 1994 and Turner 1994) which have overtaken social science accounts of the body. I am referring to the semiotic scholarly traditions of the body which treat the body as text and therefore something to be read (Frosh 2002); and the much celebrated Foulcadian perspectives which tend to privilege a passive, inscribed, surveyed and representational body (Bakare-Yusuf 2001). Rather, existential phenomenological ideas of the body choose to forefront the body as a place of fundamental ontology. Therefore the governing premise of Ponty's version of existentialism is that we in fact speak and think from our bodies.

In other words, the process of *being-in-the-world* is grounded in our bodily experiences, "so the body is more than physical entity, and we find in it the fundamental synthesizing agency that brings the world into being" (Bakare-Yusuf, 2001: 53). In other words, it is the body that grounds our experiences and meaning-making strategies in our social worlds. Furthermore, Bakare Yusuf (2001) notes that existential phenomenology also privileges *a body with capacity*, which is embedded in the idea that consciousness is first and foremost not only embodied, but a matter of 'I can' rather than 'I think', rejecting outright Cartesian separatist formulations of body and mind. Within this conceptualisation personhood is understood as, "a *body-subject*, with consciousness imbedded in the body and intentionality that of the body-subject, rather than simply one's consciousness" (Langdridge 2007: 37). This *incarnated intentionality* refers to the body's capacity to act in a world at a stage prior to consciousness or reflective thinking, therefore making "self knowledge and perception as derived first of all from an awareness of bodily capacities according to the demands of the situation" (Bakare-Yusuf 2001: 45).

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[34] Existential Phenomenology, which focuses on the nature of existence builds on the existential movement initiated by Heidegger, but more readily associated with Jean-Paul Satre, Simone de Beauvoir and Maurice Merleau-Ponty, radically transformed phenomenological philosophy. In particular, Merleau-Ponty's version of existentialism was concerned with lived experience and emphasised the body-subject and embodiment.

Bakare-Yusuf further explains how this intentionality takes place on the bases of what Merleau Ponty calls the *corporeal schema*, which makes intentionality an embodied phenomenon. The corporeal schema refers to the "set of functions the body has acquired in order to perform actions in the world. The schema involves a relationship between the self and the world and is the necessary condition for the body's situatedness and grounding within the world" (Bakare-Yusuf 2001: 47). Finally, Merleau-Ponty, unlike Sartre, did not think we are condemned to be free, but rather that "freedom results from the way in which we act and take up positions in the world. It is through our actions that we make ourselves and the world we inhabit meaningful and significant" (in Langdridge 2007: 37).

One of the major criticisms that has been leveled against Merleau Ponty's account of embodiment is that it does not pay adequate attention to how embodiment is shaped by social forces such as race, gender, class, generation, education, sexuality, physical limitation, and so on (Bakare-Yusuf 2001). This is primarily because his account does not return embodiment to the concrete field lived experience (Bakare-Yusuf 2001; Weiss 1996), taking into full consideration issues of power. And this is where Fanon's development of the *historico-racial schema*, which was essentially building on Merleau Ponty's corporeal schema, was crucial in confronting the shortfalls within Merleau Ponty's account of embodiment. This allowed psychoanalyst and post-colonial scholar Franz Fanon to historicise colonised subjects through the internalization of the epidermal schema and in this way surface their colonised conditions. And as Bakare-Yusuf (2001) points out in this way Fanon sought to emphasise the fact that to understand what embodiment means also depended on knowing how conditions of embodiment are also systematically organised by patterns of domination and subordination.

However, as womanists have also pointed out that in any social account of embodiment it is important to not only emphasise a *historically situated body*, but to synthesise emotions into the analyses in order to understand experience as body-felt and sensuous. To capture this *embodied account of emotions,* Bakare-Yusuf (2001) suggests that we will need to move beyond

psychological[35], bio-medical[36] and political-economy accounts of emotions,[37] which imbeds them as discourses. Rather she explains that in an embodied account of emotions,

> emotion is therefore another name for a specific from of being-in-the-world and 'being-to-the-world". Emotions is this case is not reducible to pure interiority; or emotions reveal the dynamic of relations between self/other and world rather than being merely modes of individual psyche. Different emotional responses therefore are the expression of changing relations to a changed world. Rather than emotions being simply the "objects of our experience, they are the *forms* of our existence, revealing the fundamental way in which we orient ourselves within it" (2008: 148)

And since emotions are precisely part of "the experience of embodied sociality" (Lyon and Barbalet in Bakare-Yusuf 2008: 148), it is only in taking full consideration of emotions or moods within constructions of subjectivity that we will be able to understand the evolution of African subjects as an ontological condition which is strongly shaped by the violences of colonialism and other forms of subjugation. And integrally linked to our emotional experiences is *how we sense our realities* and come to know what we know. It is not a coincidence that in most African communities sensing is considered *'a feeling in the body'* and as a bodily way of knowing what is happening to you. Interestingly, sound rather than sight, is the most dynamic sensory field in several African societies (Geurts 2002). For example, hearing among the Anlo of Ghana was not simply limited to hearing by the ear, but *a feeling type hearing*. Similarly in the Southern African Nguni cultures, people talk about *'Angimuzisiswi kahle'*, I don't feel-hear them, or *'angimuzisiswi kahle egazini lami'*, I don't hear-feel them in my blood, to signal feeling uncomfortable about someone. Therefore phenomena such as "hearing in the skin," "hearing in the blood" or "hearing odour" are not merely problems of language and translation, but may

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[35] As Williams and Bendelow points out "the roots of this tradition to dismiss emotions as private, irrational inner sensations which have historically been linked to hysterical bodies, is deeply rooted in the Cartesian rationalist project which has divorced the body from mind, nature from culture, reason from emotion, and public from private" (1998: xv).

[36] The conventional biomedical theories of emotion represent an American "ethnopsychology" based on western notions of mind, body, feeling and reason, nature and culture, self and other, male and female, individual and society. There is in western biomedical models an assumed binary between public sentiments and private feelings, between what is cultural and what is "natural" (Scheper Hughes: 1992: 427).

[37] For example in her work on Alto women in the Brazillian slums, anthropologist Nancy Scheper Hughes works from the conceptual framework that "emotions are 'historical inventions' and as 'rhetorical strategies' used by individuals to express themselves, to make claims to others, to promote or illicit certain kinds of behaviours, and so on. In other words, emotions are discourse" (1992: 431).

suggest a difference in embodied experience or aspects of a different *being-in-the-world* (Geurts 2002).

Finally, in addition to Merleau Ponty's corporeal schema and Franz Fanon's racial epidermal schema, I would also like to add another layer of the *spiritual corporeal schema.* I do this explicitly since in most accounts that draw on Merleau Ponty's existential phenomenology, such as the works of Bakare-Yusuf, Csordas and others there is a tendency to frame their analysis on intentional and autonomous corporeality within perspectives of the secular individual. Even though these approaches do complicate this issue of autonomous corporeality by pointing out that it is simultaneously shaped by existing multiple power relations, but because they rely largely on Merleau Ponty's western conception of individual agency, humans are then still perceived as separate from divinity (Alexander 2007). For as Mozambican social anthropologist Alcinda Honwana (1997) notes, that in many African contemporary contexts there are other factors which may play a role in determining autonomous action. For example she explains how *spirit agencies and humans continue to be seen as ontologically part of one another.* In this instance personal agency can no longer be perceived and experienced as entirely separate from one's bodily experience. She noted in her work on African spiritualities and post-conflict reconstruction of child soldiers that she was conducting in Mozambique that, "spirits and human are in constant interaction and may arguably be seen as ontologically as part of one another" (Honwana 1997: 3). More specifically she suggests that "in the context of Southern Africa, humans and divinities have a more intertwined relationship because spiritual agencies take possession of people's bodies and faculties, live and grow in people and thus constitute a body praxis, a form of embodiment[38]. Within this perspective, humans and spirits became part of the

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[38] In their book *Of revelation and revolution: Christianity, colonialism, and consciousness in South Africa* the Commaroffs (1991) provide a rich account of those aspects of southern Tswana life during the precolonial (1800-1830) that would later also mediate their encounter with missionaries. Specifically highlighting symbolic practices and ideological categories as found in the economy and culture of the Tswana, they explain how the Tswana were motivated by a very different set of assumptions to those of the incoming missionaries. The Commaroffs explain how among the precolonial Tswana their distinctive (as opposed to western) **ontology in which persons, spirit forces and material objects could affect each other.** This was something that missionaries would have a great difficulty grasping. After-all, as the authors point out, they were coming from a notion of modern western individualism in which spirit and matter; people and objects were set apart. This showed a fundamental difference in the **idea of being and consequently in conceptions of personhood between the Tswana and missionaries.** For the pre-colonial Tswana their cosmology was diffused thoroughly in the fabric of social existence.

same agency as they share a combined and integrated existence" (ibid: 3-4). This idea of spirits and humans mutually constituting the other raises important phenomenological issues on the nature of self, existence, personal agency, selfhood and identity. However, we also need to keep in mind that in contemporary Africa, we cannot preclude individual's desires for personal freedom, i.e. an autonomous self that does not identify with these influences of embodied spiritual agencies. However, to me it is still vital to incorporate this element of the sacred embodiment into phenomenological perspectives as it further anchors us to better understand the core questions of this study around township women's changing subjectivities.

3.5 Township Mothers and Daughters' Lived and Embodied 'Cultures of Survival'

In his understanding of the notion of 'cultures of survival', the South African literary critic, Njabulo Ndebele illuminates that, "even under the most oppressive of conditions, people are always trying and struggling to maintain a semblance of normal social order. They will apply tradition and custom to manage their day to day family problems: they will resort to socially acquired behaviour patterns to eke out a means of existence. They apply systems of values that they know. Often those values will undergo changes under certain pressing conditions. The transformation of those values constitutes the essential drama in the lives of ordinary people. The range of problems is ordinary enough but constitutes the active social consciousness of most people" (Ndebele 1991: 53).

Ndebele's formulation of 'the ordinary' informs my proposed conceptual framework of township mothers and daughters lived and embodied 'popular cultures of survival'. However, in this chapter I also argue that these 'popular cultures of survival' are further constituted by a dialectical relationship between the township philosophies, moralities and aesthetics of '*ukuphanta*' (to hustle) and '*ukuhlonipha'* (to respect). As mentioned earlier, my approach then takes on a dialogic approach to theory formation where the voices of participants, material gathered in the field have been subjected to direct interactions with the voices of emerging African women scholars shaping this field of *gendered approaches to African popular culture*.

The aim of this dialoguing process is to ultimately create a situated analytical framework that is responsive to life as experienced by those who live it. Let me clarify from the onset that this conceptual framework will focus on how *both speech and embodiment are critical in formulating the existential ground for mothers' and daughters' popular cultural expressions of survival in townships.* Therefore, unlike previous studies which have focussed wholly on either prevailing discourses (Cooper 2004), or the body (Bakare Yusuf 2001) to identify working class women's agency, this study will analyse how in everyday township life both of them simultaneously shape *being township mothers and daughters.* Second, rather than privileging one corporeal desire (e.g. sexual) over another (e.g. spiritual/religious), this study will rather highlight how various layers of corporeal desire shape township mothers and daughters subjectivities, and the 'popular cultures of survival' they ultimately fashion.

'*Ukuphanta'* and '*Ukuhlonipha'* then encapsulate lived and embodied popular philosophies, moralities and aesthetics that broadly give subjective meaning to *being* a situated township subject. These are social terms which are readily used in everyday township interactions to give explanations to ways of living that reflect traces of the *survival wisdom* which are historically generated, but continue to be shaped by everyday structural marginalisation and oppressions. Brazilian cultural anthropologist, Cesar de Souza Tavares, has also made the useful observation of how in everyday life people invoke meanings that they find relevant by suggesting that-- "every culture may have one, or several central themes that shape and articulate a people's attitude, themes which can be summarized in one phrase, or even one expression that performs a category of expressive behaviour. The materials of these attitudes are phrases, expressions or words created in everyday life in order to classify behaviour and states of affairs...Many times, the same aspect can be embodied in gestures and bodily motions that emblematically and imaginatively express, condense and broaden what a given culture is trying to narrate through speech" (1998:157).

So, although I will proceed to discuss each of these lived and embodied popular philosophies and ontologies separately, bear in mind that this separation has been done for analytical purposes to rather highlight their distinctive features. For we must remember that when we use an analytical framework that emphasises lived experience, we are then compelled to not view them as separate

spheres of existence, but as operating interactively to provide multiple imaginaries and memory sites which township mothers and daughters may choose to access and occupy. For, if we take an 'either/or' position on '*ukuphanta*' and '*ukuhlonipha*' we will once again fail to grasp the concrete dilemmas, strength-force and socio-cultural transformations of poor urban women during these complex times, and thus once again miss the opportunity to tease out just how and why '*ukuphanta*' and '*ukuhlonipha*' together constitute such deep and integral facets of township culture and being. Rather in this study these contrasting popular philosophies, moralities and aesthetics will be conceptualised as having a dialectic relationship and therefore constantly enriching, challenging and reshaping each other, and therefore ultimately upholding each other to be experienced as coherent at times. In this way, within lived experience, when mothers and daughters are faced with existential uncertainty and rising levels of poverty, this pragmatic yet creative dialectical interaction between '*ukuphanta*' and '*ukuhlonipha*' ultimately produces paradoxical urban subjects who are simply in search of extending their horizons to rehumanise their conditions of existence.

3.5.1 "*Ukuphanta*"-To Hustle

'*Ukuphanta*' as a means of 'finding a way in order to survive,' 'getting by' and 'making ends meet,' is a social concept that can be found in several communities, particularly the working class, throughout the world. From the inner-city projects of the United States it has been popularised by the recent hip-hop gangster music video imagery of 'hustling'; while in the Brazilian favellas[39] as *"Jeitinho"-Nos temos que encontrat um Jeitinho para sobreviver*, we must find a Jeitinho in order to survive (Tavares 1998: 161); while Pecaut (2000) in his work on Columbian youth also explains how these youth from poor and violent urban areas claims of commitment to honest and hard work does not exclude praise of being sharp and being able to profit from ones little 'rebusque', hustling. In South Africa we use the Nguni term '*ukuphanta*' or '*ukuphanda*'. I think it is important to emphasise that "*ukuphanta*" is a term that emerges out

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[39] Favella is a generally used term for a Shantytown in Brazil. In the 18th century, the first settlements were called bairros africanos (African neighbourhood), and they were the place where former slaves with no land ownership and no options for work lived (in http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/favela , accessed on 18 December 2010).

of structural complexities which are historically tied to the protracted marginalisation and oppression of Africans globally. This is the reason why it is both an overwhelmingly familiar code and mode of existence shared by the world's poor, and largely why it often takes an anti-institutional character. In recent times in has been exacerbated by the dominant global neo-liberal economic system which has sharply increased global inequalities between the rich and the poor. More specifically the global transition from manufacturing to a high-tech service economy has narrowed the prospects for reasonably well-paying and stable employment for many working class people, while bifurcating the labour market and creating extremes of pay, skill and stability (Queeley 2006). While at the same time we must not lose sight of how these global economic changes have also resulted in women's wage labour becoming increasingly important in this growing global service sector that is dependent on the construction of women's labour and bodies as "cheap, available, and easily controlled" (Harrison 1991: 3). And so within these increasing structural inequalities what we witness is an alarming proliferation, rather than a fading away of this pragmatic way of survival among poor urban women.

However, this notion of 'getting by whatever means', is not only a speech register, but as indicated is constituted by a combination of speech and body practices that tell us something about how poor women create alternative opportunities and 'aesthetics of living' (Tavares 1998) amidst a strained everyday. I have drawn on Brazilian cultural anthropologist Julio Cesar de Souza Tavares work on 'Jeitinho' as found in Brazil's favellas. Much like 'Jeitinho,' '*Ukuphanta*' is a pragmatic survival skill to manoeuvre a racist and deeply inequitable socio-economic world that many of the world's poor find themselves occupying. Second, it is also about a non-verbal style that operates at a corporeal field, which is responsible for defining styles and rhythms of life which reflect one's self-esteem and self-presentation to the world (Tavares 1998), even though poor. Finally it is also about an aesthetic sensibility, or what Tavares (1998) calls an 'aesthetic of living', which *affirms African beauty and the good life, while being poor.*

As a survival skill, '*ukuphanta*' in townships basically means anything that will bring in money and is mainly used to describe non-conventional ways of doing this. For example, a mother will tell you that what she is doing is '*uyaphanta*' (the way of getting by to survive) because she uses the money to feed her family; while a young girl sexually involved with a rich 'sugar daddy'

does this to help her poor family, is another example of '*ukuphanta*' at work. So whether the money is acquired legally or not, '*ukuphanta*' is an accepted way of surviving in townships. You find parents, or more specifically mothers of unemployed youth, complaining about their children who still look to them for support when they can go out there and '*phanda*' (hustle). Young women do not want a boyfriend who is still dependent on his parents. He is expected to '*phanda*,' meaning he must go out there and 'try' something that will bring in money. It does not matter whether that something is legal or not, as long as it contributes to the household income. '*Ukuphanta*' therefore involves a set of skills, a way of doing something to create opportunities for income to achieve often provisional results, such as acquiring groceries, school-fees, clothing, toiletries, beauty products, fast-food, entertainment, cover transport costs, airtime and other everyday household necessities. However, as anthropologist Abdoulique Simone (2008:2) observed in New Bell, an informal settlement neighbourhood in Doula, Cameroon that, "while New Bell today remains full of entrepreneurship and improvised making-do, there are simply too many demands on available resources...in such conditions it is difficult to make plans, to project into the future, to pace oneself with a series of advancing steps geared to some overarching objective." In such situations it is common to find the simple resignation of--"*Pra Hoje ja da, pra manha dues dara*", For today we're covered; Tomorrow God will provide (Tavares 1998: 169).

Zinhle, one of the young women I interviewed, gives a lived and embodied account of some of the basic elements of 'ukuphanta', as she relates the story of her relationship with her ex-boyfriend who gets by through 'ukuphanta':

> *Zinhle: I don't know what can I say about Chesterville life or maybe you will find your answers when I talk about different things. Let me start about my love life, I was involved with a guy from Chesterville, maybe you know him... He wasn't working, he was a thief at the time I dated him. It was fun and I enjoyed it... when he went out to steal from the white people he would come back with belts, jeans, takkies, gold jewelry.... and he will give me those things to wear and he took some to sell and he would come back with cash... it hurts me when he went out to do drugs. He would remember that he had given me a ring, come back for it so he can buy his drugs. He will come with his friends.... he would say to me he will give me another one. But I always knew when he takes it he will not bring it back.*
>
> *When he gets arrested, and I would go and visit him... he will get out. When he was in jail they will sentence him for a year... I couldn't stand a year without someone to take care of me... so I*

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dated other people, but I still visited him. I told my new boyfriend about him and said when he comes back- don't make trouble. I didn't have a baby with my previous boyfriend. When he came out from prison we carried on where we left off. He was arrested in 2003. The new boyfriend was from Emthwalume, but he lived here in Chesterville at Road 4. He was a tenant there, he didn't have his family here. When we dated he was a taxi driver in Chesterville, he is very different from guys here I can say he was a farm boy. When my previous boyfriend came out of prison he knew everything that I had done every time he comes out, he knew things I was doing... When they are in jail they know what's happening outside... I don't know how he knows. When I visit him he will tell me things as they are. I was naughty I used to ask my other boyfriend for money to visit him in jail. Of course he didn't know, the one in prison, he will question and shout at me about what he hears about me...but where else was I supposed to get the money to see him. When he came out again I told him- well I think we should break up. I sat and weighed them both and asked myself when will it end... I was tired. What if I am somewhere and I hear that he has been shot because when somebody finds him stealing at his house for sure they will shoot him dead.... or if he is not shot they will arrest him.

There would also be times I would go looking for him at his home and I would not find him. He's gone out to do drugs... I started seeing all these wrong things about him because now I'm seeing someone who's living a straight life. My new guy took good care of me, he was very different. But I loved my 'jail bird' very much. I used to cry everyday when I see him 'goofed'...then I said I can't do this anymore. He was violent and I was scared of him. He used to threaten me... But I didn't care anymore... My new man took me to meet his family in Mthwalume... his family asked me about my family and other things. There was no more 'jail bird'... I was free. Well I told him we could be friends and he must see our relationship from my point of view... Do you know Stu the day after we spoke he went back in jail...

Zinhle's narration highlights a number of other factors that relate to '*ukuphanta*'. For example, that there are differences in the ways that women and men '*phanda*' which are closely related to aspects of femininity and masculinity. Men who make a living from '*ukuphanta*' often dress well and are seen as more generous to their girlfriends, providing them with countless gifts which can include stolen goods. While when women '*phanta*' this often means they are shoplifting, or engaged in strategies to extract money from their sexual partners. Sometimes 'ukuphanta' is also associated with microeconomic survival activities, such as earning money by braiding hair, looking after babies, cleaning households, or selling items such as cigarettes, alcohol, dagga, sweets, chips and *vetkoek* (sweet-cake) to others in the township. In the context of Chesterville, where the notion of '*ukuphanta*' for men is an old one, it means housebreaking, pick-pocketing, stealing cars, *ukungitsa*, or general theft from stores in the city centre and/or from white people's homes and, increasingly, from wealthier African people's homes. Interestingly, when these same strategies are used amongst struggling people in the township - that is, when 'troublesome' youth

steal from their neighbors-other township residents quickly label these actions as theft, and not as part of '*ukuphanta*'. These expressions then also highlight the ways communities shape the construction of boundaries around who they perceive to be 'part of' or 'not part of' their communities. Other more sophisticated forms of '*ukuphanta*' especially popular with the men also include white-collar crimes such as fraud, especially credit card fraud.

In the context of Chesterville there are elaborate mythical stories of heroes and heroines who are expert '*phantas*' (those who *phanta*). There is even an established hierarchy. Those who engage in the ways of '*ukuphanta*' that involve more danger and risk, such as housebreaking and general theft, are perceived by the majority as 'real men'. This masculinity is enhanced when they lavish their fast cash on their girlfriends, their mothers and friends. These are known as '*izikhokho*', a name derived from the resilient crust left after making *pap*, the staple South African maize starch meal. Furthermore, the danger and risk associated with 'ukuphanta' activities ripples through to other facets of township living, and being '*isikhokho*' also quickly translates to being highly desired by both women and men. However, being in the high-risk business of being '*amaphanta*', many of these young men, to counteract the stresses and uncertainty they experience daily, seek pleasure and escape through 'hanging out' with friends, '*ukubloma*', intense partying and consuming alcohol and dagga. These descriptions highlight the extent that creating normativity out of risk has been a long-embodied phenomenon in urban townships.

The opposite of '*amaphanta*' is reflected in the creation of categories such as '*abafana bo ma*', mommy's boys and '*izinyoni*', birds. '*Abafana bo ma*' are young boys who adorn themselves in the latest fashions, but it is widely known that they do not '*phanta*' for their clothes; rather, these are purchased by their parents, and in Chesterville, this means their mothers. *Izinyoni* are then those men who often work legitimately for a living and can be easily *tricked* out of cash. Being 'mommy's boy' or '*izinyoni*' is tantamount to not being a 'real man', terms which are heavily policed by township women. Further, these activities of '*ukuphanta*' are seen to incorporate certain rituals that impart the skills of being an 'urban survivor' to many of these formally uneducated and unemployed daughters and sons in townships. Incorporated into this act of 'naming' are issues of masculinity, status and contextually formulated forms of authority. It is then not unusual for those who are '*abafana bo ma*' or '*izinyoni*' to seek to escape the usual

growing-up pressures and stigmas by joining '*amaphanta*'. My younger brother related to me how most of his friends, known as 'mommy's boys', had opted to become '*amaphanta*' and were now either in jail or dead. Those engaged in white-collar crimes were usually older men who had initially started out by doing the more risky level activities of '*ukuphanta*', though this was of course not universal.

In addition to '*ukuphanta*' being an expression of femininity and masculinity, articulating youth independence within urban African contexts and also being a set of acquired skills, this mode of being is also expressed through bodily rhythms, movements and gestures. For as mentioned, let us not forget that African women have used their bodies to protect and project themselves into an inhospitable world. And this is why Tavares points out that among the African Diasporas communities who constitute the overwhelming majority in Brazil's favellas, "the body plays an essential role as a concrete location from which the life perspective is defined" (1998: 3). And through the everyday movements of the body in its familiar territory, the body is transformed into a place of memory (Tavares 1998; Bakare Yusuf 2001). And Hewitt further reminds us that the past is afterall remembered bodily--"the body cannot forget where it has been" (2009: 269). Some have argued that such sites of *bodily memory* regularly appear when deep memory either disappears, or is threatened with disappearance, generating what we may call *histories of the body (*Tavares 1998). This embodied knowledge is commonly survived through popular bodily practices such as dance, religious practices, fighting styles and ways of walking.

However, scholars from various disciplines have criticised these modes of existence such as '*ukuphanta*' as affirming and submitting to dominant power by masking the irresponsibility of governments to respond to the structural inequalities that exist, and thereby fuelling the failure of poor communities to lobby and organise against unacceptable living conditions. In this way '*ukuphanta'* and similar lived philosophies and moralities of survival, in their failure to undermine authority, are argued to in fact add to the *privatisation of suffering* for the poor. However, what these valid criticisms overlook is that '*ukuphanta*' recognises alternative forces of power and in this way create the conditions for people to make decisions about their everyday lives, that is, have agency under hegemonic conditions.

This is especially important for those who are normally denied even that capacity to act and create alternatives to shape their own lives. And as literary scholar's Elaine Scarry work on torture has shown us, while all bodies are vulnerable to power, the act of creating can restore a language of agency for individuals (in Hewitt 2009). In these moments of 'non-heroic ordinariness,' Ashis Nancy (in Harding 2000: 152) for example, illustrates how as a means of psychic survival 'ordinary Indians' under British colonialism negotiated and adjusted within the limitations of this rule, and how these "apparent compromises with the colonial system were a protection from being overcome by the values of the colonialists...but worse [is] the loss of one's soul and the internalization of one's victor." Furthermore, the self-mastery acquired through skills learned from 'ukuphanta' allow for some degree of fleeting autonomy for these marginalised which is achieved through assertiveness, fearlessness and pride (Abu-Lughod 1986). This allows for some kind of respectability in being able to satisfy the material needs of the family and household, illustrating how "power is also located in the existential struggle for self-empowerment and self-mastery" (Jackson 1998: 256). Further, maximising survival through the competitive spirit of *aggressive hustling* need not mean the abandonment of the co-operative spirit sustained through extended kin and friendship networks, for as Harrison observes, "in the light of the increasing scarcity of cash, these extended exchange networks, allow their impoverished participants to meet basic needs outside of formal market transactions" (1992:459). Finally, in '*ukuphanta*' we also find ways the poor enhance their lives through the creation of a counter popular aesthetics.

That is, these popular philosophies and moralities also incorporate a counter 'aesthetic of living' that affirms 'black beauty and alternative ways of living...celebrates happiness, existence and pleasure" (Tavares 1998: 19), and in doing so seeks to recognise the full humanity of township mothers and daughters. This, Tavares (1998) argues, becomes the true *existential resistance of the poor*. Recognising both 'the good life without fear of dying', and 'the importance of maintaining a good life although being poor' (see 1998: 20), creates the conditions of making what perhaps might be an unbearable everyday worth living. And in recognising their African aesthetic sensibilities, ways of feeling, sensing, taste and visceral pleasures to the world, as Cooper (2004) suggests, enables those who live on the social margins to celebrate sensuality in their own terms, thereby humanising themselves. In this way, popular philosophies, moralities

such as '*ukuphanta*' provide us with a glimpse of how township mothers and daughters face the world aesthetically in spite of their socio-economic marginality. Interestingly, this popular aesthetic of working class women which is often rejected as debased and vulgar by the middle-classes, is as Peter Stallybass and Allon White note, often appropriated and used as "an object of nostalgia, longing and fascination ... and become[s] symbolic contents of bourgeois desire" (1986: 191), for as they brilliantly observe, "disgust always bears the imprint of desire" (1986: 191).

These lived and embodied popular philosophies and moralities such as '*ukuphanta*' then allow us to also view African women's *sexual desire as a desire for recognition that liberates* as opposed to commodifies them (Cooper 1990). Recognition, as defined by hooks, involves that "response from the other which makes meaningful the feelings, intensities and actions of the self. It allows the self to realise its agency and authorship in tangible ways" (1990: 199). This reformulation of desire is particularly important as historically African women's *desire has often been cast as a wound* which is often caught in a "litany of loss, abandonment and broken promises" (hooks 1990: 197).

3.5.2 "Ukuhlonipha" -To Respect

While '*ukuphanta*' is about gregariously manoeuvring a racist and highly inequitable world among the world's poor (Tavares 1998), '*ukuhlonipha*' involves grounding the oppressed within this unstable and unpredictable world they inhabit through gathering, sharing and reflection which offers them an "alternative ontological identity of connection" (Harding 2000: 217). This is because '*ukuhlonipha*' as another lived and embodied popular philosophy, morality and aesthetic of survival among township mothers and daughters which privileges *relational ontology*, which encourages "a way of perceiving connections and influences among all presences (material and immaterial) in the cosmos" (Harding 2000: 79). Therefore, this social concept also incorporates what Tavares (1998) also observed among urban Afro-Brazillians a spiritual skill, bodily orientation to the world, while also expressing a counter-aesthetic harnessed through the *lived and embodied survival wisdom* of township women. 'Ukuhlonipha' as a lived and embodied spiritual/religious sensibility is also born out of the African's need to

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survive the tensions of oppressive systems such as colonialism and apartheid, while also maintaining a more humane understanding of their place in the world.

'*Ukuhlonipha*' also illustrates the observation made by feminist phenomenologist Bakare-Yusuf (2008: 2) that although we may embrace the multiple differences that characterise most contemporary societies, "many still yearn for a stable, coherent ground to support the self." And in the case of Diasporic communities, cultural historian Sandra Harding (2000: 150) noted that from the early days of slavery African Brazilians came to formulate meanings for themselves of "blackness as African-ness and African-ness as a source of axe" (i.e. life force). And so African-ness was heavily associated with a spiritual life force[40]. And this search for a sense of stability, cosmic equilibrium and being-in-peace with God and life (Tavares 1998), continues in other contexts to be a core defining factor for township mothers and daughters. Furthermore, as a religious/spiritual orientation, '*ukuhlonipha'* has been crucial in absorbing the personal and collective traumas suffered under colonialism and apartheid. By creating alternative meanings of what it means to be human and belong through codes such 'ukuhlonipha', women were seeking to repair and heal discordant family and communal bonds. Gathering and praying together women were able to also create environments where they could attend to their own needs and healing. This is why Julio Braga argued that spiritual/religious communities practice produces what she called an alternative *cidadania* (citizenship), "a model of human relations and participation in society within a paradigm strikingly different from that embraced by [the] nations' elites" (in Harding 2000: 160). I must also mention that these spiritual/religious spaces created by poor women have also been known to be transformative spaces of rejuvenation and thereby cultivate that 'life-force' that enabled women to endure and go on under limit situations[41]. Harding (2000) explains that rejuvenation was achieved through principles

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[40] Harding writes, "From the internal perspective of the black community, African-ness was a value-especially a religious value. Muniz Sodre observed that in spite of the seductions of power apparently available to some Afro-Brazillians who distanced themselves from African-ness, Africans were often more esteemed than wealthier *Crioulos* within the communal spaces of black Bahian life" (2000: 117).

[41] Limit situations are those "wherever the rules of everyday life have been suspended, and questions of survival are brought to the fore. Put differently, a limit situation is a situation where everyday life is rife with legions and tensions, uncertainly chaos, material scarcity and corruption. In limit situations those who live at this edge of existence are directly facing the issue of their own survival, their own mortality, whether in brute physical terms, or in a more complex emotional, spiritual or physical sense. (Bakare-Yusuf 2002: 3).

imbedded in the 'theology of pleasure,' where dance and song were used to transform spaces into places of intense feelings of pleasure and joy. In this way '*ukuhlonipha,*' similarly to '*ukuphanta,*' is about creating spaces of freedom, but in this case with a special emphasises on a connection with the divine.

Socio-linguistic scholar Puleng Hanong Thetela defines the '*hlonipha*' code among the Southern Sotho as a "culturally learned linguistic code of politeness for women" (2002: 186), which is realised through "politeness, encodings such as euphemistic expressions, avoidance of profanities and vagueness" (ibid 177). However, she also notes that this common-sensical linguistic code used in particular to negotiate sexual meanings among Southern Sotho communities also acts to constrain women from expressing themselves explicitly to report violences against them, such as rape. We must also keep in mind that socio-linguistic explanations of politeness codes such as '*ukuhlonipha*' often dismiss the wider historical and social contexts in which such categories are generated. These conditions have often included situations where women have laboured in sustaining a generational code of respect among family and community members, in the interests of producing communities that perform respect, integrity and dignity, in spite of weak social fabrics. Keeping in mind that this code may at times act against them, at the same time we must not lose sight that '*ukuhlonipha*' also constitutes part of the broader lived and embodied survival wisdom and speeches of desire (Sitas 2004) of township women.

The ideal township woman was described by one the research participants as '*umama oqotho*', a dignified mother. In fact '*umama oqotho*' captures the embodied characteristics of township's mothers and daughters philosophies, moralities and aesthetics of '*ukuhlonipha*', very well. I asked a group of young township women to generate a list of qualities they considered as important features of 'umama oqotho'. Below is the list they generated:

-Ozihloniphayo-akaphuzi, uqgoka ngokuzihloniphayo, ukhuluma kahle, uhlalisene kahle nomakhelwane

She respects herself. She does not drink alcohol. She dresses modestly, she speaks well, and she has good relations with her neighbours

-Okwazi ukumela nezinkinga angazibalekeni

She faces her difficulties and is not a quitter.

-Okwazi ukukhulisa abantwana kahle, akakhethi, abayale, abathande

She is able to bring up her children well, physically, mentally and emotionally, she does not discriminate and she advises them well and loves them.

-Oyisibonele ezinganeni onemfundiso eright

She is a role model and offers the right teachings.

-Ohlonipha umdeni nomphakathi, onobubele

She respects her family and community, and is kind.

-Onozwelo, osizayo emphakathini

She is compassionate and assists her community

-Okwazi ukuxazulula izikinga emndenini ngaphandle kokuchema nokuxabanisa

She is able to resolve the problems of other families without causing divisions and conflicts.

-Omela iqiniso noma sekunjani-okuwrong kuwrong

She stands for the truth no matter what-what is wrong is wrong.

-Ongavuni izingane umazonile

She does not indulge children when they are wrong.

-Omaziyo uNkulunkulu, othandazayo

She knows God and prays.

-Ongaphuzi, ongadli amadrugs

She does not drink alcohol and does not consume drugs.

-Othembenkile, ohloniphayo

She is trustworthy and is respectful

Owazisa futhi ohlonipha athande umyeni wakhe

She loves and respects her husband

(Abafundi Institute 2010 Learners, January 2011)

Interestingly 'ukuhlonipha,' which is associated with respect and politeness, is closely linked to African motherhood, as opposed to womanhood. Second, in many cases the terms of 'respect' and 'dignity' are used interchangeably by the learners, meaning that being-respectful is a core component of the embodiment of dignity for many in the township. This generated list also comprises a number of generationally valued behaviours and practices orbiting around *being respectful,* also then reflects what womanist Layli Phillips maintains about motherhood as essentially a "set of behaviours based on caretaking, management, nurturance, education, spiritual mediation and dispute resolution" (2006:xxiv). The discourse of African motherhood as supporting patriarchal ideologies and thus limiting African women's agency towards emancipation (Trebilot 1983; Van Mens-Verhulst 1993; Lewis 2004) has been highlighted by various feminist scholars. However feminist sociologist Zine Magubane maintains that this discourse has been greatly misunderstood. She notes that specific South African feminism rooted in motherism and family in fact reflect "less an affirmation of patriarchy than an attempt to rearticulate the meaning of motherhood in such a way as to challenge its race and class exclusive character" (2010: 1020). Magubane (2010) notes that there is no denying the extent that defining women as mothers has been used to justify denying them positive representations and voice in the public sphere. However, she also explains that in racist societies like South Africa, motherhood and family became highly politicised and were actively mobilised as markers of exclusion or inclusion. Furthermore, as highlighted earlier, since African women had to assume primary responsibility for the maintenance of the family and the household in both the economic and emotional sense, they were compelled to view domestic issues as having a strong political dimension. This is partly why when their ability to support their household was threatened they were willing to take political action.

This brings me to the next point on *'ukuhlonipha'* which is that it is a cultural representation which is also expressed through bodily self-presentations, that include adornment, gestures, posture and manners of walking. As mentioned, aesthetic measures, grounded in the body have been a prime site to cultivate an alternative sense of self and communities among the oppressed. And as Rachel Harding notes, these choices in "personal adornment, composure, and gesture are perhaps the most readily available to subaltern people to express another orientation to the fact of their oppression" (2000: 128). For it is these spiritual/religious bodily sensibilities that also allow township women to bring into visibility their awareness of grace, sensuality and beauty by wearing and displaying their clothes with dignity and elegance. This embodiment of personal courage, sexual modesty and the acceptance of emotional and physical pain, reflected in their stoic appearance, can also be read as a way to reclaim their bodies, and rather use them to communicate their versions of morality as they gracefully move through township spaces.

The stoic figure is, of course, a very common one in African women's iconography. A stoic person is basically someone who appears unaffected by emotions, and is generally admired for showing patience and endurance in the face of adversity. Vividly portrayed among women in the shantytowns where cultural anthropologist Nancy Scheper-Hughes completed her study on mother-love, one of the women consoling the other upon hearing of the death of her child says-"You are strong, Dona Maria. Be grateful that you are still alive. *Resign yourself*. It is useless to grieve. You have your own life to think about. *You must endure*" (1992: 441, my emphases). These themes of resignation, endurance and grief so memorably embodied in women's stoic bodies, are strong themes in surviving oppression and poverty. In this sense stoicism is then strongly associated with *performing dignity* in the midst of hardship. These bodily self-presentations and aesthetic choices form part of the attempts to rescue African women's bodies from the historical sexual degradation they had repeatedly and silently suffered, by restoring and proclaiming their own ideas and values of what it meant to have a body with integrity and be a dignified human being once again. Other everyday bodily practices which are associated with *'ukuhlonipha'* include prayer, collective worship, traditional rituals and ceremonies. And because of its association with tradition and politeness, corporeal desire within lived and embodied popular philosophies, moralities and aesthetics of *ukuhlonipha*', has often been viewed as shadowy and unclear while also seen to draw from conservative "discourses which continue to

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essentialise them as 'untainted' and 'traditional' or 'beautiful but loyal' alluding us not to engage their erotic despair or celebration" (hooks 1990: 194).

However, such a view is only possible if we choose to split sexual longing (typically associated with '*ukuphanta*') from spiritual/religious longing (conventionally linked to '*ukuhlonipha*'), yearnings that may be simultaneously experienced by township mothers and daughters alike. This perspective expressed by hooks is also possible when embodied spiritual and religious faith is theorised as wholly oppressive and controlling over women's sexual agency. As outlined earlier, in seeking a conceptual framework that comprehensively captures township mothers' and daughters' 'cultures of survival', to constitute spiritual and religious desire as merely controlling and a policing discourse serves to eliminate an entire layer of township women's felt experience. And since spirituality and religion have grounded and humanised millions of poor women through the daily bodily practices of prayer, rituals and ceremonies, which often mediates healing for themselves and communities, it is then more productive to understand spiritual and religious longing as constituting yet another "kind of corporeal desire, related but not separate from the desire for sexual and emotional intimacy" (Hewitt 2009: 255). Such a retheorisation of desire allows us to better conceptualise how spiritual and religious desire can be comfortably accompanied by hetero-sexual desire in the everyday lives of township women. It exposes the fact that the dichotomy between the spiritual and sensuous are indeed false, and that the two are in fact inseparable in lived life. As feminist Audre Lorde elaborates on this point that "we have attempted to separate the spiritual and the erotic, thereby reducing the spiritual to a world of flattened effect, a world of the ascetic who aspires to feel nothing. But nothing is farther from the truth…The dichotomy between the spiritual and the political is also false…For the bridge that connects them is formed by the erotic-the sensual-those physical, emotional, and psychic expressions of what is deepest and strongest and richest within each of us, being shared: the passions of love, in its deepest meanings (Audre Lorde 1983 in Moody 1997: 24). Such alternative conceptualisations then allow us to view township mothers' and daughters' longing for companionship and intimacy with others as inextricably bound with their desiring bodies and yearnings for *Umvelingqangi*[42].

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[42] This is the Nguni word for God in Christianity, and Allah in Islam.

3.6 Conclusion

The tendency to conceptualise '*ukuhlonipha*' as authentic and purifying, and '*ukuphanta'* as fake and corrupting when analysing township women's lived experiences,continues to persist. For it can be argued that in conditions of lived oppressions the sacred is not only to be found in the spiritual/religious realm per se, but can be traced to the physicality of experience within material life (Harding 2000), such as via various body practices of beauty, style, adornment and enjoyment that permeate everyday interactions. Rachel Harding (2000) found that such efforts among the oppressed are simply part of their broader attempts to reflect 'ways of surviving in the midst of siege' (2000: 151); 'a way to grow strong in assaulted territory' (2000: 152); 'a way of maintaining a very different sense of selfhood and identity while operating within the limitations of hostile hegemonic forces' (2000: 152); and ultimately as 'a way to build an alternative experiences of humanity, of participation in society, of citizenship' (2000: 151).

In fact, I must point out that this fusion of the material and spiritual is a principle that is deeply imbedded within African systems of thought and practices regarding what constitutes a balanced life. As African scholar of religion and philosophy Kofi Opuku notes, "both the organic and spiritual aspects of disease are taken into consideration when a cure is sought. The perspective is based on the understanding that human beings are a compound of material and immaterial substances, which makes the maintenance of balance between the spiritual and material a condition of sound health" (in Harding 2000: 77). The suggested conceptual framework on township mothers and daughters lived and embodied 'cultures of survival' draws from this kind of conceptualisations which breaks out of imprisoning and pathologising discourses on township ways of living, by arguing that in everyday life the actions engaged by mothers' and daughters' draws simultaneously on these seemingly 'contradictory' popular philosophies, moralities and aesthetics. As within these tensions and contradictions '*ukuphanta'* and '*ukuhlonipha*' become shared orientations that co-exist and generate new meanings regarding what it means to be a woman in South Africa's township which remains coloured by uncertainty, structural inequalities and arbitrary everyday violences. Furthermore, these new experiences reformulate the senses,

which is an important reconstitution for those who have experienced prolonged violation that often results in their sensory paths mutilated by these experiences (Hewitt 2009).

Critical then to understanding '*ukuhlonipha'* and 'u*kuphanta'* is their potential for resistance and transformation in everyday life. In this way, these popular philosophies, moralities and aesthetics represent quotidian attempts to resist domination by manipulating and negotiating spaces and materials to express township women's views on humane living. In doing this, these modes of experiencing the world are then about creativity and work (Bakare-Yusuf 2001), and also what Harding called elsewhere a 'performance of conversation', which is about "altering the needs of besieged and subjugated peoples" (2000: 149). In these cases, struggles and tensions in everyday life are then given material representations and transformed into tolerable, and in some cases, even to joyous conditions. And finally, as mentioned in everyday life township, women may not necessarily experience this fusion of 'ukuphanta' and 'ukuhlonipha' as necessarily contradictory, though it certainly does open up the possibilities for paradoxical conditions and subjectivities. This is because we must remember that when we embrace lived and embodied experience as the site from which we theorise, this automatically means that we must accept that we will unearth experiences often coloured by contradiction, ambiguity, which may ultimately leave us with unsettling accounts. So very much as sociologist Francisco Gutienez Sanin observed that a morality "based on the imperative to share what one has with others does not prevent the constant breaking of rules in the community," (in Pecaut 2000: 147) so too with 'ukuphanta' and 'ukuhlonipha' among township mothers and daughters. In other words, these yearnings for spiritual and religious emplacement can be experienced side-by-side with the seductions of enjoyment and sensuous living even though being poor, in order to carve viable selves under structurally and existentially challenging conditions. And "enmeshed within this web are subjects with lives to live, constituted in part by their role in power relationships in which they participate. These relationships being dialectical, necessarily engender contradictions which people must somehow tame in order to live with them" (Buck 1991: 56).

CHAPTER 4: Methodology on Township Mothers and Daughters Lived and Embodied 'Popular Cultures of Survival'

4.0 Introduction

This study began as an exploratory journey of a daughter, Nthabiseng Motsemme, from one of KwaZulu-Natal's smaller townships-Chesterville- in search of her 'mothers' garden', Linda Motsemme and by extension her grandmothers Nokuthula Motsemme and Mamane Jali. My mother, a single parent whose husband died when she was 28 years old leaving her with 3 children to raise, is a trained social worker and an active community worker who belongs to the 'old school' that believes caring for the community is an ethical and communal responsibility. As a result I grew up surrounded by a constant traffic of orphans, abandoned strangers and cousins who all called her mama Linda. Growing up in this open home where we were all treated equally, I even began to suspect that I was also an estranged orphan she had taken in and chosen to care for. At times, when intuition told me I was her birth daughter, I even resented her big and welcoming heart to everyone who came knocking on our door seeking help. During the notorious high apartheid violence of the 1980s, my mother who at the time happened to be a social worker formally working with township male youth, and who progressively transformed our home into a safe haven for young boys from police harassment, became quickly labelled as a 'comrade sympathiser' by the apartheid state and its supporters, and in the case of Chesterville township the notorious vigilante group-the A-team. This propelled a series of brief arrests of my mother, threats to her life, our home being targeted for regular police and security forces harassment, and ultimately our home and her car being petrol bombed in 1986. I was witness to these events and they all occurred when I was entering my turbulent teens. These formative experiences of being raised by a single and activist (though she would never identify herself as an activist but a concerned mother) mother during one of South Africa's most violent periods, constitutes the critical foundation of why I would later become drawn to exploring township women's lives.

My mother, who is now 67 years old, continues to be an active community member through her involvement in the church where she occasionally preaches, pays regular visits to the sick and

grieving in our community; a member of various women's stokvels; active in the local political scene; continues to participate in local youth development initiatives and is a part-time teacher for social work auxiliary workers coming from poor urban areas, make her a very busy woman. I left Chesterville Township in 1990 to pursue my university studies and chose the University of Cape Town so that I could be as far away as possible, from what seemed to me at the time, a rather parochial life of the township. Of course throughout my university years I would visit regularly, but in short I increasingly became a 'visiting daughter,' rather than imbedded in the daily life of my community. However, even now having been a university lecturer, researcher and research manager my black knees betray my working class roots and this embodiment places me right back to my visceral situatedness as a township female subject. Kneeling to clean acrylic or the more recently preferred tile floors; kneeling to do handwashing, kneeling when entering other people's homes in the presence of elders, all form part of my experiences as a township daughter. The socialisation to cleaning and washing begins at an early age for township girls, as we watch and imitate our mothers, aunts and older sisters squatting, kneeling and leaning forward to do the daily chores of maintaining a clean home. These embodied practices are ways in which our mothers pass to us, their daughters, the values of discipline and cleansiless, and more importantly to keep some semblance of human dignity under constrained conditions.

While on the other hand, my hands and chest bear signatures of protection rituals done to me when I was young child. These almost unnoticeable markings embody a practiced but unspoken spirituality in townships, whose power I am learning to appreciate once again. Rooted from my birth to my everyday growing up memories of walking to the local primary school, sharing food in one bowl with my brothers; getting a hiding from coming home way after sunset from the sheer enjoyment of playing with friends games such as *blakie-blakie*; *mampatile, umagalobha, amagende, 3-tin, iqhathu and izindlu*; buying (actually I usually got them for free) *amagwinya* or *umxhabhiso* from our next-door neighbor who is also a traditional healer and my 'other-mother', to later learning to negotiate the township streets as a young woman whose body was suddenly changing during the terror decade of the 1980s, while simultaneously indulging in the unforgettable moments of the pleasures to dancing (yes, with premed hair and dressed in the latest neon big-shirt fashions) to Brenda Fassil, Stimuli, Teddy Pendergrass and Anita Baker melodies, all fusing together to create a distinctly township mood, are all a part of me, reminding

us that townships are places of joy and pain, excessive violence and sadness and excessive creativity and joy.

Speaking from this position as 'township daughter', I then went in search of a methodological approach that would incorporate my voice as well as those of the participants I interviewed. I found that the integration of an African womanist and existential phenomenological frameworks to be useful and coined my own methodological approach which I have called *African womanist interpretative phenomenology*. This framework then allowed me to map out a flexible data collection process and data analyses strategy where I could explore the deep subjectivities and embodiments of township mothers' and daughters' experiences of suffering and healing. Ethical dilemmas encountered on the field were also constantly incorporated in order to make the methodological process relevant and meaningful to mother and daughter participants of the study.

As mentioned, one of the concerns that I had when I entered the field was in ensuring that I had a methodological outlook that would be as holistic, yet also as flexible as possible. I needed a metaphor that appreciated the multiplicity of ways we 'come to know,' and would therefore be also able to treat the township mothers and daughters I spoke to, as complete human beings. In this search towards reaching those neglected and forgotten parts of townships women's lives, I found that the metaphor of *spirit possession and dreams* very useful in securing my methodological ground. This is because this trope is essentially double-edged to both reclaim 'women's tongues' as well as warn me about the possible dangers of zombification that I carried from consuming unlimited amounts of a western based diet of theories, what elsewhere Carolyn Cooper has called 'poisonous knowledge'(1991).

Interestingly, what I was to discover was that African women scholars and creative writers have been using this metaphor for some time as a means to enter into marginalised women's hidden or forgotten knowledge spaces, thereby ultimately transforming knowledge production. However, this use of spirit possession and dreams by African women should not surprise us as Hazel Tafadzwa Ngoshi (2009) has also shown through her recent article *Recovering the Tongue: memorializing grieved women through spirit possession and ritual in Zimbabwean literature*, that the tropes of spirit possession, rituals and ancestral memory have been effectively used to

inscribe female subjectivity in African cultural memory and national consciousness. This is linked to the fact that possession has consistently been documented as a feminine response which makes it a subaltern discourse to hegemonic practices across different cultures (Stoller 1995). Let me share some examples that I came across from Zimbabwean novelist Yvonne Vera and Caribbean transnational radical feminist and healer Jacqui Alexander who have also deployed the metaphor of spirit possession to situate their work and writing process.

In an interview conducted with Jane Bryce in August 2000, Yvonne Vera said this about the process of writing her first novel *Nehanda* which deals with the Zimbabwean War of Independence:

> Nehanda (published 1993) was my first novel, and it came out of me almost like a dream. It was the feeling of a dream when I look at it now. And that suited it, because it concerned a myth, a legend. It was a story of spirituality, of ancestors, a mystic consciousness and a history….so it was much better to write it almost intuitively, out of my consciousness of being African, as though I were myself a spirit medium, and I was just transferring or conveying the feelings, symbols and images of that. I wrote it at a time when I could write it, the way one might write a folk-song. Today I would probably spoil it. I wrote it from remembrance, as a witness to my own spiritual history. (Bryce: 2002: 220)

She continues,

> Writing the novel transformed me. I remember after I wrote the book, feeling physically old because I felt so wise, I knew so much about the spirit world. I hadn't travelled in it before in a concentrated fashion like that, and I felt as if I were a spirit as I wrote it. I felt in the end *it came out of a state of possession.* I asked her in my traditional manner of asking-getting up before dawn to ask her guidance-and she had visited. And in the end I felt physically exhausted, and that I had lost my youth, because I couldn't pretend to the world that I was naïve. I felt a fierce sense of responsibility to tell this story, and to do so, I had to coexist with this Nehanda spirit. It really gave me a lot of strength as a woman" (Bryce 2002: 222, my emphases).

While Alexander in her recent book *Pedagogies of the Crossing: Meditations on feminism, sexual politics, memory, and the sacred* points out from the onset that this academic text takes the road less travelled by, "Moving from the betrayal of secular citizenship and dispossession to sacred citizenship and possession, from dismemberment to rememory" (2005: 16). In fact, in her final chapter on *Dangerous memory: secular acts, sacred possessions,* she maps out her path towards becoming a healer, in her travels to the Congo and the conceptual, bodily, soul

transformations she has journeyed in integrating the scholar and healer, in what she calls *Pedagogies of the sacred: making the invisible tangible.*

So what lies behind the appropriation and embodiment of possession by both African scholars and creative writers? What are the sources of enchantment captured by this corporeal mode of writing and creating knowledge? First, I think that adopting the metaphor of spirit possession allows the researcher to access a more inclusive methodological standpoint, demonstrating that the theorymaker/storyteller is *always embodied*. In other words, using embodiment as an epistemological resource creates the potential to destabilise the idea that there is only one path to acquire knowledge. This expands our ideas of what constitutes legitimate knowledge sites, allowing us to speak of corporeal epistemologies for example. For as African womanists and feminists have consistently pointed out *knowing is always a consequence of specific experiences and embodiments.* Let me clarify that when I speak of possession my invocation is not cast within the genealogy of functionalist anthropological writings where it has been used to explain how 'other' societies function. Rather, I draw on cultural anthropologist Paul Stoller's (1995) broader definition of possession as a set of embodied practices that also has social and political consequences.

Second, I would like to propose that through occupying this positionality which moves one from a state of dispossession to possession as Alexander declares, also gives the scholar and writer access to what I call the *diviners epistemological narrative.* Various scholars have documented the ways in which diviners extract meanings from dreams, bodies, the senses, the lived world as well as the spiritual world, in order to construct situated knowledge. For example an ethical diviner as healer is someone who is effective in mediating between various knowledge systems, sources of information and multiple sensory modes (Winkelman and Peek 2004), seeing them all as empirically valid. In other words, the diviner embraces the senses, reasoning, the body, mind, spirituality and combines them all to create a 'coherent' view of the social situation that is subjectively meaningful to specific individuals and communities. This multifaceted and multilayered view of knowledge is made possible because inherently, "spiritual possession represents a world decentred, horizontal and ambivalent which enters into radical conflict with

the new image of the world designed by reason: vertical, uniform and centralised" (Vambe 1993: 127).

Third, in adopting this metaphor to frame my outlook as I maneuvered the field, meant that I would be travelling between worlds, making the notion of liminality central for me to embrace. For those who occupy this zone of liminality, Chicano radical transnational feminist Gloria Anzaldua coined the Spanish term *Nepatleras*. She describes *Nepatleras* as--"mediators", "in-betweeners", "those who facilitate passages between worlds…threshold people; those who live within and among multiple worlds, and develop a perspective from the cracks." (in Keating 2005: 1-2). However, occupying these liminal states of consciousness and ways of thinking need not be viewed as being in a constant state of displacement, rather as assuming a *threshold space* which offers the possibilities of creating broader imaginative frameworks where multiple and different angled ways of 'seeing,' and 'listening' can occur. In the same way that Vera reminds us when she talks about the process of writing *Nehanda:* writing can become a conscious act of exhumation, resistance and witness.

However, spirit possession can also be associated with 'spirit thievery' otherwise known as zombification which Cooper defines as the "appropriation of consciousness and destruction of will...taken their knowledge of their original and natural world away from them and left them empty shells- duppies, zombies, living dead capable only of receiving orders from someone else and carrying them out" (Cooper 1991:70). This process of zombification is associated with colonial miseducation and thus carries the idea of being embodied with 'poisonous knowledge' which literally destroys one's tongue and being. This understanding of zombification is very much aligned to Aime Césaire's (1972) definition of colonisation as a process of thingification; and Linda Tuhiwa Smith's description of colonisation "as a process of stripping away our understanding in our own eyes and an undermining of our ability and right to determine our destinies" (1999: 72).

From this metaphor of spirit possession I was then *able to embody a methodological approach* which would give me the freedom to occupy and incorporate a multilayered and multifractured angle of seeing, listening and feeling township mothers' and daughters' lived and embodied experiences of suffering and healing, when I went into the field. It was also the place from which

I constructed my own situated qualitative methodological approach that I called an *African Womanist Interpretative Phenomenology*. In weaving together this framework I principally drew from African womanist and existential phenomenological epistemologies. And while on the one hand African womanism has grounded me ontologically, the interpretative phenomenological approach has allowed me to utilise accessible methods to collect, analyse and make general sense of the data collected in the field, while at the same time maintaining a critical distance from the data as best as I could.

4.1 Methodological Approach: African Womanist Interpretive Phenomenology

Mark Orbe, Darlene Drummond and Sakile Kai Camara (2002) outline the growing use of phenomenological inquiry in African-American women's studies. Integrating phenomenology and Black feminist thought in their study exploring African Americans' everyday encounters, they demonstrate the utility of phenomenology as a methodological tool consistent and compatible with ideas of Black feminist thought. Similarly, I want to suggest that African Womanism and the phenomenological approach of interpretative phenomenology have several points of converges that can be productively combined to formulate a qualitative methodological approach that is able to gather rich data on the lived and embodied experiences of suffering and healing among township women. As I have mentioned I have chosen to call this hybrid methodological framework, which integrates African womanist and interpretive phenomenology approaches, *African Womanist Interpretative Phenomenology*. But before mapping out this suggested methodology let us briefly outline what are in fact some of the common features of both frameworks.

Although womanism is associated with the critical, otherwise known as the emancipatory paradigm, and phenomenology is grounded within the intrepretivist or constructionist tradition, they both share the idea that social realities are subjective and multiple. In both cases the idea of what constitutes valuable sources of knowledge and evidence is defined broadly and ranges from written evidence, to lived experience, the body, emotions, folk and common sense. Furthermore they are committed to methods which represent as faithfully and fruitfully as possible the voices and holistic experiences of those being 'researched'. In this sense dialogue, oral and

conversational types of interview techniques are preferred over the more structured methods which dominate positivist quantitative approaches. Such methodologies based on objectivist positivism have been rejected by African women scholars because they maintain that these require women to,

> objectify ourselves, devalue our emotional life, displace our motivations for furthering knowledge about Black women, and confront in an adversarial relationship those with more social, economic and professional power... It therefore seems unlikely that Black women would use a positivist epistemological stance in rearticulating a Black women's standpoint. Black women are more likely to use an alternative epistemology for assessing knowledge claims, one using different standards that are consistent with Black women's criteria for substantiated knowledge and with our criteria for methodological adequacy (Hill-Collins 1990: 207).

This leads me to the second theoretical principle that these forms of inquiry share, which is the value they place on *personal expressiveness and emotions* as not a hindrance, but central, in enhancing the formulation of situated knowledges. Additionally, both African womanism and interpretative phenomenology view the incorporation of personal voice of the scholar, that is, reflexivity, as key in highlighting the extent to which knowledge is always imbedded in power relations and constituted by a process of co-construction between the researcher and the participants involved in the research process. Allow me to turn my attention into surfacing what aspects of these approaches allow us to forefront the voices and lives of township women within their particular 'cultural complexes' (Abu-Lughod 1986) exposing their deep truths and everyday humanity.

4.1.1 African Womanist Methodologies

A central idea within womanist perspectives is that methodological purity is not a requirement, and that mixed methods are seen to work better (Phillips (2006). The main concern for womanist researchers is that at all phases of the methodological process the methods used should enhance ideas of harmony, balance and healing. Indeed, the broad umbrella that womanist methodologies are often identified within is that of *healing methodologies*. Womanist scholar Cynthia Dillard (2008) who has worked on African women's spiritual subjectivities advocates a healing methodology based on love, reciprocity, compassion and gratitude. This methodological framework she proposes must engage not just historical and cultural knowledge but also traditional wisdom, politics and spirituality. Similarly, womanist historian Yvette Abrahams

(2004) whose work has focussed on challenging the dehumanising scholarship that exists out there on aunty Saartjie Baartman maintains that a methodology of healing[43] is also about *celebrating all of our humanity*, and therefore needs to be based on the premise that we cannot wage a liberatory struggle effectively, unless we heal. That is, "physical and psychological well being provides the necessary foundation for social justice and commonwealth" (Phillips 2006: xxvi). Abrahams continues that by definition, a methodology of healing must also be reflected by a mode of writing that takes power and rests on womanist language which is constructed mainly through experience and struggle. It is about a struggle to patch together fragmented selves that Gloria Anzaldua describes to be the goal of her work as--"my whole struggle has been to put us back together again. To connect the body and the soul and the mind and the spirit ...heal the wounds that strive for wholeness instead of being fragmented in little pieces" (in Lara 2005: 41). And again as Jacqui Alexander (2005) similarly emphasises that we must not be afraid to make compassion and beauty a part of our intellectual work because these emotions directly affect our broader human struggles for freedom and healing.

It is worth mentioning that womanist healing methodologies share several fundamental principles with *decolonising methodologies[44]* as advocated by Maori scholar Linda Tuhiwa Smith. These alternative methodologies of healing and decolonizing methodologies have generally emerged from what Smith (1999) asserts are the experiences of people who have been studied, researched, written about and defined by others. They have also developed out of a critique by feminist and critical theorists who were searching for culturally sensitive approaches to conduct research. Finally, these *methodologies from below* tend to privilege reflexive insider

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[43] On healing methodologies, Yvette Abrahams (2004: 12-13) reflects, "Khoekhoe pharmacology, like many indigenous peoples' pharmacologies, is based on the assumption that life itself (body, mind and soul) contains within it the power to heal. Herbs, prayer and righteous living are tools that assist life to sustain itself while the healing occurs. So, in writing history without hatred, for healing, it is well to remember the traditional preoccupations of women during war and peace: family, herbs, beauty, and the upholding of values which all of these things represent. I speak from within this tradition. It is the only way I know how to heal and be healed."

[44] Decolonising methodologies tend to focus on "reclaiming, reformulating and reconstituting indigenous cultures and languages" (Smith date:142). Indigenous researchers and communities have created indigenous methodologies that are often a mix of existing methodological approaches and indigenous practices to formulate research projects[44] which focus on: Claiming, testimonies, story-telling, celebrating survival, remembering, indigenizing, intervening, revitalizing, connecting, reading, writing, representing, gendering, envisioning, reframing, restoring, returning, democratizing, networking, naming, protecting, creating, negotiating, discovering and sharing (Smith 1999).

accounts that typically merge with research participants' voices, experiences and perspectives. The idea of incorporating the '*scholar as healer'* within academic discourse as proposed by some women scholars is thus necessary and urgent as indigenous scholar Catherine Odora Hoppers explains that,

> in order for us to be relevant to the 'fragmentation' of others, we must speak from our very own 'fragmentation'. As Africans, we are all faced with the wounds of the past. Now we have to become leaders in our own re-making. *This means that we become healers*, even when we are cognisant of our own fragmentation and vulnerabilities.... Yet it is our very own affliction that provides the inspirational sensitivity, self-knowledge and faith to take our wounded continent forward (2006: 48).

For it is time for a long overdue reflection on healing ourselves and communities as African-American feminist bell hooks compassionately reminds us that,

> When quality of life issues are not given the same attention as our anti-lynching activities, it means we have a low level of life expectations…the warriors we need to step forward now aren't the confrontational kind, but healers. Folk who know how to reach into where we really hurt, to the wounds we can't see and that nobody likes to talk about (hooks 2004: 64)[45].

4.1.2 Reflexive Insider Accounts

Womanist epistemologies have stubbornly given hermeneutic supremacy to insider perspectives, an assertion which has received some good measure of criticism. For example Bakare-Yusuf provides a sustained critique on Carolyn Cooper's attempts to privilege an insiderist account as problematic since these local forms of analysis she argues, can also generate their "own forms of aporetic silence and occlusion" (2006: 164), and also reveal in-built blind-spots.

However, scholars who draw on womanist theoretical perspectives insist that in the social sciences more attention needs to be given to the native as a speaking subject, particularly since there has been a tendency for the "insider perspective [is] constantly invalidated as the outsider positions him/herself as the "real" authority" (Cooper 2004: 12). And in her study on Jamaican popular culture cultural theorist Carolyn Cooper (2004: 2) asserts from the onset of her study that, "this study is stubbornly rooted in a politics of place that claims a privileged space for the local and asserts the authority of the native as a speaking subject." While womanist historian

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[45] I would like to thanks Professor Julie Moody-Freeman for pointing out this particular quote to me.

Yvette Abrahams declares at the beginning of her doctoral work on aunty Saartjie Baartman that, "here, I use womanist theory as a useful approach. The aim of this paper is to contribute to African women's activism. It is situated in the present and arises uncompromisingly from my own experiential location. In it I summarise the survival wisdom of my own life and community in constructing a theory which retells Sarah Baartman's history in a way which self consciously seeks to be liberatory (2000: 12). These insider accounts which consider the scholar's own personal experiences, emotions and intuitions as good evidence in the knowledge making process resonate with an African methodology which remains visible in African churches of 'testifying', or beginning a problem analysis by sharing one's experience (Abrahams 2000). Another strategy used by womanists is "to use the pronoun 'our' instead of 'their' when referring to African American women's, a choice that embeds me in that group I am studying instead of distancing me from it. In addition I occasionally place my own experiences in the text. To support my analysis I cite few statistics and instead rely in the voices of black women from all walks of life" (Collins 2007: 199). Similarly Abrahams confirms this position by stating in her doctoral work, "this consideration has led to my decision to use the first person, where necessary, in this thesis, and also where necessary to include personal experiences" (2000: 15). In fact Layli Phillips and Barbara McCaskill inform us that this bases of making knowledge claims is,

> Perhaps the central organizing principle of womanism (if it can be said that there is one) is the absolute necessity of speaking from and about one's own experiential location and not to or about someone else's. Black women's scholarship has placed Black women and their experiences at the center of analyses just like traditional white men's scholarship has placed white men and their experiences at the center of analyses; the crucial difference is that Black women's scholarship has articulated and owned the centering...Black women's scholarship does not parade as universal, but rather emanates from a point of acute authenticity and invites others to participate in a similar, equally authentic process (1995: 1010-1011).

However, this manner of producing knowledge should not be seen as a substitute for producing 'objective' knowledge, but simply an act of power by African women to construct knowledge based on their own existential positions which highlights another version of the truth about their lives. This privileging of personal voice in the process of formulating knowledge is closely linked to the principles of reflexivity underscored in most womanist and feminist methodologies. Reflexivity refers to the "process in which researchers are conscious and reflective about the ways in which their questions, methods and very own subject positions (as white/black, middle-

class/working-class, heterosexual/homosexual, insider/outsider, etc) might impact on the knowledge being produced" (Langdridge 2007: 58-59). Critics of reflexive research warn of the need to be mindful of this critical self-awareness and the ways in can potentially lead researchers becoming too self-indulgent, and possibly overshadowing description and explanation (Olesen 2005).

In moving beyond reflexive debates, Faye Harrison (1991) maintains that there are other important reasons for privileging insider accounts. An outsider herself who worked in Jamaica's ghettos for several years, she argues that this is not a matter of claiming superiority of insider views, but rather about *decolonising social science scholarship*. She maintains that "natives must penetrate and reconstitute the core disciplines' discourses by constructing theories premised upon an alternative set if priorities, visions, and understandings" (Harrison 1991: 89). She advocates that, what she calls the 'second sightedness' and multiple consciousness of native scholars, "which emerges from the tension between, on the one hand membership in western scholarship and profession, or a relatively privileged class or social category, and on the other hand belonging to or having an organic relationship with the oppressed social category" (1991:89), as heightening and intensifying counter-hegemonic sensibilities and understandings about the oppressed. This is what Hill-Collins was also referring to when she made the observation that African women's experiences, both prior to contact and after initiation in their western inspired disciplines, may be able to provide "special perspectives and insights…available to the category of outsiders who have been systematically frustrated by the social system" (Hill Collins: 2006: 118).

However, we cannot dismiss the insights made by Bakare-Yusuf and the observations of insider scholars such as Christine Obbo (2005) and Patricia Zavalla (in Olesen 2005) who have confirmed that their insider status and background did not necessarily suffice in gaining easy access and understandings into the research participants' worldviews. Perhaps that is why concepts such as Patricia Hill-Collins' 'outsider-within' which reflects the creative use of both African women's privileged class positions but marginality within academia as reflecting their special positioning, are perhaps better suited to describe African women scholars' positioning within the research process. In addition, Carolyn Cooper (2004) suggests that insiders,

particularly those working on popular culture in marginalised communities, should adopt a *mediating role* lest they be labelled as informers extracting insider information and making it public to authorities who may ultimately use it against community members. She maintains that this, "mediation is not a distortion of meaning. Rather, it is a translation of the language of the street into the argot of the academy. More importantly mediation is also a process of expanding the lexicon of grammar of academic discourse" (ibid: 24). However, whether being an insider is a constraint or provides special perspectives and insights, Abu-Lughod (1986) and Bakare-Yusuf (2006) argue that insider accounts also need to be subjected to the same scrutiny as those written by outsiders.

4.1.3 Dialogue

Another central methodological principle of womanism is the importance of *dialogue*. For womanists dialogue is important as it "permits negotiation, reveals standpoint, realizes existential equality, and shapes social reality" (Phillips 2006: xxvii). Womanist Layli Phillips explains that the 'kitchen table' is often used as a key metaphor for understanding the womanist perspective on dialogue:

> The kitchen table is an informal, woman-centred space where all are welcome and all can participate. The table is an invitation to become part of a group of amicably comprised of heterogeneous elements and unified by the pleasure and nourishment of food and drink. At the table, people can come and go, agree and disagree, take turns talking or speak all at once, and laugh, shout, complain and counsel-even be present in silence. It is a space where the language is accessible and the ambience casual. At the kitchen table people share the truths of their lives on equal footing and learn through face-to-face conversation. (Phillips 2006: xxvii)

This creation of safe spaces through horizontal versus vertical interactions is also effective in facilitating the exploration of "collective memories and shared stocks of knowledge" (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005: 903), by groups of women who have had similar experiences and are struggling with similar issues. Since womanist perspectives aim to draw out aspects of women's lives which have been marginalized, allowing women to take ownership of these conversational spaces to explore often taken-for-granted daily experiences, is crucial. But for women to do this effectively the authority of the researcher must be curtailed, so that this dialogical interaction can ultimately contribute towards the creation of more polyvocal texts. At the same time when researchers do participate in the dialogue they must be willing to also apply

what Keating (2005) calls listening with 'raw openness'. She explains that this form of listening by researchers incorporates the "desire to learn and be transformed as a researcher, and includes acknowledging paradox, ambiguity and partiality as well as that we are always in process, always open to change" (Keating 2005: 251). This shared dialogic space which is central to womanist practice is furthermore shaped by a spirit of hospitality, a value which emerges out of womanists' caretaking sensibilities. This practice constitutes a way of acknowledging dignity, offering nurturance, providing pleasure and care in order to foster positive relations (Phillips 2006), and is seen by womanists as crucial to interweave within all phases of the methodological process.

4.1.4 Interpretive Phenomenology (IP)

Interpretive phenomenology psychology refers to a group of phenomenological approaches that have been shaped by the philosophy of existential phenomenology. Grounded in this philosophical tradition, these qualitative phenomenological approaches are interested in surfacing the lived and embodied life-worlds of participants, and generally refer to situations where the researcher enters the world of the researched to gather rich and subjective data from small samples of participants with the aim of generating themes from the data (Langdridge 2007). The most popular approaches within interpretive phenomenology psychology, which have also been effectively employed beyond this discipline, include descriptive phenomenology, interpretive phenomenology analysis (IPA), interpretive/hermeneutic phenomenology and template analysis. For purposes of this study I opted to utilise the interpretive phenomenological framework because of its less prescriptive and less formal methodological approach to data collection and analysis. Langdridge (2007) describes IP as a small family of methods which are principally based on existential phenomenology philosophy. He further outlines the various stages of IP, which it broadly shares with other forms of phenomenological inquiries, as consisting of the following interrelated stages: the collection of data; thematisation, which I will discuss next, and finally the interpretation of themes which will be elaborated in chapters six and seven.

4.1.4.i Data Collection

Data collection was guided by the overall womanist methodological framework of healing, while also drawing on interpretative phenomenology approaches where interviews, focus groups, participant observation, self-written descriptions and other creative methods are preferred (Langdridge 2007).

The main data collection method used included interviews (individual and group) and observation which were then complimented with a range of other techniques to add richness and depth to the data. The interview strategy was divided into two phases--phase one focussed on the younger generation (ages 16-35) and phase two shifted focus towards the older generation (ages 36-92). Focus groups were the main technique used to gather information from the younger cohort, while for the older women I used individual interviews, which as I will explain later, was more effective. Sampling was largely guided by the social situations I encountered and I therefore ended up using a combination of techniques ranging from purposive, and at other times accidental and even snowballing. These types of sampling techniques are common in IP approaches that promote using small groups of participants who share the general experience under investigation, and do not vary significantly in terms of demographic characteristics. As Darren Langdridge states, "the aim is to recruit a sample of people such that the researcher can make claims about these people and their particular shared experience" (2007: 58). Within this type of framework flexibility in conducting interviews is key. For example, although most of the interviews with older women were done in September, as opposed to May with the younger women, the surprise visit by my grandmother's sister of 92 years old was an opportunity that I couldn't afford to miss. And so this unplanned interview became my first interview which was done over breakfast at home.

Table 1 below illustrates the breakdown of interviews conducted during Phase 1 of my research:

INTERVIEW DETAILS	PARTICIPANT DETAILS	TIME PER/INTERVIEW
Interview 1: 20 May 2004	3 participants: 26 years with one child; 24 years; 27 years old;	3 hours
Interview 2: 25 May 2004	2 participants: 25 years; 23 years with one child	2 hours
Interview 3: 26 May 2004	1 participant: 25 years	3 hours
Interview 4: 26 May 2004	2 participants: 16 years; and 16 years	2 hours
Interview 5: 27 May 2004	3 participants: 33 years old with 5 children; 24 years old; 26 years old with one child.	3 hours

A total of 11 township daughters were interviewed and these interviews, which were tape recorded, lasted between 2-3 hours, with all but one interview conducted with groups of friends. As evident these samples were small enough to allow everyone to speak, while at the same time creating opportunities to record multiple perspectives. All interviews with township daughters were conducted in a back room of my home. Most 4 roomed houses in the townships have back rooms, as this iconic township dwelling is often just too small to adequately house everybody. This backroom is usually allocated to the males of the family, and young women may view it as a comfortable space of 'escape' from the main family 4-roomed house. I ensured that the participants were comfortably seated in a circle, and offered them baked cakes and some soft-

drinks. The arrangement of chairs into a circle was a deliberate act as I hoped to invoke the womanist 'kitchen metaphor' to create a space where participants would feel more ownership and equality to take over the interview space and make it their own. In such an interview context I could then take the role of a traveler and travel together with these young women as new insights on things long taken-for-granted organically emerged. Although I had completed an interview guide which mainly revolved around the following themes-- personal family background; growing up; relationships: friendships and hanging out and going out; love, romance and pregnancy; death, dying, funerals and HIV/AIDS; support structures; future and dreams; I ended up relying more on improvised, on-the-spot interactions with participants to create a context in which meaningful dialogue and exchange of information could be shared. This emerging dialogical space allowed rich conversations to take place which would later allow for thick descriptions to occur in the writing process.

Each interview had a general structure which comprised opening it up with an explanation of the purpose of the interview, while locating it within the broader research project. Some of the broad themes and topics that would be discussed in the interview were also briefly mentioned. At this early stage confidentiality, anonymity and privacy issues were also assured. After getting assurance from participants that they understood these issues, permission was sought on whether the interviews could be tape-recorded. Young women were also informed that they had a right to terminate the interview if they felt uncomfortable at any moment. After these background and ethical issues were cleared, the interview began with each young woman introducing herself by providing a brief biographical narrative, and then room was created by the researcher for a highly interactive conversational atmosphere to emerge. I also ensured that I kept an observation pad during the interviews where I drafted brief notes on interactions, silences, body language and moods which were emerging during the interview.

The approach of focus groups which emphasizes pulling together groups that are similar in terms of life histories, perceived needs, desire, race, social class, region, age, etc, is viewed within the womanist and interpretative methodological traditions as more likely to generate the kind of solidarity and collective identities that are necessary to produce shared histories (Kamberelis and Dimitriadis 2005). And since a large part of this project was to explore ideas about collective

township women's lives that had been ignored, the choice of focus groups appealed to me as their interactional element also encouraged participants views and meanings to be heard, while simultaneously allowing the formulation of other ideas through the dynamic interaction of the group, to occur. Finally, it was easier to generate an organic conversational space because these groups of young women were more or less my peers, and in this sense we shared common experiences (Makoe 2007) around general township life encounters and were able to get a lively 'vibe' going without much effort.

The second sample of interviews conducted with older women explored the following general themes of township life-- growing up and moving to Chesterville; family life; working life; support structures; leisure; violence; being a mother and grandmother and sister; experiences of death; feeling tired/exhausted and aching body parts; making do and surviving; endurance and resilience; on being the breadwinner; on loving and things that bring joy; faith and spirituality; missing men; on community and neighbours; comments about youth; what makes life different now; and hopes and visions for the future. Given the experience from my earlier interviews with younger women where I had drawn up a detailed interview schedule, I decided to follow a less prescriptive route with the older women's interviews and adopted a more open-ended in-depth interview approach. In this kind of unstructured technique the researcher normally asks a question to frame the discussion and works with participants to explore their situated meanings. Scholars have noted that these types of interviews work best when the interviewer has some insider knowledge, shares the culture of those being interviewed, and also understands the language of interviewees (Fontana and Frey 2005). This then allows the researcher to become an active listener and interact with the participants on the spot as they narrate their stories. Importantly, as Kamberelis and Dimitriadis also point out, "these in-depth conversational type interviews mitigate against the tendency to separate thinking and feeling and therefore open up the possibilities for reimagining knowledge as "distributed, relational, embodied and sensuous" (2005: 898). Obbo notes how it is almost impossible to conduct such rich in-depth conversational interviews through translators, because even when they are very good, "they unwittingly edit out the nuances that are transmitted through tone of voice and body language" (1997: 62).

I also realized that when I was interviewing older women, who were often running income generating activities from home such as selling liquor, snack items to children, looking after babies, that rather than editing out interruptions it was more meaningful to incorporate these interactions into the interview so that they became part of the interview context and conversation. In fact, these interactions constituted another layer that would reveal the complex webs of relationships, interconnections and survival strategies that were part and parcel of township mothers lives. Afterall visiting is critical inter-subjective and humanising aspect of township life. I also complimented these individual in-depth conversational interviews with older women with other creative visual data collection techniques. These included fusing in the use of photo-albums within the interview process, and conceptualizing the township house as an archive and a source of information for hidden yet rich aesthetic symbols. These unconventional data collection methods were part of my attempt to consider how 'other' less popular sources could perhaps illuminate otherwise hidden subjectivities and sensibilities of mothers and daughters in Chesterville Township. In September 2004 I entered the following notes in my observation diary that I kept:

> I have started to use photo albums for the research. So far they are proving a wonderful tool for people to open up and to also show how people represent themselves to the world. They show relationships and interconnections between friends, family and generational connections often long forgotten and lost. They allow the participant to relax and remember times coloured by joy, love and beauty since most pictures are of weddings, new born babies, mother and child, mother, father, children and other relatives. The backdrop may be a part of an afternoon spent relaxing. They are an excellent way to generate humorous situations as me and the participant laugh over old dressing styles and sexy young women transfixed on the photographs, emerge from the pages of the album. This moment of sharing is also excellent for introducing a more relaxed atmosphere to the interview.

> They also reflect how township mothers reflect their creativity. For example a typical photo album consists of fabulous cuttings from Christmas cards and any available popular magazines to decorate the space between photos. Great care is taken at the type of images used to embellish this memory treasure. It is a creative work that almost everyone I interviewed has lovingly put together.

> Houses are also creatively decorated, porcelain animals being a marked feature. Electronic equipment is also part of the furnishings, whether it works or not. It demonstrates the mother's ideas of beauty as well as her desire for her family to be associated like 'everyone' else who can easily afford these things. I've encountered several television sets and refrigerators that were not working in the poorer homes, notably the 2 roomed houses, known as *izitimela* (trains) as they are joined as semi-detached houses are. Everyone had dreams of extending their 2 roomed to include other rooms. One of the older women I interviewed had placed her washing-line way at the back

of the tiny house to accommodate her plans to go backwards when she extended it, as it was impossible to go forward as that would place her bang in the middle of the road.

All interviews conducted with older women were done at their homes. This was deliberate because these interviews surfaced the cultural fact that age was factor and had a bearing on how the interview must be structured and conducted. And as phenomenologist educationalist Mpine Makoe notes, "age is a very important component in African culture…interactions between different age groups in an African tradition is based on respect of elders" (2007: 104). Given this it would have been a sign of great disrespect for me to ask women who were older than I to come to me in my home for interviews. It would have been tantamount to breaking a cultural taboo reflected in my undermining the status of elders who are often associated with the perception of an authoritative source of knowledge in the community (Sitoe in Makoe 2007). Details of the older township women sample are illustrated in **Table 2** below.

INTERVIEW DETAILS	PARTICIPANT DETAILS	TIME PER/INTERVIEW
Interview 1: 19 May 2004	88 years old	1h30min
Interview 2, 3 and 4: 19-23 September 2004	60 years old	4 hours
Interview 3: 25 September 2004	63 years old	2 hours
Interview 4: 27 September 2004	43 years old	I h 30min
Interview 5: 27 September 2004	38 years old	3 hours

| Interview 5: 30 September | 62 years old | Cancelled interview and |
| 2004 | | submitted written account |

4.1.4.ii The Data Collection Process and Transformations

"On entering the field, we enter the domain of *lived experience*" (Nordstrom 1995: 139, my emphases)

As mentioned while my initial set of interviews with township daughters were completed between May-June 2004, the ones with township mothers were done during September-October 2004. I interviewed a total of 5 older women who were all single mothers. One of the women who at the last minute couldn't make the interview opted to write about a memorable event about her township which is discussed in chapter 7. When I arrived at home to initially do my interviews, I came with a loosely defined topic, armed with my laptop, tape-recorder and video recorder and dressed like a 'white girl', as people commented. In other words I entered the field as a 'researcher', distinctly separating myself from the women I knew. While the focus group interviews done with township daughters were animated, perhaps a sign that they appreciated my 'traps' of being educated and 'different'. Afterall, they all spoke of their dream of leaving the township for something better. However, as I outlined earlier during the first phase of my interviews I also managed to speak to an older woman. Interestingly, when I later reviewed this interview it was flat, defined by stock-responses which were clearly not imbedded in her lived life. In other words, I was being told what I wanted to hear. So when I returned back home in September to do my second set of interviews with the majority of the older cohort, I was pregnant and showing. My pregnancy became the topic of much discussion and in many cases the opening dialogue before interviews formally began. I think my being pregnant afforded township mothers the opportunity to 'care for me, often providing tea, bread and biscuits if they were available. In their simple homes, they were able to extend their hospitality to me.

During this second phase of my interviews I also lost the 'PhD student façade,'--no more laptops, video-camera-just me and an unobtrusive tape-recorder. Being pregnant, I was now also forced to wear looser clothing. In effect I then entered this second phase of my interviews as mama Linda's daughter. As cultural anthropologist Lila Abu-Lughod (1986) observed in her

own ethnographic work among a Bedouin community in Egypt, it was when she entered as a daughter that it was expected that she would have to behave according to certain standards for women acceptable within that community. And it was only when I entered their homes as a daughter that I also began to have deep dialogues with township mothers. Our conversational interviews, where I was initially the one prompting and in some ways leading the direction of the conversation, were transformed into oral narratives as women assumed authority over the interviews. This was the surprising factor that organically emerged from the interviews that I had not in fact anticipated. That is, how as the conversations deepened, they were transformed into *oral narrations*[46]. And much like Christine Obbo who was doing research in her own community, I also did not set out to collect oral narratives, as she says, "I merely listened to these women" (1997: 48). And similarly with me, as I progressed with the research, and as township mothers alerted me to listen carefully at what they were about to share, the passing of knowledge through the oral was clearly taking shape. In this situation the power relationship was inverted and I became the listener as they seized epistemic power through their discredited[47] orally transmitted knowledge. And I submitted to this transformed interactive interview space taking place between an elder and a daughter of the community. In fact, this moment reminded me of an observation made by the Cherokee Indian scholar, Andrea Smith, that in many indigenous societies, you must demonstrate to the elders that you have reached a point of maturity and responsibility for certain kinds of knowledge to be passed on and entrusted to you. She writes,

> One of the major tenets of Western education is the belief that all knowledge is knowable. In the Cree world all knowledge is not knowable…You can't just go and take it, or even ask for it. Access to knowledge requires long-term commitment, apprenticeship and payment. As a student of oral history, in the traditional sense, there is so much I have heard and learned and so little I can speak of write about, because I have not earned the right to do so. I cannot tell anyone or write about most things because it has not been given to me. If I did it would be theft. So I'll

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[46] I would like to thank Dr Mpine Makoe for alerting me to this important shift that took place during my interviews.

[47] Toni Morrison describes 'discredited knowledge' in the following way-- "We are a very practical people, very down-to-earth, even shrewd people. But within that practicality we also accepted what I suppose could be called superstition and magic, which is another way of knowing things. But to blend these two worlds together at the same time was enhancing, not limiting. And some of those things were 'discreted knowledge' that Black people had; discreted only because Black people were discredited therefore what they knew was 'discredited'. And also because the press towards upward social mobility would mean to get as far away from that kind of knowledge as possible" (in Cooper 1991: 65).

probably be an Old Lady before I am allowed to pass it on. By then, I'll have learned all those rules of transmission and will probably feel impelled to keep it in the oral tradition and not write it down (2005: 133).

In other words, within indigenous contexts apprenticeship demands respect and without it you will not learn anything--"It is not enough for you to understand the traditions, you must learn how to respect them" (Smith 2005: 135). In this way the data collection journey for the thesis became a healing journey for me, a homecoming of sorts. It forced me to critically confront the years of tertiary education diet that I had consumed over the years, which had taught me to see my own African popular cultural outlook as valueless and outside of my skin. What Carolyn Cooper called a "mis-education into otherness" (1991: 80). I had finally returned to my 'mothers garden' and I was reminded of similar discoveries that many other African women had also encountered as they had searched in some ways for their own mother's gardens.

I was reminded of an observation made by Carolyn Cooper of feminist fictions of the African Diaspora where the central characters were challenged, however unwillingly, to reappropiate this 'discredited knowledge' of their collective history--"The need of these women to remember their 'ancient properties' forced them, with varying degrees of success, to confront the contradictions of acculturation in societies where 'the press toward upward social mobility' represses Afrocentric cultural norms (Cooper 1991: 84).

4.1.4.iii Observation

Observation was used as a method to further engage with the participants' lifeworlds both during and outside of interviews. My first set of interviews was completed in May 2004, but I remained in Chesterville for another month which I spent engaged in observation. Once again the second set of scheduled interviews was completed over the September and October months, and I once again spent parts of October and November immersed in observation. It was also during these periods that I became a regular listener of Ukhozi FM, the Zulu radio station broadcasting local radio programmes and became particularly interested in the daily phone-in programmes where listeners aired their views on topics from corporal punishment, to unruly youth, to corrupt politicians and unemployment. Since I did observations for short periods of time of less than 3 months, this study cannot be considered a classical ethnography. Typical ethnographic research involves prolonged observation of a group mostly through participant observation. Therefore a

sustained period of fieldwork is central to the ethnographic approach, where the researcher spends substantial periods of time 'in the field', working and living alongside the research participants in order to immerse themselves into the cultural and social milieu under investigation with the aim of describing ordinary behaviours, valued, beliefs and practices of the participants world (Griffin and Bengry 2008; Hammersely and Atkinson 1995).

As mentioned earlier, close or participant observation is also a common method used in IP and within this framework its aim is to "enter the life-world of the participants in order to better understand and describe it, while still maintaining a critical distance to enable reflection of the experience" (Langdridge 2007: 80). For observation to be effective it is imperative to regularly keep notes. In this particular project observation was used to not only add dimension, detail and nuance to understand the life-worlds the participants described, but also to record forgotten aspects of township women's lives such as their taste and aesthetic sensibilities, their emotions as well as bodies at work in everyday life. Most of my most fascinating observations were completed after the mornings' cleaning and washing, and in the late afternoon just after the children had been settled after returning from school and the evening cooking had been done. These were times when unemployed young women would sit and pause and rest for a while. Some would transform themselves from their cleaning clothes into latest style to entice lovers, or perhaps escape the township and take a quick trip to town. I also noted other activities that township mothers and daughters were engaged with which included attending self-help clubs such as stokvels, burial societies, church and family rituals and celebrations.

An aspect which I initially started capturing but abandoned along the development of my research was *recording everyday townships sounds*. I still maintain that in any study of township life, sounds constitute a central aspect of the texture and fabric of everyday life. The constant backdrop of children playing games, sounds of the latest *kwaito*, hip-hop and R and B sounds, mini bus taxis hooting at intervals, cars zooming by narrow streets, churchgoers singing religious melodies as they walk the streets in unison to visit the sick and mourn with neighbours, politicians announcing community meeting over loudspeakers, and a familiar melody as a woman goes about doing her daily chores, allow one to understand *township moods*. This is the rhythmic backdrop within which township bodies move through this space. Omitting this aspect

of sound from the research constitutes a gap that I still propose needs to be filled by future studies if we are truly to formulate complicated readings of these marginalised urban spaces.

4.1.4.iv. Data Analysis

As mentioned to gather the lived and embodied experiences of suffering and healing among mothers and daughters in Chesterville Township, data was collected through a variety of methods, with interviews and observations being the key methods. As noted these were complemented by the recording of observational notes as well as other creative visual techniques and self-descriptions by research participants. Although the main method to identify the themes was through tape-recorded interviews, I must mention that the observational notes gathered from interviews and the participant observations were also vital in confirming and at times even contradicting what had been 'said', ultimately also shaping the final themes that took shape. However, let me return to the interview methods which were the main source from which themes were generated.

In this research process I was the interviewer, translator and transcriber. In this particular case the transcripts of the interview did not necessarily reflect a verbatim account of the interview. This is because during the process of translation I found that at times I had to interpret data instead of transcribing it in verbatim. Mpine Makoe (2007), who used the phenomenological inquiry in her own study on students' experiences of learning in a distance education institution, also found that she was compelled to rather look at "the context in which the words emerged, as opposed to only looking at the meaning of the text within the confines of the written word" (2007: 136). This, she argues, is because cultural content, that is contextual meanings, are intrinsic to the conversation itself, and therefore, the end result of translation must be to produce meaning-based translation rather than word for word translation. In instances where there were no equivalences in the target language, Makoe (2007) suggests translating the participants' meaning into a form that makes sense within the target language. Furthermore, in this study in cases where a Zulu phrase aptly captured an experience/s and/or emotion/s, I opted to use this particular phrase in the language participants expressed themselves in, such as the case of '*ukuphanta*' and '*ukuhlonipha*'.

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The method of reading and generating codes that were used in the study was thematic analysis which within phenomenological inquiry broadly includes reading and re-reading while making comments, noting emerging themes and ordering these themes. However, as Langdridge highlights "the process by which themes are generated is less prescriptive…There is a deliberate move away from a mechanical application of coding to discern meaning" (2007: 123). Three methods of approaching the data that are recommended within the IP approach include holistic, selective and detailed reading techniques. Each method is described by Langdridge in the following manner:

1. In the holistic reading approach we attend to the text as a whole and ask, what sententious phrase may capture the fundamental meaning or main significance of the text as a whole. We may then try and formulate that meaning by formulating such a phrase.

2. In the selective reading approach we listen to or read a text several times and ask, what statement(s) or phrase(s) seem particularly essential or revealing about the phenomenon or experience being described? These statements we then circle, underline, or highlight.

3. In the detailed reading approach we look at every single sentence or sentence cluster and ask, what does this sentence or sentence cluster reveal about the phenomenon or experience being described? (2007: 123)

The method of reading that I selected to generate the themes for this project included a combination of the holistic and selective approaches. The themes finally generated which are interpreted through my suggested conceptual approach related to township mothers' and daughters' lived and embodied 'cultures of survival' (detailed in chapter three) are discussed in depth in chapters six and seven.

4.1.4.v. Ethical concerns

Critical ethnographer Soyini Madison outlines that the study of ethics is primarily concerned with, "the principles of right and wrong. Questions of morality and what it means to be honorable, to embrace goodness, to perform virtuous acts, to generate goodwill, and to choose justice over injustice" (2005: 80). Traditionally, ethical concerns have revolved around issues of "informed consent (receiving consent by the respondent after having carefully and truthfully informed her or him about the research), right to privacy (protecting the identities of respondents), and protection from physical harm (physical, emotional, or any kind)" (Fontana

and Frey 2005: 715). Other ethical considerations have included confidentiality, anonymity, and protection from deceit and deception (Langdridge 2007). However, womanists and feminists have insisted that ethical issues need to move beyond these current universalistic moral philosophical frameworks by also emphasising the specificity of context and drawing on informed feminist social values of care, dignity and accountability (Olesen 2005). And thus as part of their ethical concerns, womanists and feminists have also been concerned with constantly addressing the power dynamics inherent in the research process, the potential 'stealing' of women's words by researchers, and finding creative ways to present the findings of their research in the respondents' own words" (Olesen 2005).

With regards to taking into account traditional ethical concerns, as outlined, before commencing with each interview, participants were briefed about the purpose of the study, the voluntary nature of their participation and that confidentiality and anonymity in the reporting of the study would be ensured. Their permission to use a tape recorder was also requested. I must point out that at the commencement of the study there was no Unisa Policy on Research Ethics nor any kinds of ethics review committee in existence. In fact the Ethics policy was finalised in 2008 and the first ethics committees only started to operate in 2009, years after I had completed my data collection. However, in the process of completing my study I attempted as far as possible to adhere to responsible ethical conduct. Since my research participants were women from a community I have grown up in, at times this familiarity created some ethical challenges. My identities as researcher and daughter in the community often merged to create rather contradictory situations in which I compelled to rely on intuition and common sense in order to resolve them. What was clear is that the option of academic detachment was never available to me since I had already existing connections with most of the women I interviewed. However, at all times I attempted to ensure that interviews were underpinned by womanist social values of care and taking responsibility to not undermine the dignity of participants by ensuring that the research process was a space to practice healing through sharing, eating and laughing together. However, I did encounter some ethical challenges during my fieldwork which I will briefly relate below.

On one occasion I had made plans to interview a 16 year old pregnant young woman. After finalizing our interview arrangements, she then came to my home to ask, or should I say demand, money. Having known this young woman since she was very young, my roles as 'researcher' 'older sister' and 'neighbor' all came into conflict. I chose to act as 'older sister' and we talked about respect. My response must have irritated or upset her in some way, as she never came for her interview. I remained hopeful that we would speak, but I was resolute that it must be under conditions she is willing to speak. My younger brother, who has lived in this township all his life, complains that since I temporarily came back home there has been an endless queue of people coming by under the pretence of 'visiting', but in many cases, he explains, these are just disguised attempts to extract money from me. 'Tell them you are a student (which in fact I was at the time), 'otherwise you will never hear the end of them' he advises. 'This is the way it is here, this is how we live', and he shrugs his shoulders.

In another interview context when I arrived at one of the homes of my interviewees, *mama* Mkhize, after we had completed the initial introductory comments outlining the purpose of the interview and the ethical issues, she interrupted the interview to make some tea. We were having the interview in the kitchen of her 2-roomed home, which are RDP houses mostly occupied by single mothers. When she opened the worn out kitchen cabinet I noticed that its contents were empty, and that the teabags she was offering were in fact the last few left. She apologized for not being able to supplement the tea with something, but explained that times were hard since she had become unemployed following her accident at a piecemeal job. Since she was a casual worker, she had not received any compensation for the injury she had experienced which had left her with a bad knee and back which constantly pained her. She was now using a stick to get around. At this point I decided to abandon the planned interview, and we spoke at length about her injury at work and the frustrating visits to the public hospital. I offered her there and then my assistance in any way she thought would be most useful. She responded pragmatically saying that one of the things she needed help with was to draft a formal letter to her previous employer regarding the manner in which her case had been dealt with. She also asked that while I was in the township if I could assist her with transportation money to visit the neighbouring clinic which she had been transferred to. We immediately got started with drafting the letter. And then after spending a good part of the morning with her, I immediately jumped into a mini-bus taxi

heading for Durban city center. There I bought groceries consisting of all the basic necessities that could carry her through the month. I dropped these off at her home later that afternoon. It was this township mother and grandmother that I ended up having several interview sessions with.

Our interview sessions ended up being a combination of attending to follow-ups on her workplace injury and the status of her health. At times she would ask me to pray with her before we started our interview sessions. Of course, it is self-evident that in fact all these hardships she was experiencing constituted part and parcel of her lived and embodied experiences of suffering and healing in this township. In this particular scenario womanist Dillard's principles of surrender in the research process which she states include love, compassion, reciprocity and ritual, were certainly relevant as they were infused in this research space. She explains them as follows:

- Love: love is in the capacity to offer joy and happiness. This includes developing the practice as a researcher of looking and listening deeply, not just for the often self-gratifying rewards of the research project, but so that we know what to do and what not to do in order to serve others in the process of research.
- Compassion: Compassionate research contains deep concern for the community-and the desire to bring joy to those in the community through the work that we do.
- Reciprocity: the capacity to see human beings as equals.
- Ritual: Ritual can be understood as the intention and capacity to transcend the boundaries of ordinary space and time or the practice of unifying the human and the divine. (Dillard 2006: 84-85).

It was within this interview context that the initial dialogue which had begun as between a young and 'educated' researcher and older and 'uneducated' township mother, developed over time to becoming a *grandmother orally transmitting knowledge to someone who could have possibly been her daughter.* This interview encounter did indeed transform me. However, it also left me with some ethical challenges such as days when I spent the entire day with her--when did the interview start and when did it end? When did participant observation start and when did it end? These issues were crucial in as far as they addressed the issue of possibly violating her privacy, and potentially stealing her words. For even though the relationship transformed from a typical power relationship of researcher and participant, to one of elder and youth, one cannot dismiss the fact that I would be the one who held the power of interpretation. I was also acutely aware that as a single mother who lived in the outskirts and poorest section of the township, which was

routinely rumored to be harboring criminals, AIDS, etc the possibility of enacting group harm, even unconsciously, was very real. I did not want my work to contribute to the negative labeling and stereotyping of this community and thus add to muted moral panics which Glenn Jordan describes as,

> popular campaigns in which some individual(s) or group or area is actively constructed or represented by "official society" i.e. the agencies of social control (the police and court system), the "moral guardians of society" (politicians, the judiciary, the social welfare establishment) and other orchestrators of public opinion (e.g. newspapers and other medical)- as a threat to the moral fabric, if not the very existence of "civilised society" (1991: 56).

Finally, several scholars have challenged research work whose contributions does not offer anything back to particularly poor communities (Obbo 1997 and D'Amico-Samuels; 1991), Deborah D'Amico-Samuels argues that ethically we need to consider-- "What do the people who help us with this get? What is our responsibility to them, in both the process of our research and the product we present as our statement on what they have taught us?" (1991: 77). Maori scholar Smith (1999), has outlined some of the alternative methodologies that are being produced by indigenous researchers and communities. These scholars all share the ethical principle that those 'researched' should in principle also become beneficiaries of the research done on them. Similarly Francis Nyamnjoh (nd) has also argued that the question of ethics in research should be considered at all stages of the research process to ensure the protection of individuals and communities from harm, and to ensure dignity at all times. So far he observes a negative track record within social science research in Africa, which he maintains has largely ignored this critical area. He adds that part of the reason such ethical considerations have been neglected in African universities is due to the "lack of relevant books on research experiences and predicaments in African contexts" (nd: 1).

In line with Nyamnjoh's suggestions of weaving in ethical considerations throughout the research process, feminist anthropologist Deborah D'Amico-Samuels (1991) urges researchers to consider alternative ways of disseminating research information to non-academic audiences. She cites the example on how she worked collaboratively with *Sistren*, a Jamaican women's theatre group, to communicate through a slide and song presentation the results of her research to a non-academic audience. Such suggestions have inspired me to incorporate a workshop session to

communicate my research to the community members of Chesterville Township, particularly the youth.

Finally, ethnographer Phillipe Bourgois (1991) critiques recent social science research, perhaps like my own, which merely reports a discussion on methodological and personal ethical dilemmas faced during research. He observes that "most recently, when the politics of ethics are referred to, it is often in the style of the "reflexive poetics" of one of the post-modernist approaches, far removed from effective practice" (1991: 111). Rather in the interests of *politicising ethics,* he proposes that in addition to reporting ethical dilemmas we should also be reporting ethical contradictions-- that is the conflicts between espoused academic ethical principles and the life-death situations we encounter on the field such as violence and abuse, which may require us to set aside conservative academic research protocols.

4.2 Conclusion

This chapter formulated an alternative methodological framework that began to allow us to access the hidden desires, excesses, pains and joys of township mothers and daughters. It is an approach which I felt also needed to allow me to become an embodied and speaking subject within the research process. Imbedded within African womanist and existential phenomenological conceptual frameworks, the suggested qualitative methodological approach that I have called *African womanist interpretative phenomenology* was discussed and its methods and features outlined. Further, ethical challenges that were specifically encountered in the gathering of data for this research were raised, and it was illustrated that rather than being a hindrance they actually helped to redirect and even enliven the overall research process. Having comprehensively mapped out my methodological framework which allowed me to reclaim the voices and bodies of township mothers and daughters, I will now proceed to physically and historically situate Chesterville Township before we move onto the discussion on the themes that emerged in more detail.

CHAPTER 5: Situating Chesterville Township

Figure 1: Map of Chesterville and surrounding areas
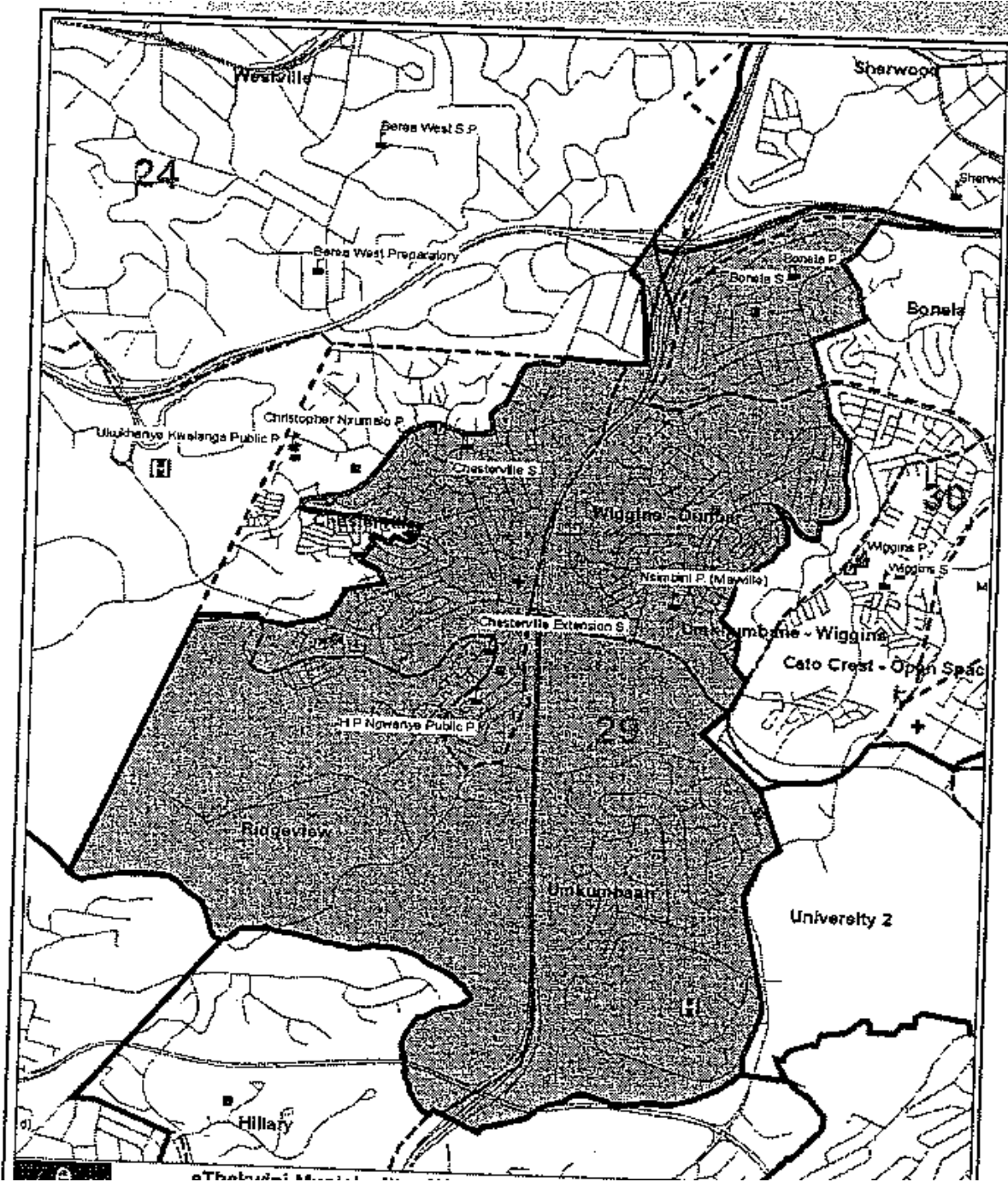
5.0 Introduction

Having described my methodological approach of an African womanist interpretive phenomenology which uses a variety of qualitative methods to unearth the lived and embodied suffering and healing of township mothers and daughters, let me now turn to situating the township of Chesterville where their lives take a situated and meaningful form. This is the place that the young women referred to as 'their home' but also the 'the place which has no life'-- '*indawo enganampilo*'. Chesterville Township is situated 13 kilometers west of Durban city center and shares a common border with Cato Manor in the East and the Berea West and Westville in the West. Chesterville's proximity to Westville has made its location rather interesting, since Westville was during apartheid, a designated middle-class white suburb. In fact, Chesterville and Westville were separated by a 'berlin wall' and no-man's land that was heavily guarded during apartheid and was only recently destroyed in 1997 (See Kuzwayo: 1985).

5.1 Historical background

Chesterville Township was erected in the early 1940's as family quarters for male migrant workers providing labour to the newly industrializing city area of Durban. Originally part of the Blackhurst[48] Estate, which because of its neglected use of land originally intended for agricultural purposes, ended up attracting a large squatter settlement (Mkhize 2002). Mphilisi Mkhize explains that in 1939 the city council, after approaching Blackhurst, purchased part of this estate for a housing scheme which was approved in 1940, and completed in 1946. However, the first houses were already occupied by 1944 and many of those who lived in Cato Manor who were eligible for a township house were among the first occupants of Chesterville Township.

 In 1946 the name Blackhurst was changed to Chesterville to honor Mr. T.J. Chester, manager of the administrative department which was also administratively responsible for this township (Mkhize 2002). During the 1950's Chesterville was recognized as the only remaining 'sub-economic' township when others, like Lamontville and KwaMashu were considered economic townships since their residents occupied a higher socio-economic level. Mkhize (2002) explains

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[48] Blackhurst was the name of an Englishman who came to Natal in the 1850s who later came to own a large part of the Blackhurst estate.

that families who earned an economic wage, and could afford to pay more that the stipulated rent levy of R2, 75, were usually removed from Chesterville to one of the above mentioned economic townships. The houses that remain as part of the Chesterville landscape, are the infamous apartheid architectural icon of 4-roomed houses made of bricks and asbestos with two bedrooms, one living room and a kitchen with a water tap.

According to Statistics South Africa (Stats SA) Census of 2001, which demarcates residential areas according to political-electoral boundaries known as wards[49] in South Africa, Chesterville constitutes a large part of Ward 29 (See figure 1).

5.2 Some Basic Demographics

Below are some of the demographic data for Ward 29 which was extracted from the Stats SA census of 2001. These include information of the general population, age, employment and household income of Ward 29, of which Chesterville is a part.

Table 1: The Population

Total population:	25 820
African:	22 563
Coloured:	416
Indian:	2803
White:	38

Pensioners:	567	2%

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[49] Local and metropolitan municipalities in South Africa are subdivided into wards, more specifically known as electoral wards. These constitute the final layer of electoral regions in South Africa (htpp://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/municipalities_of_South_Africa, accesed on the 5 December 2010).

Disabled	1011	4%
Male	12183	47%
Female	13837	53%

The above table shows that the population of Chesterville is made up of predominantly African females. The Indian and white population figures constitute those who live on the bordering areas of Chesterville, that is Westville and Mayville specifically. During the apartheid years Westville was racially zoned as a white suburb, while Mayville was an Indian designated residential area. These population groups are thus also included in the table below as they live in areas which fall within Ward 29.

Table 2: Age

0-4 years:	2406	9%
5-14 years:	4976	19%
15-34 years	10621	41%
35-64 years:	7249	28%
>65 years:	567	2%

The age group that formed the majority of those interviewed came from the 15-64 age groups, which as illustrated above constitutes around 69% of the general Ward 29 population.

Table 3: Employment 15 to 65 years

Employed:	6516	38%
Unemployed:	5291	30%
Not economically active:	6126	34%

As I will discuss in more detail in Chapter six unemployment, particularly youth unemployment, remains a major social problem in Chesterville. As the table indicates an overwhelming 64% of the residents are not engaged in formal work.

Table 4: Household Income per annum/ per household

Per/ annum	Household	
No income	1376	21%
R1-R4800	295	4%
R4801-R9600	880	13%
R9601-R19200	1332	20%
R19201-R38400	1531	23%
R38401-	886	13%

R76800		
R76801-R153600	291	4%
R153601-R307200	66	1%
R307201-R614400	17	0%
R614401-R1 228 801	6	0%
R122801-R2457600	7	0%
R2457601 and more	1	0%

Table 4 shows us that while a sizable portion of Chesterville residents have no income, around 21%, it is clear that those who are receiving some kind of income are engaged in low-paying jobs.

These demographic figures serve to illustrate that the low socio-economic conditions of this township have not dramatically changed since its inception in the 1940s as a sub-economic township. With regards to public facilities, there is a community centre, community library, community sport facilities, local clinic and an old age home, which are administered by locally elected councilors. Chesterville has about 8 major mainstream churches which include the Anglican church, Roman Catholic church, Baptist Church, Ethiopian United Congregation church, Methodist, St John's and Apostolic Faith church, and Zionist churches. African Traditional Religions are also widely practiced. Furthermore, there are four schools operating in

Chesterville namely, Chesterville High, a higher primary school Ngwenya HP, and two primary schools, Ukukhanya Kwelanga and Christopher Nxumalo Primary schools.

This township has a well-known history of political resistance in KwaZulu-Natal. Unlike other townships in KwaZulu-Natal where membership of either Inkatha and the African National Congress (ANC) was a common feature, Chesterville Township was always widely known as predominantly an ANC stronghold. In fact, in the early 1980's a high percentage of its male youth left the township to join the armed struggle across South Africa's borders. Many of them have returned and currently form part of the townships mentioned high unemployment rate. Presently, high unemployment, staggering levels of HIV/AIDS amongst the youth, and mostly female-headed households have become the contemporary features that mark this township.

During 1989 and 1991 another new development was built between Chesterville and Mayville, known as 'Masixhawulane'- 'let's shake hands'. This name was coined by residents as they mused that due to the proximity of the houses, if they put their hands out of a window they could easily shake the hand of their next-door neighbor. This housing development was initially earmarked for low income earning Indians. However, as Mkhize (2002) explains, Chesterville residents suffering from high unemployment and congestion came together and formed the Chesterville Society which then requested that Chesterville residents be prioritized for accommodation in this new housing developments, especially given that the Department of Housing had long promised Chesterville residents additional housing. However, no agreement was reached on this matter between the Chesterville Society and the then Minister of housing, Mr. Naicker, and the Director of Housing, Mr. Nico Malan. On November 1993 the unimaginable happened as some of the residents, mostly youth, who could no longer tolerate what they saw as an unjust situation, forcibly occupied the new houses. Soon other residents joined in this protest action, and despite a large police and army force contingency to intimidate the occupants, they remained. To this day 'uMasixhawulane' remains formally occupied by mostly Chesterville community members.

In addition, after 1994 there has also been a sharp increase in the number of squatter settlements emerging at the edges of Chesterville, such as Jamaica (see figure 1) whose occupants are adults

escaping the space shortage characteristic of 4-roomed houses, those wondering the city without shelter, and others moving from semi-rural areas in search of a better life near the city of Durban.

5.3 Chesterville's Defining Moments

There are of course several defining moments that have shaped this historically and culturally rich township. For purposes of this thesis I will however focus on just three of them since they contribute to deepening the contextualization of this township, and therefore assist in better situating the voices of the mothers and daughters of Chesterville. The selected defining moments that will be briefly discussed include the following: threats of incorporation into Bantustans and early resistance; political violence; and a collage of endemic violence that characterised Chesterville in the 1980s, drawn from a variety of primary sources such as newspapers and commissioned reports.

5.3.1 Threats of incorporation into Bantustans and early resistance

Even after its creation, Chesterville Township continued to face almost 40 years of continuous threats of removal (Mohamed 2002). As Michael Sutcliffe and Paul Wellings (1988) state that from the 1960s onwards, one of the objectives of the apartheid government was to transfer responsibility for urban Africans from white administration to Bantustan[50] authorities whenever conveniently possible. They explain that the purpose of this was primarily to reduce the number of Africans who resided in 'white' South Africa and to convert them into a commuter population. They cite the example of the incorporation of the townships of Umlazi and KwaMashu into

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[50] "Any of the 10 former territories that the Republic of South Africa designated as "homelands" for the country's black African population during the mid- to late 20th century. Also known as South Africa homelands, Bantu homelands, or black states, they were created under the white-dominated government's policy of apartheid. They were Gazankulu, KwaZulu, Lebowa, KwaNdebele, KaNgwane, Qwaqwa, Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei. The last four were declared "independent" by the South African government, but their independence was never internationally recognized. Although the creation of Bantustans was rooted in earlier acts, the Bantu Homelands Citizenship Act of 1970 defined blacks living throughout South Africa as legal citizens only of the homelands designated for their particular ethnic groups—thereby stripping them of their South African citizenship. Between the 1960s and '80s, the South African government continuously removed black people still living in "white areas" of South Africa and forcibly relocated them to the Bantustans. In 1994, after the end of apartheid, the South African government created nine new South African provinces, which included both former provinces and former Bantustans" (http://www.encyclopedia2.the freedictionary.com/Bantustan, accessed on 17 May 2010).

KwaZulu Bantustan administration in 1977, which effectively relegated 200 000 residents to the status of commuter, thereby automatically making these once South African citizens foreigners on their own soil. In the early 1970s, Chesterville along with other townships such as Lamontville, Claremont, and Hambanathi, were targeted by the Inkatha Freedom Party (IFP)[51] which dominated the KwaZulu-Natal Bantustan administration, for incorporation. And as mentioned, incorporation was resisted precisely because township residents realised that their South African citizenship would be undermined, therefore inhibiting their mobility to find work and fend for their families (Sutcliffe and Wellings 1988; Mohammed 1988). At this time campaigns such as 'Asifuni ukusuka' (We do not want to move), began to gain momentum in these threatened communities.

These campaigns were to be later formalized and gain even greater momentum under the formation of the organization the Joint Rent Action Committee (JORAC) on the 8 April 1983. JORAC was an umbrella organization of resident associations serving the five townships of Chesterville, Lamontville, Hambanathi, Klaarwater and Shakaville and had links with democratic organizations such as the South African Council of Churches (SACC), the United Democratic Movement (UDF) and several trade unions. Sutcliffe and Wellington (1988) explain that JORAC emerged as a result of the failure of what they described as toothless Ningizimu Community Council to represent and negotiate on behalf of communities against the proposed rent increases by the Provincial Natal Administration Board (PNAB). The first chairman of JORAC was Msize Dube, a Lamontville resident who was elected to the Ningizimu community council in 1981, and who spearheaded protests and petitions against these increases to the provincial and national government. As Sutcliffe and Wellington (1988) continue, soon the

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[51] Sutcliffe and Wellings (1988: 326) give the following useful overview of Inkatha, " Inkatha, originally established as a Zulu cultural organization by its Royal House in 1923, was revived by Gatsha Buthelezi in the early 1970s, and from 1975 began to restructure itself as a mass organization. Buthelezi, the President of Inkatha, became Chief Minister of KwaZulu-Natal when the territory attained 'self-government' in 1977. The apparent growth in the organization has been impressive. Membership is said to have risen from 30 000 in 1976 to 300,000 in 1980, 985,000 in 1984 and 1,500,000 in 1987. It remains, however, almost an exclusively a Zulu organization, and the spatial distribution of membership reflects a heavy concentration in the KwaZulu 'homeland' itself. Support for Inkatha has been mobilized within KwaZulu-Natal through the rural chiefs but its power was much entrenched and extended after it assumed control of the KwaZulu legislative Assembly (KLA) following the 1978 elections. All 65 member of the assembly are affiliated to Inkatha. In effect the KwaZulu Government is Inkatha'

'Asinamali' (We have no money) popular resistance campaign was mobilized initially in Lamontville, and spread to other townships including Chesterville. On the 25 April 1983 Msize Dube was shot dead, and a surge of unprecedented violence erupted in both Lamontville and Chesterville Townships.

Community hostility was directed towards Inkatha elements, particularly those suspected of complicity in Dube's murder and in plans to eliminate other JORAC leaders. Nevertheless, in the midst of this violence JORAC continued to pressure PNAB and Pretoria to halt the rent increases. Under the chairmanship of Reverend Cebisa Undo, JORAC staged a mass protest meeting in May and July of 1983. The authorities' immediate response was to postpone the increases until August of 1983, but the plans to increase rent were eventually shelved indefinitely "partly for fear of provoking further unrest and partly due to uncertainty over township futures" (ibid 1988: 347).

It was in that same year that JORAC protested against the incorporation of Chesterville and Lamontville into the KwaZulu Bantustan, and in 1983 Chesterville was granted a 99 year leasehold grant. However, shortly after the granting of this leasehold, "thirty Chesterville families were removed from their homes to give way for a 'buffer strip' between the township and the white Westville residential area. As mentioned earlier in a City Press report in 1985, "the two communities were separated by a "wall of Berlin", but the board wants to increase the no man's land by forming a buffer strip" (Kuzwayo 1985: 4).

5.3.2 Political Violence in KwaZulu-Natal

The history of political violence which made KwaZulu-Natal one of the most violent places to live in during the 1980s, particularly during the state of emergency years of 1983-1989, has been well documented (See for example Bonnin 2000; Minnaar 1992, 1997; Nzimande 1991). The violence during this period was the "norm [and] became indistinguishable from the exception" (Agumben in Pillay 2005:424). This violence between members of the then banned ANC, and the IFP, lasted almost two decades, peaking during the eve of the first democratic elections in 1990, with its remnants still reverberating till today. As the Truth and Reconciliation Report (TRC) Report details, "the majority of human rights violations reported at the TRC referred to conflict between IFP and ANC aligned supporters which developed into open conflict in the

1980s and climaxed in the pre-April 1994 election violence, often amounting to a civil war"
(TRC Report Vol. 3: 1998:162).

It is important to point out that what surfaced at the TRC hearings was information relating to the careful orchestration of several violent events by the apartheid security forces with the IFP. Furthermore, it is important to point out that as the TRC Report Volume 3 revealed and demonstrated in the tables below, "close to half of all statements reporting gross human rights abuses received were from the KwaZulu-Natal region. This makes the proportion of submissions relative to the population almost four times higher for this province than the rest of the country"(TRC Vol. 3 1998:162). In short, if we take the TRC report as good evidence, KwaZulu-Natal was the most violent communal spaces to live in during the 1980s and early 1990s.

This point is illustrated in the TRC report Volume 3 (1998), where it captured an overview of human rights violations in the country in the following manner:

TABLE 4: Quantity of information received by office:

Office	Statements	Violations (Gross and Associated	Gross Human Rights Violation	Number of Victims
Cape Town	1 780	4 267	3 122	2 350
Eastern Cape	2 843	6 380	5 460	3 252
Johannesburg	6 381	16 666	11 550	8 941
KwaZulu-Natal	10 292	19 383	16 803	14 207
TOTAL	21 296	46 696	36 935	28 750

(TRC Report Volume 3 1998: 157)

TABLE 5: Proportion of deponents who are victims by office and sex:

Office	Proportion of female deponents	Proportion of Male deponents
Cape Town	36%	72%
Eastern Cape	32%	79%
Johannesburg	34%	67%
KwaZulu-Natal	55%	72%
TOTAL	46%	71%

(TRC Report Volume 3 1998: 158)

As reflected in table 2, the report states that although most of the victims of political killings were predominantly males aged between 13-45 years, this pattern changed in the 1990s when the victims became predominantly females aged between 25-60 years. It also reports that forms of severe ill treatment which included "arson, assault, stabbing, incarceration, shooting, burning and destruction of property" (TRC Report Vol. 3 1998: 158), increased dramatically in the 1980s in KwaZulu-Natal. Sociologist Debbie Bonnin who has completed several studies on violence in KwaZulu-Natal townships, also noted that the increase in particularly the shootings in the KwaZulu-Natal violence can be attributed in part to Operation Marion[52],which trained caprivi trainees[53]who aggressively introduced firearms into the already conflict ridden province. She

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[52] Operation Marion was a state authorized operation launched by the apartheid government in the mid-1980s to counter growing support for the ANC and the UDF in KwaZulu and Natal. It involved supplying military and political mobolisation support to the IFP, including officially chanelling weapons to the IFP through structures in the KwaZulu government and later, when this became awkward for the national government, unofficially channeling weapons through a state-created "third force" (NIM, 1997 in The Proliferation of Firearms in South Africa, 1994-2004). In addition according to Rupert Taylor (2002) Inkatha members received 6 months training by the special operations component of the apartheid government's military intelligence and Special Forces.

[53] Caprivi trainees refres to the trainees of Operation Marion.

writes that prior to this, the fighting between Inkatha and the UDF "knives and stones" (2001: 189) were the preferred weapons. In addition to the deepening militirisation of townships in the 1980s as concretised in the caprivi operation during the height of the emergency years, 'kitskontabels' or instant policemen were also trained for six weeks and deployed in politically active townships such as Chesterville, Lamontville and Claremont (Suttcliffe and Wellings 1988) to undermine any form of orgnaised political resistance.

5.3.3 Collage of Endemic Violence in Chesterville in the 1980s and 1990s

In the next few pages I will reconstruct through various primary sources, mostly official reports and newspaper extracts from the 1980s, a collage of daily life in Chesterville Township. This will ultimately show the extent to which violence structured mothers and daughters' lived experiences. Violations emanating from all directions included unchecked police violence, death squads, vigilante groups, which all coalesced to produce the existential and socio-political ground of *being* a Chesterville resident during what was to be this politically turbulent time.

5.3.3.i Everyday Violence

Below are some of the reports that underline the everyday violence that Chesterville residents experienced during the 1980s.

The City Press *"Blood bathes tiny township: Chesterville township is bleeding to death" by Sbu Mngadi:*

> *"Living a normal existence in Chesterville has become virtually impossible and its children who suffer the most" "murder, arson, the disruption of funerals and schools, the sight of children and community leaders in hiding and the despair of mothers and wives, were daily occurrences in the township." (18 January 1987: 1)*

In **The Cape Times** "*Man burnt to death in Chesterville*" it was reported that:

> *A man died after being set alight in Chesterville, Durban yesterday…The man aged about 30, died when a group of about 30 men doused him with petrol and set him on fire. (23 April 1987: 2)*

The Citizen, *"Natal Violence, unrest continues":*

> *Violence and unrest continued again yesterday at the Chesterville Township, near Pinetown and again in the KwaMashu Township to the north of Durban, where last week and at the weekend between 13-14 people were killed in clashes…'One family is typical of so many others in the torn township. N is the head of her family. One son was shot dead late last year. She was unable to attend the funeral for fear of persecution. She has been in hiding for the last eight months, constantly worrying about a daughter whose house she fears is a target for a fire bomb attack. Her other son is also on the run. (27 May 1986: 10).*

"*Necklace death as unrest goes on*" was reported by the **Cape Times**:

> *An unknown number of people in Chesterville, Durban murdered a man over 18 years old by setting a tyre alight around his neck (10 November 1986: 2).*

Reporters Roger Smith and Billy Paddock from the **Weekly Mail** wrote on "Chesterville's weeks of terror in the nights":

> *It is the nights that are most terrifying for the residents of the Durban township Chesterville. People have been locking their doors and staying inside since the spate of killings, assaults, petrol bombings and stonings started three months ago (16 January 1986: 4).*

5.3.3.ii Unchecked Police Violence

The Sowetan *"Soldiers tried to bury us alive":*

> *Durban schoolboys are to lay charges with the police and claim damages after members of the South African Defense Force allegedly assaulted them, threw them into a newly dug grave and shoveled sand on top of them.*

> *The boys say they were standing in the street in Chesterville on Monday afternoon when a van filled with uniformed soldiers drove past. The boys say that the soldiers drove back, pointed firearms at them, demanded that they get into the van and hit the second boy, Musa Cele…In the van Musa was hit on the head and sworn at (11 July 1988: 4).*

In 1989 the **New Nation** reported *"Police claims on killing rejected":*

During the same time a young man, Sibusiso Twala was shot dead by police, who claimed that he was armed when they approached him. A catholic Priest in the area, Duncan William Mackenzie, expressed concern in an affidavit "at the number of people who are being shot by the police in the community of Chesterville" (1 June 1989: 3).

"Gastrow: I am not trying to protect criminals" appeared in the **Sunday Tribune**:

Furthermore, the Sunday Tribune noted that there are many people in Chesterville and Lamontville who see no point in going to complain to the police about offences they allege are being committed by police. And others who have been to the police to complain have been chased away. The danger is that there is tremendous frustration building up. The people feel nobody is taking any notice of them. Because newspapers are prevented by Section 27 of the Police Act from reporting what is going the residents felt they are being ignored and discarded (21 August 1983: 6).

The Cape Times released the following *"Quis custodiet ipsos custodies:*

A comprehensive memorandum on alleged police activity in the Lamontville and Chesterville townships, near Durban, in May and June has been given to the Law and order, Mr. Louis le Grande, by the MP for Durban Central, Mr. Peter Gastrow. The memorandum includes 22 sworn affidavits by people in the two townships who claimed they were victims of police action (17 August1983: 4).

The Cape Argus:

Mr. Harry Pitman, PFP spokesman on law and order, came under strong attack from the Minister of Police, Mr. Louis le Grange, when he told Parliament of claims of alleged police misconduct in the riot-torn Durban townships of Lamontville and Chesterville earlier this year. The allegations included the discriminate use of teargas, police dogs, and sjamboks against innocent people. During the apartheid period, South Africa had a worldwide reputation for police brutality (16 August 1983: 2).

5.3.3.iii Death Squads

"US paper tells of 4 SA deaths" appeared in **The Star***:*

The New York Times published a report yesterday concerning the deaths of four men in Chesterville, a Black township near Durban on June 1986. …The Star may not publish the details given in the New York Times as this would be a contravention of the emergency regulations (3 July 1986:4)

Daily News report on "Call for Inquiry into Chesterville":

> *The Progressive Federal Party has called for a judicial commission of enquiry into conditions in Chesterville near Durban where four people were killed last week. The call was made in parliament yesterday by Mr. Roger Burrows MP, PFP, Pinetown)....he told parliament that he was concerned about the neglect in Chesterville, a closed community, which was giving rise to crime. He was calling for a commission of enquiry because of the neglect and the criminal activity." (26 June 1986: 4)*

The TRC Report also noted:

> *Vlakplaas operatives, members of a secret security unit "C1", based at Vlakplaas outside Pretoria, which was part of the death squad command and operation structure, killed four members of the Chesterville Youth Organisation in an undercover operation using askaris in May/June 1986. The deceased were Mr. Russel Mngomezulu, Mr. Muntuwenkosi Dlamini, Mr. Russel Mthembu and Mr. Sandile Khawula. In November 1989 an inquest into the deaths of the four men, a Durban magistrate found that police, who had fired between sixty-seven and eighty-eight rounds at the victims, were acting in reasonable defense (Pretoria news 21 March 1990; Robert Brand 'Nofemela tells of five killed in Chesterville"). Vlakplass operatives Willie Nortje [AM3764/96], Izak Daniel Bosch [AM3765/96] and Colonel Eugene de Kock [AM0066/96] applied for amnesty in respect of these four killings. (TRC Vol.3 1998: 202)*

In the **Daily News** Ilijah Mhlanga reported:

> *Apartheid assassin and former Vlakplass unit commander Major Eugine de Kock yesterday took the stand to respond to claims about his involvement in the murder of four Cherryville anti –apartheid activists 13 years ago. De Kock told the amnesty committee of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission sitting in Durban that the entire Vlakplass unit descended on the city to deal with the "terrorists" who had murdered three while policemen…*

He continues,

> *The purpose of the operation was also to eliminate Mr. Charles Ndaba who was reported to be responsible for the murder of several policemen. In a spectacular turn of events at the hearing, an askari (ANC-turned-informer) Mr. Simon Radebe shocked the committee when he said he was the driver of the minibus which transported the contingent that attacked the UDF members at Chesterville in 1986 (3 September 1999: 3).*

5.3.3.iv Vigilante Violence in Chesterville: The A-Team

The TRC Report, volume 3 reported:

> *In Chesterville JORAC members were targeted for attack by an Inkatha-supporting and state-sponsored vigilante group set up in the township in 1983/4, also known as the A-team. The group was based in Road 13. Statements made at the Commission alleging human rights violations by the A-team refer to incidents between 1985 and 1989. These included at least 10 killings, several attempted murder and sever ill treatment and arson attacks. (209). A picture painted by witnesses at the Commissioned public hearings in Durban was that the A-team established a reign in Chesterville over a number of years. They took over Road 13, illegally occupying houses and burning surrounding houses in order to make a safe area for themselves. They also allegedly brought in Inkatha youths from other townships to bolster their power base. Their sole aim was to target members of youth and other UDF-linked organizations. This they did with the active complicity of the SAP, including the Riot Unit and the Security Branch.*

> *In his amnesty application, former Riot Unit ember Frank Bennetts (AM4059/96] gave evidence of the extent of Security Branch involvement in and collusion with members of the A-team. At a section 29 hearing, he described the A team as a group of Inkatha supporters who were acting in their capacity, or so I believed, in assisting the police in the curbing of the growth and support of groups and organizations opposed to the government and the order of the day. (1998: 209).*

The Nation reported "*Two killed in Chesterville Vigilante attacks:*"

> *two Chesterville, Durban, youths have been killed and two other injured, one critically, in what township residents describe as a reign of terror by vigilante group which calls itself the A-Team. Felix Hadebe and Peter Hlengwa, both members of the Chesterville Youth organization (CYO) were hacked to death with pangas after being abducted from their homes on Monday night...A spokes person for the Chesterville Youth Organisation said the attack on residents by vigilantes began on Saturday...*

> *A spokesperson for the CYO said the murder of Hadebe and Hlengwa followed a series of attacks on Chesterville residents by vigilantes at the weekend. Other victims included an elderly resident, Cyril Mpiyakhe Zulu, who according to the spokesman, was killed while waiting for a Chesterville bus in area, one of Durban's grey suburbs. An unknown gun-man shot another resident, Thabani Mahlobo, while he was at home. On the same night, another home in Chesterville, belonging to the Masikane family, was attacked and an outside shack set alight. A youth, Bheki Masikane, escaped with minor injuries... (7 January 1987: 3).*

While in the **Natal Mercury** "Vigilantes operating without restraint",

> The ecumenical group Diakonia said yesterday that it fully supported a call from Chesterville residents for a halt to the activities of the 'A-team'. A Dikonia spokesperson said the group had

been terrorizing the Chesterville community for several months without any apparent attempt to check them (25 April 1986: 2).

The New Nation *"The People Strike Back":*

Residents of Durban's Chesterville Township have decided to take on the "A-Team" a feared vigilante group who have taken over their lives since last August. The terror group will be the subject of talks between the deputy Minister of Law and Order, Andriaan Vlok, and Peter Gastrow (PFP Durban Central) who has been asked to take up the matter on behalf of Chesterville residents(25 March 1986: 2). .

5.3.3.v Brutal Attacks on homes

TRC Report, Volume 3 stated:

On 21 May 1989, the Imbali home of COSATU shop steward Ms Jabu Ndlovu (KZN/MPN/001/JB] was attacked by well known Imbali Inkatha supporters, including Mr. Jerome Mncwabe, Mr. Thulani Ngcobo, and Mr. Sichizo Zuma, who were seen knocking at the Ndlovu's door. Jabu's husband, Mr. Jabulani Ndlovu, who opened the door, was shot fifteen times.

The attackers set the house alight. One of the Ndlovu's two daughters, Khumbu, tried to escape, but was shot and forced back into the burning house. Jabulani died at the scene. Jabu and her daughter both died later as a result of their burns. (1998: 243)

The Cape Times *"Much Soweto unrest":*

In Chesterville a security forces member was slightly injured during a stone throwing attack on a home (27 April 1987: 7).

And also *"Townships homes hit" appeared in* **The Cape Times***:*

Four houses were attacked in the Chesterville Township near Durban, early yesterday…Two houses were badly damaged and two others were slightly damaged. UDF and Diakonia official Reverend Wesley Mabuza had his KwaMashu home petrol bombed in late August 1985. A large mob also burned down the home of David Gass, UDF supporter and Chairman of the Umlazi Residents Association, at about the same time. In September, another Inkatha gang destroyed the home of George and Willel Yengwa in Lamontville and shot at their family (9 December 1985: 4).

5.3.3.vi Funeral Violence

City Press reporter Sibusiso Mgandi reported "A burial a day is all they can do":

> *Port Natal divisional police commissioner Brigadier Jan Botha has, it terms of the emergency regulations, banned the funerals of Sandile Crawford Khawule, Joseph Russel Mthembu, Muntuwenkosi Khnayile, Russel Mngomezulu and Nkosinathi Cele from taking place during weekends or on public holidays. Botha also banned the distribution and displaying of flags, banners, placards, pamphlets and posters during any of the funerals. "No memorial or commemorative service in connection with any of the deceased persons, shall be held out of doors," he ordered. "Only an ordained minister of a religious denomination may act as speaker during the proceedings at any such funeral ceremony. Only one of the deceased mentioned may be buried at one funeral. The funerals may not last any longer than four hours and no more than 200 people may attend." A Chesterville Burial Committee spokesperson told City Press they had no alternative but to bury their dead 'one a day' in order to comply with the order (29 June 1986: 2).*

From **The Citizen** *"Police Ban funeral for 5 in Durban"*:

> *In a short statement Brigadier Botha said he believed the collective burial of five people-all men-could endanger the safety of the State in terms of Section 29 of the Internal Security Act. (28 June 1986: 4).*

The sadness occasioned by police brutality is further conveyed through the agony of relatives who could not attend the burials of their loved ones. For example **Weekly Mail** *"Mother scared to attend son's funeral"*:

> *Thandi Memela did not turn up for her own son's burial In Durban's Chesterville township last week. Instead she sent flowers and a message to read to the 3000 mourners who gathered for what was the first unrestricted mass funeral since the beginning of the State of Emergency. Thandi Memela, mother of Thabani Memela, one of the youths killed in a shootout with police, did not attend because she feared harassment. She has been the target of attacks by vigilantes and has had to flee her home, which was petrol-bombed and burnt earlier this year…The funeral of the three youths-Thabani Memela, Blessing Mabaso and Luvuyo Mgombozi-was led by UDF President Archie Gumede, followed by a chanting UDF activists who hoisted a Soviet flag. (2 October 1986: 7).*

The **Natal Mercury** *"Police: 200 youth clash during funeral"*:

> *Stone throwers who were part of thousands of mourners at the funeral of Mandlenkosi Ndimande, who was killed when a bomb he was apparently helping to lay at the Grosvenor Girls High School on the Bluff last month exploded. While the funeral was in progress more than 200 slogan chanting youths took to the streets and stoned police*

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vehicles near the Chesterville High School. Police fired teargas and birdshot, chasing the youth downs the streets of Chesterville (11 November 1985: 2).

With the constant arrests and deaths of their husbands, sons and daughters, Chesterville mothers were the one's who bore the brunt of the daily effects of the political violence described above. It was also them who were in the forefront of resisting and taming the violence to protect their homes and children. The following incident which took place in Chesterville was reported by Billy Paddock from the **Sunday Tribune** in 1986 "*Night of the Women as Sash members Join Vigil:*

> *The courageous township women took the initiative on April 26 when they decided the spiral of violence had to stop. They blocked the roads each night monitoring the movement of people in an attempt to stop mobs attacking residents. One night they confronted the police at the entrance of the township and lay down in the middle of the road to prevent Casspirs driving into the township. On Thursday night after 3 youths had been killed on the streets the township women asked members of the Black Sash to go to Chesterville in the hope that their presence would halt the violence….Allison Boulle, one of the Black Sash members who attended the vigil, said, "Shortly after we arrived we heard people running. I felt absolute terror, thinking we were about to be attacked. It turned out that a house had been petrol bombed. We all felt unnerved. But it was good that we experienced a little of what the township residents are experiencing all the time"* (1 June 1986: 6).

5.4 Conclusion

In this chapter, I situated Chesterville Township geographically and historically while also emphasising the violence visited upon its residents. The chapter also highlights ways in which despite this endemic violence experienced, the community of Chesterville evolved different strategies to resist the government's assault on them which sought to reduce them to a state of hopelessness. However, the extent that this violence became normative, and was further incorporated into mothers and daughters individual and family lives, remains insufficiently probed within South African social theory. Further, the ways this specific generational violence continues to stressfully shape the continuity of family patterns and/or forms of interactions between communities, remains a gap in South African social studies. What happens is that the effects of violence are often unexplained, subsumed and normalized under the concept of

'township', resulting in a discourse where township becomes interchangeable with violence. However, at the same time as many popular cultural theorists will quickly point out that even when oppressed communities are subjected to decades of relentless suffering which can penetrate the moral fiber and modes of existence for these communities, this harsh living can also potentially generate excessive creativity. As mentioned earlier, this is what Jamaican poet Kwame Dawes was referring to when he spoke about the *redemptive creative force* that came out of Jamaica's marginalized ghettoes.

Bibi Bakare-Yusuf has also argued in another context that the metaphor of the slave ship "can either be seen as the origin of extreme disruption and violence, or opening up the possibilities of excessive forms of creativity" (2001: 86). In the same light we can extend this analysis to townships and argue that we can either view them as only places of cultural disruption, loss, extreme negation and therefore ultimately spaces of 'unfreedom' (Bakare Yusuf 2001); or alternatively as sites where new cultural forms are given birth often in excess, as necessitated by the painful rupture that suffering inevitably brings. As this chapter has argued, both these perspectives are relevant in constituting 'cultures of survival' for township mothers and daughters, further highlighting the contradictory and elusiveness of this social space called townships. In chapters six and seven I now move to a detailed discussion on the themes of the lived and embodied experiences of suffering and healing that were generated from township mothers' and daughters' narrations and observations made during fieldwork.

CHAPTER 6: Lived and Embodied Suffering among Township Mothers and Daughters[54]

6.0 Introduction

Having geographically and historically situated Chesterville Township, in this chapter I outline some of the themes that emerged from Chesterville mothers' and daughters' narrations and observations that were made which I have called their *lived and embodied suffering*. This includes their experiences of physical and spiritual displacements, political violence and the violation of intimate spaces, living in an atmosphere of HIV/AIDS, pregnancy out of wedlock, unemployment and 'forever-working', and the weakening of intergenerational ties in this township. These themes create a painful tapestry of suffering for mothers and daughters that has made suffering and its sister -endurance- a deep embodiment of what it means *being* a township female subject.

6.1 Physical and Spiritual Displacements

The historical experience of the displacement of African people continues to structure mothers' and daughters' recollections of recent violence. These foundational episodes of 'uprootedness' are often followed by forced and repeated episodes of resettlements. Let me raise right from the start that this experience of displacement and the consequent *embodied dislocation* it generates, highlights the extent to which women's lives have been repeatedly defined by violations that have torn and eaten away at their life affirming socio-cultural and socio-spiritual resources, that under more hospitable conditions would ensure social and cultural continuity, as well as felt-

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[54] Parts of this chapter have appeared in a different form in Motsemme, N. (2007) '"Loving in a time of hopelessness": On township women's subjectivities in a time of HIV/AIDS', in *African Identities*, Vol 5 (1), 61-87.

safety.

It is well documented in the global discourse of sustainable development that displacement and resettlement undermine societal sustainability, particularly among the most politically weak, such as indigenous women and children (Downing 2002; Aronson 2002; Cernea 2000; Pandey 1998). Displacement specialist Theodore Downing defines the effects of displacement, known as resettlement effects as, "the loss of physical and non-physical assets, including homes, communities, productive land, income-earning assets and sources, subsistence resources, cultural sites, social structures, networks and ties, cultural identity and mutual help mechanisms" (2002: 3). It is this experience of this 'resettlement effect' that has generated what several scholars now call 'new poverties', and heightened those of who are displaced senses of 'social disarticulation' (Downing 2002). *Social disarticulation* refers to the "erosion of a society's cultural inventory", "cultural defense mechanism", "break of the normative machinery", "socioeconomic collapse" and generally includes "the collapse of vital social networks and life support mechanisms making the society become less than its previous self" (Aronsson 2002: 1).

Michael Cerneau (2000) states that for every year, more than 10 million people are displaced around the globe to make way for development projects. He notes that hydropower generation is responsible for most of these displacements, and is followed by mining operations. Most of these developments create a pattern of gross human rights violations and enormous trauma among effected communities. This assertion is illustrated by Inga-Lill Aronson (2002) and Balaji Pandey's (1998) studies on the displaced in South America and India, which both found that a resource loss for the poor, even by a small measure was, in fact, experienced as devastating. In many instances this results for those who are poor, becoming even poorer. Furthermore, Downing adds that "societies that have endured for hundreds, if not thousands of years, disintegrate under the pressures of forced displacement" (2002: 7-8). This fragmentation is felt through the abovementioned loss of social security in the form of the breaking up of families, weakening of kinship ties, increase in unemployment and a general loss of control over one's life (Aronson 2002). A major study in India, which supports this finding, traced the pre and post displacement on those forcefully resettled by six infrastructure projects in the state of Orissa in eastern India, revealed that landlessness increased in all six populations. Furthermore, as

Downing (2000) also alerts us, most academic and NGO research organizations have confirmed the difficulties and ineffectiveness of rehabilitating displaced communities to their former economic and social conditions.

Cultural anthropologist Inga-Lill Aronson's ethnography based on the Zampan dam project in Mexico also found that uprootedness from one's familiar landscape was also experienced and embodied as a deep emotional wound. This, she explains was largely due to the subjective emotional experience of attachment to place. She explains,

> The peasants were emotionally attached to the landscape through multisensory experiences-visual, olfactory, auditory and tactile. Under normal circumstances, as long as the landscape and the Umwelt were intact, there had no need to articulate this engagement in words. They took the natural landscape for granted as long as life continued as usual in a stable time and space continuum. In many ways the place made them remember who they were (2002: 95).

In other words, the landscape was key in how individuals identified themselves as a people. Further, it played a critical role in weaving meaningful navigations of time and space creating daily rhythms that shaped stability in everyday life. This is why Aronsson argues that one of the results of this disruption of daily rhythms in a relocation project such as Zimpan, was disorientation to named space since, as she outlines:

> the people came from an area where they could easily orient themselves in space because of the named places of the landscape…the old landscape was covered with paths that linked the different homesteads with each other… (2002: 95).

Aronsson (2002) also highlights that she found that people of the valley *reacted with mental and physical illnesses to the deterioration of their natural and cultural landscape.* Some women attributed the sudden increase in deaths to "sadness (tristeza) because of the dam" (Aronsson 2002: 108). Further, many of the women also said that they suffered depression and did not want to get out of bed, while others lacked strength and some felt abandoned. While initially the men did not mention health problems, Aronsson (2002) notes that it was clear that the stress of marital problems as a result of economic challenges, had led to a direct increase in severe alcoholic problems. As people tried to explain their pain, which as Aronsson (2002) notes was a term the peasant women used themselves to explain how they felt and why they were ill, is related to "living in a landscape that slowly deteriorates in front of one's eyes, while accepted cultural categories lose validity and meaning" (2002: 109). They told her that, "the face is calm

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but inside us there is disorder" (Aronsson 2002: 109). Some women, she explains underwent "a traditional treatment, a ritual cleansing of the body by a female healer, or they used herbal treatments, made from herbs purchased in the city" (Aronsson 2002: 109).

In this way the Mexican Zimapad project demonstrated the extent to which being uprooted is not just limited to the sphere of the physical realm, but can be experienced as a deeply embodied socio-cultural and socio-spiritual violation by individuals and communities. And as township mothers' and daughters' narrations of displacement will unearth, this is largely because in most African communities, including Chesterville township, experiences of repeated displacements profoundly alter a person's *spiritual being* and often results in individuals, families and at times entire communities expressing that they feel they are living their daily lives under the *tyranny of ancestral debt.* The explanation goes like this--because individuals and families have been uprooted so many times they have become disconnected from their ancestral ties, ties that continue to constitute a major identity marker in African cultural life.

One thing that we need to keep in mind is that in most of our communities people have the capacity to *carry* their ancestors, that is their 'rootedness', with them as they move. However, as highlighted earlier in chapter three, in situations of great unrest, this is not easily achieved because many people simply do not have the means, or even the time, to do this. As highlighted, to carry out these socio-cultural rituals is costly business: specific animals need to be sacrificed to make ancestors satisfied and thus willing to move along. Ideally, it should be an occasion of joy and festivity, with a treat of delicious and plentiful food served to everybody, including the ancestors. Furthermore these rituals must not be hurried. And the family should all be present, and also be in complete consensus about the move. Many continue to believe that when these rituals are not properly done, this can lead to social chaos resulting in the disorganization of families and communities not just in the present, but the future. And as Ma Mkhize elaborates:

> *Ma Mkhize: you see the ancestors follow us, but people when they travel everywhere they don't see that. I know the Sotho like to use sheep for their ceremonies. Sometimes you have to go to your past when things are not going on well. You have to look for idlozi, the ancestor that will give you the direction. When you ask ancestors for something you get it, you ask again you get it.*

But you must thank them, think of them, those who gave you the blessings. As much as they can give you, they can also take away, everything from you, things that are near you...

In short, the historical wounds of physical displacements are thus not only felt at the economic and social levels, but come to be experienced as *deep spiritual violations* which have an embodied impact. Narrating her repeated uprootedness, Nelisiwe shares:

Nelisiwe: Nelisiwe is my name and my surname is Dhlomo. I lived here in Chesterville. I used to live in Claremont, but we came back to Chesterville. We left Claremont when there were wars and we built a shack outside and that's where we lived. I don't know how I should talk...my mother died soon after and we were left alone, we got a house here at Mas'xha. (a recent RDP extension of the Chesterville township).

I: Just talk; just keep talking...it will come together, don't worry...

Nelisiwe: Now we live at Mas'xha

In the case of 60 year old Ma Mkhize, she shares with us how displacement resulted in an embodied sense of a broken connection with her ancestors -*amadllozi*- who constitute the grounding of her existence. Losing this circular and reciprocal connection with the 'living dead,' according to her, has disoriented her and explains why she has had so many misfortunes in her life. This is because these forced resettlements from her open-spaced rural home to various racially segregated townships introduced a fundamental imbalance in her life. Like many families who were arbitrarily removed, her family also failed to carry out the necessary rituals to inform their ancestors ceremoniously that they were departing. Such a situation she explained *created chaos in both the spiritual and material world*. This is because *amadlozi,* the ancestors, are lost and busy looking for their kin, while the living slowly become '*wandering beings'* after having lost their guides and balanced grounding in this difficult world. In other words, for many township mothers and daughters being connected to one's ancestors remains a core aspect of how one existentially defines oneself as *being-human*. Ma Mkhize explained her spiritual violation in the following manner:

Ma Mkhize: listen now, let me tell you a story, I am Sophie Mkhize and I'm married into the Dlamini family...I'm mama Mkhize but I was married into the Dlamini's. My origins are this, my father comes from Emusinga and my mother was born in Grey town. When I was young I remember they used to call the place Emabovini, but I didn't live there long. A gentlemen from the Mkhize family married a woman from Greytown and they lived in the rural areas. They worked for the white man, the boers-farmers. Each family member would work six months and then after that another family member would work another six months till all of you are done working. Each household would meet in the fields and work the land. Food would be planted and sold in the city area of Durban. Then my father grew tired of this life and he left and went to work in Johannesburg. When he came back he was no longer favoured by the boers because they said he has become clever, and then my mother and father planned to go to another place. The place was Nkolosi Eskebheni—the place of water. The place where we lived is now called the Inanda dam now. We were moved when the dam was being built. We went to live in Emkhomazi.

I: Aunt earlier you talked about something that I want you to say more about: the connection between moving and moving so many times, and what you believe to be your ill fortune in life. I'm not sure I understood this connection. Can you explain a little more?

Ma Mkhize: yes you see my father moved from...

(End of cassette)

...moving from place to place means that the proper rituals were not performed and the ancestors did not know where we are. This situation creates chaos in the place of the ancestors and the earthly world because connections have been broken and we can no longer find each other (that is the ancestors and family members still living).

On the other hand, 26 year old mother Thandi explains her repeated uprootedness which was a result of the political violence that gripped KwaZulu-Natal for almost a decade, making it one of the most violent places to live in, in the following manner:

Thandi: Everything, everything was burned down ... and some of the things they just took... they stole whatever it is they felt they wanted to steal....they burnt everything and we left...we were then all relocated to the community hall in KwaMakhutha...and then I left to go and live in Umlazi at R section.... There... well you see at that time I stopped going to school... we lived there for some time...There was a small yard you see and we built a small shack.... But living in

the shack was not good... After some time my mother talked to her sister because she thought it would be better if we lived in the house.... In the house it was my mother's sister, her 2 daughters, and my mother and my sisters... We lived well at that time and then the following year I went back to school... and then there was a time when it was not good to stay there it became bad and then my sister started looking for a flat for us to live in town.... Then we find a flat and stayed at the flat ... then things didn't work out and we started looking for another place to live... now my mother lives at a backroom at the white people where she works (as a domestic worker) and I live with my boyfriends family... my sister is looking for shelter as she is having problems with the house she found after the flat...

Overall these recollections clearly highlight how being uprooted directly affected township women's identities to be experienced and embodied as 'floating,' 'disoriented' and 'without grounding'. As mentioned, a part of this was as a result of having lost their guides, their ancestors, to provide critical spiritual navigation to maneuver a harsh material world. Repeated physical displacements of particularly African women, also points to how they continue to *live the present in historical terms* as the "past was, in a sense inserted into the present" (Malkki 1995: 76). This is because since the arrival of the first white settlers in South Africa right through to apartheid, the forced removal and displacement of Africans constitutes the bases from which a white racist South African Union was established. Furthermore, these experiences of uprootedness whether as a result of colonialism, apartheid, modernization projects or political violence show the extent the poor ultimately house their memories in alternative sites such as emotional memory, bodily memory and their spiritual practices, in order to cope with these historic, psychic and bodily traumas. Finally, they also remind us how we always need to bear in mind that for most Africans their lived cosmologies and connections with the environment are not just physical or economic, but also infused with the spiritual.

South African theologian Marthinus Daneel (1999) notes that in most African theologies the healing of the land and the people often occurs simultaneously. This is why cleansing, purification and 'clearing of spaces[55]' are considered as part and parcel of spiritual self-renewal.

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[55] See September 8, 2002, SABC.com, "Members of the Azanian People's Organisation (AZAPO) visited the prison cells today as a symbolic restoration of their mentor's dignity. The clergy cleansed it to remove the spiritual and physical humiliation Biko suffered (http://wwwsabcnews.com/politics/the_provinces. Accessed on 2003/04/02.

In other words, healing involves the reconciliation and harmony between the human and non-human (Daneel: 1999), in which landscapes are an integral part. That is why during moments of bloody violence it is held that the earth was literally and symbolically bloodied by the generations of killings, and thus a purging of the earth, what others have called *ecological reversal* (Feldman pers. comm. Budapest 2004) and *ecological repair* (Daneel: 1999) are needed for holistic healing and living of individuals and communities to occur.

However as Thandi reminds us, we must also add to these broader upheavals within lived uprootedness personal dramas and feuds between family members, which unless resolved, also contribute to displacement experiences for particularly young township daughters and their families. Unmarried mothers who reside with their children in family homes, as I will later explain remains a dominant practice in Chesterville, are particularly vulnerable as their *right to shelter* is usually precariously linked to the benevolence of parents (especially the father), or the older brothers in cases where the parents have died.

6.2 Political violence and the violation of sanctuary spaces

The second theme that was pervasive in the townships mothers and daughters' tapestry of suffering was their lived experience of political violence. As mentioned in chapter three, mothers and daughters are inserted in specific ways within the high apartheid narrative of the 1980s. To become a mother in the 1980s was to enter motherhood during one of the most violent moments in South African history. So in these remembrances of these recent violences, it is mostly mothers who recall the enforced separation from their children, particularly their sons, during arrests and raids, and sons crossing borders to join the liberation movement; the further entrenchment of the absence of their men as the state actively targeted them; and how notions of felt safety were bitterly transformed and physically embodied as a collective wound, as security forces fired into their intimate spaces, including their homes. Sociological and psychological texts repeatedly remind us of the importance of home as a vital symbol in giving those who

Rituals of cleansing were also carried out on Robben Island by 'izangoma', African healers using circular energy, which is seen as life energy (Conversation with Ellen Feldman; Budapest; 2004)

belong to it love, trust, care and a sense of belonging. The home is one of many typical examples of sanctuary spaces, which as Jean Franco (2004) found in her work in Latin America, also included the church, women, priests, nuns and children. Sanctuary spaces, she adds, are often conceptualized as immune spaces which must be defended against potentially adverse outside forces. However, South African social anthropologist Belinda Ross (1997) cautions us that even though women often draw on metaphors from the domestic to map out their violations during apartheid, this does not imply that they belong naturally or totally to the domestic. Rather, this points to home as an important constitutive space to township women's subjectivities.

Elaine Scarry in her groundbreaking book *The Body Pain* reminds us that violence is both world-making and world-destroying. She also makes the important observation that the unmaking of civilization inevitably requires a return to and mutilation of the domestic which she argues is the ground of all making (1997). Several South African scholars have noted how apartheid violence targeted the family, or more specifically, African-centred socio-cultural and socio-spiritual resources that helped to shape and maintain the continuity of moral communities (Ramphele 2000; Reynolds 2000). In this way apartheid violence, particularly the state terror of high apartheid of the 1980's, was a central force in further fragmenting township mothers' and daughters' *local moral worlds* (Kleinman 1992), simultaneously violating their right to sanctuary. Furthermore, this 'unmaking', as social anthropologist Pamela Reynolds has asserted, also signified a way in which the apartheid state participated in a process of the *"decomposition of nurturance"* (2000: 143) *and the "fragmentation of care"* (2000: 163) in township communities. In other words, this active targeting of the home as a space of destruction constituted ways in which representatives of the state intruded upon the rights of women to protect and care for their children in relatively safe home spaces.

Let me begin with Ma Mkhize's background narration of political violence that engulfed Chesterville for almost a decade and literally tore families and communities apart:

> *I: yes, we were talking about the violence in the 1980s that was everywhere in KwaZululu Natal*
>
> *Ma Mkhize: yes there was matter between Inkatha and the ANC then this thing of A-team started at the government school, I don't know what happened and then there was this thing this A-Team.*

This A-Team was the one people got from TV they used to watch it on TV. They used to be this program on TV played by B.A.

I: ... And Murdock

Ma Mkhize: yes that black man from overseas, who used to cut his hair in this crazy way and used to dress like a bhinca. It was from this A-team TV programme that they named each other, and then the next thing we didn't get along people from Road 13 and Road 25 and all that... and then suddenly because somebody opposite was ANC, you stopped even looking at each other...at that time there was a lot of death because people were being killed.......

I: yes I remember others would just disappear...

Ma Mkhize: yes many just disappeared, others moved to other places and many ran away to become soldiers (ANC underground operatives). There are others who left to go and they have not returned. Till now we don't know where they have gone...

I: yes we are talking of another time in our lives....just thinking about it makes you wonder how we survived, it...

Ma Mkhize: if we were able to survive Lindelani there...many funeral boxes would have left that house- it was me, aunt J, N and Z that day they crashed the door and broke in inside...

I: what were they looking for?

*Ma Mkhize: I don't know all, what I know is that they wanted to burn the house down... when I came there to look after the house and we thought the violence will not reach there, but people were saying that Lindelani will be the next, that day the violence started, we will leave the place bare they said (that is the warlords from the squatter camps). They would chant this and said soon we will enter this township. We will enter Lindelani...but they came all the way from Konozaza to provoke them that side. And these were children coming face to face with old men.... and this side (in Chesterville township) the A-Team **started its violence till we grew used to it** and the army was here and then there were many arrests of children here (Chesterville township)... at the end they just started to arrest and arrest...(my emphases)*

I: and then how did you protect yourself from all this..?

Ma Mkhize: I remember the fear, fear, fear…. I remember this would pass and you would think-I survived this one… and this one would pass you and you would think I survived this one. Whew. Even the ones who thought they were invincible, a boss, he died in Road 25…but even at that time things were better…and we don't even know why he was stabbed…and maybe because..

While Thandi the 24 year old mother started her lifestory of what it meant to be a young women growing up in KwaZulu-Natal during the 1980s in the following manner-

Thandi: I am originally from Adams (originally a missionary settlement in the Northern rural areas of KwaZulu –Natal)

I: oh…

Thandi:… yes, it's a rural area…when we lived there it was an open area, there was no developments like now… we came to live there because my mother's brother…the thing is he was a policeman who was working in KwaMakhutha during the ANC – IFP wars…it was his house … we lived there.. one day , I remember it was the funeral of Chris Hani…

I: I remember that day…

Thandi: They came and burned all the houses around… you see we all lived together… there was my uncle's house then aunts and cousins houses together… all of them were burned.. all houses of people they knew were IFP were burnt…

I: …everything ... Did you manage to save anything…?

Thandi: Everything, everything was burned down … and some of the things they just took… they stole whatever it is they felt they wanted to steal….they burnt everything and we left…we were then all relocated to the community hall in KwaMakhutha…

Several studies of violence focusing on parts of Latin America, Europe and Africa have in fact noted how recent political violence has targeted everyday life as the focus of state violence (Reynolds 2000; Feldman 1991; Ross 1997). This scholarship also traces how these traditionally feminised spaces become politicised, through for example the raiding of homes, house arrests, and general attacks on the home and funeral space, and how these disruptions in turn undermine community and family interconnections. In her study on state violence, the family and political activists over a ten-year period with ex-detainees in South Africa, Pamela Reynolds (2000)

concludes that, a core concern of high apartheid of the 1980's can be characterised as a systematic violence against the institution of the African family. In other words, the state went to great lengths to destabilise families and undermine a sense of trust, symbolic continuity and unity within families. Elaine Scarry (1985) has noted the potency of this political practice in her own study of pain, torture and the body highlighting that the unmaking of civilisation inevitably requires a mutilation of the domestic space which constitutes the foundation of being a subject in this world. Violent practice enacted on the home thus changes the meanings around this intimate space by defamiliarising it and possibly transforming it into "a place of danger and deprivation" (Povizanovic 1997: 157).

In centralizing how violence has penetrated and changed even the most sacred of spaces such as the home, we are also forced to confront the gap of how the *experience of violent space* in South Africa has surprisingly been undertheorised. Typically, what happens when we encounter the idea of space in studies of violence is that it is often conceptualised as a neutral and empty container, an empty vessel in which some kind of abstracted political force acts on. This leads to many writings on political violence to simply frame or edit out the embodiment of violent space from their explanations. The idea of *space as a locus of the interpretive*, in other words, as meaning producing for particularly violated individuals and communities, still requires further critical engagement.

My argument is that when we understand how safe space became a wound for township mothers and daughters that we will begin to see how violence was embodied by them, which also reshaped, or rather *transformed the sensory experiences with their everyday.* That is, when state or vigilante groups violated the home through for example forced entry, they simultaneously inscribed repressive public-political codes into the home; making the outside (associated with state violence) have a permanent presence and resonance inside the home. Spatial meanings of outside as-state terror, unsafe etc; and inside as-safe container, etc, were inverted, causing confusion on what should be coded as 'safe' and 'unsafe'. Felt-safety, warmth, the sense of continuity, relative order, or the smell of pap and 'mogodi', tripe soup cooked inside the home, are transformed by the chilling shadow of the betrayal of the intrusion, causing a *violation of the senses* to occur for those occupying the home. It is important to highlight that this violation of

the senses is also closely linked to how we remember. For instance, Jacqui Alexander reminds us that how so much of what we remember is in fact embodied in "the scent of home; of fresh-baked bread; of newly grated coconut stewed with spice, nutmeg and a bayleaf from a tree" (205: 277).

Furthermore the *damage to property and stolen goods* was felt as a real embodied loss by women as Thandi recalled in her own abovementioned account, showing us how violence can also be intimately written onto material objects such as the home, and ultimately embodied as a remembered pain. Ma Dlamini's recollection of violence in the 1980s also directly recalls how the state wrote its excesses of violence onto her four-roomed house:

> *Ma Dlamini: At one time they (apartheid security forces) threw teargas at our house, which I really did not understand.*
>
> *I: The shocking or the funny thing about these cases is they came to homes where they knew they would find women, the vulnerable ones...*
>
> *Ma Dlamini: Yes, that was the case, our storeroom was burnt down at one time, they threw a petrol bomb and that burnt it down. We had to stay alert at all times, even children fell victims of such situations...*

Furthermore, conceptualising *safe space as a wound* in township mothers and daughters also reminds us that within the lived experience of political violence "first hand knowledge about the suffering encountered is principally retained as bodily memories" (Povrzanovic 1997: 154). This is because as Maja Povrzanovic observes, the *new bodily experience acquired during moments of violence* which includes those experiences of "siege, radically restricted mobility…constant tension due to the manifold of fears" (1997: 159), have a direct bearing in shaping our identities. She even suggests that these new bodily experiences can even result in physical body changes as she identified in her ethnographic work during the Croatian war where a woman who lost so much space as a result of the war that, "the shrinking of safe space in her town was reflected in the shrinking of her body" (1997: 159). Similarly in Chesterville, township women's memories of violence also corresponded with effects on the body and in particular aching body parts that women complained about. For example Ma Mkhize spoke of aches located on the back, arms and bones which, which she explained had been with her for a long time without her knowledge

until she was injured at work and was scheduled for a medical examination where she was *touched* on her body after a very long time. It was the experience of being touched that awakened her deep seated physical pains, reminding us as Jacqui Alexander (2005) observed of how touch is indeed a core element in the work of decolonisation. As she remembers, "I used to get aches in my body and I didn't know." These pains were linked to *"ukusebenza kakhulu"*-that is working too much in one's life- that is forever working. Given such experiences it should not surprise us why most township mothers become victims of lifestyle related illnesses such as hypertension and diabetes, which are strongly associated with a stressful lifestyle and nutritionally unbalanced diets. The weight and constancy of these situated and shared experiences of embodied violation remind us to why those affected by violence tend to do whatever they possibly can on "saving and preserving one's body and the immediate material surroundings of one's home" (Povrzanovic 1997: 159). However, the wounded body formed by violent experiences also generates a "new way of being present to the world… gains something not possessed before" (Slattery 2000: 7). And, therefore, as phenomenologist Richard Slattery suggests, "within the scars and pains of our wounds is the blossoming of a flower of freedom; the wound has the capacity to open up to liberation, even when the origin of such freedom is so tender and vulnerable" (2000: 213).

Another site which must be mentioned that is usually associated with safe or sanctuary spaces, includes schools. During the violent period of the 1980s township schools were not exempt from being targeted for open violence by the state security forces, crushing students' right to a safe education. And like elsewhere in the country schools were a prime site for political organising and action as the Weekly Mail reported in 1986 that, "Chesterville was quiet during the August riots in Durban but in September pupils at the senior secondary school went on boycott after the detention of one of the leaders" (Smith and Paddock 1986: 4). Dudu would have most likely been a part of this experience, as she vividly remembers how it seemed that safe spaces were being eroded everywhere for young township women during this time:

> *I: How was school at that time?*
>
> *Phumzile: Things were tough, I don't want to lie, and white soldiers were coming to our school and into our classrooms threatening us and causing havoc in our schools. It made our education*

life very difficult. In 1983 there was one time when we had to stop schools because the situation had become tense. People used to jump out of windows to escape the boers-soldiers once there were the rumors that they have entered the school yard. We only went back to school in September that year which was just before we wrote our final paper...

Our principal was the one who went round looking for his Form Three pupils so we could go and prepare for the exams. Thus when we started being serious and started studying, our teachers also helped us prepare for the exams which did help us a lot. We wrote these exams and I passed and proceeded to form four. I also remember our school was burnt down in 1984.

6.3 Repeated experiences of Death, HIV/AIDS and Pregnancy

I: who is this wearing a suit in this photo?

Ma Mkhize: oh, that's my uncle, everyone died in that house... Him, the children, till just the house was left...there is no one left in the house the only one left is the wife and the .... Her husband, a policeman died. There were 3 children and they all died...

Ntokozo: Another thing is I'm HIV positive. The time I was diagnosed I had no clue of what was taking place. I just remember they took some blood tests and I was pregnant with my second child who had come unexpectedly.

Zethu: In the past there was this thing that if you got pregnant, you capture a man...but now it's different, you're chasing him away.

The next layer of suffering that constituted lived and embodied suffering by township mothers and daughters is closely linked to the ways in which *death became such an embedded part of daily township life,* structurally shaping women's social and intimate lives. While I cannot go into aspects of the multitude of unaccounted-for deaths during early colonial encounters of violence, it is surprising that in townships, which have had such constant and regular dealings with death, we find that this traumatic experience has received scant attention within South African social studies. And given the observation by Michael Taussig (1987) in his extensive study on terror and healing in Peru, that while the space of death is crucial to the creation of meaning and consciousness in any community, it becomes even more so in societies where

torture is endemic and where the culture of terror dominates. This makes it even more urgent that we must begin to surface this particular historical and social experience of collective suffering by township communities.

The linking of 'the dead' with apartheid violence is not only traceable to the fact that the state was responsible for many deaths in townships, but also that it actively participated in the *separation of the dead from the living*. This further illustrates my point mentioned earlier of the planned participation of the state in attacking people's cultural resources. Feldman (2002) has referred to the apartheid state's political strategy of hiding and burning of African people's bodies as part of the hidden history of the South African state, which also ironically became a public acknowledgement that its power was in fact illegitimate. After all, as I have repeatedly shown, the ways in which this state legitimised itself was predicated on the erasure of African people's histories, memories and meaning structures. With regards to the separation of the dead from the living, as explained in chapter three in most African cosmological systems, this separation is experienced as traumatic by many township families. Part of the reason lies in the fact that within most forms of African spirituality, the separation of the dead from the living is viewed as *a fundamental violation of self, family and the capacity to reproduce moral community.* A violent separation between the living and the dead is thus seen as affecting the cosmic balance between those living and the 'living dead'. Such an imbalance signals a breakdown in *cosmological continuity* which is dependent on the circular communication flow between the living and those who have passed on to become ancestors. Furthermore, those who may have died as a result of a violent death and not given a proper burial, are still believed to become restless spirits who may even become destructive in the quotidian life of the living (Sveker 2003).

However, we must also remember that in the process of digging up, locating graves and naming them results in *a rememory of the violence.* But this recent digging up of 'hidden graves,' also constitutes a moment of healing for several families. For we must remember that *death without mourning constitutes a death without reflexivity* (Uli Linke 2003, pers.comm), which has the effect of paralyzing an individual's sense of cosmological continuity and a stable sense of self. However for many more families there has been no closure, as they have not been able to

perform traditional family rituals for those missing, left in a void as to whether their loved one's are truly dead. For several of these families remain firmly grounded in the belief that if the correct processes of the appropriate rituals are not followed, then '*isinyama,*' or misfortune will follow. So in this instance a crucial element of constructing closure is locating the physical body so that the ritual of '*ukugezwa,*' cleansing can follow.

If we trace the types of deaths that township mothers and daughters dealt with in the 1980s, it was predominantly mass political deaths of mostly young men murdered by the state and/or vigilante groups; while in the post-apartheid moment it has been HIV'AIDS related deaths which have disproportionally stolen the lives of young African women. In fact, when we look closer at the types of death that have repeatedly occurred in townships, we find a remarkable gendered generational pattern in death related experiences. Among those I interviewed the majority of mothers had lost husbands prior to the 1980s, and then as mentioned, in the 1980's they lost mostly their sons as a result of political violence, and finally in the 1990s township mothers were forced to watch mostly their daughters die of HIV/AIDS. This historical continuity of mothers burying their loved one's-- their children more specifically-- embodies a deeply painful experience that remains difficult to express for many of these mothers. To some extent this lived and embodied suffering of township mothers can be seen as a form of social death which scholars have argued is characterized by heavy psychic damage, torment (Mbembe 2002), and just simply deep fatigue. Furthermore, these repeated death experiences have meant that women's 'caring' and 'compassionate' roles in death practices continue to be severely overstretched. An interesting aspect to point out is that while the township body of the 1980s was politicised, and celebrated in the name of liberation, as evidenced in songs-- such as '*Amagugu alelizwe*'--the heroes of our nation songs which were collectively harmonised during mass funeral processions, the ailing HIV/AIDS body is never seen; it is privatised and experienced as a source of shame for newly 'liberated' African South Africans. It is of particular shame to several of the emerging group of confident middle-class Africans who have become the central actors responsible for performing a new aesthetics of 'independence' and 'freedom' in the public spheres of politics, business, and entertainment. Currently, the burden of caring for this ailing body and mourning becomes primarily the responsibility of the family, in which few want to share. This isolation, as well as being marked by a 'bad death', is experienced as traumatic by

individual families.

However, as earlier pointed out by several phenomenologist scholars, humans embody a desire to transcend their material limitations, and in Chesterville we find that this experience of living intimately with HIV/AIDS-related deaths has also generated a survival response that seeks to go beyond this social death through the creation of a whole repertoire of *popular languages* that speak to *living in atmospheres of HIV/AIDS*. As scholars we are then encouraged to explore how these expressive cultural forms, explicitly not linked to issues of HIV/AIDS, are mobilised and do in fact 'speak' to HIV/AIDS. The question of what happens when death, not life, structures your everyday, invites us to then 'see' how those who live in such social conditions tame and domesticate HIV/AIDS so that they can simply live with it in their everyday lives. I do not think it is an accident that in South Africa HIV/AIDS is commonly referred to as ADIDAS (three stripes of the brand name), Z3 (the BMW sports car), Number 3 (gesture with three fingers) and **H**lengiwe **I**vy **V**ilakazi. The latter is a typical Zulu woman's name and surname in KwaZulu-Natal. Referring to HIV/AIDS as 'Hlengiwe Ivy Vilakazi' signals that the virus is something very intimate and familiar to everyone and *she* could potentially be anyone you know. These everyday examples reflect daily attempts by individuals to domesticate and live with the disease by recomposing its meaning through linking it to both highly desired material and intimate objects, while at the same time feminising this illness as a 'women's disease'. Post-colonial scholar Francois Verges has also spoken of how in conditions of existential and material strain life can be said to be measured in terms of a 'death expectancy,' which compels us to "look at the ways in which death is tricked, deceived, outmaneuvered" (2002: 608). However, what is interesting is that from the 'outside' this could easily be interpreted as collective denial. But if we take a closer situated look, we will find that these attempts also bring to our attention the ways in which township mothers and daughters *mobilise available cultural resources* in order to live intimately with death. In addition, these daily accounts of distancing yourself from thinking about AIDS all the time are ways of coping when you are living around an atmosphere of repeated deaths.

Statements such as 'It's not something you think about all the time'. 'You keep it at the back of your head because you must live' and 'sex is life', are openly expressed in young township

daughters' narrations. Included as well are notions of refusal, which incorporate denial and invincibility to confront the actual existence of HIV/AIDS– 'this will not happen to me'-- typical of the adventure spirit in youth identities.

There are other reasons for not wanting to talk directly about HIV/AIDS. Township daughters are also strategically avoiding the unknown, since they have no guarantees that they are exempt from being next in what is generally perceived as an inevitable kiss with death. Such fears are grounded in the fact that many of them swear that they would not put themselves through the nerve-wracking experience of testing since they have all had unprotected sex in their recent past. We must also keep in mind that in communities such as townships where uncertainty and anxiety dominate the structuring of everyday experience rumors of whether one is positive or not can quickly acquire the status of incontestable truth. An interesting aspect is that there also appears a fear in actually mouthing the words HIV/AIDS, as if *saying it* is tantamount to unleashing its destructive power over you. This is because in most African communities the idea that "our words have power, which in certain circumstances can maim or kill" (Lakoff and Johnson 1986: 12), continues to have cultural resonance for many. The combination of these domesticating acts, distancing and often blind refusals, collectively point to new ways of how township daughters in particular, are structuring aspects of denial as well as coping in their lives. In other words, what township daughters highlight is that denial and coping are not diametrically opposed forms of action, but are rather the fusion and embodiment of these ambivalent behaviours which are then experienced as part of their sexual subjectivities.

When I enquired about whether losing family members and friends, and witnessing neighbours deteriorating from HIV/AIDS, had any effect on ways township daughters were reviewing notions of sex and even life, this is how groups of friends responded:

> *Sbongile: Maybe 2 per cent think about it [HIV/AIDS] in Chesterville ... going out and having sex is life ... Even when you know about HIV, it won't stop you living ...You won't leave it just because ... especially if you have started doing it ... Of course you will be scared ... but this is not something you will be looking at, thinking about all the time ... that you might have it ... it's not something you look at all the time ...*

> *I: There are many rumors, because we don't talk about it openly, there will be a rumor that so*

and so died from AIDS. Others have told me that even if somebody knows that this person died from AIDS there will still be other young women going with him ... Is this true?

ALL RESPONDENTS [simultaneously]: Yes, Yes...

Dudu: It happens a lot ... a lot, a lot ... I mean it happens to such a great extent ... Maybe it's because people take this thing [HIV/AIDS] and put it at the back of their minds and choose to forget that it will affect me ...

A pair of 16-year-old friends added:

Malindi: Yes, there are billboards, TV and radio about protected sex or abstain from sex, birth control, condoms, everything but they don't listen ... A guy will say I want skin-to-skin and as a girl you are so emotionally involved ... I love him ... I can't say no ... he needs me ...You see things like that ... or you think he will see somebody who is better than me ...

Nana: Girls don't care about AIDS and all the diseases that are there, because no one uses condoms ... It is true ... It doesn't seem as if they love themselves, or think ...Some girls at my school [in the township] sleep around with a group of friends ...

These conversations opened up discussions about safe sex, particularly the issue of condom use, or rather non-use. All except one of the women I spoke to mentioned using condoms regularly. All daughters were aware that using condoms is one of the most effective ways of limiting the spread of HIV/AIDS and yet, as 26-year-old Nonhlanhla observed:

Nonhlannhla: Another thing that frustrates me are those people who make fun of those who are HIV positive because we don't like to check our status ... Like me I have never been for a blood test meanwhile I'm criticizing someone who's HIV positive. Also I have a boyfriend and we don't use condoms ... They lie when they say they use them ...

The topic of *funeral attendance* generated a lot of sighs as township daughters expressed their fatigue at the constancy of deaths taking place around them:

Hlengiwe: There was a time I was attending so many funerals in a month, weekend to weekend. We would ask ourselves, now who are we burying this weekend? ... Now it's casual to talk about funerals.

Nonhlanhla: Sometimes we used to attend funerals Saturday and Sunday …

I: Do people mention how the person died at the funeral?

Hlengiwe: No! No!

Nonhlanhla: I went to a funeral where they said that the person had died of AIDS.

Hlengiwe: No, I wasn't in the church when they said that … But now I remember you and [L] told me about it, what they said …

Nonhlanhla: Yes …her sister said that she died of AIDS, that whoever was dating her must go for a blood test. Lots of people were angry with her and they told her off … But I was glad because she had guts …

And an angry revelation by the 16-year-old friends:

Nana: Recently, [X] she was our age and she died from AIDS … You see her friends, it's like they didn't learn anything from her death … as if nothing has happened this year … they were her friends, they used to go out with her …

Malindi: They started talking about her behind her back …

Nana: At her funeral nobody was willing to stand up and say something … When she was alive they used to go out with her partying and stuff … When she was sick nobody was there for her, there were friends for now … You just have to live your life … me I am not here for my friends, this is my life …

I: Have you attended many funerals?

BOTH RESPOND: Yes, yes.

I: Does all this dying scare you?

Nana: It scares and it hurts … when you see young girls doing these wrong things

Malindi: There are so many beliefs about death … Right now I prefer to keep my mouth shut … Well I don't know what to believe in … When my time comes, so let it be … but it hurts …

When I asked whether people were not afraid of living within this atmosphere where death had

become such a norm, one of the young women quickly responded:

> *Zinhle: If we were, why are there so many young pregnant women?*

> *I: Yes, I want to talk about this pregnancy issue ... Why are there so many young pregnant women here ... What's going on?*

> *ALL [speaking at the same time]: Oh my God, we were talking about that the other day.*

> *Nonhlanhla: There is someone I know who fell pregnant and then she did deliver the baby but it passed away within three months ... Let me tell you something she's pregnant again and she is HIV positive, the baby was buried this year January ... There is an older child before this one and this is her third pregnancy.*

> *Hlengiwe: Some want to prove themselves, prove by having babies that they are not positive. When I was pregnant and I was at the clinic ... even nurses do not ask us to have blood tests so that they can give your baby AZT ... And we will all go for the tests but when the time comes for us to pick up the result ... No one will go [laughs] ... The nurse will tell us that, girls your results are back girls ... We will be like: Do they think we are crazy? I'm not interested to know my status.*

6.3.1 Defining Existence from a 'Position of Life' rather than 'Position of Death'

When the issue of pregnancy was raised, daughters immediately fused it with matters of HIV/AIDS. This shows the extent to which the *juxtaposition of death and life* has an ominous presence in township daughters' experiences of township life. Zimbabwean feminist Patricia McFadden (1992) argues that the infusion of HIV/AIDS in the daily lives of African women is once again forcing us to rethink unresolved questions around fertility, family planning, motherhood and womanhood in Africa. For example, she asks whether the resistance to contraception and the use of condoms is linked to a desire for children by both women and men, which goes beyond the cultural, economic and emotional reasons previously assumed. In cases where the woman and the man know their HIV-positive status, McFadden suggests that this lingering knowledge of a possible death may very well *generate an even more intense desire to perpetuate oneself through giving birth to a child.* Further, with the growing knowledge around preventative interventions such as AZT for pregnant women to decrease the chances of them

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passing the virus onto their unborn child, Hlengiwe suggested that even though the parents would eventually *die*, what remained important was that the children would *live*, illustrating what François Verges has noted among traumatised communities where "death is a strong immediate presence from birth" (2002: 608).

I also observed amongst young mothers who are aware of their positive status that the birth of a living child appears to symbolically 'inject' them with the desire to 'live and be alive'. In other words, it provides a way to structure their lives from a 'position of life' as opposed to a 'position of death', which being associated with the virus continues to suggest among township mothers and daughters popular imaginations. Ultimately this demonstrates the extent to which childbearing remains a deeply embedded socialised instinct for many women which, as McFadden (1992) has also argued, remains hard to relinquish even in a time of HIV/AIDS. In many ways this highlights what womanists have mentioned when they maintain that motherhood remains an important facet of African womanhood, which appears to have survived and not become wholly eclipsed by the specter of living with this virus.

Another factor we need to consider is that by engaging in everyday sexual relations from a position of 'not knowing' (as several daughters interviewed attested that they would never go for an HIV/AIDS test), giving birth to a healthy baby becomes physical evidence for all to bear witness that the mother and, by extension the father, are also physically healthy. Surprisingly, this was considered by young women as one of the most compelling reasons why someone would choose to fall pregnant during this time.

An area which also surfaced in conversations, and which needs more research attention, is the choice some daughters' are making to bear children with men who are openly known in the community to be HIV positive:

> *Mpumi: Here in Chesterville we don't talk about it and we don't care ... Lets say I'm dating someone who is HIV positive and I didn't know ... and people will tell me about his status. I will not dump him I will carry on and the sad part is I will fall pregnant by him ... You see things like that ... I don't know whether its poverty or just plain stupidity ... or you want to prove to others that what they are saying about him is not true .. I don't know what's going through their minds when this happens ...*

Hlengiwe: They date him like nothing is wrong ... The worst part is when they fall pregnant.

Nonhlanhla: The way I see it is maybe they want [to] see that they will survive after a baby ...

But perhaps Trask Haunani-Kay insight may provide the starting point to understand what is happening among these township daughters who choose to have relationships and engage in unprotected sexual relations, and finally have children with those they know are openly HIV positive. She suggests that rather than viewing moments of dangerous play with death within victim frameworks, we should opt to see them as expressions of a deep desire for freedom within an unjust social world as she writes-- "the *death instinct was not destructiveness for its own sake, but for the relief of tension. It was an expression of the eternal struggle against suffering and repression"* (1986:7, my emphases). While at the same time we need to always consider that in contexts where death has been part and parcel of the social experience of being-a-township subject, *dying from HIV/AIDS could be conceived as 'another way of dying'*[56] along a historical continuum of repeated intimate deaths- from colonialism to apartheid, to liberation. And in such social conditions where death has become the norm, as Jadran Mimica brilliantly outlines that-- "in this sense there is no death as such, but *only a myriad of often contingent ways of dying, of becoming dead and of being after death*" (1994: 216, my emphases).

6.3.2 Pregnancy out of Wedlock

Pregnancy is discussed in contradictory ways by both township mothers and daughters, where on the one hand it is viewed as a 'fall from grace', while on the other hand evidence of one's 'true' womanhood. For example Hlengiwe recounts of how she was compelled to lose her privileges in the church as a result of falling pregnant outside of wedlock:

Hlengiwe: In my church siyaqiniswa, which means you can now eat the sacrament and you became a full member of Wesile (church). Now you can wear a uniform that's blue and a tie. But once you have worn the uniform and you fall pregnant that's when you fall, uyawa, and you are not allowed to wear it again and you don't even eat the sacrament. You see me now I don't eat the sacrament…and I have to start all over again. I will attend a class for sacrament before I join the youth course. This uniform that we wear is for the youth. That is what I will have to do.

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[56] I would like to thank Prof Tinyiko Maluleke for pointing me to this insight.

But you must do this only if you are convinced that you won't lose it again...You lose your uniform firstly is by falling pregnant and then alcohol... but there are people who drink but they don't let somebody from church see them drunk. Things like that... the worst part is to have a baby outside marriage but now who would have married me without having a baby.

This practice of having children out of wedlock, who are then raised at the daughter's family home, was seen by mothers as a sign of moral breakdown and contributing to the further weakening of the township social and moral fabric. Ma Mkhize explained how this dominant practice of having children while still living at home is in fact a recent social phenomenon:

I: hay'bo auntie the whole of Chesterville is full of this...you know I used to think that this is our way of life, because that is all I grew up with around me here in Chesterville. Almost all the young girls have children still living at home...

Ma Mkhize: ...(laughs) and not just Chesterville but the whole country too

I: Oh this was something not there in past...

Ma Mkhize: no it was not there...we used to do like... we still maintain that a young woman must not give birth at home, that is why you hear people saying we must return to our customs...she must not just to go out with men anyhow, and if she does her sisters should advise her about sleeping with a man...A young girl must learn to close her legs...

I: I thought this is how we live as Africans.....I mean here in Chesterville a person can even have 4 children at home...

Ma Mkhize: this is a sign of things going morally wrong...

I: I mean everyone here...everyone around me seems to have children this way, they all have children while living at home

Ma Mkhize: There is no problem in giving birth, but just as we did a person must first get married. Even if the marriage fails, you must still get married first. Bride price was paid for me.

While Ntokozo also added:

Ntokozo: Yes to some extent people have tried to respect the culture but time has changed things. When we were growing up, we learnt that one should only have a child once she has entered her

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matrimonial home. We had respect for the elders and we lived by their rules...But these days young girls have become the most vulnerable to today's harsh economic situations, as they become single mothers then they struggle to take care of their children and therefore end up dumping these kids with their grandparents denying their responsibility for their actions. Personally I think if you decided to have a child you should learn to carry your own burden and act more responsibly about your choices...

However, at the same time township mothers feel helpless in changing a social practice they see as undesirable as Phumzile, mother of a 23 year old says in resignation:

I: The young generation and pregnancy, how do you view it?

Phumzile: These days, getting pregnant is like a fashion with these girls...they are not ashamed. I was so ashamed and would hide it as much as possible because people used to laugh at me... even the nurses who delivered my baby were all on my throat...but now they claim to have "rights"...even as a parent I am afraid to discipline my own child as I fear being taken to court.

However, Carolyn Cooper whose work is located amongst the Jamaican poor alerts us that we need to consider that "the high level of teenage pregnancy and childbirth among working-class girls in Jamaica and the Diaspora is probably matched by the high level of teenage pregnancy and abortion among middle-class girls. Class privilege, which allows varying access to abortion as a moral and economic option, masks the similarity between the sexual practices of working class girls and middle-class girls. Many sexually active middle-class girls are protected from the consequences of their actions in ways that are not usually available to working-class girls" (2004: 144). Cooper's observations are also vividly captured in Ntokozo's narration about when she fell pregnant for the second time:

I: The issue of abortion I hear most young people do in the townships, did you ever considered it?

Ntokozo: No, I never, it never crossed my mind although my second came when I wasn't ready for it. I pulled through to the end. I remember actually running away from home.

I: Why did you have to run?

Ntokozo: I knew my parent would be furious, but when I came back I was ready for anything. They were shocked, but later they accepted...

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And as we see from Hlengiwe's recollection that despite the stigma attached to pregnancy out of wedlock, "folk wisdom acknowledges the fact that the very mother who laments the fall of her daughter into premature motherhood, especially if this pregnancy repeats the narrative of her own sexual history, is often seduced into joyous acceptance of the catastrophe when she sees the beautiful child that results" (Cooper 2004: 143).

6.3.3 Formulating Intimate Relationships from a Position of 'Not Knowing'

Condom use continues to be the cornerstone of state HIV prevention strategies. While the National Department of Health has reported a drop in HIV/AIDS incidence amongst youth in South Africa, it has also reported an increase in infection amongst the older age groups, especially married couples. A consistent finding that studies continue to report is that people who have been in relationships for longer periods of time use condoms less frequently than those who have been in relationships for shorter periods (Rivers and Aggleton 1999), a social reality echoed by Dudu:

> *I mean really you get so comfortable in your relationship with your boyfriend that after two or three months … Hawu! The condom is out …*

Low frequency in condom use is thus also intricately linked to intimacy issues of love and trust between partners, which many daughters are reluctant to jeopardize. However, what complicates these notions of intimacy is that many of these township daughters often have a sense that even though they are choosing to have sex with their partners 'skin-to-skin', they remain aware that their partner may have other sexual partners. This normative acceptance of multiple male partnering within heterosexual relationships appears to be a deeply woven narrative within township women's subjectivities. In one of my interviews with Ma Mkhize we discussed at length this issue of multiple partnering and its potent dangers in a time of HIV/AIDS:

> *I: you remind me of the story of Umjondolo you told me about…the one who had his girlfriend with whom he had a child with… then the next thing he has another girlfriend, whose boyfriend is in jail… and now how many people are there, the married one, the one in jail and all those. If one of them has the virus, then all of them get infected, this is how it kills us. Now when the other one comes from jail, she will most likely also sleep with him...*

Ma Mkhize: and she will not stop with the new boyfriend, even when the old one is back.

I: yes, that's how it kills us, and then rubbers are not used and then the married one, what does she get from Umjondolo?

Ma Mkhize: well, they marry too young these girls, she from that side eTsimbini, they come here to hide...

I: maybe with him being in prison, she is lonely and passing time by sleeping with other young men.

Ma Mkhize: how do you alleviate your loneliness using your body?

I: maybe there is something she will get.

Ma Mkhize: from Umjondolo? These girls enjoy being pregnant like these young women who accept love proposals whilst they are drunk. They have to be reminded the next day, that's why it's not good for girls to drink.

This acceptance of multiple partnering especially for men tends to be mediated by a combination of a choice 'not to know', a form of 'denial', or to consider 'knowing as poisonous'. As Nonhlanhla explained:

Another thing is that when you have a boyfriend who lives here in Chesterville ... Chesterville is small, we all know each other and boys are naughty ... let's say he lives here in Road 12 and I will be proudly walking with him and you don't know that maybe in the morning he was with another girlfriend ... and people will tell you because this is Chesterville and Chesterville is small. They will tell you that in the morning -- there was a girl with him ... and I will be aware when I come and see him ... it is better if he lives far from me because I will not know if he has another girl...he must make sure whatever he is doing wrong, nobody sees him...

In this specific case the issue is then not whether he has several partners, but the humiliation and loss of dignity and respect that will be suffered in visibly knowing he has other women. One of the keys to maintaining viable intimacies revolved around formulating discreet practices between sexually intimate partners. Therefore spending shared moments and experiences together and also allowing the distancing of specific knowledge of other possible partners, *defines this experience of intimacy* for township daughters. These two positions are not necessarily

experienced as conflictual, but rather as a mode of experiencing intimacy where multiple male partnering has for a long time been a visible and practiced norm.

It would be short-sighted to frame this notion of intimacy as 'irrational' or simply as a form of denial by township daughters. In some ways township daughters are also reflecting back the kinds of intimate relationships that are deemed acceptable in their communities. As many of them tried to make clear to me, this was not a partnering practice that they did not challenge within their own intimate relationships. Rather, what they tried to highlight was that, given the contexts in which their subjectivities were being formulated, which amongst other things was characterised by material lack, an acceptance of multiple partnering for men and, in more hidden ways, multiple partnering for women, daily hustling and survival, they were also enacting survival strategies that might potentially transcend these very social environments that were structured to numb and make them not *feel—that is be human*. Afterall, even within a context of HIV/AIDS we must not lose sight of the *underlying layers shaping intimacies*, and that these relationships are also being shaped by sexual desire, attraction and a hunger for closeness. Even within these existentially and economically depressed conditions, young women relate how they will leave relationships where they feel they are not receiving the emotional and material necessities they require.

To illustrate these points, Nelisiwe explained in length how for years she had been in a relationship with a man who 'kept' two women and that she had recently dropped this long-term boyfriend after he had a second baby with the publicly 'known' mother of his children. She herself had a baby at 16 with a man she was no longer having a relationship with, and who is currently in jail for '*ukuphanta*', house-breaking in this case. However, she did not perceive herself to be the 'other woman' who was a victim and, in fact, she jokingly related that polygamy, '*isithembu*', was still very much alive in urban townships. She explained that what was really at stake in one's choice of a man was whether he was able to fulfill his emotional and material obligations to both women. It seemed clear to her that with the second child on the way, her man would be unable to fulfill his emotional and material obligations to her, so this was good evidence of why she should leave him.

Other daughters admitted to having men on the side, specifically for purposes of '*ukuphanta*'

that is, to survive each day, as the majority of them were without formal employment. When asked if condoms were ever used, all the daughters interviewed, except one, said they were not used, and that men desired 'skin-to-skin'. Some women themselves openly expressed their own discomfort with noisy and intrusive condoms, and their preference for 'skin-to-skin' sexual exchange. Shockingly, Christine Glover-Walton (2001) in her study on HIV/AIDS and condom use in the Eastern Cape found that the best predictor of condom use was the number of people one knew who had died of AIDS. However, what was disturbing was that condom use was higher among those who knew four or fewer people who had died from AIDS, than it was among those who knew more than four. To me this demonstrates a chilling illustration of how we come to normalise even living in the midst of death.

Ma Mkhize lamented how township daughters were ignoring the publically distributed knowledge on the danger of the virus and were seemingly blindly contracting HIV/AIDs:

> *Ma Mkhize: the way I see it, it's much worse, this thing is affecting even women, and wives…you have this situation where the man is coming with this thing. He comes to leave this thing with her...AIDS. Yes, we have died too much because of this thing. I look at these ones who are jollying and I can see that this person doesn't have an idea about what there are doing. You see right now if you say you are playing around, you are hustling for money-uphanta imali…You just go everywhere having sex, it's like the virus is sending you-iyona ekuthumayo…*

A focus on the local and subjective forces does not mean that global forces at work in communities are necessarily hidden. In fact, my interactions with township daughters highlights precisely how far-reaching national and global economic policies were in penetrating and *transforming sociality and inter-subjectivity between members of poor communities*. In other words, these national state and global forces of neo-liberal economic policies were also crucially shaping strategies for survival, and loosening and creating 'new' meanings around viable heterosexual relationships. For example, Nonhlanhla told me upfront how important it was to have a man with cash, because everybody in the household was unemployed. This meant that she relied on one of her boyfriends to supply her with money to purchase an electricity card. This system of purchasing electricity upfront is a recent one in South Africa and coincides with the present government's economic policy on Growth, Employment and Redistribution (GEAR), which prioritizes the privatization of basic services. Recently, members of the Electricity and

Water Campaign were arrested for protests against state plans to privatise water in South Africa's poor urban communities. Therefore these narrations also demonstrate the ways in which the forces of changing political economies not only affect the structural elements of township daughters lives, but even *enter their subjective constructions and strategies of (sexual) intimacy*. Finally, what these young women's narrations also force us to realise is that these are also recollections that attempt to map out ways of *loving in a time when social meanings are collapsing and/or in crisis*. And in attempts to restore some notion of order and continuity, how daughters also actively reassert their own meanings to these existential dilemmas.

6.4. "Sihlezi for Years": Unemployment and "Sitting Around"

The majority of daughters I interviewed came from households where most family members were unemployed, and hence the household relied in one way or another on government grants such as pensions and/or child support, the income from mothers' low paying jobs and 'ukuphatha'-hussling, for economic survival. Township daughters frustratingly outlined their problems around this issue:

> *Hlengiwe: Oh at home nobody is working…but my sister is helping us and it's not the same...*
>
> *I: I wasn't aware that there are so many people who are not working…yes it's there at the back of my mind…but there are so many.*
>
> *Zinhle: Hey! There are a lot you know. It's not as if we are not doing anything about it…*
>
> *Hlengiwe: Hawe ma you see me I don't want to sit... now I wish I could go back to school. Hay'bo! I'm tired now...*
>
> *Zinhle: That's me also...*

While Ntokozo explained:

> *I: How do you survive?*
>
> *Ntokozo: I get paid through grants and I'm still staying with my child and we are managing.*

Further, unemployed township daughters (except for two, one who worked as a waitress and the other a seamstress in a clothing factory), described themselves as 'sitting' (sihlezi). This notion of 'we are sitting' is a widespread one and I encountered it on several occasions. In other words, in everyday talk young people did not describe themselves as unemployed when you enquired on what they are currently doing, but rather as 'we are 'sitting'. They will also tell you that the phenomenon of 'sitting' is very widespread and a serious challenge for many urban youth in African townships and that in fact many of them have been 'sitting around' for years. While conducting this research, many township daughters seeing me at home and carrying out the rituals of being at home, approached me and asked me whether I was also 'sitting' this year. This 'idling' and 'passing the day' through everyday rituals revolving around cleaning and caring for children seems remotely linked to the act of seeking employment. However, others will be quick to point out that even though they are 'sitting', they do periodically go out and look for work. However, they will just as quickly add that given the racist employment practices of KwaZulu-Natal, which in their view continued to favor Indians and 'coloureds' for work, it was hopeless to find a descent job.

The concept of 'ukuhlala' or 'sitting' or 'idling' then seems to contain within its meaning a sense of resignation of not finding good employment which adds to a generalized sense of hopelessness to their lives in general. I would even add that this metaphor of 'sitting', of 'immobility', a sort of symbolic amputation, is how township daughters also express their embodied pain and suffering of another type of displacement. I say this because as phenomenologist Setha Low has shown, "metaphors can provide flexible, creative, and strategic language for the expression of suffering" (1994). '*Sihlezi for years',* we have been sitting for years, as *embodied distress* of one's expectation to find employment as a young person being prematurely terminated, is passively experienced by township daughters' as body sensations (Low 1994). In this way these "body metaphors provide a possible solution for the expression of lived experience that can communicate bodily sensation, as well as social, cultural and political meaning" (Low 1994: 143), for township daughters.

At this moment the labour politics of KwaZulu- Natal are important to highlight. As indicated by township daughters who were 'sitting around', they pointed out that seeking work in

KwaZulu Natal was unlike other provinces, as the Indian and 'coloured' communities tended to continue to be privileged in employment preferences. This of course forms part of the remnants of apartheid ideology which privileged opportunities for Indians and 'coloureds', over Africans to enter the informal and formal job markets. There was an overall feeling of injustice as youth expressed that the job market only offered jobs to Indians and 'coloureds', and very rarely to Africans, sentiments echoed in the controversial and now banned song, 'Amandiya' by well known playwright Mbongeni Ngema. One woman expressed her anger and betrayal saying that she had not voted in the last general elections because she felt the ANC supported this status quo, in order to secure Indian financial support and votes in KwaZulu-Natal. If you were lucky to find 'something', youth would add that you had to put up with undignified treatment and bad pay. That is, if they had not already hired a 'kwere-kwere[57]' in your place, as they explained. The politics of 'race', unfair labour practices, complex expressions of xenophobia and what was felt to be a deeply racist employment context appeared strongly in young women's narrations.

Interestingly this *waiting without hope,* described by township daughters*,* bears striking similarities with the existential hopelessness that has been described by Lisa Malkki (1995) and Michael Jackson (2005) of youth experiences in refugee camps in Tanzania and Sierra Leone respectively. But perhaps this should not surprise us given that townships were constructed very much along the logics of refugee camps, which was essentially to limit and restrict its inhabitants. Jackson (205:147) found in the encounters and conversations he had with refugees in Freetown, Sierra Leone in the wake of the country's decade long civil war that,

> It was this that made their immobility so painful, for if there is one thing that reduces a person to nothingness it is *waiting without hope…that is what they suffered. This was their pain* (2005: 147, my emphases).

And within this existential condition of hopelessness where the power to act and to work is violently curtailed and where "time is no longer experienced as a future, a forthcoming" (Bourdieu 2000: xxii-xxiii), a demoralised frame of mind takes shape. And similarly to those

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[57] A deregotary term which refers to dark skinned Africans from other parts of the African continent. Interestingly this term tends to exclude those Africans who are light skinned from countries sych as Egypt, Tunisia and Morrocco. Thanks to Thando Mgqolozana for pointing me to consinder the issue of skin colour in my explanation of 'kwere-kwere'.

youths in refugee camps that Jackson describes, despite this sense of a bleak future, township daughters do attempt to carve out some area of personal autonomy for themselves, no matter how trivial, where they can exercise some measure of independent choices. However, Jackson also observed in these refugee youths that "the more rigid and impersonal the structure within which they are forced to live, the more likely they will exercise this choice in ways which challenge the structure" (2005: 192). Sadly some of the choices that township daughters make in a social world "that gives nothing in return," (Jackson 2005: xv) are destructive as the following interview excerpts illustrate.

> I: When did you start drinking and why?

> Phumzile: I started drinking wine occasionally, during Christmas then it became a habit during weekends then it was full time when the reason then was because we had nothing better to do we were not working as one major reason we started drinking. We were drinking mainly with friends, which was really nice.

> I: So when did you start working?

> Phumzile: I once worked at the Red Cross that was in 1976 to 1977 as a voluntary worker. Our main benefits were food and blankets which we use to steal. I was a very naughty girl when I was growing up and never too serious. When my grandmother passed away, this was when I started to see the realities of life. I was more serious or at least tried to be serious. At this point in time all my siblings had become shoplifters, because hunger had struck us a great deal. We ate vegetables for weeks and weeks...it was terrible. But my grandmother, gogo was against the shoplifting and she tried her best to put food on our table. At times we would eat maize, phutu and beans. Meat had become our best meal served only on Sunday's. Things however improved when an aunt we were staying with started working. She helped us a great deal.

> I: And where did the shoplifters end up?

> Phumzile: There were obviously in and out of prison. In 1988 after some serious thinking I decided to go back to school.

While Dudu and her friends recounted:

However, although the idea of 'ukuhlala' is strongly linked to the incapacity to move (a symbolic sense of amputation) and a lack of creativity and stimulation in one's social environment ('the place with no life'), individuals are mobile but it is within routinised socio-cultural parameters. For example, when I asked groups of young women to describe what a day of 'sitting around' involved, generally they would describe the following daily rhythms-- the day began with doing household chores which included cleaning, handwashing clothes, and taking care of babies or smaller children who had not started attending school; bathing and getting dressed would follow around midday; after cleaning the house and bodies, it was time to sit outside one's small yard waiting for friends to visit, or going visiting yourself where 'catching up' on the latest news and strategizing around the weekend usually occurred; as the afternoon approached and others were coming from work, this signaled a time to start preparing the evening meal; and finally the evenings were reserved for watching favourite television dramas and visits from lovers.

Two unemployed township daughters Nonhlanhla and Hlengiwe share these routinised movements that instill some type of order, predictability and control in their everyday lives as follows:

Nonhlanhla: When you work up in the morning you clean, you do the laundry and you watch all the morning television programs because you don't do washing everyday you see...

Zinhle: You end up cleaning the whole house washing windows, doing the things you never used to do because you are not doing anything...

Hlengiwe: Hey it true. Me it's been a year now of doing nothing...I was counting. I wake up in the morning bath my baby then myself, after that I feed him maybe I start cleaning around 10 - 11... that's when I start cleaning...and the maybe around 2-3 I'm finished then eh I sit after that and its back to the baby...I sit with my friends...some attend school and I see then after they come back when they come to check up on me we talk about stupid things like- hey have you seen that

guy!! Nothing serious. If my friends are writing exams I tell them that they should go and study...I don't lie about that...I tell them don't focus on us and go and study...and they must not worry themselves about us, they must go and we will still be waiting for them here...

And township daughters are aware that not being able to contribute to the running of the household can result in you losing your self-respect and dignity. As Ntokozo explains:

*Ntokozo: If you are not working people have a tendency of looking down on you. So you do everything in your power to satisfy your family's needs and wants...**by whatever means to earn some respect*** (my emphases).

Finally, there is also the factor that Chesterville being one of the poorer urban ghettoes in KwaZulu-Natal, the presence and visibility of the unemployed is historically part of what has defined this community. I often comment to my family when I am home how I lose sense of 'working-time', because I am always surrounded by people without formal work. Unemployment, in other words, has become part of the social fabric and sense of being a part of this community. Perhaps, it would be strange and shocking to many if this township were suddenly visibly quiet during the day as many had left for work. To be unemployed, or is it to 'sit around' and 'idle' does not necessarily place you within the category of 'abnormal', since there are many others who are in your exact situation. In the township context we must always take into consideration that the self employed, especially women running shebeens, selling food, selling marijuana or dagga, are also subsumed under this term 'unemployed'.

6.5 "Always working"

Although most daughters were unemployed, township mothers on the other hand were engaged in low-paying formal employment as domestic workers, tea-ladies, cleaners and factory workers. As alluded to earlier, as a result of *forever working* mothers consistently related how their *bodies* were constantly fatigued which manifested in aching arms, backs, feet and knees.

Ma Mkhize: I had a few odd jobs here in Chesterville. I used to make tea at the local clinic, and we used to clean floors. I also found another odd job of fitting pipes. There were white people who were fitting new pipes here in Chesterville and their contract office was just near the local

church. I made tea for the white people and worked there... After that work stopped and that's when I found work with X...

Ma Dlamini: I first worked as a domestic worker, working for this Portuguese family which was not easy. I was just doing it for the money although I wasn't getting paid much...it was in Syringa road off Rear road...In 1962 I had my first child T. I raised him and when he was five I started working for this German textile industry a job that my uncle's son had secured for me. This was in 1967 and I worked there for a long time plus-minus 31 years...Things were not that simple either in this industry we would work long hard hour's...morning, afternoon and night using small globes to sew and get our work done. Basically, we worked in shifts which we exchanged from time to time.

I: How many shifts did you work?

Ma Dlamini: We would work three shifts per day which we exchanged...some will call it a day and we would come in and continue from where they left. Basically, what we were doing is sewing clothes and weaving.

I: What else would you do to get some income besides going to work?

Ma Dlamini: Well, myself at the time I was working I never used to sell anything, I used to get most of my money which I did save for stokvels and those savings would contribute to the December holidays...I would treat the children with gifts and food...My mother also used to sell vegetables which she got from her vegetables garden...

Phumzile: Well I used to sell beer...I actually had a shebeen (selling locally brewed beer at home) at home. It did help us because business was good and I was able to buy clothes, food and pay bills like for electricity. It was paying but it was tiring because of the long odd hours we had to work, so I stopped.

Other ways of 'getting by' for township mothers included informal economic strategies such as selling clothes, cigarettes, ice-lollies and sweets to children, baking cakes for funerals, selling

liquor, selling ganja, selling vetkoeks and polony, selling vegetables, babysitting and selling hot meals near taxi ranks.

It is this experience, constituted by a combination of township mothers' full time low-paying jobs coupled with finding informal income-generating practices to get extra cash, while still maintaining the household and disciplining and caring for children, which resulted in a situation where they were *forever working*. This left them with very little time for rest and rejuvenation. It is important to highlight that these embodied stresses experienced by township mothers in their everyday lives, quickly dispel those mythical accounts of African women as forever strong and resilient, no matter the harshness of the conditions they must live under. These false notions of African women are based on assumptions that--"we are somehow earthly mother goddess who has built –in capacities to deal with all manner of hardships without breaking down, physically or mentally (hooks 1993:70). And as bell hooks points out that it is the perpetuation of such myths that further contribute to limited insights about African mothers' and daughters' suffering and lives in general. This is the reason why for many township mothers, religion and lived African spiritualities have provided a much needed emotional valve to purge the frustrations and pains of living such harsh lives. This is what Ma Mkhize expressed about her love of being part of the Zionist[58] church in her community:

> *I: what is it about these churches of yours that you love so much?*

> *Ma Mkhize: Zion?*

> *I: Yes, what is it that you get from these churches?*

> *Ma Mkhize: freedom...*

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[58]Zionist Churches are a group of Christian denominations that sprang from the Christian Catholic Apostolic Church in Zion, Illinois. The Zionist Churches proliferated throughout southern Africa, and became African Independent Churches. Research in 1996 suggested that 40% of all black South Africans belonged to a Zionist church. Zionist churches are characterised by the following features:Use of faith-healing and revelation through dreams; "Jordan" baptism, in rivers; Ritual garments, often mostly white, and prophetic staffs; Food taboos, such as not eating pork; Some smaller denominations worship in the open air, and practise "wheel" dances—dancing in circles, sometimes to the beat of drums; Some denominations accept polygamy; Some denominations show syncretic mixing of Christian and traditional African religious beliefs (in http://www.wikipedia.org/wiki/zionist_churches; accessed on 10 February 2011).

6.6 Trans- and Intergenerational struggles

"The intergenerational connections on which the flow of everyday life is premised were themselves destroyed under the policies of apartheid" (Ramphele 2000: 8).

Trans and inter-generational struggles surfaced in the narrations about a crisis in parental authority, overburdened grandmothers', and tensions between young women.

6.6.1 Crisis of parental authority

How do we begin to explain the pain that mothers experience imbedded in the crisis of parental authority that most of them feel particularly disempowered to transform? As part of understanding generational ruptures and continuities, I also interviewed some mothers and grandmothers of Chesterville Township. One sentiment that they all shared was that children's authority was fast superseding parental authority. It is reasonable to suggest that part of the explanation of this parental authority breakdown can be traced to our recent history of intergenerational betrayal, another topic which has been insufficiently explored in our social studies. During the 1970's a radical transformation, which was to be solidified during the 1980's period of political unrest, occurred in township homes. Youth defied their parent's authority, particularly their fathers, who were seen as colluding with the apartheid state through passive acceptance. Hjalte Tin puts forward the argument that the position of the patriarch in townships has always been a tentative one as, "he was split between demands made on him by his radical children and by the repressive state, and many children lost respect for what they saw as the pitiful survival strategies of their fathers; avoiding the hassle of the overcrowded house, drinking beer in some shebeen after work and leaving the family to its own devises" (2001: 14). It was these myriad of entrapments which opened up the possibilities for transgenerational conflicts. Therefore, in June 1976, youth not only rebelled in the township's streets, but also against patriarchy in its current form in their homes, causing a violent reconfiguration of power and

authority structures within township families. However, the erosion of patriarchal power particularly in urban families could be argued to have been more a carefully managed myth, since both urban and rural women were the ones increasingly running households. Mamphele Ramphele puts this succinctly when she observes that African women have to "tread a fine line between affirming the manhood of their men-folk and supporting themselves and their children. The myth of the man as supporter, protector, provider and decision-maker were carefully nurtured in an attempt to protect the family and community from ethical breakdown" (2000: 115).

Lingering transgenerational struggles over issues of morality, politics, history and survival were then appropriated by youth as sites for open confrontation with parents. These private battles which became public expressions continued into the 1980's with traces remaining to this day. Of course, this reorganisation of the family structure meant that women's role as nurturers was further extended to being principal providers and disciplinarians, which as highlighted continues to heavily burden township mothers.

> *Gogo Zondi: things are very bad because our children have lost respect...they think that they are above the older people. When you try to advise the young people they tell you that- Gogo but that's old fashion...*

> *I: When you advise them, you advise them about what? Gogo Zondi: That when they are going that must tell you where they are going. These youngsters do not tell the older person. Instead they tell their younger sisters and it's the young ones who tell you were she went. There is a lack of respect and that is not right. They should say how long they will be staying wherever they are going...sometimes they lie and say two days meanwhile its two months...*

> *I: You don't say! They just stay there without worrying about anything? Then what do you do? After they come back after two weeks, do you shout at them or chase them away?*

> *Gogo Zondi: You cannot do anything because if you hit them they will take to court these days. Children have rights.., During my day we didn't have any rights at all. You see at home at Lamontville the young ones used to cause so much trouble. They do this because they are saying that this is how things are done*

> *.I: Are these rights above the older people of today?*

Gogo Zondi: Yes, even teachers cannot discipline a child because these children will take you to court. As a parent you now cannot discipline your own child even if she has done something wrong. Now tell me how are they going to respect us? These children are even killers now

.I: Where do you think this come from? Maybe they feel that since they think they fought for freedom they deserve these rights.

Gogo Zondi: As adult we didn't say that government should give all these rights, children should be under their parents.

I: But what exactly do you do because you have to live with them...do you just keep quite when they do wrong?

Gogo Zondi: Yes, if she must die well so let it be. There is a saying that goes- isosha lifela emsebenzini walo, a soldier dies for its own work! It is useless to talk to these youngsters about what right and wrong. I know that friends are also bad influence. Girls of today are behaving worse than boys...

As Gogo Zondi highlights it is interesting how after apartheid, mothers are quick to point out that the parental authority crisis can be directly attributed to the emerging rights-based culture, or 'Mandela's rights' as they call it. One of the mothers recounted an incident of how her granddaughter had laid charges against her daughter (the teenager's mother) for abuse. The grandmother, deeply disturbed by the incident, asked how the mother was meant to discipline her daughter who used these newly instituted laws to legitimise her loose moral practices of sleeping around with different men, and often away from home for several days. Afterall, she reasoned, she was 16 years old there were diseases such as AIDS out there, and afterall it remained the responsibility of the parent to discipline an uncontrollable daughter. Such situations, they were quick to point out, complicate child–parent social interactions and disrupt systems of authority in already fragile homes, where most mothers work low paying and unsatisfying jobs returning home late in the evening, often already tired. These 'rights', as some of the mothers complained, were weakening parental authority and complicating social relations in their families, where their basic expectations as parents to discipline their children and be respected by them, was being eroded. For these single mothers, reproducing sustainable families was becoming almost impossible because establishing transgenerational connections was seen as being undermined by

the advent of a 'right based' society in South Africa. In other words, according to the views of these township mothers, children were seen as increasingly running households and usurping more and more power within the household, making it difficult to fulfill parental duties. As 88 year Gogo Zondi skeptically acknowledged:

> *Gogo Zondi: There is no more respect in our children. Those who have respectful children, should go on their knees and be thankful as this is rare.*

The idea of disciplining other children within the community, as encouraged in the concept of 'ubuntu', was seen as a thing of the fading past. Grandmothers and mothers complained that disciplining a child that was not from your immediate family was not worth it any longer, as you were likely to be met with responses such as –*ungubani*? 'who are you?*' Unani*? 'what do you have?*' or, 'isikathi sethu manje, asazilutho ngesenu!'* 'It's our time now, we know nothing about yours!' However, one of the mothers I spoke to did point out that these new laws introduced under the new democracy were not altogether negative, as she had witnessed many cases of abusive parents in the township. However, she still maintained that the majority of township daughters (as it tended to be them who used or rather manipulated these laws she said), used them to disempower parents so they could live life as they wished. She then continued to cite examples of young girls she knew who had dropped out of school and were shacking up with boyfriends at a very young age. Township mothers they all seemed to agree, had lost authority and power and the only thing to do was to 'watch', which to some extent can be seen as signaling a loss of hope and faith in this generation.

6.6.2 Overburdened grandmothers

Transgenerational struggles between township mothers and daughters were also coloured by the experience of many daughters reporting that they had been raised by their grandmothers and often found themselves emotionally disconnected from their birth mothers. This trend of the importance of grandmothers is a global trend that Astrid Stuckelberger has observed as follows,

> Many grandparents find themselves becoming the sole providers of care for their grandchildren. One reason being the migration of the middle generation to urban areas to work. These "skip-generation" families are fund in all regions of the world. Another reason for the increase in number of children living in households headed only by grandparents can be attributed to trends in several factors (divorce, HIV/AIDS, drug abuse and child abuse) (2005: 75).

As daughter of Chesterville Ntokozo illustrates, this is a growing trend in her own community:

> *Ntokozo: We are 8 in our family, 2 boys and 6 girls. This is how many children she gave birth to. We all grew up together, with our mother and grandmother, gogo, her mother. We grew up and never got to know much about our father because our mother kept him a secret. Well anyway I only got to know about him when I was in secondary school. Anyway we grew up calling our gogo, Ma, because she was the one who was always there, guiding us as we were growing up...*

> *I: Like B, she was brought up by her gogo since she was a baby...*

> *Ntokozo: Yes, that's how we grew up. Another thing is that my parents were drunkards, they really drank beer seriously...even my grandmother used to drink. I went to junior school for my primary education. I remember gogo was like the one who registered me there. We were many children and things were tough but she did try her best to educate all of us.*

However, despite these negative mother-daughter experiences daughters still continued to yearn for their mothers' acceptance and closeness:

> *Ntokozo: it was hard having a mother who was a drunkard. She would come home drunk throw herself on the floor and swear at all of us...**but we adjusted and got used to the situation**. Despite all this she was still my mother...(own emphases)*

6.6.3 Tensions between township daughters

Finally, many studies that focus on the townships tend to collapse all young women into a homogenous entity. What is distinctive in these interviews is the extent to which young women make their own distinctions between each other, often based along lines of moral conduct. Upon hearing I was going to interview a group of women who were drinkers and smokers, this is what this group of friends had to say:

> *Hlengiwe: Oh my God Stu what will people say if they see you with them?*

These township daughters considered themselves as more decent than these 'others' whom they referred to as 'thugs'. As they explained what they preferred:

> *Zinhle: Yes we do our own thing...*

Nonhlanhla: You can't actually compare us with S and D...seeing you with them we're like-Hawu Stu what is going on...To been seen with them...Eish...

Hlengiwe: Even them...they see us differently...Things like that...Oh... I believe they say that we are into ourselves, and we think that we are better than them...But us too...we see them as feraggies (thugs). Exactly...They see themselves as clever people...So that's how it is...We also see ourselves as cleverer than them...

Nonhlanhla: Some of them believe that if you don't drink you are stupid and that there' something wrong with you. But we do go out... I don't want to lie...But you won't find any alcohol. Nobody drinks among my friends. We don't waste too...you buy 2 liters of Coke...we drink and keep it.

While the group of daughters who are known to openly drink and smoke narrated the following at different points in their interview:

Sbongile: I mean these same women who took down at us Stu, you find that this person has 3 children and they have had them with different men, the person is not working and they know that the children's father can't support them.... But us if we go, wash, get dressed and look good and go to clubs....We can do this and get dressed and go to clubs... and then when they get left behind with their 3 children and they look at their situation and they see that they can't do like us... you see all of this... it creates hatred.

Dudu: Here people see us as if we are people who have no morals.... But we are cleaver than those who stay at home... because we are exposed to all kinds of different people.... You know there's something you don't understand.... We can even sit with people who are big heavies (influential and /or rich).

Dudu: Well, me and my friend we are told we are insolent / rude... but this is who we are... I mean people will hate you for so many things... But I always tell my friends-- you know what my friend, it's because they don't know how to praise us (laughs)... because they wish they could be with us... (laughter) ...no.. I mean we are not going out with anyone's man.... There's no one we are abusing or taking away their possession... we do not take anyone's boyfriend... we just live our lives... and then people have a problem.. it's because they wish they had enough courage to do what we do. But they don't....

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I: What about the drinking and smoking... what does...

All at different times: 'We don't care'.. 'Us, we just don't care what others say about us'..

They explained:

Sbongile: The thing is we are not fakes...others may look down on us and say –eish but those women, but when you sit down and talk about us to them (men), he may not say anything.... But I'll tell you that he realizes that he's sitting with genuine people and they're good company.

I: What kind of people are fakes?

Dudu: It's a person who doesn't want to live their true life... Stu, it's this person who is worried what others will say-- Oh , what will so and so say and all that stuff... that time you will find that this very person is more rude than anything you know... and when they are in front of other people they want to project this image... they don't want to relax, they don't want to act themselves... suddenly they are anxious-when other people arrive they don't want them to know they drink beer... This is the thing, when we don't have money we drink our beer... not that we don't drink other things....I mean on good days we drink whisky and all other nice things.... And then on bad days we know that we have limited money and beer will take us where we want to go (laughter)... so now these (fakes) will be sitting with their cans of Coke in the corner... hiding the kind of life we all know they live... they hide the life they are.... Like I see you... and then I say to my friends--No, I don't want her to know that I smoke... no, no, please don't give me, don't give me.. then I buy a cooldrink, even though I came to drink!

Dudu: Haai no... I had this friend she was a fake with a capital F.

Interestingly, all these young women who were popularly known to be 'without morals' and 'thugs' by their peers, had this to say when I asked them to describe themselves:

Dudu: I am a survivor... I can stand for my own things even when they are really bad.... I am a person who can adapt anywhere, with anyone...

Sbongile: I am a person who does things to please herself. What other people think is not my concern

Zandile: What can I say...in my life I've always said I will live the life I want to live. Even if another person passes judgment and looks down at me – it's the same thing.... I ask myself- what will this person do for me...

The ways that township daughters differentiated between each other ranged from aesthetic to moral sensibilities--dress styles, to whether one drank or smoked, visited local shebeens and dagga-houses, or went to church, to more profound concerns such as one's general life attitude. These strong moral overtones regarding how daughters of the township 'ought' to be living, or what it meant to be an 'authentic' township subject, were clearly heavily contested by township daughters.

6.7 Conclusion: And how did Township Mothers and Daughters endure this Tapestry of Suffering? A lay township womanist theorises…

I: Even with all the strength women have surely at times...the body just gives up and says I have had enough of this suffering...Enough...when will all this suffering end...

Ma Mkhize: the minute you think of that is the minute you fall on the ground and everything goes wrong...What you say is -it's alright, God will protect me. Isn't it he was the one who said- I will not give you a burden that is more than you can handle.

I: that's life...

Ma Mkhize: yes....There are some bananas out there, when they are ripe I will mash them and eat them with bread...and wild spinach, imfino, and now if I can get hold of the seeds for green beans...I have now started growing tomatoes..All that will be left is oil and onions...

I: let us leave it here for today. But there is one more question I would like to ask you which is-- what would you tell a person who doesn't know you, what makes you endure each day?

Ma Mkhize: ummm I would say I live from all the goodness I receive in my life...if I get tea, maize and bread...And the small jobs...

I: auntie, tell me with all these experiences what is that when you look around and there is no bread, what gives you hope that things will be alright? Honestly I would not know how to continue...Really!

Ma Mkhize (laughs lightly) it's like I had to tell myself that the time I have been given is a difficult one, and I shouldn't always focus on the fact that my life is hard. I wouldn't be able to cope with such a thing...

I: yes people have suffered, how did you manage to survive all those things? Was it church? Was it support from others?

Ma Mkhize: yes, it's just that at that time, at that moment church helped me to forget, when you come back from a sermon. When you return you forget some of the things...

I: it's too much...

Ma Mkhize: like right now I don't have sugar and tea. Then the next thing, you come and I have some tea and sugar, things like that. I don't know what made you think- let me go and see aunt down on the other side. I am just grateful for these kinds of things...

Ntokozo: I remember one Christmas we had nothing to eat not even mealie-meal. All the young children were all seated in the house hungry and bored. We were seated in the house when this strange thing happened- a man we didn't even know brought us some groceries, from heaven I guess. It was manna from heaven. There was everything- rice, chicken and all these things... that's when our day started to happen for us. Thanks to the gift from above...

CHAPTER 7: Lived and embodied Healing among Township Mothers and Daughters[59]

"And where there was suffering, there was always supposed to be healing[60]:"

"Mmangwana o tshwara thipa ka mo bogaleng[61]"

"How did they persist in their beauty in spite of everything?" (Walker 1983: 251).

7.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter I explored how physical displacements, political violence and the violation of sanctuary spaces, living in an atmosphere of HIV/AIDS, pregnancy out of wedlock, unemployment, 'forever-working', and the weakening of intergenerational ties have collectively shaped the lived and embodied suffering for township mothers and daughters. I ended the chapter with fragments from township mothers' and daughters' everyday private philosophies on how, despite the existential and material hardships they must bear, they tame these realities and continue to endure. In this chapter let me now shift my emphases from surfacing conditions of suffering to exploring strategies of healing that mothers and daughters have adopted as part of their survival strategies during the post 1994 period.

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[59] Parts of this chapter have appeared in a different form in Motsemme, N. (2007) '"Loving in a time of hopelessness": On township women's subjectivities in a time of HIV/AIDS', in *African Identities*, Vol 5 (1), 61-87; and "And where there was suffering, there was always supposed to be healing": African Women's lived and embodied meanings of Reconciliation and Healing." A paper presented to the Working Group on: "Coming to Terms with the Past" held at Yale University, Council on Latin American and Iberian Studies; October 31-November 2, 2008

[60] This is an altered statement, taken from Frederich Nietzche, "*Thus spoke Zarathustra*, which reads, " The spirit of revenge my friends, that up till now, has been mankind's chief concern; *and where there was suffering, there was always supposed to be punishment."* ((in Wilson 2001:156, my emphases).

[61] This is a popular Sotho proverb which when translated means, "*A mother always handles the sharp edge of the sword."* Thanks to my colleague Ms Boshadi Semenya for pointing it out to me.

In South Africa, through the dominant visibility of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), the healing narrative has become synonymous with reconciliation within the popular imaginations of South Africans. However, in this chapter I show how this much celebrated truth commission in many ways was limited as it failed to embrace the idea that township women were indeed capable of philosophising and transforming their own lives from their own perspectives. Instead the commission sought to re-appropriate their memories of suffering and absorb them within the emerging collective consciousness of a new African nation based on sacrifice. I then propose more situated meanings of healing that incorporate township mothers' and daughters' search for rehumanisation in their everyday lives which are coloured by everyday uncertainty and paradox. I will show how in their existential search to live in a more humane world they intuitively understand that healing is always embodied and must therefore be dealt with in a holistic manner. To illustrate this I firstly provide a critique of the religious-redemptive narrative at the TRC that dominated emerging ideas of healing in South Africa soon after the fall of white settler rule. Second, I will discuss the healing practices that township mothers and daughters continued to practice during the post-apartheid moment. These included rituals of reconciling with the dead, reconciling fragmented families and reconciling shattered communities. I will show how these rituals were in fact principally township women's expressions of desire (Sitas 2004) for healthy physically and cosmically balanced selves, families and communities. Third and finally, I advocate that in beginning to remap new sites of rehumanisation to include the lived and embodiment of the ordinary found in beauty, style, adornment, sexual pleasure and enjoyment, can only allow us to broaden our epistemic frameworks to understand the ways township mothers and daughters reframe and create viable practices of what it means *to heal under times of socio-cultural change.*

7.1 A Critique of the Religious-redemptive narrative at the TRC: Implications for Situated Meanings of Healing

Social anthropologist Richard Wilson (2001) in his book *The Politics of Truth and Reconciliation in South Africa: Legitimising the post-apartheid state*, outlines how in the early

founding documents of the TRC, notably the *1993 Interim Constitution entitled: National Unity and Reconciliation,* the term reconciliation was never fully defined. In fact, this foundational document outlined the parameters of the functions of the TRC as granting amnesty, making recommendations to the government regarding reparations, and also holding Human Rights Violation (HRV) hearings around South Africa. However, as Wilson points out:

> In the critical period of negotiations during 1993, the most basic, minimal understanding of reconciliation which the National Party[62] and the National African Congress[63] negotiators could agree on was this: *that reconciliation meant amnesty for violators of human rights*" ((2001: 99, my emphases).

He further elaborates that nowhere in the *National Unity and Reconciliation Act of July 1995,* did it say that the TRC should reconcile anyone for that matter. According to this piece of legislation reconciliation would then flow from the administrative processes of investigations, and possibly during the hearings. In other words, right from the inception of the Commission the meanings surrounding what reconciliation actually meant were highly contested, causing a near collapse of the Commission itself. Furthermore, adding meaning to reconciliation also meant generating a whole series of emotional debates around issues of guilt, culpability and conflicting interpretations of what constituted the parameters of a just war, which in some ways was viewed as derailing the reconciliation process as such discussions were often divided along clear polarised positions defined by race and political affiliation during the transitional years. And it was while being immersed in these myriad of developing debates during the early years of the formation of the TRC that Richard Wilson outlined three suggested narratives of reconciliation that he argues emerged during the life of the TRC. These included:

a. The legal-procedural narrative[64]

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[62] The National Party came into power in 1948 and was the party that was responsible for the construction and administering of apartheid laws and policies.

[63] The African National Congress began as a liberation movement which the aim of overthrowing white racist rule in South Africa. It came into power in April 27, 1994 with its first African president Nelson Mandela.

[64] Richard Wilson (2001: 104) outlines that this was, "a legal positivist, procedural view of reconciliation, which emerged as a result of the application of legal principles contained in the Act. It was concerned with creating fairness as a result of the direct application of statues to individual cases of gross human rights violations. It was by self definition immune to attempts to impose surrounding values and political judgements on the actions of the TRC"

b. The mandarin-intellectual narrative[65]

  c. The religious-redemptive narrative

I will like to focus briefly on the *religious-redemptive* (RR) narrative which Wilson argues was "where the TRC was to be the most effective in the conversion (replete with religious connotations) of the individual to a nation building project" (2001: 10). It was also from this narrative that the experience of coming before the TRC would create a condition where individuals could be healed and old resentments possibly smoothed (Wilson 2001). It was a discourse which found its most comfortable expression within the HRV hearings which were held around the country between 1996 and 1997. As several authors who have worked on the South African TRC have noted, this narrative was effective because it created a platform in which the suffering of all could be collectivised and morally equalised, and strategically framed within the context of the liberation, often with the ANC as protagonist in the struggle towards freedom. In contrast to the other two approaches, that is the 'legal-procedural' and the 'mandarin-intellectual' approaches, which sought to uncover a structural claim to truth, the RR approach embodied "a social truth which integrated people narratives, myths and experiences" (Wilson 2001: 110), making it very appealing in the popular sense. And so it was for these reasons that Wilson makes the sustained argument in his book in the chapter, *Reconciliation through truth,* that this was where the notion of reconciliation was most developed in the life of the TRC.

7.1.1 The Religious-Redemptive Narrative and its Critique
However, an important and yet oftentimes marginalised critique, was to emerge from scholars of African Traditional Religion (ATR) on this religious-redemptive narrative, which as Wilson proposes became a major hegemonic force in the HRV hearings that took place around the country. Dr Guma, an academic and traditional healer during TRC public discussions held at the University of Cape Town in 1997 criticised the unfolding process of the TRC as participating in

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[65] For the mandarin-intellectual approach adherents, truth was seen as the catalyst for reconciling a deeply racially divided nation. Preferring more abstract notion of the nation, as opposed to viewing reconciliation as individually orientated, it was this approach that Wilson (2001: 107) notes made the definitive "shift from people to the nation as the focus of who or what was to be reconciled." This was the approach that dominated the intellectual circles within the TRC.

an oppressive gesture through its undermining of African perspectives of healing. The reason for these accusations of marginalisation was based on a number of factors, one of them being the fact that the key personnel of the TRC were dominated by individuals from the Christian mainstream churches. For a start, the charismatic struggle icon and chairperson of the Commission, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, was an Anglican priest. The chairperson of the TRC in the Eastern Cape was reverend Bongani Finca, and in KwaZulu-Natal it was the Bishop Mgojo. It was argued by ATR practitioners and scholars that given this representational dominance of the Christian mainstream churches voice and presence, the approach to healing ultimately adopted in the TRC would 'naturally' mirror back these Christian perspectives. This is a point that scholars such as Richard Wilson (1996) and sociologist Belinda Bozolli (1998) also noted in the very early days of the HRV hearings where they witnessed Christian religious symbols of forgiveness and healing, as opposed to vengeance and anger, being openly privileged. This was justified by the argument that the majority of Africans in South Africa fall under the total 77% Christian category[66].

But as ATR scholar Nokuzola Mndende points out, this process of "acculturating ATR into Christianity" (1996: 49) merely acted to violently reinscribe Christianity as the norm. This, she argues, created a situation where mainstream Christian perspectives in fact violated those who lay outside this morality, *undermining their right to seek the truth* (Mndende, pers.comm., October 2008, my emphases). And for radical ATR adherents, using a predominantly Christian perspective to make sense of the past was argued as having no ideological bases, given what they viewed as the violent role that Christianity played in the colonisation of Africans. While the chairperson of the TRC, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, did make an informal apology for the part Christianity played in the oppression of Africans, the "suppression of ATR meant the *TRC remained spiritually oppressive* to the thousands who came to testify" (Mndende, Pers. Comm., October 2008). So even when Archbishop spoke of being the 'voice of the voiceless', this was not entirely the case, because African concepts and practices of healing had not even been given

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[66] The statistics on the religious affiliation of the post-apartheid South Africa stood at the following in 1996: Protestant: 42%; Roman Catholic: 9%; African Independent Churches: 26%; Uncertain: 17%; No religion: 2,5%; Muslim: 2%; Hindu: 1.74%; Jewish: .4%; Confucian: .02%; Buddhist: .01%; Other. 13% (Mndende 1996: 43)

an opportunity to be simply given voice (Mndende pers.comm; October 2008). That is, they had not been provided a platform to express themselves from their own conception to define and express themselves independently. And if the central concern of the TRC was to give voice in order to heal the past, then this project had been undermined by this bias towards the Christian outlook. The TRC had thus missed a creative opportunity to weave into healing discourses more situated and fusion-based meanings of healing. In failing to recognise this ontological condition of the many of those who came to bear testimony to their violent pasts at the HRV hearings, meant that healing remained partial and thus incomplete.

So the question remains as to what did those who had been victimised and brutalised by political violence of apartheid do *to enact their own versions of healing.* I approach the surfacing of these counter-memory sites by going beyond the TRC and venturing into the communities in which the majority of those who came to testify lived-- South Africa's urban townships. It was within these marginalised and interstitial spaces that township mothers and daughters' versions of healing within their communities was daily enacted, and could thus be heard.

7.2 'To Cleanse is to Heal': Healing Individuals, Families and Communities

Township mothers in particular have always intuitively understood that social suffering carries a deep embodied wound which ultimately affects the wider balance between the human and extra-human worlds. They also intuitively know that since protracted violence is also embodied, these rituals they perform which center on reconciling the past with the future, the living and the dead, the community and the self, also contain within their practices the means to strengthen and create bonds of healing through collective sharing of food, laughter and healing conversations for those who are still living. Further, through township mothers and daughters' healing practices and narratives, we also witness how African spiritualities and modes of healing remain a powerful cushion, a counter-force if you will, against perceived daily material difficulties and existential pains. And so drawing on African lived spiritualities continues to be appealing to township mothers and daughters because they provide a sacred space in which the person to be healed is viewed as a total person with a social, familial context which need to be restored to a healthy balanced state, and that this includes a balance in the cosmological sense (Du Toit and Abdulla

1885), which is the bases from which they draw the endurance to face yet another day. And even during post-apartheid these often hidden practices create conditions in which many township women continue to draw their energy to repair their fragmented and wounded bodies, weave together damaged intergenerational relationships, restore the moral fibers of their communities, and to create harmony within contexts that remain hostile to their existence. Let me now discuss some of the healing practices and conversations that I encountered during my fieldwork in Chesterville. I have thematised these healing practices under the following headings below: reconciling with the dead; reconciling fragmented families; reconciling devastated communities.

7.2.1 Reconciling with the Dead

As mentioned earlier, repeated encounters with funerals point to the extent that death has and continues, to structure everyday life for township mothers and daughters. In the 1980s it was political deaths, now during post-apartheid it is 'bad' HIV/AIDS deaths. Grandmothers and mothers I spoke to point to the importance of specific cleansing ritual requirements, *ukugezwa*-- to be cleansed, after a death. In addition township women, especially grandmothers and mothers drew my attention to the symbolic importance of *inyongo,* the gallbladder, and *isiqubu*, the herb that is closely associated with cleansing ceremonies, particularly after a death has occurred.

Inyongo iyona ephethe idlozi, the gallbladder is what carries the ancestor, making it one of the most potent symbols for any family ritual ceremony. *Inyongo* is where the purest fluid in the body resides and its cultural significance cannot be over-emphasised. Even during wedding ceremonies, *ukuhlangana kwezinazi,* the meeting of the ancestors (the gallbladders from both families) is recognised as what ultimately seals this union. Ma Mkhize describes the significance of *inyongo* repeatedly in her interviews as this conversation demonstrates:

> *Ma Mkhize: you see inyongo is important to all things pertaining to the family, pertaining to the home and when it is stolen, when you do a ritual ceremony everything in that household will go astray. People steal it you know, especially within the family. At my husband's family they did a ritual for my late husband and ishongwe was lost… you know ishongwe is that part at the back of the cow, you know that long hairy thing, you know the tail of the cow…*
>
> *I: yes, I know it.*

Ma Mkhize: this is called ishongwe...well at home ishongwe was lost. Nobody knew what happened to it and nobody has ever been married?

I: no one in the family has been married?

Ma Mkhize: even if they have been married, in no time their marriages fail and they will be battles in their homes. If they had a husband they can return anytime or you will hear they have become drunkards. We don't even know where this person even discovered drinking in this way and the next thing you hear is that the husband is sick and tired and doesn't know what to do with her, and this person is just drinking in their home. She was even married to a priest you know. I have not seen her for a long time. The last time I saw her I could see that she was still alive but no longer the "squeeza" (in-law) that I once knew who was beautiful, the other one just grew old... they say they don't know what got into her...no one knows...

I: the importance of the gallbladder, I have heard it mentioned on several occasions but didn't know it was so important...

Ma Mkhize: there is also what is called the Inceko, after slaughtering this is dished out with umshwelo... this was too if it is lost during ancestral ceremonies ...eish problems...

I: what's that, inceko..?

Ma Mkhize: yes, inceko it looks like this Stu...it has umlongo ngaphakhati, the contents of the stomach, this is the last meat of the ancestors, inyama yedlozi, meat that the old women eat. After the ritual they will eat this meat and scoop out umlongo, the contents of the stomach, from inside...

Later she also explains:

I: aunt what is the significance of inyongo, why is it for all the rituals you have mentioned inyongo is so important. Why?

Ma Mkhize: inyongo iyona ephethe idlozi, it is what carries the ancestors

Isiqungu, is the herb that you cleanse yourself with, by washing your hands after coming from the funeral grounds. As she further narrated to me:

I: what is isiqungu?

*Ma Mkhize: this is the herb that is pounded, I have some in my backyard...this is the herb you use to cleanse after coming from a funeral. You can't go to the funeral and not cleanse yourself in this way. Usuke usamuncu-You are still sour...You are not cleansed....Even people around you will feel repelled by you...you are moving around with this person [dead spirit] without you even knowing...you cannot see this...but when you approach, people feel this heaviness-ukusinda-about you and it is because you are still moving with **the shadow** (my emphasis) of this person who is physically no longer there...then the ill luck begins....you don't find work....even if you find it, you don't stay long...hayi bo things become bad...*

Of course when things become hard and one finds themselves in a permanent state of being troubled by the shadows, that is when you seek the help of those who can mediate with the world of 'the shadows', that is diviners, healers and prophets.

In addition, the significance of cleansing within healing practices to reconcile the dead with the living, reconcile families and create a sense balance between the cosmos and material was comprehensively outlined by Ma Mkhize in the following extended conversation we shared:

I: one thing I wanted to ask you is this thing of death.....the rituals attached when a person dies. For an example when I saw these things after the death of M's child, there were certain things that had to be done. They say that a person needs to be cleansed after death.… What does that mean?

Ma Mkhize: it's about cleansing the person so that the person can be free, akhululeke. This is done because the shadow of the person who was yours or close to you has passed away. He or she is still with you, usuke esakuwena...you remove the shadow using umswando.

I: what is umswando?

Ma Mkhize: it's from the goat...

I: so a goat has to be slaughtered?

Ma Mkhize: yes, then people have to go and cleanse, to remove inzilo that has been worn during the mourning period

I: so that the person who has died can be freed?

*Ma Mkhize: no, the one who is freed is the one who remains on the earthly plane.....because the one who has died is buried but the shadow remains, **you go and bury the physical body but the shadow remains (my emphases)**. A person who has died is the same as the person who is still alive. Remember you clothe yourself in special clothes to mourn, ukumuzilela, them and then when the time that has been set by your customs you follow, then after this period it's time to slaughter...*

I: so was the ritual that was done for aunt T different to the one that M did? If so what is the difference? I know the difference was that aunt T was the wife and her husband had died, whereas with M, he was the father and his son had died. What makes the death experiences different from each other?

Ma Mkhize: phela with aunt T it was her husband who had died, and the other it was his child. What happens is that the mother of the child must clothe herself with isiphika. Umama wengane uyasiqoka isiphika, the mother of the child must clothe herself with these mourning clothes, so that is what is removed...

I: and why did aunt T have to come where she grew up to come and do her cleansing ceremony. Why did she do it at her own home in Umlazi?

Ma Mkhize: because that is where the story begins. When you are a widow, the first thing that must happen is that she must be cleansed by her own family where she was born and after that she must also be cleansed by her husband's family.

I: what are the processes involved in the period of cleansing, yokungezwa? I remember there were herbs to be pounded which we used to cleanse her with and then her mourning clothes are thrown away in the wild...these are things I remember about aunt Ts cleansing ritual. What other things are done?

Ma Mkhize: you know the most important thing in this process is inyongo, gallbladder of that animal that has been slaughtered for the occasion. Because she is a widow she will be bathed, uzothelwa on her ring finger with inyongo, they will let the gallbladder drip on that finger and also pour inyongo into a dish and mix it with umswanambo for cleansing... the clothes are then buried in the bushes. The mourning clothes must be left in the bushes; the widow returns home and then wears new clothes especially bought for the occasion... I wasn't there I don't know...

I: but were they also required to?

Ma Mkhize: yes they have to because if they fail to do this the shadow…let's say you are at work and the deceased child will be there (points behind the shoulder)

I: right there?

Ma Mkhize: well you will not be able to see it with your eyes, but everything around you will not go on well. But if you go and visit those who see (healers, prophets etc) they will diagnose and tell you that you need to do the necessary rituals for the child.

I: who are these people who can diagnose (amahlolayo) these things?

Ma Mkhize: Its abathandazi (prophets) those who can tell you about your life story without having ever met you

I: those who can see…

Ma Mkhize: yes, let's say it's those who can see, ababonayo. This is a person who has never met you but can tell you things that are your secret and you say to yourself-hayibo! Then they keep on telling you true things that you thought you only knew and things that you know happened in your life. It is these kinds of people….it is God who tells them these stories, they call them prophets.

I: but there are those who are told by amadlozi, the ancestors.

Ma Mkhize: yes, it's one and the same thing. It's just that it can also happen through religious faith, ukukholwa.

I: these are the people who don't use herbs, imithi.

Ma Mkhize: yes, these who do not use imithi, it is the angels who tell them our life stories...They use holy water but for those who work through indlozi they…

I: but there are those who use both, who mix, who use prayer for healing, but if necessary also use herbs

Ma Mkhize: yes that happens you see if your situation or ailment is too serious, and they can see that water alone cannot work then they will return you to herbs...in that situation they would already have seen that water will not be enough to help you get out of your situation. When they use water they know that it will work…

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I: the other thing that I wanted to understand was……

Ma Mkhize: if you have not been properly cleansed, wangezwa uhlangothi olodwa, your things don't go well either. Like myself who was not properly cleansed by husband's family...I was never properly "received" nor "cleansed" that is the reason things are what they are-crooked. I'm part of that family but also incomplete…

I: I'm confused what is it that you didn't do?

*Ma Mkhize: remember you start at your family home, I don't know the reason for this but I know that that's where it should start to undress at home and then you leave with some meat and you take to your married home. There they will eat the meat and also welcome you with their own meat and then **kuhlangana kwezinazi**, the meeting of izinazi…*

I: what is the meeting of inazi?

Ma Mkhize: inazi izinyongo, the gallbladders…

I: oh, I see these are brought from both homes your home and that of your husband's

Ma Mkhize: yes they are brought together, ziyahlanganizwa, so that you can be complete and everything will be fine now. All that is left is for you to ask for are good fortunes, izinhlanhla…

I: what about a situation you cannot afford to do all these things required, buy an animal, food travel …all these things? Now I would like to know if you will be punished for a situation you have little control over. What happens…? I mean there is a lot of poverty and suffering in this world.

Ma Mkhize: you see umuhluphekhile, when there is poverty you go into town to buy itwalo

I: itwalo?

Ma Mkhize: Yes, itwalo you know that meat enobulongo ngaphakathi, the stomach of the animal, umlongo okufihlekile ngaphakhati, the contents of the stomach that are hidden inside, that is the meat you have to buy. You scoop out umlongo that is inside and use that to mix it with nesiqungu

I: so you have to complete the process you can't do it half measures. You were telling me about your situation, where things where not completed, but I disturbed you…

Ma Mkhize: yes , I didn't do some things...what needs to be done now is that my son G will have to do these things for me... when he is fine he will have to pay and do these things for me that his family should have done.

I: so if you failed to do some things for whatever reasons, there is chance for correction?

Ma Mkhize: yes there is always room for corrections. A prophet, umthandazi, will always help you determine if you are doing the things in the right way. They (the ancestors) have the ability to break or close down a home till it doesn't exist. In truth I cannot go and be with the people from my husband's family. This is why I am just sitting like this, alone, it's because I wasn't properly received, angenigeniswanga...

I: they did not slaughter for you?

Ma Mkhize: No, they didn't anoint me with the gallbladder, amangithelanga ngenyongo this is done to receive a person, ukungenisa umuntu...

7.2.2 Reconciling Fragmented Families

As outlined in the previous section on lived and embodied suffering by township mothers and daughters, the African family has been a target of political and economic attack since the days of colonialism, which intensified under the ruthless apartheid years. However, despite these concentrated and well-planned efforts to permanently dislodge and disorientate African families, township mothers have through ritual performances continued to harness this social unit to ensure some sense of stability and cultural continuity. Below I map out some of the healing rituals that township mothers initiated to stitch together their disentangling families and salvage some measure of felt-connectedness. These included the journey of a mother searching for her deceased daughter's lost spirit to reconnect with her in order to transform the current misfortunes being experienced by her family; while the other ritual was performed to reverse the potentially ill fortunes that may befall a young woman and her family who had become pregnant out of wedlock. These two examples of healing discordant relations, both of which I was a participant, are presented below in a rich conversation I had with Ma Mkhize:

I: all these things are new to me, I also want to ask you about other things I saw and experienced, not things I was told by another person. Ok let me just tell you the ceremonies I have been

attending since I arrived. First there was the ceremony for the baby next door, and then the following week aunt N came home to fetch P at home carrying what looked like a leaf. What was happening then? All I remember was I was working on my computer and she asked me to find something that belonged to P, I was confused... I went and found something and gave it to her. But I'm still not sure what was going on exactly...

Ma Mkhize: what I can say was that there was a cry, kwakhalelwa, that P had lived at your house and now when she became ill, she was taken to a hospital or what..?

I: yes, she was taken to many places...there is no place she didn't go...

Ma Mkhize: so when she died before the funeral they took her home isn't?

I: Which home? The one in KwaMashu?

Ma Mkhize: No that home was shut down...I am talking about there by the government flats... what needed to happen was that after they left the flats they were supposed to stop the Motsemme family, and tell her that by the gate...the hearse was supposed to stop and they should have said - P you have departed from this earth, we have come to tell you that we have come to take you from where you lived and we are accompanying you to your final resting place. We have just come from your flat now we are at the Motsemme family to tell you that the time to go has come. That is what should have happened from her flat to the Motsemme's, and then from there to the church... in the morning just before burial...that is where the story was lost...

I: oh this is done when you have been living elsewhere either than your own home?

Ma Mkhize: yes I mean it was clear that she had no intention of moving from your home. She was staying.. you could see that she did not care to stay at her mother's and even left her own children, she left them at her mother's and they would visit her, remember she was here...

I: so what was the reason for this ceremony?

Ma Mkhize: what must have happened is that her mother found out from a healer that this person is not with them...remember that her mother left her flat in Chatsworth and moved into her daughter's flat after she died. When she moved in, many things were not going well. She most likely went to see a healer and was asked – what exactly did you do when your daughter was

buried, because there was somewhere you were supposed to pass before taking her to her final resting place? Where was your daughter living?

I: oh and so after doing this you need to…?

Ma Mkhize: is there something that was done after this?

I: yes the following week she slaughtered and there was a lot of meat and dumplings…

Ma Mkhize: Yes that means she had fetched her…that means she really was at your home. She must have been there because soon after she died she came to me in a dream and said- aunt, please go and tell ma at work…go and tell her that she must go and apply for a grant for the children. When I told her mother she responded saying-Praise and thank the name of God because that has already been done. And she used to come often to me in my dreams, and she did not look bad at all. I won't lie she looked the same way we used to know her….beautiful.

I: yes P took good care of herself…

Ma Mkhize: yes sometimes they [the ancestors] come shouting in anger…they change on us when they are on the other side you know.

I: what is the reason of bringing her back, so that she can…?

Ma Mkhize: so that she can look after the children and things can go straight…

I: ok things were crooked…?

Ma Mkhize: Yes what should have happened is that, when she began to get really ill, she should have been transferred to her home and died there. But that did not happen, instead she was ill and she died here…

ATR scholar Nokuzola Mndende also notes that this ritual is also done when a person who has died far away from home and a reburial cannot be performed that,

> The elders talk to the deceased to explain to him/her that they have come to take him/her home. From the point of departure at the gravesite until they reach their ancestral home, the elders are in constant communication with the spirit of the deceased explaining every action or step that the clan members are passing through (2009: 126).

7.2.2.i 'Cleansing the home'

I: and then soon after eating this meat, the next thing we were at another ceremony. This time it was a baby ceremony, the ceremony of the birth of D's baby, remember that one? You were there as well. What was it all about?

Ma Mkhize: it was a ritual ceremony to cleanse the home because the young woman was pregnant...

I: right...

Ma Mkhize: it's a home cleansing...the baby's father was cleansing S's home (home of the young woman)

I: why was the home being cleansed?

Ma Mkhize: because the young women had come pregnant... A burglary had occurred in the home.

I: ok, so it is the boy's family who initiated this ceremony?

Ma Mkhize: yes uyahlawula, they are paying back their debts. It is the father of the child who must do this ceremony. Because he has impregnated without the consent of the family... and it is not just the cleansing ceremony that he must pay for there are also other payments

I: now I understand...

Ma Mkhize: yes he slaughtered a goat, what is left is two cows. That's the payment 2 cows and a goat

I: and they are paying because...?

Ma Mkhize: because he had made her pregnant, he has not paid the bride price. She is not his wife...

I: Oh...Ok

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Ma Mkhize: yes it would have been a different matter if he had married her first. You can't as a young woman fall pregnant whilst you are still at your father's house...

I: I thought it was a party to welcome the child

Ma Mkhize: no, kuyahlawulwa, payment for damages...and he hasn't finished as yet. He still has to pay 2 cows. You never know he might end with just that goat. People don't want to pay any longer, even if the child is born and the parents are financially okay. When it comes to payment (shakes her head)

I: there is this thing of announcing the pregnancy to the family. That's where it starts right?

Ma Mkhize: yes the women of the family take the young woman to the boyfriend's home, then after we have announced the pregnancy we will determine imali yamazola

I: What is amazola?

Ma Mkhize: I don't even know about you because this man comes from far away. We will charge a lot of money (she is talking about the fact that my husband is from West Africa and thus his home is very far)

I: amazola?

Ma Mkhize: the amount is calculated according to rivers we must cross to get to the man's family. It's R100 to cross a river. Yes, every river that we cross you must pay. We would have travelled a long way.

I: look at that I got the message totally wrong. I thought it was the welcoming of the baby and meanwhile the poor guy was making serious payments...I had no idea we were eating meat that has been slaughtered by the boyfriend's family...

Ma Mkhize: did you get the details of the pregnancy outside marriage...There is the goat and two cows. Goat for cleansing the home, one cow for the father and the other one for the mother, these things go together. Then the young woman is given money to go and cleanse. In the past they would go and cleanse in the river and leave 10cents in the river and then they will go and buy bread and wash it down with sugary water... and the goat, in the past it was slaughtered in the bush. But things have changed, it is now slaughtered at home...but if you look at these things

now, they are usually just a few young women in these ceremonies there are a lot of mothers present...

Cleansing rituals which seek to purify the socio-cultural body, family and community are ways in which township mothers and daughters attempt to redress the deep imbalances present in their intimate lives. They are a way of strengthening what is experienced as weak moral fabrics and intergenerational connections. These are then ways township mothers and daughters tame and exert some kind of righting the disorders felt to be surrounding them. This is why these rituals focus on pragmatic ways to help one survive in a dignified manner despite living in an atmosphere of collective suffering. For we must remember that in contexts of suffering, in order to aspire towards wholeness people often engage their cosmological beliefs (Sveker 2003). In this way, these healing and purification practices performed by township mothers, and in which daughter's actively participate, become direct strategies to reverse these cosmic imbalances and, as womanists insists that by "maintaining a harmonious relationship between humans, the environment, and the spiritual realm" (Phillips 2006: xviii), is crucial in creating conditions for healing. And since they are drawn from an "alternative ontological identity of connection" (Harding 2004: 217) where there is a reciprocity between the sacred and mundane, these healing practices ultimately constitute, "quotidian attempts to negotiate safety and refuge-how traditional African orientations towards the cosmos influenced the way in which black people *responded and resisted the many attempts at their dehumanization*" (Harding 2000: 21, my emphases). Finally, in engaging these age-old customs, township mothers and daughters are accessing alternative modalities and vocabularies which are based on models of community and humanity which bear their own remembered signatures.

7.2.2.ii Healing Support between Women

After attending a few of the ritual ceremonies described above, I entered the following notes onto my field diary:

Women, Food, Rituals and Building Community

> *RITUALS that have taken place every successive weekend since I arrived at home:*
>
> 1. *A regular ritual by the healer to the ancestors*

2. *The cleansing for X whose baby had died*
3. *Bringing an estranged daughter back home*
4. *The birth of a neighbours beautiful baby boy*

MY BELLY IS FULL OF GOAT, DUMPLINGS, HOME BAKED CAKES AND COOLDRINKS

What do all these have in common?:

- *Mainly women present*

- *Slaughtering*

- *In 1 just chickens with amadumbe and dumplings*

- *In 2, 3 and 4 a goat/sheep had been slaughtered with servings of dumplings. And of course home baked cakes and cool-drink to wash down*

- *African brewed beer also prepared*

- *Constant flow of women. Entire preparation is by women in their pinafores. [Outline significance of PINAFORES and link with being woman and respectability…GET PICTURES of various patterned pinafores]*

- *Women inside the house and men outside eating and drinking beer*

- *Women sit according to ages in different rooms. Not always the case due to availability of space. But if there is space shortage then sit in various sections and eat accordingly.*

- *Younger women serve older women*

- *Then the stories and reminiscing, remembering*

- *This is an opportune moment to pass on generational 'rules' on how certain things should be carried out. Intergenerational memories are passed on orally and transformed simultaneously as discussions about how things ought to be done now are debated, People have various perspectives. Others appear more flexible [surprisingly the most flexible who was at ritual 4 was the old women healer, while the women whose son is currently in jail and she herself is a pensioner reprimanded us, the younger women for doing it all wrong. For example older*

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women will reprimand younger women that isithebe should be placed on the floor and not eaten placed on the table. But other women seemed to be more flexible regarding the rules, rather saying that those were outdated. A space for 'reworking out' traditions and passing on generational memories regarding the rearing of children, etc. Everyone has an opinion...

- *Stories about marriage, engagements and weddings are plentiful. All the younger women still dream of marriage [youngest over 28 with children]*

- *Children enter the women spaces periodically and amusing events follow.*

- *This is interconnection time; family time; eating time. You would be amazed how many people can fit into a 2 roomed house. It grows bigger [explore this poetic idea of space growing bigger due to mood and number of bodies present]*

- *The role of neighbours; the reinforcement of old values; continuity and change as women eat and laugh together*

- *The building of community*

- *The sustaining moral fiber of community; Women knit it together...generations of women create and sustain these age old rituals*

- *There is laughter...The young women who has just given birth loved unripe mangoes with salt, curry-powder and vinegar...and they are starting to call the little boy curry-powder..Someone else that we must not forget that his uncle is fishcake [a nickname he now hates being called according another younger woman]...There is laughter in the room.*

During these described cleansing rituals it is mainly women who initiate them, prepare and gather to share food and healing conversations together. As I observed in my notes, these rituals constitute an important element towards building connectedness, thus humanising this community of township mothers and daughters. These sacred women-centred spaces thus weave together township mothers and daughters inter-generationally, while centering hospitality for all those who attend. This womanist principle of hospitality becomes a way of "acknowledging dignity, offering nurturance, promoting amity, and providing pleasure to foster positive intra and interpersonal relations" (Phillips 2006: xviii). During these ceremonies I even got to connect

with childhood friends that I had not seen since I left Chesterville to go to university. We shared stories of our childhood, remembering and laughing together.

In addition to these support-giving spaces, women in Chesterville also provide each other with material and emotional support. The most visible forms of material support in the everyday ranges from helping out with the bare necessities such as a cup of sugar, mealie-meal or rice to the formalised women-centred support networks of stokvels and burial societies, socio-economic practices which womanist Layli Phillips (2006) reminds us are essentially imbedded in the survival wisdom of marginalised women's socio-economic and political experiences. Township mothers also collectively share the silent and embodied experience of many having lost their husbands and fathers of their children. Ma Mkhize shares how she became very close with a township woman she worked for as a domestic worker as they consoled each other after losing their husbands around the same time:

> *Ma Mkhize: well, we sat and then we become these two doves, M became a real sister to me, and then from there we could not be separated. She became my true sister and I even stopped wanting to be with my family, I lived there at home with her...Her children grew up and she fixed the papers for me so that I could go and look for another job...*

Finally, women also supported each other by taking care of children who were not necessarily biologically their own. This is based on a resilient practice in African communities where 'othermothers', such as grandmothers, aunts, cousins and women neighbours may support 'bloodmothers' who, for various reasons, are unable to take care of their children. I myself am a beneficiary of 'othermothers' assisting me with my children while I struggled to complete this doctorate working full time with three young children, and with a husband who travelled frequently for his work. My mother, aunts and husband's sister and her daughters have been instrumental in providing me with the space to be able to write as they willingly offered to take care of my children at various stages of the development and completion of this research. Afrocentric feminist Patricia Hill Collins maintains that this is perhaps one of the most distinguishing features of African motherhood which is that,

> While the biological mother-child bond is valued, child care was a collective responsibility, a situation fostering cooperative, age-stratified, woman-centred mothering networks" (1991: 45).

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These various healing support practices that township women undertake then ultimately illustrate women's silent work as they carefully stitch, repair and nurture scarred trans and intergenerational ties through bonding rituals and hospitality in the hope of healing themselves, their daughters and communities.

7.2.3 Reconciling Devastated Communities

> *The fact of the matter is there is no other work but the work of creating and recreating ourselves within the context of community (Alexander 2005: 283)*

Below is an extract from Ma Sithole, a community activist who had to cancel her interview at the last minute but opted to write an account of what constituted a memorable moment of healing for her, in her community of Chesterville Township. She wrote:

> *In the early 1990s most of the people who had been in exile started to return home. There were celebrations for some, but when they got home (Chesterville Township) they found that the township was so divided that they could not walk freely in the township. Some had homes in the A-Team (vigilante group that terrorized this small township in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa) stronghold, e.g. Road 13, and these were 'no go' areas for African National Congress supporters. How could they enjoy being with their families? Some had friends or family among the enemy, i.e. the A-Team, and something had to be done.*

> *There was no formal meeting or any day of reconciliation event in Chesterville, only people led mostly by the ex-exiles started going into the no-go areas, inviting old friends (A-Team members) to parties, attended their parties etc. This was followed by more people doing the same and seeing that there was no confrontation, and this process just continued. Sooner or later things had gone back to where they were before. It must be noted that the ex-exiles were seen as leaders by the youth and their actions were easily copied by the youth. It was surprising to see the response of a township which had been at war against each other return to peace so easily. It was as if everybody was saying "we are tired of this fighting."*

> *People who left their homes started to return and claimed their homes back. This was a very exciting period and since the township was preparing for elections, the parties were free to*

*campaign. The township has never had political strife after this informal reconciliation. Some of the families testified at the TRC, **but their greatest achievement was the reconciliation that happened at the grassroots level, where they live with their families, friends and community.** There was no pointing fingers maybe people feared that by going back, old wounds would be opened and maybe talking would also open a can of worms, so **people decided to let things be and focus on the future** (my emphasis).*

It would be easy to dismiss the suggestion by Ma Sithole as an act of resignation to an overwhelming situation of past violence. However, when we fully understand the lived and embodied effects of prolonged social suffering from the point of view of what is at stake for those directly affected, then these types of responses, which center forgiveness of one's worst enemies, begin to make pragmatic sense. In fact Michael Jackson in his ethnographic work after one of the most brutal civil wars in African history in Sierra Leone also found:

> Most Sierra Leoneans preferred to 'let sleeping dogs lie', to 'forgive and forget', not because they were indifferent to the horrors of the war, but because they saw that there was less profit in prolonging the agony and raking over dead coals, that in focusing on reintegration and rebuilding. This tacit consensus not to dwell on or talk about the war seemed more prevalent in early 2003 than the previous year (2005: 170).

7.3 Mapping New Spaces of Healing Among Township Mothers and Daughters

As outlined in chapter three, in most analytical frameworks that focus on marginalised urban areas, lived and embodied practices associated with the aesthetics of living, such as beauty, style, adornment, sexual pleasure and enjoyment are often framed as corrupting and inauthentic popular cultural expressions. However, in the proposed conceptual framework on township mothers and daughters lived and embodied 'cultures of survival', I explicitly point out that this dualistic approach is meaningless if one's theoretical outlook is based on lived and embodied categories of experience. As I further pointed out in the previous chapter, in their attempts to maintain an alternative selfhood and identity within constraining social spaces, township mothers and daughters fuse the material and spiritual to assemble positive conditions for their existence. In this way this approach seeks to re-interpret these lived and embodied practices linked to the

aesthetics of living as in fact also constituting "an act of self-conscious female assertion of control over the representation of their person" (Cooper 2004: 125-126). This positive retheorisation of these often devalued everyday popular cultural practices by township mothers and daughters becomes an attempt to advance their own 'truth' versions, knitted out of their own experiences and accumulated survival wisdom of what it means to live humanely and even joyously.

Political science philosopher Achille Mbembe outlined a gap in social studies on African life, which he argued have neglected, "sexuality, pleasure, and lifestyles…sexuality is entangled in broader questions of lifestyle, pleasure, happiness, risk, and death, with the aesthetics of the body; with desire, sensuality, fecund, and subjecthood. It represents the most important site where new African identities are tagged, performed and enacted" (2001: 7). Given these gaps within contemporary social science scholarship, popular cultural scholar Carolyn Cooper's work on Jamaican dancehall culture represented a welcome conceptual break when it asserted that rather than viewing poor urban women's yearnings for beauty, style, excessive adornment, the pleasures of disguise, sexual desire and pleasure, defiant sensuality and yearnings for self autonomy and self-respect through economic independence, as commodification and objectification, we should rather embrace these popular cultural expressions as women's affirmations of existence in a world that often misrecognises and marginalises them. Below I reinterpret these lived and embodied practices of survival as healing strategies being performed by township mothers and daughters during post-apartheid.

7.3.1 Strategies used by township mothers and daughters to maintain viable identities: Targeting men with cash, Beauty, Style and Enjoyment

Township daughters in particular used a number of strategies to assert agency, formulate momentary spaces of autonomy and create alternative identities in the midst of existential and material uncertainty. These included-- targeting men with cash, beauty, style and enjoyment.

7.3.1.i Targeting men with cash

Scholars have highlighted that even those living at the margins of society also routinely engage in conscious daily attempts to stitch together some semblance of "personal autonomy for themselves, no matter how trivial, where they can exercise some measure of independent choices" (2005: 192). As mentioned earlier, we also need to keep in mind that in particularly poor communities not being able to generate income towards the running of the household is experienced as a deep shame which has the social consequence of losing one's fragile self-respect within the community. Within such existential and socio-economic contexts, sex and being sexual can easily become equated with a means to empowerment, and as a way that despair is transformed into possible pleasure. Such a conceptualisation also underscores the popular portrayal of township women as mere victims of their circumstances. In fact Oinas and Jungar (2005) maintain that several feminist accounts continue to portray women as victims, a tendency which they observe has been transferred to research on sexuality. They suggest that this victimhood focus can be problematic, because it may obscure decisions and actions made by women in their everyday lives. Further, it fails to account for the ways women actively participate in daily power struggles to challenge their own intimate relationships, as well as seek pleasure.

And in order to create a sense of personal autonomy and self respect, township mothers' and daughters' sometime engage in forms of monetary extraction actions directed towards men who have cash. Their techniques of extraction are often coded and subtle and involve specific transactions and negotiations between men and women.

Choosing a 'man with potential' who can support you materially remains a central concern in how township daughters selected potential partners. As they explained at various points in our focus group interviews:

> *Nonhlanhla: We are very choosy people, me and my friends ... You showing up without a car [shakes head disapprovingly] ... and me I love money that's no secret ... you can come with no car but you must be financially covered ... It's not wrong. You must be able to give me money and I love money and I don't think this a problem. Without a car, no money and he's not working ... that is burden ... what are we going to eat?*

Zinhle: How will he take you out?

Nonhlanhla: Yes the only thing we will do is to have sex. That's what's on his mind … Somebody who does not understand will think I am a bad person. There are guys who come and offer love it's just that Eish … You see …

Hlengiwe: But I believe in that, and Nonhlanhla is right…what she's saying some of it I follow. I won't go for someone who doesn't have money….Then if someone comes along who has money he must make sure he doesn't love only me, I have a baby and he must take care of him too. He must look after both of us and he must love both of because I have lost my baby's father.

Zinhle: I prefer someone who is responsible someone, who's working who will give me money to do my hair…do you understand because I'm not working. Money is important…Yes it's like that everybody wants money. Without money you can't have fun, if you date some who doesn't have money you will end up in doors making babies instead of going out and enjoying yourself and seeing different people…if a man satisfies you don't do silly things.

Nonhlanhla: I'm straight forward when it comes to money. My friends know that at least I'm honest. Yes, I need money because nobody is working at home and I do get it. I don't mind switching the lights off if somebody comes to check me at home and he will ask- why is it dark? and I will say the electricity card is finished. My mother understands. When he leaves, he must leave me with R200 and I will switch the lights back on again when he is gone.

Zinhle: Our problem is that at home maybe your mother is working, but nobody else is working…It's because we don't know what are we going to eat so that why we want money.

While Sbongile from the focus group of another set of friends adds:

Sbongile: In order to survive you have to go out with someone who has potential, so he will give you money and take you out to even a restaurant. You will want to buy a take-away full chicken, because you remember you left your girls back home with nothing. Whoever goes out must know that they must bring something for everyone too. You have to because you never know maybe you will also need something tomorrow. There are so many ways to get money from men, it's just that you have to change your ways…

The targeting of especially older men with cash by township daughters has been linked to *transactional sex, which* is sex in exchange for money, gifts, favors payment of clothing

accounts, consumption goods such as cell phones and airtime, and household groceries. Social anthropologist Mark Hunter (2002) draws a useful distinction between 'sex linked to subsistence' and 'sex linked to consumption', even though we must remember that in everyday township life these concepts are intermeshed and are dependent on the current needs as defined by young daughters themselves. In the case of *sex linked to subsistence*, gifts from these relationships can contribute to the household economy, as 24-year-old Dudu outlines:

> *In my family nobody is working so when I go out with a man, I must at least come with something, you see. I just can't come back in the morning and go for the bread meant for the children when I have been away all night ... what is that ... They all expect that I come with something at home ... even R10 to buy bread and milk at least ... But hey now my boyfriend is tight on the pocket ... so when he is very drunk and sleeping, I go to his pockets and I take some money [laughs] and I go home in the morning ...*

Dudu makes it clear that there is an unspoken expectation at home that after a 'night out' with her boyfriend, she must come home with 'something' that contributes to the basic household economy. In a situation where a woman cannot meet her family needs because her man is unemployed, she can strategise around 'picking up another man'. In fact it is common to hear township daughters jokingly talking about their 'minister of transport' (for mobility), 'minister of finance' (for cash), or the more common 'sugar daddy' (older men, often married), as some of those who cater for their consumption and/or subsistence needs.

'Ukuchutha inyoni' Or to Pluck a Bird

Township daughters often have creative strategies of extracting cash from men. As they explained, '*izinyoni*' (these were mama's boys) and '*amakwere-kwere*', are easy targets. One of them explained that when you were about to go out with one of these 'easy targets', women would jokingly say to each other, 'I am going to pluck that bird', or, when identifying a potential easy target, 'friends, let's pluck that bird'.

When township daughters strategise on 'plucking birds' they are re-enacting bodily agency in their immediate socio-cultural contexts. First, 'plucking' (extracting what you desire from another) involves a task which can be argued to involve the creative ensemble of certain interpersonal skills. This task also requires some form of negotiation between a man and a

woman. Within this social exchange, certain kinds of transactions take place which range from extracting cash, food, transport or any other necessities desired at the time. In fact, this wonderfully vivid metaphor used by township daughters also alerts us to playful ways they incorporate issues of sex, sexuality and exchange into everyday life. Of course we must stress that the issue of *play* takes on a dangerous edge when framed within a context where HIV/AIDS is rampant, thus creating a potential context where "pleasure is transformed into a site of death" (Mbembe 2001:126). So, while we can celebrate young women's ability to make autonomous choices we cannot ignore the environments in which their lives are being shaped. These are places where scarcity and inequality are often played out in and through their bodies. In addition, when we consider the broader social processes of economic marginalization, political apathy, material lack and employment racism within which their subjectivities are being produced, we are left with celebrating 'bittersweet heroic' attempts to alter one's fate.

Often in these transactions and negotiations takes place around their bodies the one area that they control, in order to access material resources and thus shape desired outcomes. In such cases instead of her being seen as loose or objectified, a township daughter may feel empowered because she now has the ability to earn money, and make a contribution towards her enjoyment and/or the home, therefore transforming her despair into pleasure. However, what is also clear in these conversations with township daughters is that in exerting bodily agency they are also simultaneously challenging and reproducing the very patriarchal structures within which they continue to be embedded in (Hunter 2002, 2004).

However, despite this Weis (1996) has cautioned against mainstream readings of these sexual transactions which tend to place women as irresponsible sexual actors and render men as victims to the dangerous desires of these sexually illicit women. Such framings have a profound effect of shifting blame and negative moral judgments onto women's bodies. These accounts also erase the extent that money has become the "supreme locus of enjoyment" (Mbembe 2001: 160) for several young Africans. And as Cooper (1995) suggests, even when women's sexuality is commodified we must not lose sight that women's enjoyment of sexual and economic independence still form critical components towards their total health.

Clearly *sex for consumption* is embroiled in the consumption culture fast emerging in South

Africa townships, and in which everyone is eager to participate. Township daughters are not excluded from this project of desiring goods and money in what is often experienced as a hostile environment which consistently excludes them from mainstream circuits of consumption and pleasure. This desire to consume the 'good things in life' highlights "our human desire to enjoy luxury" (Cooper 2004: 18). Afterall as Mbembe points out, "In the postcolony, magnificence and the desire to shine are not only the prerogative for those who command. The people also want to be "honoured" to "shine" and to take part in "celebrations" (2001: 160). Within my popular cultural perspective consumption is thus read as "a creative and potentially liberating process" (Cooper 2004: 250), which has the capacity to refashion marginalised people's ideas of themselves. This, as John Storey points out, is because consumption constitutes one of the most visible ways in which we stage and perform our dramas of self-formation. In this sense consumption becomes closely associated with the ways in which we present and affirm ourselves within our social worlds. We can therefore say that consumption and being dialectically constitute each other critically shaping what it means to survive in urban townships. These consumption practices become forms of self-maintenance that are also about "life and death struggles for psychic and social survival and it consumes the entire person" (Bakare-Yusuf 1994: 5-6). And as repeatedly mentioned in this study, desire rehumanises those who have been conveniently erased from the dominant historical narrative.

We must also be open to the idea that sex may be a way of sustaining a sense of meaning in the face of meaninglessness. Given that mothers and daughters live in depressed marginal areas, or what they themselves call 'a place with no life', in addition to sex providing a sense of empowerment, it may also indicate yearnings for a physical release from the pressures of living in the midst of 'hopelessness'.

7.3.1.ii. Beauty

The notion of 'being-beautiful' was an important aspect in all young women's interviews. Most of the women were not shy to announce that 'I know I'm beautiful', or as Hlengiwe the 23 year provocatively announced – 'I know that I'm not a dustbin that no-one is interested in smelling… I am that type of a dog that everyone wants to smell'. While Dudu simply stated:

Dudu: I know I am beautiful ….. when I walk out the house I must make sure that when I walk out this door (gestures), I am not going to reach the place without a man stopping me and saying – "excuse me, can I talk to you". You see these things …. So I can leave home with no money to buy cooldrinks or cigarettes, but where I am going, I know myself (emphasises)… I know that I am X and I'm beautiful …

While Zethu the 33 year old, mother of four continued that often when she and her friends went to parties, 'men would get confused by all these beautiful big dark women… and they go crazy.' Being beautiful also involved a whole set of 'beautifying' techniques. Even though unemployed, self-care was a central concern and as I probed into their strategies women explained them to me in the following detail.

Hlengiwe: During the weekend we do our hair. Some do nails… you must do a pedicure Stu… you must go to Musgrave Centre where they do pedicures…

Nonhlanhla: Friday is hair day… yes, when we are going out to clubs...

Zinhle: When you about to leave the house with friends you check and ask them, it's important-my friends how do I look? Does this look good on me? Friends I am not sure about this one…. What do you think? No, they will tell you, wear this one…. What about my hair?… and when you walk out, you must know you are beautiful… and then the men see all of you and you are all beautiful and they are confused…. [laughter].

These everyday beautification rituals can be argued to be part and parcel of township daughters' projections of their own aesthetic preferences in a social world which tends to repeatedly undermine their aesthetic judgments. Township women's beautification practices put on display their creative innovations of embodied femininities, provocatively challenging the way they are seen as desirable women. These everyday presentations of the self contribute towards creating an alternative aesthetics of African women in general. Strategies of constructing beauty among African women are broad and range from celebrating the pleasures of deception through make-up and hair extensions (Cooper 2004), to posturing elegant respectability in their church uniforms. However, feminists continue to assert that the bodily discipline of beautifying oneself fails to challenge prevailing sexual gender norms. In an effort to retheorise beyond presenting

these practices as oppressive, feminist philosopher Ann Cahill (2003) focuses on the communal process of beautification by separating the site of beautification and the site of the presentation of the beautiful feminine body.

She argues that in stressing the communal aspects of beautification, women bring to the fore other notions of subjectivity which privilege *interdependence* over autonomy; *collective or shared experience* as these young women relate with one another, over individual existence; and center the *body* over intellect. In this light, these shared experiences of beautifying themselves do not necessarily have to be viewed as an oppressive practice for them. In fact what such a view encourages is the acknowledgement of the pleasures of caring for one's body. In other words, "feminine beautification can be pleasurable insofar as it affords an opportunity for caring, embodied, intersubjective encounters" (Cahill 2003: 59). The communality of this experience also gives us glimpses of female-centered subjectivities at work and how women bond in various ways.

However, as Cahill (2003) reminds us, no matter how much the beautified woman enjoys the process of beautification, she always has little control over how her image will be consumed, particularly by men. However, what differs about this context is that unlike some middle-class feminists whose aim is to dismiss this male gaze (Cahill 2003), these young women's self-care strategies are performed with a sense of full recognition about how she intends her image to be consumed which is directed precisely at men's desires. For as Carolyn Cooper (2004) has highlighted earlier that ghetto women in Jamaica also experience *pleasure in being desired,* which she argues *rehumanises* them. Desiring thus also becomes a way township daughters' insist on being recognised in a world that tends to cast them into oblivion. The other aspect linked to 'working to be beautiful' is that it is often directly linked to attaining specific goals, like for example the entrapment of a men with cash. As Zinhle related to me, 'here we live by lies, that is the way people live.' While her friend, present in the interview with her agreed and added that, 'here… you always hear of someone hustling somebody…. It's like that.' In other words, investing in body work to make oneself beautiful was not only about feeling good, but also closely linked to surviving and ensuring that you seize potential prime opportunities for 'getting by'.

At the same time these self-care practices are also about celebrating the pleasures of disguise, seduction and entrapment (Cooper 2004), to particularly capture those men with potential. And as Cooper notes among poor women in Jamaica's ghettoes, disguise is essentially about "making others believe that you are other than your everyday self-unglamorous street vender…outsmart others through disguise" (2004: 127). Therefore, in participating in these elaborate beautifying and adornment practices, daughters of Chesterville township are able to "savior sensuality that has been repressed in the drudgery of [her] everyday existence" (Cooper 2004: 128). This is because this newly constructed body displaces the despised working class body into a site of erotic pleasure, thereby transforming these bodies into sites of pleasure rather than pain. This is how daughters explained their seduction strategies:

> *Sbongile: You must always look good, smell good. We go to the shops in town to spray expensive perfumes at the beauty counters, because when you meet someone they must know your standard…. They think that this girl wears expensive perfume and looks good and he must maintain that…. Men were born to provide [laughter]*

> *Sbongile: Sometimes I buy a twenty (packet of cigarettes) even when I have no money before I go out…. If I meet someone and they see me at least he will think that –ok, this woman doesn't smoke loose cigarettes [laughter]…. This woman only smokes a pack of cigarettes…. It's like that... yes...*

Clearly, women were conscious that they were engaged in processes of 'deception' and 'creating illusions' about 'who they were' in order to catch someone who could 'maintain them' at the standard they found them, as I was told. In other words township daughters are very aware of the "border-crossing potential of disguise" (Cooper 2004: 131), in transforming their conditions of lack into a productive resource that generates tangible rewards for them and even at times their families. As Sbongile playfully revealed:

> *Sbongile: if he found you wearing Poison perfume, he knows you are not cheap... When you ask for money for perfume he must remember you wear expensive perfume. (laughter).*

When we discussed these entrapment strategies as coded in deception, daughters were adamant to assert that the township was a very harsh place to live in, and it was only the strong and creative who managed to survive it. Being able to hold the male gaze for specific material

outcomes and/or pleasure constituted a necessary pragmatic survival skill and overall strategy to actively shape one's life. Finally, as Gondola (1999) found among unemployed Congolese youth, this will to care for the body reflected the centrality of caring for the body amidst spaces marked by material deprivation.

7.3.1.iii. Style

> *Nana: In townships we are doing things because they are in style… then you will be the talk of the townships.*

Caring for the body was also part of what the 26 year old Nonhlanhla explained about township life as, 'here we live in style', *siphila ngestayela*. Clifford Geertz (1973) has made the observation that style is not mere adornment, but substance. In other words, making attempts to try to understand what individuals mean by "living in style," also reveals important aspects about their cultural histories, social lives and interactions. And as I have pointed out in an article that I wrote on adornment, the experts of style are well known in townships and embody the townships capacity to create and their will to reclaim their bodies that have been violently objectified, to make themselves beautiful subjects once again (Motsemme 2003). I observed that in these instances creativity through a meticulous attention to dress became a way that violence and loss of dignity experienced under apartheid in townships, was tamed. Being 'in style' was then important and almost all the young women had an opinion about what was stylish and fashionable. As Nonhlanhla and Hlengiwe discussed about the latest styles:

> *Nonhlanhla: You see those parties that we go to, a friend of mine was at my house this morning and we were busy dressing up and my mother said-you see now you won't have anything left to wear with so much parties that you go to, you will lose your heads. You see now when you go out you must wear a boot, a polo neck and a scarf, that is in fashion now…a scarf that is very classy not your old mothers scarf. You know when you go out you don't have to be formal but you must look good…and I can't go out looking like (points to her outfit she is wearing) this wearing a three-quarter and this lousy t-shirt…*
>
> *Hlengiwe: ok my style…eish styles come and go but now it's white linen and the shoes that we wear…I'm talking about the one with the round or curved heel…but now there is new ones that just arrived, the round one's. It must be round but at the same time it must have a small heal*

when you see them you think they are flat but...I think white is in and you don't want anyone getting close to you cause when some guy comes my way they will be attracted by the white outfit...nobody wearing dark colours comes close to me...even Nonhlanhla here with her navy she's clean but no...and the perfume that you are wearing that day must be a very expensive one.

ALL TOGETHER: all of us in the same style...

Hlengiwe: I must wear white trousers and a t-shirt that shows my cleavage and my figure...then you can wear a scarf but something that will match your outfit and your boot is red...

Zinhle the 26 year old who's ex-boyfriend was a thief explained that the big attraction with township men is because '*banestayela',* they have style. She reminisces how she was totally taken up by her boyfriend's stylish ways, as opposed to the 'farm boy' she has her baby with. In this context, style is expressed in the clothing one wears (designer labels); the way one manipulates and fits these items of clothing sensuously around the body; the way one walks and talks; and the general attitude one projects when one is wearing these clothes. This assemble carries a script that all collectively recognise as 'stylish' in the township. But of course the notion of 'style' is not a static one and is always undergoing transformations in townships.

Such is the case now, where one finds township daughters increasingly identifying African-American hip-hop and rap popular cultures, rather than retro township styles, as 'stylish'. At the same time what is happening in South Africa is that many middle-class African youth are appropriating these township styles and commodifying them. The new popular label Loxion Kulca, which was started by two young African men in their early 20's, (one educated in a private school, the other the child of influential parents who were in exile), provide illustrations of the constant connections between township and suburbia in South Africa. However, it also highlights what Deborah Thomas also surfaced as a process taking place in Jamaica's ghettoes where,

> The majority of people who are poor and uneducated, their culture, their music, their dance, are appropriated by the middle-classes so they can feel very Jamaican, or very cool, feel very roots yet at the same time, there's a limit to how much they want to identify with these people socially (2004: 116).

Probing this concept of 'siphila ngesityle',-we live in style-, also begins to allow us to see how young women are consuming desire and pleasure through commodity goods. Finally, this

preoccupation with 'style' shows ways in which ordinary Africans all over the world's marginalised urban areas have used *caring for the body* amidst spaces of deprivation and humiliation as a means to re-assert their beauty in a uncaring world (Bakare-Yusuf 2001, 2003). And as Rachel Harding reminds us, it is significant that the reclamation of African identities has revolved around the rehabilitation of the body "because the body has been a prime site of degradation of black identity through its commodification, enslavement, and signification" (2000: 154).

7.3.1.iv. Enjoyment

> *Zinhle: Yes, sometimes we go to parties, but not here in the township...*

> *Zethu: We go out and go drinking and go partying...and even go to nightclubs...even though I have children...It all depends...It depends on whether you can think and use your head that-ok it's fine I have children and so when I get money, I think fine I need to think how am I going to pay for things in the house, I also have to dress well...and if my friends tell me we are going out during the weekend, I also have to make sure that I have some cash, like transport money...then I know we have money to get there, its fine because when we get there, uzosiphantela, you will hustle for yourself...that's how we work...we will see when we get there. We know we don't have money...At that time you know you look beautiful and when you get there you say you want a drink and you know a drink will come to your way (laughter)...you look beautiful and you know it*

> *ALL: You have no money that time (laughter)...*

Andrea Queeley (2003) notes that historically among the African-American working class, *enjoyment and entertainment have always been a central means of creating humanity through pleasure*. Despite being unemployed and coming from poor homes, township daughters related how they regularly went partying to have a good time. This idea of scarcity existing side by side with modalities of enjoyment constitutes a search for what Mbembe has called "therapeutic quests" (2001: 160) among the poor. And this lifestyle of enjoyment, of going out to parties often outside the township environment, was commonly coupled with *dancing the night away*. And I cannot overemphasise how dance is vital in as far as it reinstates the autonomous power of the African body (Gilroy 1996) by claiming it back to African township women's self defined ethical orders, thereby re-humanising them. Furthermore, dance also offers the possibility of

transforming a dull existence into moving into a zone of experiencing moments of intense feelings (Harding 2000), and therefore to feel alive.

7.4. Conclusion

This chapter has demonstrated that the daily practices of reconciliation and healing enacted by township mothers' and daughters' to deal with a violent past, as well as create a sense of moral community amid a damaged present, constituted a powerful yet unacknowledged counter narrative to the one presented through the publically staged one of the TRC. It explored how the principal route to healing, especially amongst township grandmothers and mothers, remained imbedded in the elusive arena of African cosmological systems and spiritualities, which to this day continue to be part of what we can call subjugated knowledges. We see how in their rituals and healing practices they center wholing, connecting and integrating themselves with their pasts, futures, families and communities which shout--'This is how we heal our own wounds from our own perspectives'. In this manner, these communal performances are then also expressions by township mothers and daughters of their self-fashioned ways on what it means to take care of their *being* as African women, who continue to live in urban dwellings which are caught up disproportionally in the matrix of a neo-liberal globalising world. Furthermore, the chapter has also argued that the popular socio-cultural expressions of beauty, style and enjoyment, which are associated with the *aesthetics of living,* synthesised together also constitute efforts to re-humanise township mothers' and daughters' lives through "the pleasures of release from the prison of identity that limits the definition of the person to one's social class and colour" (Cooper 2004: 138). In other words, these experiences and performances by township mothers and daughters can also be viewed as healing sites as they create spaces for momentary autonomous instrumental action and pleasure to take place. The chapter finally suggests that in incorporating these excluded aesthetics of living as being part of a repertoire of self affirmation strategies for positive conceptions of social existence by township mothers and daughters, we have begun the work of rethinking these lived and embodied experiences as ways township mothers and daughters challenge centuries of negation by inserting their versions of beauty and being a sexual being. Afterall, as we know, African women's bodies have been historically

painted as, "undesirable and non-sensuous" whose "wombs bear fruit but we are not sweet," (Maracle 1996: 76). These momentary acts of self-authourship allows them to finally reclaim these pleasures of the flesh positively and celebrate their joys of being part of a community which acknowledges their total being in everyday life.

Chapter 8: Conclusion

The aim of this study was to explore the lived and embodied suffering and healing experiences amongst mothers and daughters in Chesterville Township, KwaZulu-Natal. In chapter one, against the background of urging for a review of current frameworks to understand townships, I outlined how the proposed field of study--Township Studies--continues to be dominated by political-economy, socio-political, socio-economic and urban development conceptual frameworks. I argue that these often positivist aligned frameworks are no longer producing new knowledge because they consistently produce hollow political township subjects who act on the world by virtue of their political agency. Furthermore, I demonstrated that even when these structuralist and institutionally driven approaches were gendered and spatialised, what scholars tended to continue to do was to reinsert back into their analyses the idea of township women as political subjects and/or political mothers, as opposed to also being emotionally and historically situated beings (Bakare-Yusuf 2001). In persistently framing them in this manner, scholars thus failed to illuminate how they in fact also used a variety of ways, which included their bodies, emotions, voices, histories and stories, to create viable lives amidst suffering. As I illustrated, these dominant conceptual frameworks, which have been fundamentally shaped by the developmental discourse on African women, ultimately end reflecting back old binaries and abstractions of strong/weak and matriarch/victim type stereotypes of township mothers and daughters. In other words, this volumous work (see Seekings 1992) does not fully engage how township women who continue to be caught "between the ruins of culture and the disintegrating of the social" (Gould 1995:808), transcend these conditions of felt-disharmony and embodied fragmentation to generate that creative redemptive force (Dawes 2006), that is hope, for healing. We must keep in mind that if we continue to rely on these structurally determined models, no matter how much they have been remodelled, we will simply fail to uncover what is existentially at stake for those who experience both chronic and arbitrary forms of everyday violences. And in agreement with Cabral, Cooper as well as many South African scholars and cultural artists, I suggest that an African popular cultural framework will free us to be able to better explore these deep subjectivities of township mothers and daughters. This theoretical framework, as I maintain

in Chapter two, is able to do this precisely because of its inherent flexible inter and trans-disciplinary nature that allows us to explore the paradox and contradiction of the everyday lived and embodied township experiences, while connecting it to wider socio-economic and historical experiences. And in its collective analyses of marginalisation, healing, creativity, loss, sexual desire, beauty, sacredness, sexual agency and sensuality, we can finally look deep into the eyes of township women and discover their self generated versions of what are their truths about their lives.

To analyse the lived and embodied suffering and healing of township mothers and daughters, I then mapped out my proposed popular cultural studies framework that is closely aligned to African womanism (African women's ways of knowing) and existential phenomenology (the body's way of knowing) that I called-Township mothers and daughters lived and embodied 'popular cultures of survival'. In chapter three I then proceeded to explain how these 'cultures are survival' are constituted by a dialectical tension between 'ukuphanta', to hustle, and 'ukuhlonipha', to respect, in South African townships. From here I suggested that it is from this constantly changing positioning that the existential base from which township women and daughters formulated their survival strategies to outmanoeuvre, or rather tame suffering towards the horizon of holistic healing, is based. In this way they remind us that even with township atmospheres where "death is lived as a modality of life and is wholly assimilated into everyday sociality" (Mimica 1994: 215), the critical moments that define our lives continue to be "love, mutual recognition, respect, dignity and well-being" (Jackson 2005: xxix). The thesis also surfaced those humanising strategies within a perspective that takes into account the inter-transgenerational factors regarding how township-ways-of-being-the-world are passed on from mothers to daughters. This, it was shown, was done with the aim of preparing daughters for the harsh socio-economic conditions they will have to face, often alone without their men.

In chapter four, speaking from a position of a metaphorically 'possessed' township daughter, I construct a methodological framework that allows me to let township women speak and feel. This flexible methodological approach I adopt can be described as an African womanist interpretative phenomenology. In centering healing methodologies from African womanism and lived and embodied experience from existential phenomenology perspectives, I allowed myself

to reconsider taken-for-granted ethical positions by enabling myself to be transformed by my field encounters with marginalised poor township women. I believe that this 'permission' to incorporate emotions within the research process, further enriched it. In chapter five I simply briefly situate geographically, demographically and historically Chesterville Township that mothers and daughters call their home. This was principally done to further make graphic the shocking and brutal violent context within which women recounted their narratives and carved out their lives. The use of primary sources was not only a deliberate attempt to historicise these violences township women endured and thus show how the present continued to be lived in historical terms, but also to allow these texts to 'speak' in another language, the unspeakable.

Chapters six and seven which outline the themes of the research, constituted the 'life-force' of this study as they clear space for township mothers and daughters to speak. Given the continued marginalisation of poor urban women's voices within social science discourse, this conscious act to write their reflections as another way of coming-to-know reflects how writing can indeed also be " an act of resistance and witness" (Gould 1995: 815). And in Chapter six what I specifically show is that despite their lived and embodied suffering that includes experiences of physical and spiritual displacement, political violence and the violation of intimate spaces, living in an atmosphere of HIV/AIDS, pregnancy out of wedlock, unemployment and 'forever-working', and the weakening of intergenerational ties in Chesterville Township, they continue to endure. And as their own popular philosophies on suffering and enduring indicate towards the end of chapter six, hope is imbedded in finding what is wonderful and miraculous within the fabric of everyday life, which is ironically where they experience their greatest injuries. I then conclude the study by tracing how township mothers and daughters have formulated their own lived and embodied practices of healing imbedded in lived and dynamic African spiritualities and the aesthetics of living, as opposed to public based-- that is TRC-- understandings of healing. And as I continue to discuss in this chapter it is a combination of centering African spiritual practices governed by reconnecting rituals and the new aesthetics of living manifested in the modalities of enjoyment, beauty, style and chasing cash that constitute their ways, that I show how mothers and daughters move out of "social dereliction to psychological redemption" (Gondola 1999: 23), and therefore transcend their "ontological conditions of pain" (Bakare-Yusuf 2001: 193).

What I would like to ultimately propose is that township mothers and daughters lived and embodied suffering, and the healing practices they forge in order to mediate a painful past with a strained present has a substantial contribution to make towards deepening and expanding our interdisciplinary approaches such as township studies, gender studies, memory studies, indigenous studies, violence studies, human rights studies, and many more. However, such an engagement will only happen when we dare take the leap to honour the memory sites of the oppressed, which as we know, are often not located in official discourses and practices. But should we productively engage these subaltern epistemologies and methodologies, then the pathway for viewing other worldviews, 'ways of doing', 'ways of seeing' and 'ways of relating', will be generously opened. This will lead us to have a much more nuanced way of understanding how township mothers and daughters negotiate their lived and embodied experiences.

Township mothers and daughters narrations of the 1980s violence in Chesterville Township, KwaZulu-Natal also invite us to abandon privileged and safe ideas of where our lived experience and memories lie, and how we may overcome the historically-felt wounds imprinted on our bodies and landscapes. By exploring these sublime experiences and memories of suffering and lived healing practices, we are also critically extending our epistemic frames within current social theory that focuses on marginalised lives. Like these township women, in acknowledging that suffering is more than just about 'what we see', or 'what we say', or 'what we think' for that matter, but is also deeply embodied and affects our metaphysical worlds, then we would have begun to reach into the hidden and invisible work that women do in order to endure conditions of hardship and pain. This is the often unacknowledged and never celebrated work of how daily when suffering impinges the everyday lives of women, in spite of this, they continue to engender the everyday with some sense of normalcy: carefully nurturing and weaving together scarred cultural intergenerational chords, and attempting to reproduce moral communities based on the 'ethics of care and compassion' in the hope of restoring the social fabric of their communities, and ultimately rehumanise their otherwise oppressive and materially limited lives. For as they have demonstrated it is in their gendered daily practices that they give us a glimpse that they intuitively understand that suffering is always embodied, and must therefore be dealt with through a multilayered and holistic manner.

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WRITTEN ACCOUNTS

Abafundi Institute 2010 learners of social auxiliary work who generated the list on *'umama oqotho,'* a dignified mother.

Ma Sithole who wrote an account on her most memorable healing experience in Chesterville Township.